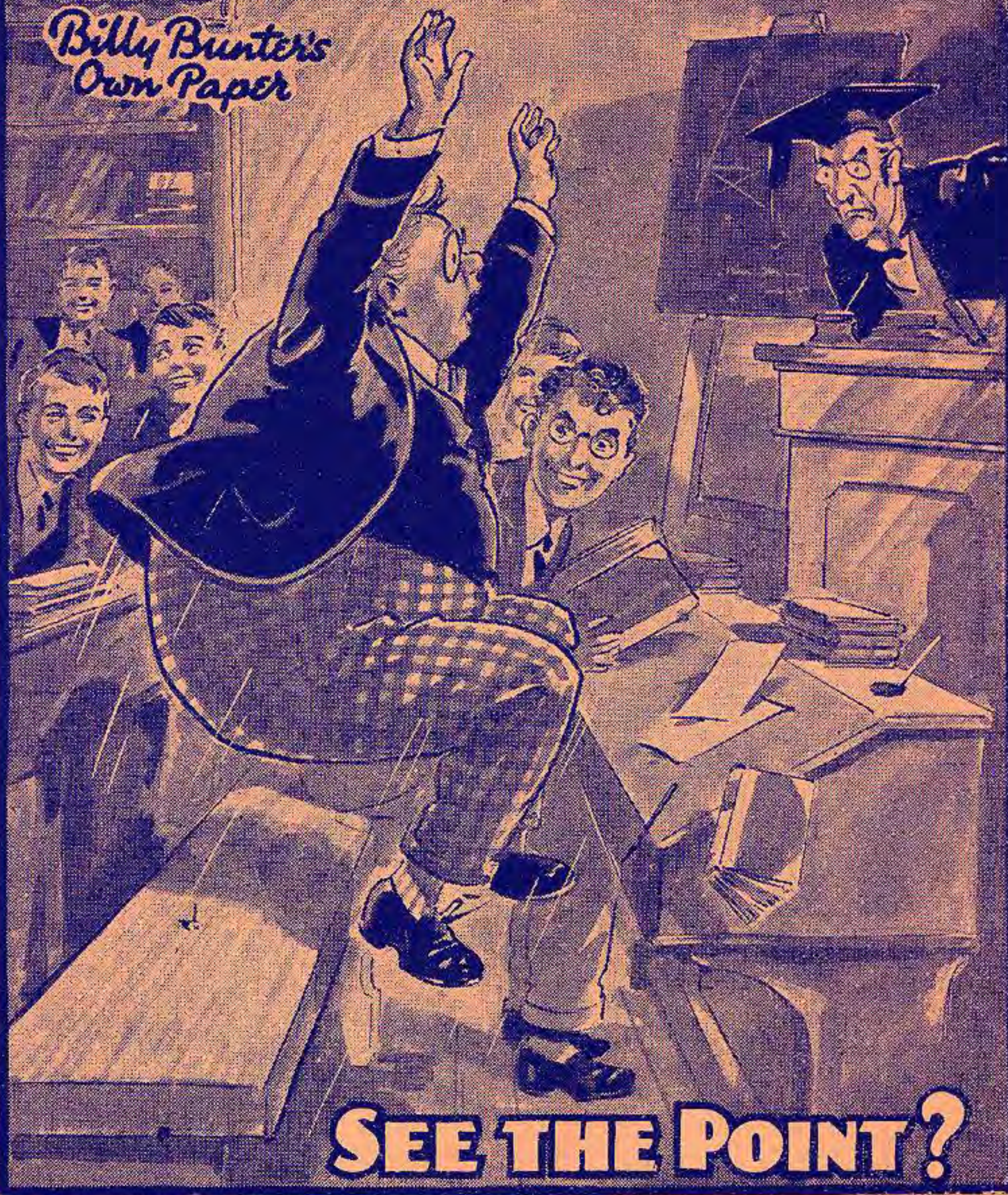


"THE CLUE OF THE PURPLE FOOTPRINTS!" GREAT GREYFRIARS
YARN INSIDE!

The Magnet ^{2^D}

*Billy Bunter's
Own Paper*



SEE THE POINT?



THIS WEEK BY HAROLD SKINNER

UNTIL a few months ago, Dick Penrod had the job of filling this page with so-called poems and alleged jokes. I used to stare at his efforts, and I know just the hour of doom was striking and my goose was cooked. I look back to those happy days with a tremendous sigh.

The editor came down to Greyfriars and asked me if I had decided to let every fellow take a turn at writing his own page or not, and suggested I might do the cartoons for him. That a room, I agreed. The net result is that I now get one thundering good night's sleep except when I have a holiday by drawing a Second Form tag.

My only comfort is that the sunny is always quiet and peaceful, and a fellow can get a snore when the matron buzzes off. But my space is a mass of cold cuts, in a week or two I shall have to draw Bolsover major; a little later, Coker is on the list. Wreaths and floral tributes should be sent care of the editor. For—

Woe to the man who enlarges

The size of Bob Cherry's big feet,
They may be a couple of bages,
But draw them quite dainty and neat;
Or Cherry will give you a thrashing,
With weeping and wailing and gnashing!

You'd hardly believe, if you saw 'em,
The features of Bolsover's face!
But woe to the man who must draw 'em,
He'll soon be a hospital case!
For Bolsover thinks it invidious
When fellows point out that he's hideous!

Tom Dutton is deaf, and no hearer;
He cannot distinguish a word,
But Tom has a punch like Carnera,
And drawings are seen and not heard!
So, as he could hear no excuses,
He left me a bundle of bruises!

And Coker will give me no quarter,
To draw him is absolute cheek,
There'll be such a horrible slaughter
I shall not wake up for a week;
No matter, as long as it's funny,
And you get a laugh for your money!

CONFESSIONS OF A CAD!

Do I smoke? Alas, my young friends, I have indeed tasted of the forbidden herb. Do I play cards? I weep with shame, but I cannot deny it; I have handled the guilty pasteboards. Am I acquainted with the interior design of the Three Fishers Tavern? I can hardly speak the words, but I am.

I have even, cad that I am, crept from my dormitory at the witching hour of night and have gone north upon the razzle. Such conduct is unparalleled and unprecedented, but it has happened.

What have I to offer in mitigation of this fiendishness? Well, I don't know that I have anything much, except that I rather like it. After all, what's the good of rules unless somebody breaks them? The other fellows wouldn't get any kick out of being good unless there were a few bad eggs and gay dogs about the place. What's the good of being good if everyone's always good?

The Little Tin Gods Club in Study No. 1 really owe their conscious virtue to sad cases like me. Not that I really dislike Wharton; he's no friend of mine, but I get

on all right with him. He has his own opinion of me, and I have my own opinion of him, and we agree to leave it at that. He's not like Alonzo Todd, who always tries to reform me.

Last time he was at Greyfriars, 'Louzy punned me in the study and talked so very, very seriously to me that my eyes were opened and I saw the errors of my ways, and actually wept over my past crimes. 'Louzy was very, very gratified, and went so far as to invite me to tea with him, as a reformed character.

"Th-thanks awfully, 'Louzy," I sobbed.

"I'll come with pleasure, and we'll have a little g-game of b-banker afterwards shall we?"

In case any other dear friends want to do me a bit of good, I may say that I'm quite aware that backing horses is a mug's game. I know I shall lose my character, and, what's worse, my money. I know that Joey Banks practically lives on remews like me and Smitay. It's not the slightest good appealing to our common sense, because we know as well as you do what fools we are.

But—we don't play the goat for business, but for sport. You are keen on looter and cricket. Right-ho! I happen to be keen on billiards and racing. Just a matter of taste, that's all. I may think you're a poor prune to waste your time chasing a muddy looter about a field. You may think me a dingy sweep to waste my time in salubrious spots like the Three Fishers. It happens that the Powers That Be think the same as you do. Well, that's hard luck, but what about it? If we're caught, we're sacked, and that's that. You're not sacked for playing looter, but that's simply your good luck.

Eh?

FRIEND O' MINE!

Gentle George loved his kind teachers. Personally, I hate 'em like poison; but, as I say, tastes differ. There is only one of 'em I think of as a friend, and that's Prout. I love Prout!

He's a noble character, and practically unparalleled. What wouldn't I give to be a personal friend of this man, and have the advantage of his delightful conversation? Have you heard the thrilling tales of his exploits in the Rockies, in the year before the Flood? He was a terrific hunter. His slaughter of rats, mice, squirrels, and other vermin is still unprecedented.

My favourite yarn is the one where Prout had slipped on a precipice and dropped his rifle into the yawning abyss. (I suppose he'd been talking to the abyss—that's why it was yawning.) Unarmed, Prout staggered away towards his mountain hut, when round the corner came a monstrous grizzly bear.

Figure the position! He was standing on a two-foot-wide ledge of rock, with the abyss still yawning beneath him. The bear was in front of him. There was no escape. Prout's rifle was gone, but his courage was still firm. In an instant he made up his mind. Tapping the bear on the shoulder, he said:

"A word with you, my dear bear! Let us have a slight chat on the international situation. Sit down here, my good fellow!"

Well, of course, that was the finish. In two hours the bear was cold and stiff—talked to death. They buried him in a cavern near by, and upon his tomb they wrote: "He was more chinned against than chinning!" Alas, poor bear!

I DESIRE TO POINT OUT, MY DEAR BEAR, THAT THE SITUATION IS QUITE UNPARALLELED



SKINNY-RIDDLES

What's the difference between Bunter and a burglar?—About two feet round the waist, that's all.

Why is Coker like a mule with stomach ache?—Probably because he was born that way.

When is Cherry playing cricket like Prout out shooting?—When he is out for a duck.

What is small and light and not hot, and yet Prout can't hold it for two seconds?—His tongue.

What's the difference between a fellow who speaks to Dutton and a slice of bacon?—One's rash, the other rasher.

Our contributor for next week is
CEDRIC HILTON.



Harold Skinner

HAROLD SKINNER

REMOVE FORM STUDY NO. 11

Skinner, like most people, is a queer mixture of good and bad—but in his case, the bad predominates. He has plenty of vices, such as meanness, gambling, breaking rules, malice, and envy. One feels it is impossible for Skinner to go straight, just as it is impossible for Johnny Bull to do anything else. His own queer twist of character makes him spiteful, cunning, treacherous, and jealous. Yet he is extremely clever and witty. He is always ready to make jokes, though the jokes are not always good-natured. He is as keen as a razor, could be a brilliant scholar if he ever took the trouble, and has quite a gift for drawing. In healthy outdoor sport he is not in the least interested, and no good at it. None the less, Skinner contrives to make plenty of fun in the Remove, and is not unpopular on that account. He has not spared himself in this cartoon—which is in keeping with his character.

Someone has robbed Dr. Locke's study, and left a clue behind him—a clue that does not need a detective to follow it up. Do the tell-tale footprints spell the capture of the mysterious prowler who has been haunting Greyfriars for so long past?

The CLUE of the PURPLE FOOTPRINTS!

By FRANK RICHARDS



Mr. Quelch advanced, bent double, his gimlet eyes scanning the purple stains on the oaken floor. "This way, sir," he said. "You can see where the prowler trod." "Quite!" said Dr. Locke, keen and eager.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Sharp!

"WHAT is that, Bunter?"
"Oh!" gasped Billy Bunter.
"What—?"
"Oh, nothing, sir!"
"You have something in your hand, Bunter."

"Oh! No, sir!"
Billy Bunter's answer was unusually truthful. He had nothing in his fat hand. A moment ago he had had a bent pin in it. But at the sharp rap of his Form-master's voice he had dropped it like a hot potato.

The Remove were taking their places for school. Nobody had sat down yet. Some of the fellows near Bunter were grinning. Mr. Quelch suspected that Bunter was the cause. He was certain that that fat member of his Form had something clutched in his podgy hand. Knowing Bunter's manners and customs, he suspected toffee.

He came a step nearer to the form, and his gimlet eyes glinted suspiciously at the fat Owl of the Remove.

"Hold up your hands, Bunter!"

"Oh! Yes, sir!"

Billy Bunter held up two fat paws—both certainly in need of a wash, but containing nothing. Quelch stared at them. Obviously, they were empty—which was quite unexpected.

"Very well; you may sit down!" said Mr. Quelch.

Billy Bunter did not immediately sit down.

He had come provided with a bent pin, which he was going to place on the form beside him, for the next fellow to sit upon.

The next fellow to Bunter was James Duck, the new boy in the Remove. He was the only fellow near Bunter who was not grinning—not being in the secret.

A bent pin, for a fellow to sit upon, was Billy Bunter's idea of a joke! Duck, the duffer of the Form, was the

recaptured the pin with his other fat hand.

The pin he placed on the form behind James Duck. The grammar he placed on his desk.

"Bunter!"

"Oh crikey! I mean, yes, sir!" gasped Bunter.

"I think you picked up something, Bunter."

Billy Bunter wondered whether Quelch had eyes in the back of his head. Really, it seemed sometimes that he had.

"Oh, no, sir! Only my Latin grammar, sir!"

"I think you picked up something with the other hand, Bunter."

"Oh, no, sir! Look!"

Bunter displayed an empty paw. That paw had placed the bent pin behind James Duck, but had, naturally, been hidden by Duck, so Mr. Quelch had seen nothing of the pin.

But he was clearly suspicious.

"If you have toffee, or any such comestible about you, Bunter—" rumbled Mr. Quelch.

"Oh! No, sir!"

"Stand out before the Form, Bunter."

Bunter rolled out before the Form. He rolled out confidently. He had no toffee about him. Quelch was on a false scent. Tuck in the Form-room was strictly forbidden; but that was a rule which Billy Bunter passed by like the idle wind which he regarded not—when he had any tuck! On the present occasion he hadn't! So that was all right.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,624.

Thrilling School and Detective-Adventure Yarn,
Starring HARRY WHARTON
& CO., of GREYFRIARS,
and JACK DRAKE, the Boy
'Tee.

victim of a good many practical jokes. Now the fat and fatuous Owl was joining in the game.

But without the pin, which lay on the floor at his feet, Bunter could not carry on. He had to have that pin!

So, with great astuteness, the fat Owl pushed a Latin grammar off his desk, and it flopped to the floor as Mr. Quelch turned away.

Bunter stooped to pick up the Latin grammar. At the same moment he

But the Remove master was suspicious. He could see that something was up. Unless it was toffee he did not know what it was. He was going to ascertain whether it was toffee! In which case, Billy Bunter was booked for a swipe from his Form-master's cane.

"You will turn out your pockets, Bunter!" rapped Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, sir!" said Bunter cheerfully.

Often and often such an order would have led to the revelation of toffee, or butter scotch, or bullseyes. Now it led to the revealing of grubby, sticky lining—merely that, and nothing more.

There was a sudden chuckle among the Removites.

The fellows who saw the bent pin on the form behind James Duck expected to see him sit down on it without looking round.

Instead of which, he did glance round, through his steel-rimmed glasses, and pushed the pin along the form.

It was now in Bunter's place, waiting for the return of the fat Owl.

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Bob Cherry. "That chap ain't such a fool as he looks!"

"Not quite!" grinned Johnny Bull.

Mr. Quelch glanced round sharply.

"Silence in the Form!" he rapped. He turned back to Bunter. "Bunter, I am assured that you picked up something you had dropped, and that you dropped your Latin grammar as an excuse for doing so."

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

This seemed rather like magic to the fat Owl.

"What is it, Bunter?"

"Oh! Nothing, sir! I never had anything in my hand when you spoke to me, sir, and I never dropped it, and I never picked it up again, and it wasn't a pin," gasped Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"A pin!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "Silence! Did you say a pin, Bunter?"

"No, sir! Nothing of the kind," stammered the confused fat Owl. "I never had a pin, sir. Besides, fellows are allowed to have pins, sir. I—I—I was going to pin in a loose page in my Latin grammar, sir. Not that I had a pin, sir!" added Bunter cautiously. "You can ask Skinner, sir. He knows—he gave it to me."

"You utterly stupid boy—"

"Oh, really, sir—"

"Go to your place, Bunter!"

"Oh! Yes, sir!"

Billy Bunter rolled back to his place. The Remove fellows took their seats.

Bunter blinked at James Duck in astonishment. Duck had sat down—on the bent pin, so far as Bunter knew! But he did not jump; he did not yell; he did not stir! Unless James Duck was made of cast iron, Bunter could not understand it! He stood blinking at him through his big spectacles.

"Bunter!"

"Oh! Yes, sir!"

"Sit down at once!"

"Yes, sir!"

Bunter sat down!

He reposed on the old oak form for about the millionth part of a second! Then he bounded up, as if the form was red-hot!

"Yaroooh!" roared Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked the Remove.

"Oow! I'm punctured! Yaroooh! Wow!" roared the fat Owl, wriggling with anguish. "Oh crikey! Wow! Ow! Whoooh!"

Bunter's roar rang through the Form-room. It echoed out into the passages. The celebrated Bull of Bashan had nothing on Billy Bunter at that moment. He roared and roared. He wriggled and squirmed, and almost danced.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,624.

"Bunter!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

"Yaroooh!"

"How dare you make such absurd noises in the Form-room?" shrieked the master of the Remove. "Silence—"

"Yow-ow-woop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Is anything the matter, Bunter?" asked James Duck, in his mild voice, turning his steel-rimmed glasses on the fat Owl.

"Wow! Yow! Wow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence in the Form!" hooted Mr. Quelch. "Bunter, what do you mean by this? What—"

"Ow! Wow! I'm punctured! Wow! I sat on the pin! It's stuck right into me! Yaroooh!" howled Bunter. "Oh crikey! Oh! Ow! Ooooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Upon my word!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "Bunter, this passes all patience! You have brought a pin into the Form-room and sat on it! For what reason, Bunter, have you played so utterly stupid a trick?"

"Yaroooh!"

"You will take a hundred lines, Bunter, for bringing that pin into the Form-room—"

"Ow! Wow!"

"And another hundred lines for sitting on it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!"

"Ow! Oh crikey! Wow—"

"And if you utter another sound, Bunter, I shall cane you!" hooted Mr. Quelch.

And Billy Bunter, with heroic efforts, contrived not to utter another sound.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Some Jape!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"
"That fat ass!"
"What on earth's Bunter up to?"

Harry Wharton & Co. were sauntering in the quad after class. They were not thinking of Billy Bunter. They had, in fact, forgotten his fat existence. But they were reminded of him, suddenly, and unexpectedly.

A fat face, and a big pair of spectacles looked out of an open study window. Billy Bunter was taking a cautious—a very cautious—blink into the quadrangle from the window. And the Famous Five came to a halt, and stared at him.

That study belonged to Mr. Lascelles, games master and maths master at Greyfriars. Billy Bunter had no business there. Bunter, it was true, was very often found where he had no business. Still, it was rather a puzzle what he was up to in Larry Lascelles' study.

That study being on the ground floor, and the window-sill rather low, any fellow could glance in in passing if so disposed. As the window was open any fellow, indeed, could have clambered in. Bunter, it seemed, had done so. Now he was taking a very cautious survey of the quad, evidently to ascertain whether he had been observed.

"Oh!" ejaculated Bunter, as his eyes and his spectacles fell on five surprised faces staring at him. He jumped.

The Famous Five came up to the window.

"What are you doing there, you fat ass?" asked Harry Wharton.

"I say, you fellows, is Quelch about?" asked Bunter anxiously.

"Queelch's gone out," answered Bob Cherry.

"Oh, good!"

"But what—?" asked Frank Nugent.

"It's a jape, you know," grinned Bunter. "Look!"

There was something in Bunter's fat right hand. The Famous Five stared at it. It was a soda siphon. Evidently it was the property of Mr. Lascelles—or had been. It was Bunter's now.

"A jape!" repeated Johnny Bull, glaring at the fat Owl. "If you're going to jape Larry, we'll scrag you!"

"The scragfulness will be terrific!" declared Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "Japing the esteemed and absurd Larry is barred."

"Not Lascelles, you silly asses! Duck!" explained Bunter.

"Duck!" repeated the Famous Five.

"You fellows saw the rotten trick he played on me in the Form-room this morning—with that beastly pin, and—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, cackle!" snorted Bunter. "I'm jolly well going to pay him out for it! You wait till he comes into this study."

"Is Duck coming to that study?" asked Frank Nugent blankly.

"He, he, he! Yes, rather!" Billy Bunter chortled. "I've got Skinner to tell him that Mr. Lascelles wants him in his study. He'll think it's something to do with maths, of course—see? Ho he, he!"

"You howling ass—" began Bob Cherry.

"Yah! You wait till he opens that door!" said Bunter. "I'm going to let him have this right in the chivvy! Make him jump—what?"

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Bob Cherry. "You dangerous maniac, suppose Larry comes back to his study—"

"He won't," grinned Bunter. "The beaks are at tea in Common-room—see? Safe enough for half an hour. Think I'm a fool?"

"What-ho!" said the Famous Five, with one voice.

On that point their opinion was evidently unanimous.

"Yah! You'll see!" said the fat Owl. "I'll show that fathead Duck whether he can make a fellow sit on his own pin!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, do stop cackling! You'll get a crowd here!" yapped Bunter. "I say, you fellows, you can stand there and watch, if you like, and see that idiot Duck get it right on the beezer! You just watch till he opens the door!"

"Look here, Bunter, you silly Owl, I—"

"Yah! You just watch me jape that fool, Duck!"

Billy Bunter was not to be reasoned with. He was still feeling twinges from that bent pin, on which he had unintentionally sat. Likewise, he had two hundred lines from Quelch hanging over his fat head. Billy Bunter was on the trail of vengeance, and James Duck, the duffer of the Remove, was the doomed victim. Bunter, the japer, was going strong.

The fat Owl turned from the window, and rolled across to the study door. The Famous Five outside watched him.

Bunter planted himself behind the door.

He lifted the soda siphon in both fat hands, a podgy thumb on the nozzle. In that strategic position he was prepared to sweep Duck fore and aft, as it were, as he opened the door and came in. He grinned over the soda siphon, his little round eyes twinkling through his big round spectacles.

All was safe—so far as Bunter could see.

With Mr. Lascelles at tea with the



As the study door opened, Billy Bunter opened fire with the soda siphon. Swish! Swoosh! "Oh! Oooogh!" came a startled howl. "Oh, gad! What——" Bunter stood transfixed with horror. It was not James Duck who had got the soda-water—it was Mr. Lascelles, the games master.

other beaks in Common-room the coast was clear—quite clear.

All Bunter had to do was to wait till James Duck, spoofed by Skinner's message, came to the study. That was only a matter of minutes. James Duck would be left swimming with soda-water, and Bunter would drop from the window. It would be all over long before Larry Lascelles came back from Common-room. It was safe as houses—to Bunter. Really, the best-planned jape ever.

It did not seem quite so safe to the juniors outside the window. Somebody else might come to the study. Larry himself might be early away from tea. Duck might fail to fall to Skinner's spoof. All sorts of things, indeed, might happen that had not occurred to Billy Bunter's fat and obtuse intellect.

"Oh, my hat! Here he comes!" breathed Bob Cherry.

Looking across the study from the window, the Famous Five saw the door-handle turn. They watched breathlessly.

The door opened.

"Oh!" gasped the five together, as they glimpsed the figure in the doorway—hidden from Bunter by the door.

It was not James Duck!

It was a much taller figure than Duck's—a very athletic figure. It was, in fact, Mr. Lawrence Lascelles, the games master of Greyfriars, who had not, evidently, lingered over tea in Common-room.

But there was no time to intervene, or even to call a warning word to the fat and fatuous Owl. Even as they gazed at him in startled horror, Larry Lascelles stepped into the study.

Swish! Swoosh!

Bunter was ready—too ready. He was only waiting for the newcomer

to pass the edge of the opened door. He let fly at once with the soda siphon, and a stream of soda-water landed on the games master.

"Oh!" came a startled howl from Mr. Lascelles.

He jumped. Bunter had said that a sudden stream of soda-water would make the newcomer jump. He was right. It did. Mr. Lascelles not only jumped; he fairly bounded.

Swish, swish! Swoosh! Splash!

"Ho, ho, ho!" gurgled Bunter, breathlessly, as he swished and swooshed.

"Oh! Oooogh! Oh gad! What——"

Mr. Lascelles spun round towards the fat figure with the soda siphon. Then Bunter saw.

"Oh!" he stuttered.

Bunter stood transfixed with horror. It was not James Duck. It was Mr. Lascelles! Unfortunately, Bunter was so petrified with horror that he never even thought of shutting off the siphon. Rooted to the floor, blinking at Mr. Lascelles with horrified eyes through his big spectacles, the petrified Owl went on swishing and swooshing, and the jet of soda-water splashed full into the games master's face as he glared at Bunter.

Swoosh! Splash!

Bunter had intended to let James Duck have the lot. Unintentionally, he let Larry Lascelles have the lot!

Mr. Lascelles staggered back as the stream splashed in his face. That stream splashed on his nose, then on his chin, then in his neck, and then down his waistcoat. The last spurt of soda-water drenched his trousers. He staggered back against the study table, gasping and spluttering.

"What—— Bunter, how dare you! Boy!" roared the games master. He

dabbed and clawed at soda-water. "Boy, are you mad? What——"

"Oh crikey!"

Crash!

The soda siphon dropped from Bunter's nerveless hand and crashed on the floor. Outside the window five fellows stood aghast. Bunter, blinking at the drenched games master, was more than aghast. Larry Lascelles, staggering against the table, gasped for breath, and glared at Billy Bunter with a glare equally amazed and enraged. Larry Lascelles was a good-tempered young man; he had never been known to lose his temper. But undoubtedly he looked as if he had lost it now.

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Bob Cherry. "That blithering Owl has asked for it this time!"

"The askfulness is terrific!" gasped Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"Bunter!" Mr. Lascelles' voice was a roar. "Boy, are you out of your senses? What——"

"Oh crikey! Is—is—is it you, sir?" stuttered Bunter. "Oh lor'! Oh crumbs! Oh scissors! I say— Oh crikey! I—I thought it was Duck——"

"What?"

"I—I—I thought Duck was coming to the study!" gasped Bunter. "I—I—I thought it was Duck coming! Oh lor'! I—I was going to let him have it— Oh crikey! I—I—I thought you were in Common-room! Oh scissors!"

"You utterly stupid boy!" gasped Mr. Lascelles.

"Oh! Yes, sir! C-c-can I go now?" stuttered Bunter. "I—I say, sir, I—I'm awfully sorry, sir! I—I never meant it for you! I—I—I hope you ain't wet, sir?"

"What! I am drenched! You—you——"

Words seemed to fail Mr. Lascelles. He proceeded to actions. He grabbed Billy Bunter by the collar, and, with one swing of a sinewy arm, landed him across the study table.

Bunter roared as he landed. He could guess what was coming next. He guessed right. It came!

With his free hand Mr. Lascelles grabbed up a cane. It rose in the air and descended on the tightest trousers at Greyfriars School.

From those trousers the dust rose. From their owner a yell rose which woke the echoes far and wide.

"Yarooooooooop!"

Whack!

"Yoo-hooop!"

Whack!

"Oh crikey! Yow-ow-ow-ow-ow!" roared Bunter. "I say— Wow! I say— Oh crumbs! Yaroooooh!"

"There!" gasped Mr. Lascelles.

He threw down the cane, and Billy Bunter, roaring, rolled off the table. He roared, and roared.

"Ow! Wow! Oh crikey! Wow!"

"Leave my study at once!"

"Ow! Wow! Ow!"

Mr. Lascelles made a movement to pick up the cane again. Billy Bunter shot to the door. Sounds of woe and lamentation died away down the passage. From the window came another sound.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Lascelles glanced round at the window.

"What—" he began.

Five faces disappeared as if by magic.

"That fat ass asked for it, and got it!" said Harry Wharton, when the chums were at a safe distance.

"The gotfulness was terrific!" murmured Hurree Singh.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Five On The Spot!

"THE Head!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Cover!" breathed Bob Cherry.

It was morning break the following day at Greyfriars School.

In that all-too-brief period between second and third school fellows were free to disport themselves as the spirit moved them anywhere within the precincts of Greyfriars. But they were not allowed out of gates. Only those high-and-mighty personages, the prefects of the Sixth Form, were allowed to walk out of gates in break. Such freedom was not for the smaller fry.

No fellow under the Sixth ought to have been out of gates in break. But, sad to relate, there were fellows at Greyfriars who sometimes did, rather thoughtlessly, what they ought not to have done.

The culprits on this occasion were the Famous Five of the Remove. They were out of gates in break.

They had not walked out at the gateway. Gosling, at his lodge, would have spotted them, and if he had not stopped them would have reported them to their Form-master. But there were more ways than one of killing a cat. The chums of the Remove had dropped over the Cloister wall in a quiet corner, unseen and unnoticed. Now they were taking a little ramble.

Really, there was no great harm in it. It was a fine spring morning which tempted fellows into the open spaces. And where was the harm in a little trot along Friardale Lane, where trees and hedges showed the glistening green of the spring-time?

That was true. But it was also true

that there was a strict rule on the subject, and that juniors breaking that rule were booked for trouble. So, as the chums of the Remove spotted a majestic figure in the offing, they took the alarm.

Dr. Locke, the headmaster of Greyfriars, was a benevolent old gentleman. He always had a kind smile for all and sundry. But, kind and benevolent as he was, the Famous Five did not want him to spot them out of gates in break.

So, as they discerned that majestic figure coming along from the school, prompt cover was the only resource.

The juniors at the moment were passing the Abbot's Spinney, at the corner of the lane, in view from the school gates if anyone had looked out. On that spinney was the hut occupied by Randolph Crocker, old boy of Greyfriars, who had been expelled in disgrace from the school many years ago, and had turned up again like a bad penny.

It was not the spot that Harry Wharton & Co. would willingly have selected for cover, for visits to the place by Greyfriars fellows were forbidden with terrific strictness. Getting out of gates in break was a mere trifle compared with entering the quarters of that disreputable old boy.

But it was a case of any port in a storm. The Head was approaching, and in a few moments more he would have spotted them. And nothing was to be seen of Sportsman Crocker; the hut was closed, there was no smoke from the chimney, and it looked as if the Sportsman was absent.

Bob Cherry pitched open the gate in the fence and cut in. Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent, Johnny Bull and Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh followed in after him. They vanished almost like ghosts at cock-crow from Friardale Lane. It was quick work.

Almost in a moment they were on the inner side of the spinney fence, with their heads ducked down. There they were out of sight of their respected headmaster when he passed. Clearly he had not seen them already, and it was unlikely that he would spot them through the narrow interstices between the palings.

"O.K.!" murmured Bob Cherry. "Keep your nappers down! The Big Beak won't see us!"

"Six of the best, if he does, in here!" said Johnny Bull.

"He won't. Keep mum!"

Bob peered through the palings. Dr. Locke was quite near at hand now, but his glance was not directed towards the fence. A frown had come over his kind face, as if something had evoked his displeasure, though the Removites certainly were not the cause of it. Apparently, his eyes had fallen upon someone coming up Friardale Lane from the opposite direction, the sight of whom did not please his majestic eyes.

Bob glanced in the other direction towards the village.

"Oh crumbs!" he murmured.

He spotted the figure that the Head had already seen. It was a well-known figure—that of Sportsman Crocker—with a spotted muffler round his neck, a hat drawn low over his brows, and little of his face to be seen beyond a nose and a thick, bushy, ragged moustache.

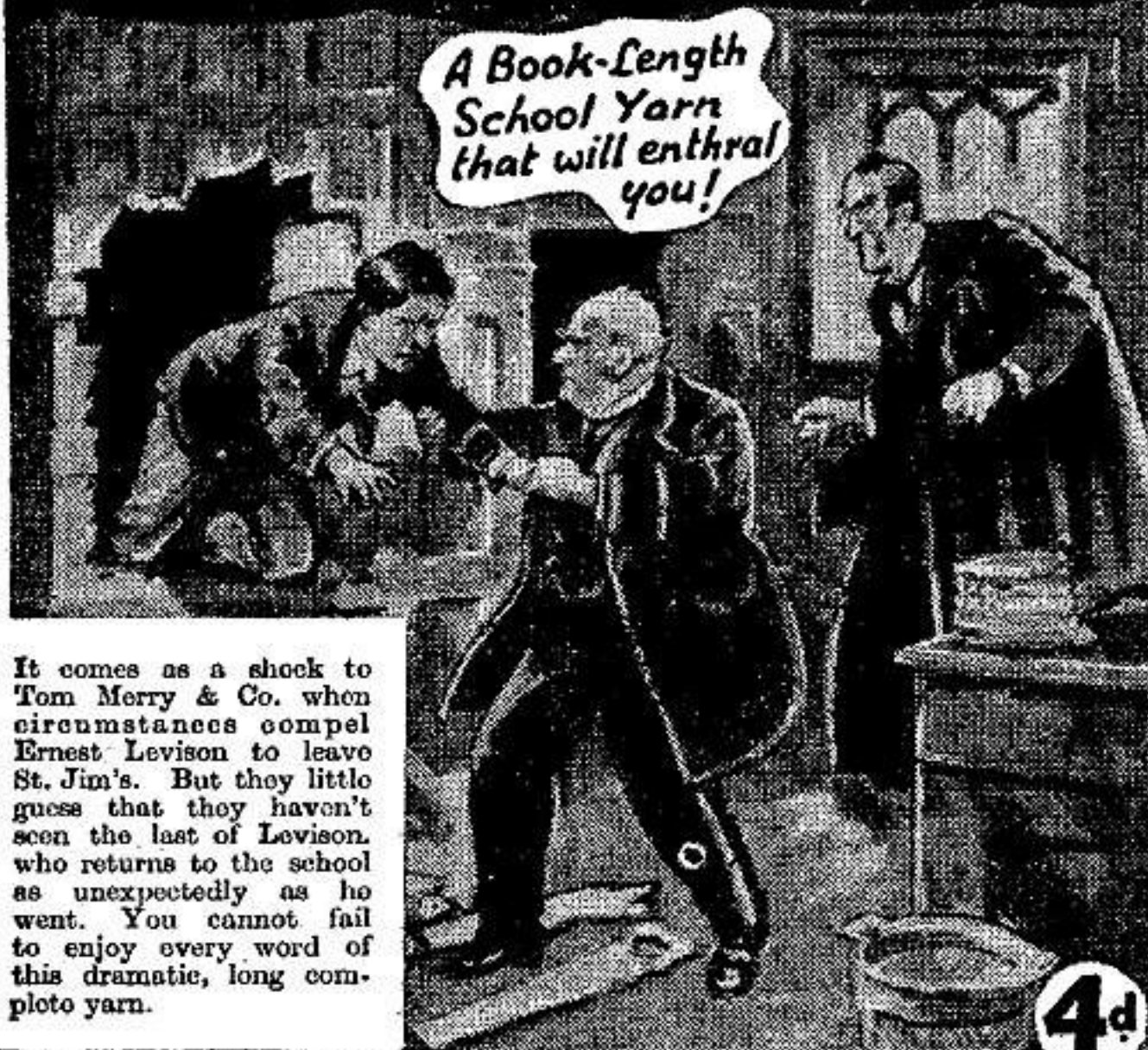
"That sweep!" muttered Nugent.

"Coming back from the Cross Keys!" grunted Johnny Bull. "What foul luck! He will spot us here before the Head's gone!"

"The rottenfulness of the luck is truly terrific!" murmured Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh. "The gamefulness is up!"

The BOY WHO CAME BACK!

A Book-Length
School Yarn
that will enthrall
you!



It comes as a shock to Tom Merry & Co. when circumstances compel Ernest Levison to leave St. Jim's. But they little guess that they haven't seen the last of Levison, who returns to the school as unexpectedly as he went. You cannot fail to enjoy every word of this dramatic, long complete yarn.

Harry Wharton peered through the palings. Crocker was not so near as the Head, but he was walking a good deal faster.

"Sit tight!" murmured the captain of the Remove. "The Head may pass before that brute comes in!"

"Let's hope so!" breathed Nugent. "If he sees us here before the Head's gone we're done!"

It was rather an awkward predicament for the chums of the Remove. If Crocker came in at the gate before the Head was out of sight it was going to be stormy weather. He would spot them the moment he came in, and they had no consideration to expect from that old boy of their school. They had had trouble with Randolph Crocker more than once.

Slowly from the direction of the school came the Head. More rapidly from the direction of the village came the Sportsman. He reached the gate in the fence, while Dr. Locke was still at a little distance. And, as his shadow fell over the gate, the juniors ducking under the fence gave up hope of pulling through undiscovered.

But, to their great relief, Crocker did not push the gate open and step in. He came to a halt, and they breathed again.

Instead of entering, the Sportsman leaned on the gate, looking up the road towards the school.

His eyes were fixed on the approaching headmaster, his old headmaster, who had expelled him from Greyfriars twenty years ago for bad conduct which had culminated in pinching.

He did not glance within the fence, or he certainly must have seen the five juniors ducking there. They were hardly three yards from him, and they watched him breathlessly. If he did not spot them till Dr. Locke had passed on his way, it was all right!

The headmaster of Greyfriars, with slow and majestic motion, came on. Through the interstices of the fence, the juniors could see him—and they saw the expression of cold dislike and disdain that came over his kind old face at the sight of the Sportsman lounging at the gate.

Apart from that icy glance, Dr. Locke took no heed of the man. But, as he came up, Crocker stepped from the gate and barred his way.

"Morning, old bean!" he said.

Dr. Locke came to a halt.

He certainly did not wish to stop, or to exchange words with Randolph Crocker, once of the Greyfriars Sixth. But his way was blocked by the grinning, sardonic rascal, and he had no choice in the matter.

He did not answer Crocker's mocking greeting. He gave him a look of contempt which might have pierced the thickest of skins. But it had no effect on the one-time Sportsman of Greyfriars. Contempt, the Oriental proverb says, will pierce the shell of the tortoise. But Randolph Crocker seemed thicker-skinned than a tortoise.

"Stand aside, please!" said Dr. Locke icily.

"Not a word for an old boy, dear old headmaster?" grinned Crocker.

"I have nothing to say to you, Mr. Crocker! Let me pass immediately!" rapped the Head.

Crocker pointed to the painted wooden sign over the fence. That sign, which announced that Randolph Crocker, formerly of Greyfriars School, was prepared to repair boots and shoes with promptness and despatch, was a standing offence to Greyfriars.

Every fellow knew that Crocker never mended boots and shoes, and was too

idle and shiftless to have done so, even if he had had the ability. His game seemed to be wholly and solely to draw the attention of the neighbourhood to himself and his peculiar proceedings—for no reason that anyone could guess, except to annoy the headmaster who had expelled him so long ago.

"I'm still looking for trade, dear old bean!" grinned Crocker. "You could put quite a lot in my way! What about it?"

"Stand aside!"

"Caught that pincher yet?"

Dr. Locke gave a violent start.

"What?" he ejaculated.

Crocker chuckled.

"Oh, I've heard the news!" he said. "Twenty years ago you sacked me for pinching! Think I don't know that pinching is going on in the dear old school now? I keep my eyes and my ears open, old bean—being such a close neighbour!"

Dr. Locke's face set. Within the school, the Greyfriars prowler was the theme of constant discussion. But it had not occurred to the Head so far, that the strange and mysterious exploits of the prowler had reached ears outside the school.

The startled and deeply displeased look on his face caused the Sportsman to chuckle again.

"My dear old headmaster, it's getting to be the talk of the place," he said. "I've heard about it at the Cross Keys in Friardale, and at the Three Fishers up the river! You can't keep a thing like that dark weeks on end."

Harry Wharton & Co., behind the fence, exchanged glances. They had known that Crocker knew about the Greyfriars prowler, and that probably a good many other outsiders knew. But they could see that it was a shock to the Head.

"I command you to stand out of my way!" exclaimed the headmaster of Greyfriars. "Let me pass at once!"

"What's the hurry?" grinned Crocker. "I don't often get a chance of a chat with my dear old bean!"

Dr. Locke, without replying, stepped aside, to walk round the grinning rascal. Crocker had a stick under his arm. He slipped it down into his hand, and made a sudden swipe.

The silk hat flew from Dr. Locke's head. It spun in the air, flew over the spinney fence, and landed there.

"Oh!" gasped Dr. Locke.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Crocker.

Dr. Locke passed a hand over his silver locks. He hardly seemed to realise what had become of his hat!

"You—you—" he gasped. "You—you ruffian! You dare—"

Crocker roared with laughter. The Sportsman was fond of a shindy; a taste that the headmaster of Greyfriars did not share in the very least. More than once he had barged into the school for no apparent purpose but to kick up a row! It was twenty years since Dr. Locke had expelled him—but the Sportsman's malice was as keen as ever. He advanced towards the headmaster, the stick in his hand.

Dr. Locke backed quickly away. The Sportsman, grinning, followed him up. Then the juniors ducking behind the fence suddenly stirred.

Whether even that reckless rascal would have ventured to swipe the Head with that stick, they did not know—but they were not going to give him the chance. Bob Cherry leaped to his feet.

"Collar that cad!" he roared.

And there was a rush! The next moment, Sportsman Crocker was rolling head over heels in the dust of the lane.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Larry Takes A Hand!

"O H crikey!" gasped Billy Bunter. Bunter's eyes looked like popping through his spectacles.

The Owl of the Remove, in break, was adorning the gateway with his fat person. He was blinking out into the road through his big spectacles, when that sudden, exciting scene transpired at the corner of Friardale Lane. At the sight of the Head's silk hat spinning off, under the swipe of Crocker's stick, Bunter fairly jumped.

That disreputable old boy had made himself obnoxious in every possible way since he had camped at the hiker's hut on Abbot's Spinney. He had rowed with Greyfriars fellows—he had punched Prout, the master of the Fifth; he had even pulled the majestic nose of Mr. Quelch, Bunter's Form-master. There seemed to be no limit to his impudence and audacity, and to his desire to be troublesome and offensive to the school that had, so long ago, cast him out in disgrace.

But this was amazing. To a Greyfriars fellow, it was almost unthinkable that any man could dream of raising his hand to the headmaster. And Crocker had knocked off his hat as coolly as Bob Cherry might have knocked off the hat of Coker of the Fifth! And he looked like following up that awful action with actions still more awful, when the Famous Five suddenly jumped out from behind the fence and grabbed him.

"Oh crikey! I say, you fellows! Look!" yelled Bunter. "He's knocked the Big Beak's hat off! Oh crikey! That man Crocker—oh scissors!"

An athletic young man who was standing speaking to Gosling at his lodge glanced round at Bunter. It was Mr. Lascelles, the games master of Greyfriars—more often called "Larry" among the juniors.

Bunter's yell reached a dozen fellows in the quad, who came speeding up. But Mr. Lascelles was first. In hardly more than a second, Larry Lascelles was looking out at the gateway.

One glance was enough for him.

The sight he beheld, at a little distance, was startling enough. Dr. Locke, with a dizzy expression on his face, stood bareheaded, the spring sunshine gleaming on his silver hair. Randolph Crocker was rolling on the ground in the grasp of five panting juniors.

Mr. Lascelles shot out of the gateway like an arrow from a bow. His feet seemed hardly to touch the ground as he went.

Larry was an athlete; he played Soccer with the Sixth, and was a great man among the footballers. He was the youngest and most popular member of the staff; admitted none the less because it was rumoured that he had been a boxer before he came to Greyfriars as games master. He had a turn of speed on the football field that left even old Wingate, the captain of Greyfriars, standing. But he had never run up a Soccer field so swiftly as he now cut across to the corner of Friardale Lane.

He was on the spot almost in a twinkling.

Dr. Locke, in quite a dazed state, leaned against the fence of the spinney. Before his eyes was a cloud of dust, in which arms and legs wildly thrashed, as the Famous Five grappled with Crocker.

Into that dusty cloud Larry Lascelles reached and grasped a collar. It was

Crocker's collar. His sinewy arm wrenched, and the old boy came out of the mix-up almost like a cork from a bottle.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" gasped Bob Cherry, as he staggered up. "It's Larry!"

"Stand back, you boys!" rapped the games master.

The Famous Five, dusty and breathless, stood back. They were quite willing to leave the Sportsman in the able hands of their games master.

Larry was the only man on the staff who could have dealt with that hefty rascal. But they had no doubt that Larry was able to deal with him.

It looked like it; for Crocker, wrenching savagely at his collar, was unable to get away from the games master's grip.

"Let go, you fool!" roared Crocker, red with rage, twisting and struggling savagely.

Larry Lascelles, unhooding, hooked him along to the open gate in the fence, and with a twist of his arm sent him spinning through.

Crocker collapsed on the muddy path within, and lay sprawling.

Mr. Lascelles turned to the Head.

"I am sorry, sir, that that rascal should have annoyed you!" he said. "Please leave him to me!"

"Bless my soul!" gasped the Head dizzily. "I—I—Bless my soul! Where is my hat? I—I think my hat was—was knocked off! Bless my soul!"

Bob Cherry cut in at the gate, past the sprawling and panting Crocker, and picked up the hat. He ran back with it to the Head.

"Here it is, sir!"

"Oh! Thank you!" gasped the Head. "Bless my soul! That ruffian—Dear me!" He dusted the hat, and replaced it on his venerable head. "I—I have a great mind to—to prosecute that—that ruffian, but—but—Bless my soul!"

"He will trouble you no further, sir!" said Mr. Lascelles quietly.

Dr. Locke glanced at the old boy in the spinney. Crocker had scrambled to his feet, and was eyeing the games master evilly. But he showed no desire to come to close quarters again. Larry Lascelles was a very different proposition from the elderly members of the staff.

"Thank you, Mr. Lascelles!" said the Head; and, still in a state of considerable confusion, the venerable gentleman proceeded majestically on his way towards Friardale.

He did not seem, in the confusion of the moment, even to have noticed the juniors—for which they were duly thankful. They had shown up, in defence of their headmaster, but that did not alter the fact that they were out of gates in break!

Neither did the games master heed them. He stood looking after Dr. Locke till the headmaster turned the bend of the lane. Then, with an extremely grim expression on his face, he stepped in at the gate of the spinney.

"Oh gum!" murmured Bob. "He isn't through with that sweep yet! He was waiting for the Head to clear!"

"And now—" said Johnny Bull, with a happy grin of anticipation.

Randolph Crocker eyed the games master with evil eyes. He was in a savage temper; but, ready as he generally was for a shindy, he seemed uncertain about carrying the matter further. He was going to learn now that that was not a matter of choice.

"Now, my man—" said Mr. Lascelles quietly.

"Get out!" snarled Crocker. "You're trespassing here! I've chucked out a Greyfriars master once for trespassing here, and I dare say you know it!"

"You had better take off your coat, Mr. Crocker!" said the games master.

"And why?"

"Because I am going to thrash you!" said Mr. Lascelles. "You have insulted Dr. Locke—a gentleman whom even a lawless and disreputable rascal like you might be expected to treat with respect. You could be prosecuted, but you take advantage of the fact that the headmaster of Greyfriars does not want the name of the school to be dragged in the mire. Take off your coat! I am going to thrash you within an inch of your life, Mr. Crocker!"

Mr. Lascelles' voice was quiet, but it was very distinct. Evidently he meant every word that he uttered. The Famous Five exchanged blissful looks. It was time, in their opinion, that Sportsman Crocker got what he had asked for so long! They had no doubt that Larry could give it to him.

Crocker had pitched Mr. Hacker, the master of the Shell, over his gate like a bag of bones. He had doubled up portly old Prout with one punch. He had grabbed Quelch's nose! But Larry Lascelles was the man to put paid to him—the chums of the Remove had no doubt about that!

"You'd better clear, you cheeky young cub!" snarled Crocker, for once unwilling for a shindy. "You may have heard that I was a boxer at Greyfriars—and I've been in the ring since then."

"So have I!" said Lascelles coolly. "Will you take off that coat, Mr. Crocker, and put up your hands? Or shall I knock you down first?"

Crocker's coat came off. He threw it on a bush, and his hat after it. Then, with a sudden rush, he came at the games master of Greyfriars, his teeth set under his shaggy moustache, his eyes gleaming from his hard face. The next moment they were fighting.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Some Scrap!

"WHAT—" ejaculated Mr. Quelch.

"What—" exclaimed Mr. Prout.

"What—" snapped Mr. Hacker.

The three masters all spoke at once. They were in the quad in break. They were discussing a matter which was an endless topic at Greyfriars School—the prowler. That mysterious prowler, still undiscovered, was getting on the nerves of the staff.

Hacker was strongly of opinion that the assistance of the police should be called in. Prout scouted that idea, but declared that something ought to be done—without specifying what the something was. Quelch agreed with Prout. But all three masters forgot about the prowler all of a sudden and stared towards the gates.

In break, Sixth Form prefects were allowed to walk out, if the spirit moved them to do so. Outside their select ranks, no Greyfriars man was permitted out in break. So it was quite an astonishing sight to see a whole mob of fellows, seniors and juniors, pelting down to the gates and streaming out, just as if no laws or rules existed on the subject.

"Hobson!" shouted Mr. Hacker, as Hobson of the Shell tore by.

If Hobby heard, he did not heed. He shot on.

"Vernon-Smith! Todd! Field! Redwing!" hooted Mr. Quelch, as those members of his Form flew by.

"Coker!" boomed Mr. Prout. "Potter! Greene!"

Coker and Potter and Greene of the Fifth raced on.

"Upon my word!" exclaimed Mr. Prout.

"Wingate!" called out Mr. Quelch, as the captain of Greyfriars was seen cutting down to the gates like a fag. "What—"

Wingate careered on. As a prefect, he had a right to go out if he liked, which lesser mortals hadn't! He seemed in too great a hurry to have time to answer the Remove master.

"Something is happening out of gates!" said Mr. Prout.

"Evidently!" said Mr. Hacker.

"It is extraordinary!" said Mr. Quelch. "Perhaps we had better see what it is! Possibly that ruffian Crocker creating a disturbance!"

And the three beaks progressed gateward.

They heard a roar from Coker of the Fifth outside.

"Come on, you men! They're scrapping!"

"Good old Larry!" yelled Hobson of the Shell.

"Bless my soul!" gasped Mr. Prout. "Is it possible that Mr. Lascelles—"

The three masters followed at the tail of an excited swarm. They passed Gosling in the gateway. The old porter was staring across at the spinney, with a grin wrinkling his gnarled visage.

"He's getting it," said Gosling, "and wot I says is this 'ere—it's 'igh time he was 'andled!"

The spinney at the corner of the lane was only a short distance from the gates. The whole length of the fence was crammed with Greyfriars fellows. Harry Wharton & Co., being the first on the spot, had front places. Round them surged Removites, Fourth Formers, Shell fellows, big men of the Fifth and Sixth. Fifty fellows were speaking at once; excitement reigned supreme.

"Go it, Larry!"

"Good old Larry!"

"Hurrah!"

"I say, you fellows, did you see that cosh? Right in his eye! Oh crumbs! I say, did you see it?"

"Did we?" chortled Bob Cherry.

"Did we not?"

"He's got him beat! Oh, good old Larry!"

It was not easy for the masters to make a way through the surging throng. But they pushed on.

"Don't shove, you ass!" rapped Bob Cherry, as he felt a hand on his shoulder.

"Cherry!"

"Oh!" Bob jumped at his Form-master's voice and looked round. "Sorry, sir; I didn't know—"

"Do you know what this means?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "That is—is—is Mr. Lascelles engaged in combat with—that ruffian?"

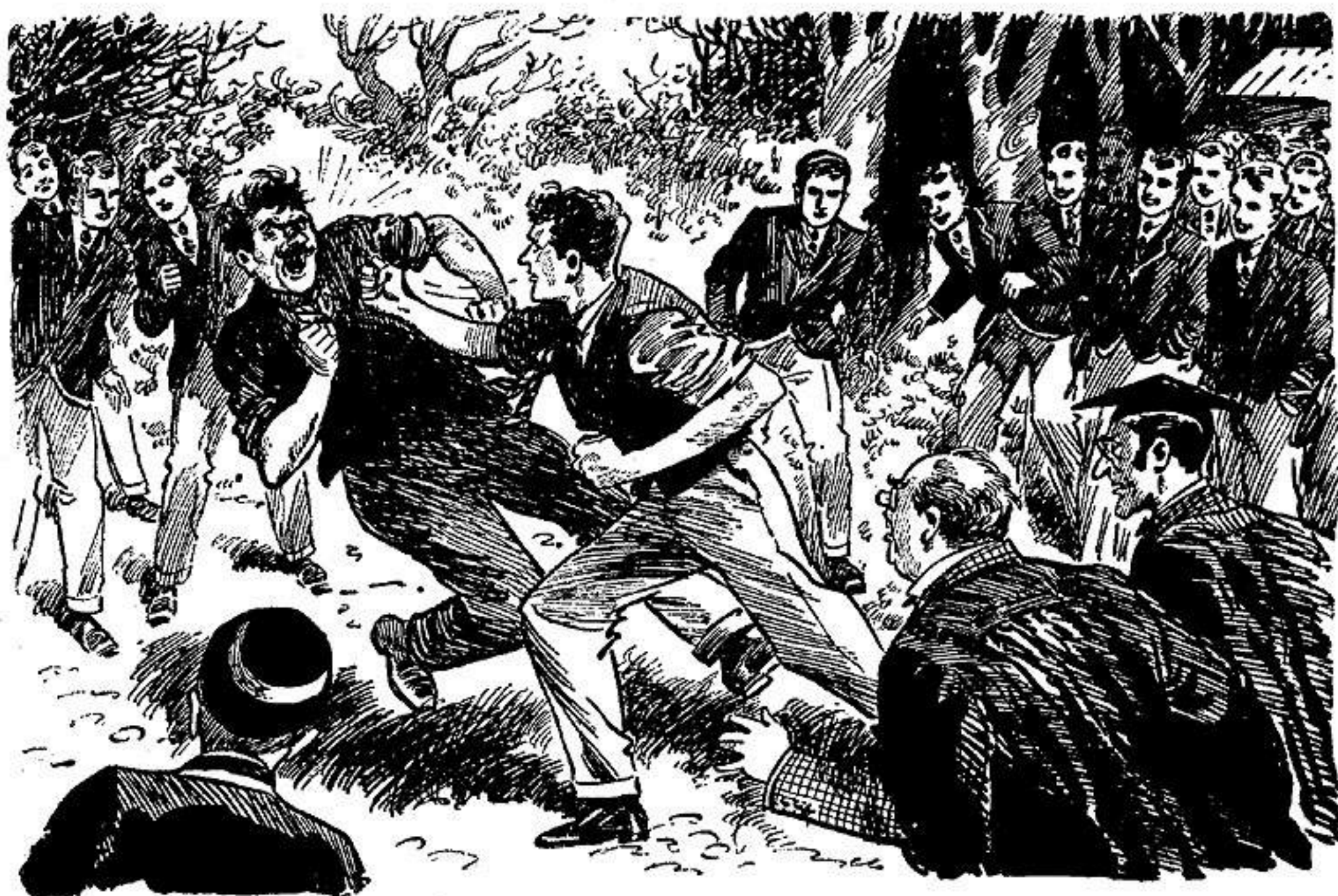
"He knocked the Head's hat off, sir!" said Bob. "Larry's giving him a lesson! I mean, Mr. Lascelles is, sir!"

"He—he—he knocked the Head's hat off!" gasped Mr. Prout. "Is it possible? Is it imaginable? Bless my soul!"

"He won't do it again in a hurry, after Larry's through with him!" chuckled Vernon-Smith. "Can Larry box, you men?"

"Can he?" chortled Bob. "Oh, my hat! Look!"

"Man down!" roared Gwynne of the Sixth.



Crocker rushed at the Greyfriars games master like a tiger, and was met with left and right. "Cosh!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Good old Larry!" An upper-cut, that came like the crash of a mallet, fairly lifted Crocker off his feet. "Greyfriars wins!" yelled Harry Wharton & Co.

The scrap in the spinney was going strong. Crocker was a good man with his hands; he knew how to box, and he was active, quick, and wiry. And he stood up with savage desperation to the young master who had started to thrash him. But it was plain to all eyes that Mr. Lascelles was getting the upper hand.

He was not getting off unscathed. His nose streamed red—his lip was cut—one of his eyes winked. Crocker was getting in some good ones. But Larry's damages, compared with Crocker's, were as moonlight unto sunlight, as water unto wine! Crocker was getting to be quite a picture.

The games master of Greyfriars was clean and fit all through. The Sportsman was far from being in the same condition. Late hours, cigars and cigarettes, whiskies-and-sodas, did not make for fitness. Any other master on the Greyfriars staff Crocker could have handled like an infant. But he was crumpling up under Larry's steady and unsparing attack. For every jolt Crocker put in, he received back three or four or five, and every one was a jolt such as might have come from the hind leg of a mule! Larry had said that he was going to thrash him for his insult to the headmaster—and Larry was doing it, with drastic thoroughness.

Mr. Quelch smiled. He rubbed his nose, which had once felt the nip of Crocker's impudent fingers, and smiled! Prout almost grinned! Prout had not forgotten the punch that had doubled him up. Even Mr. Hacker, who seldom smiled, and generally looked quite acid, beamed! Hacker had not forgotten being dropped over Crocker's gate like a bag of bones!

"Man down!"

"Get up, Crocker!"

"You're not licked yet!"

"Go it, Larry!"

Mr. Lascelles did not heed, or glance at the swarming crowd along the fence. His attention was concentrated on Randolph Crocker, and on the performance of the task he had set himself. Crocker was going to learn to treat the headmaster of Greyfriars with respect; and Larry was going to teach him that much-needed lesson. And he was doing it, with terrific vim.

The Sportsman sprawled at his feet, panting. But he scrambled up and came on again. His eyes were blinking, his nose a crimson lump, his face darkening with bruises; but he was game—or, at least, he was so savagely enraged that it spurred him on. He came at the games master of Greyfriars like a tiger, and was met with left and right.

"Cosh!" gasped Bob.

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

"Some scrap!" grinned Johnny Bull.

"In my younger days," Prout was booming, "in my younger days, I would have dealt with that scoundrel in precisely the same way."

"Good old Larry!"

"Bravo!"

Crocker had closed in on the games master, clutching. An upper-cut that came like the crash of a mallet fairly lifted him off his feet and he crashed down on his back.

Larry Lascelles stood panting a little. Tough as he was, the tussle had told on him. But it was over now. That last terrific jolt had done it.

Crocker sprawled on his back, groaning! He was knocked out—and never had a man been so thoroughly and effectively knocked out! He groaned, and panted, and blinked up at the games master with half-closed, evil eyes.

"Greyfriars wins!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Hurrah!"

Larry stood looking down at the sprawling rascal for a few moments. Then he stepped towards him.

"I'm done!" panted Crocker.

"Hang you! I'm done!"

"Quite!" said Mr. Lascelles. "I have only one word to say to you, Mr. Crocker. You have had a lesson; it will be repeated, if you ever venture to commit one action or utter one syllable of disrespect to the headmaster of Greyfriars. It will be for your benefit to bear that in mind."

A groaning oath was Crocker's answer.

Mr. Lascelles, unheeding him further, put on his hat and stepped back to the gate.

Then the masters seemed to wake up to the fact that it was break, that nearly everybody at Greyfriars was out of gates, and that the bell for third school was ringing unheeded.

"Boys! Go back at once!" commanded Mr. Quelch. "You should not have come out, but—Go back at once!"

"Hurrah!"

And the Greyfriars crowd cleared off to the school.

Randolph Crocker crawled to his feet, and standing unsteadily, scowled after them. Then he tottered into the hut and closed the door after him with a savage slam.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Mysterious!

"DRAKE!"
"Yes, sir!"
James Duck, the duffer of the Remove, stood in his headmaster's study.

Dr. Locke sat at his writing-table, drumming thereon with his slim white fingers, with a somewhat uncertain expression on his face. Mr. Quelch stood by the table, upright as a ramrod, grim as a gorgon, and looking anything but uncertain.

On the matter now under discussion in the headmaster's study, it was plain that Mr. Quelch had made up his mind, though it seemed that the Head had not quite made up his.

James Duck's face did not wear the sheepish expression to which the Remove fellows were accustomed. And he was looking at the Head without the aid of his steel-rimmed spectacles, which he held in his hand. In the presence of the headmaster and the Remove master, who knew his identity, Jack Drake was himself again, so to speak. Apart from his headmaster and Form-master, only one fellow in the school knew that James Duck was Ferrers Locke's assistant, Jack Drake—and Harry Wharton, who knew, was keeping the secret.

But Wharton, who knew that the duffer of the Remove was the famous detective's assistant, and at Greyfriars to track down the mysterious prowler, sometimes wondered when, if ever, the schoolboy detective was going to get on with it.

Mr. Quelch had ceased to wonder! His mind was made up that the schoolboy detective had taken on a task beyond his powers! With every passing day that brought no discovery Quelch was growing less and less patient; and he was now firmly of opinion that an older head was required to deal with the problem.

"You have nothing to report, as yet, Drake?" asked the Head slowly.

"As yet, no, sir."

"You still adhere to your belief that the person called the prowler is some person outside the school, and does not belong to Greyfriars?"

"Yes, sir," answered Drake quietly.

"All the evidence is to the contrary!" broke in Mr. Quelch. "This appears to me to be little more than obstinacy, Drake."

"I am sorry you should think so, sir."

"It certainly does appear," said Dr. Locke, "that the prowler is some Greyfriars boy who has taken to bad ways. I should be glad, very glad indeed, to believe that he did not belong to the school. But—"

"He does not belong to the school, sir!"

There was a sound like a grunt from Mr. Quelch. The Head drummed on the table again.

"The fact is, Drake, that time presses!" he said. "This morning I heard something that shocked and startled me very much. It appears that the affair has now spread outside the school; that it is talked of in the neighbourhood—that the fact that thefts are occurring at Greyfriars is a matter of local gossip."

"That can hardly be helped, sir!" said Drake. "Every fellow in the school is talking about the prowler; and it was bound to leak out."

"No doubt! No doubt! But if the

rascal had been caught—" The Head paused. "Drake, you are aware that it was upon Mr. Quelch's advice that I asked my relative, Mr. Ferrers Locke, to let you come here to investigate this matter. Mr. Quelch is no longer of opinion that—that—" Dr. Locke hesitated.

"Not at all!" said Mr. Quelch grimly. Drake set his lips a little, but he did not speak. He was well aware that the Remove master had lost all faith in his powers as a detective, much as he had hoped, at first, from Ferrers Locke's assistant.

"I understand also," went on the Head, after a pause, "that though you have failed here, Drake—"

"I have not yet failed here, sir."

"Please let me finish, Drake," said Dr. Locke, with a touch of acerbity. "I understand that, though you have as yet failed here, you are useful to Mr. Ferrers Locke—indeed, he may really be in need of your services, in the case upon which he is now engaged—"

"That is quite correct, sir! Mr. Locke is engaged in tracing Rupert Crook, the convict who escaped from Highmoor Prison, and he has not yet traced him. He is kind enough to think that I am of some use to him!" added Drake, with an inflexion of sarcasm in his voice.

"Well—very well—in that case, Drake, as nothing has come of your presence here, the identity of the prowler being still quite unknown, perhaps it would be as well for you to return to Baker Street. You are, in fact, wasting your time here, my boy."

Jack Drake drew a deep breath.

"Older heads are required, Drake," said Mr. Quelch, not unkindly. "I admit that I expected too much of you. It was my error."

"Now that the matter has spread beyond the school, other steps must be taken," said the Head. He coloured a little with vexation as he spoke. Crocker's taunts lingered very unpleasantly in his mind. "Inspector Grimes, at Courtfield, would, I am sure, be glad to give me his assistance—"

"I do not consent to that, sir!"

"Eh?"

"What?"

Headmaster and Form-master ejaculated simultaneously.

They stared at the schoolboy detective; the Head in lofty surprise, the Remove master in angry astonishment.

"I have a right to say so, sir!" said Drake quietly. "This case was placed in my hands. I decline to return to Baker Street and report failure to my chief."

"Drake!" rapped Mr. Quelch.

"Really—" murmured the Head.

"You have said, sir, that the prowler's identity is still unknown," continued Drake. "That is not the case. I have already spotted him, outside the school, and he is perfectly well known to me."

"Then who—" exclaimed the Head.

"I can say no more, sir, till my case is completed. It is now a matter of proof—that is all—and I see my way

clearly to obtaining that proof. It is useless to denounce a man who can wriggle out of an accusation."

"You state that you actually know the man!" exclaimed Dr. Locke.

"I do, sir."

"You have no doubt?"

"None!"

"This makes a difference," Mr. Quelch! said the Head, with a glance at the Remove master.

Mr. Quelch gave a shrug.

"Possibly, if Drake can make a plain statement," he said. "Unless he can give us the name of the man to whom he refers, I shall continue to believe that he relies rather upon imagination than actual facts."

"I can say no more now, sir!" said Drake. "The merest hint—a look, if not a word—would be enough to put the rascal on his guard. He might take the alarm and leave the neighbourhood. I can run no such risks."

Grunt again from Mr. Quelch.

"It is your wish then, to carry on here?" asked Dr. Locke slowly.

"And my right, sir!" said Drake.

The Head coughed.

"I shall not refuse you permission to do so," he said. "But—"

"But," said Mr. Quelch, as the Head paused, "a definite decision must be reached. It is some time now since the prowler has been active. At his next appearance, sir, steps must be taken."

"I agree to that," said Dr. Locke.

"During these weeks," said Mr. Quelch, "he has prowled and pilfered undetected. It is the talk of the school—it is now becoming the talk of the neighbourhood. Suspicion has fallen upon innocent persons—boys of my Form! First, Vernon-Smith, who came very near to being expelled; then Wharton, my head boy; and then Cherry. No one can tell upon whom suspicion may next fall—and whether upon a guilty head or an innocent one. This must end, sir!"

"I agree!" said the Head again.

"That there will be further pilferings by this unknown rascal I have no doubt," continued Mr. Quelch. "It is obvious that he is encouraged by success and impunity. I suggest, sir, that Drake should be allowed to carry on until the next incident. If he has by then made no discovery, we must take other measures."

"I agree!" said the Head, for the third time.

He turned to Drake.

"You will understand, my boy, that I have no alternative," he said. "There are probably clues to this unknown depredator which escape your eyes—do not think that I blame you, but doubtless such is the case."

Drake smiled faintly.

"I have all the clues I want," he said. "It is only a matter of waiting till I can pin the rascal down."

Another grunt from Mr. Quelch.

"And in the meantime suspicion may again fall upon an innocent person!" he rapped.

"I have no doubt of that, sir!" was Drake's answer. "And—little faith as you have now in me, sir—I could name the person on whom suspicion is next likely to fall."

"What?"

"Drake!"

"I shall not give the name," said Jack Drake coolly. "But I shall, I think, prove what I say. May I take a sheet of paper and an envelope from your desk, sir?"

"Eh? What? Certainly!"

The two masters gazed at Drake as he stepped to the headmaster's desk. They saw him take a sheet of paper and a pen. What he wrote on the paper they could not see, as his back was to them. He folded the paper, placed it inside an envelope, and sealed the envelope.

Then he placed the envelope on the Head's writing-table.

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"You will not open that, sir, until the next incident!" he said quietly. "I shall leave it in your hands, sir, to be opened then."

"But what—what—what does it contain, Drake?" exclaimed Dr. Locke, in astonishment.

"A name, sir—the name of the person upon whom suspicion will fall when the prowler next prowls. I ask you to keep that envelope in your pocket-book."

"Drake!" gasped Mr. Quelch.

"Bless my soul!" said the Head blankly.

"That is all, sir!" said the school-boy detective quietly. "If matters go my way, I shall have the handcuffs on the prowler when he next prowls; but if I do not get him, suspicion of his actions will fall upon the person named in that envelope—a person as innocent as Vernon-Smith, Wharton, or Cherry!"

Neither of the masters replied. They gazed at him.

Drake quietly left the study, and Dr. Locke and Mr. Quelch were left staring in silence at the sealed envelope on the table. Slowly the Head picked it up and placed it in his pocket-book.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Mustard For Bunter!

"I SAY, you fellows, tea's ready!"

"Good!"

Six juniors came into Study No. 1, in the Remove. One junior—the fattest one at Greyfriars—was already there.

They came in hungry, and were glad to hear that tea was ready. They had been at football practice, and that, in a keen March wind, had given a healthy edge to their appetites.

Billy Bunter hadn't been at football, as it was not a compulsory occasion, and his appetite did not need a March wind, or anything else, to give it a keen edge. Indeed, jammy smears on Bunter's fat visage hinted that he had already been taking a snack or two to go on with.

Bunter was a guest to tea that day in Study No. 1. He had invited himself and accepted the invitation!

So, while the other fellows were on the football ground, Bunter was in Study No. 1 getting tea ready. Few things in the nature of work appealed to Billy Bunter; indeed, he would take twice as long to dodge a job of work as he might have taken to get it done. But he was always ready—too ready—to handle foodstuffs. He would gladly help any fellow get tea. The drawback was that there was likely to be very little tuck left after Billy Bunter had finished helping to get it ready.

But on this occasion there was plenty—Study No. 1, for once in a way, was like unto a land flowing in milk and honey. A hamper from Aunt Amy, at Wharton Lodge, had arrived for Harry Wharton, simultaneously with a handsome tip for Johnny Bull from his uncle in Yorkshire, and a ten-shilling note for Bob Cherry from his pater. So there was going to be a real spread in Study No. 1—and lots and lots remained available, even after Bunter had got tea ready!

There was a beaming grin, as well as several smears of jam and crumbs of cake, on Billy Bunter's plump countenance. Bunter seemed to be in a very bucked mood.

"You fellows hungry?" he asked.

"Hungry as a hunter, or a Bunter!" answered Bob Cherry.

"You hungry, Duck?" grinned Bunter.

"I have a very good appetite, thank you, Bunter!" bleated Duck, in his mild voice.

"Begin on the sandwiches," said Bunter. He lifted a plate from the table. "Here you are."

Bunter could make sandwiches. There was a pile of them, and they looked very nice and very tempting.

Bob Cherry reached out for one, and, to his surprise, Bunter jerked the plate back suddenly.

"Wait a bit—let Duck help himself first!" said Bunter.

The Famous Five and James Duck stared at Bunter. There was no special reason, so far as any of them could see, why James Duck should help himself first to a sandwich.

Moreover, even if there was, it was rather unexpected for Billy Bunter to concern himself about James Duck.

Bunter was shirty with Duck. He was fearfully annoyed with Duck. He had set out to play practical jokes on the dud of the Form, and those practical jokes had recoiled on his own fat head like boomerangs. He had sat on his own bent pin in the Form-room—which was bad enough—and he had drenched Larry Lascelles with soda-water, and captured a whopping for the same—which was worse. Bunter had been heard to confide to about a dozen fellows that he would make that swab Duck sit up! So his hospitable concern for James Duck at the present moment was rather surprising.

"Take one, old chap!" chirruped Bunter. "The fact is, the top one is the best of the lot; I made it specially for you. He, he, he!"

"You are very kind, Bunter!" said James Duck, blinking at him owlishly through his steel-rimmed glasses.

"Oh, don't mench!" grinned Bunter. "I say, eat it, old chap! It's fearfully nice; take my word for that! He, he, he!"

Five faces melted into grins. The Famous Five did not need telling now that there was something unusual about the top sandwich. They doubted very much whether James Duck would enjoy that sandwich.

It looked very nice. Excellent ham was enclosed between two neat thin slices of bread-and-butter. If there was anything else as well as ham it was not to be observed.

James Duck took the top sandwich; and Billy Bunter's eyes twinkled merrily behind his spectacles. He stood watching Duck with almost breathless eagerness.

If James Duck had been the dud and duffer that the Remove supposed him to be he could hardly have failed to guess that something was on. But as there was an extremely keen brain behind James Duck's simple, sheepish face there was no doubt that he did.

He lifted the sandwich to his mouth—and Bunter fairly gasped with eager anticipation. Then his fat face fell as Duck laid it on his plate.

"I say, ain't you going to eat it, old chap?" exclaimed Bunter. "I say, it's awfully nice! Help yourselves, you fellows! These others are all right—I mean, they're all all right, of course—especially Duck's."

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

Bunter blinked at him.

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at!" he exclaimed. "What are you cackling at, Cherry?"

"Ain't he deep?" grinned Bob. "Ain't he a jolly old Machiavell? Ain't he a dark, deep plotter? Ain't he the wonderfulest japer ever?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wish you wouldn't cackle whenever a fellow opens his mouth!" said Bunter peevishly. "You'll make Duck fancy there's something wrong with that sandwich—and, of course, there isn't."

The Famous Five, chuckling, helped themselves to sandwiches. Duffer as Duck was supposed to be, it was not surprising that he was slow to begin on that sandwich. Billy Bunter's deep-laid plot was a little too palpable. The Famous Five strongly suspected that there was an over-dose of mustard hidden in that sandwich. If James Duck did not share that suspicion he must have been an even more egregious ass than the Remove supposed him to be.

Billy Bunter helped himself liberally. When the sandwiches had gone round, four remained—and Bunter annexed the four. Three he laid on his plate to be in readiness, and one he immediately parked in his capacious mouth. But, for once, Bunter was not wholly interested in the foodstuffs; he was deeply and keenly interested in Duck.

"I say, do begin, Duck!" he urged. "What are you waiting for?"

"Oh dear!" exclaimed James Duck suddenly. "Look at that plane!" He pointed to the study window. "Is it coming down in the quad?"

Every head turned towards the window at once. If a plane was coming down in the quad it was rather startling.

The moment the heads were turned James Duck whipped the sandwich off his plate and reached out to Bunter's.

Almost in the twinkling of an eye that sandwich was exchanged for the top one on Bunter's plate.

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

He ran to the window, while the other fellows stared at it. Nothing like an aeroplane was to be seen.

"I say, you fellows, I can't see any plane—"

"There isn't any plane!" said Harry Wharton. He stared round at James Duck, who now sat with a sandwich in his hand. "What the dickens do you mean, you ass? There isn't any plane over the quad."

"Fathead!" said Johnny Bull.

"Ass!" said Frank Nugent.

The juniors sat down again.

"Is that what you call a joke, Duck?" asked Bob Cherry, staring at the new junior.

James Duck smiled amiably.

"Yes, that's what I call a joke," he admitted.

"Well, you silly clump!" said Bob. "If that's what you call a joke you'd better not take to joking. Where's the joke, you footling ass?"

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

Bunter's eyes and spectacles were glued on James Duck, who was now disposing of his sandwich.

Unaware of the exchange that had taken place behind his podgy back, Bunter watched the duffer of the Remove with a fascinated gaze.

Duck ate that sandwich sedately. Wonder grew in Billy Bunter's fat face. Having packed a large spoonful of mustard into the sandwich specially prepared for James Duck, Bunter was prepared to see him explode rather like a bomb as soon as he took the first bite. Instead of which, Duck polished off that sandwich with evident relish.

"How very nice!" bleated Duck. "You make very nice sandwiches indeed, Bunter."

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Bunter. "I—I—I say, d-d-did you like it?"

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"Yes, very much indeed."

"W-w-wasn't it hot?" gasped Bunter.

"I didn't notice it."

"Oh crikey!"

Bunter wondered whether the new junior's neck was lined inside with zinc. Really it seemed like it. How a fellow could swallow a spoonful of mustard without showing a sign was a mystery to Bunter. He did not yet know that Duck hadn't.

Evidently, somehow, Bunter's jape on James Duck had missed fire. Bunter simply couldn't understand it yet. He was going to shortly!

He picked up the top sandwich from his plate.

James Duck watched him with interest through his steel rimmed glasses.

The sandwich was small; the mouth was large. It went in whole; Bunter crunched.

It was then that the bomb explosion happened.

"Oooooogh!" came a frantic splutter from the fat Owl. "Wooooogh! Help! Yarooooop!"

Bunter bounded from the table. His chair went flying backwards and crashed. Bunter grabbed at his mouth and gasped and spluttered and yelled and howled.

"Oh! Ah! Urrgh! I'm burnt! Yarooooop! Oh crikey! Ow!"

"What the thump—" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"Ow! Wow! Gurrgh! Get me some water! Gurrgh! My mum-mum-mouth's on fuf-fuf-fire! Yooooogh!"

Spluttering frantically, the fat Owl grabbed and clawed at his mouth. A volcanic sneeze shook him from head to foot.

The Famous Five gazed at him. What was the master with Bunter, they could not for the moment imagine. Then it dawned on them.

"Oh, my hat! Has he got the wrong sandwich?" gasped Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow! Wow! I'm burnt!" yelled Bunter. "Mum-mum-my mum-mum-mouth—Yaroooo! Atchoooo! Mum-mum-mum-mustard! Ooooo! Groooch! I've sus-sus-swallowed a ton of mum-mum-mustard! Gurrrrrgh!"

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

"Gurrrrrgh!"

Billy Bunter rushed for the door. He forgot even the spread. What he wanted was water to wash out that mustard. Spluttering, gurgling, sneezing, and guggling, the fat Owl tore out of the study, leaving the Famous Five yelling.

"Dear me!" said James Duck, blinking at the Famous Five through his steel-rimmed glasses. "Bunter seems to have put too much mustard in that sandwich. I think he must have put a great deal too much in it. He seems to have found it very, very hot!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Did you change the sandwiches while we were looking for that plane?" asked Harry Wharton, laughing.

"Oh!" exclaimed Bob. "Was that it?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the Famous Five yelled again.

A quarter of an hour later Billy Bunter reappeared at the door of Study No. 1. He was still gasping, his eyes were still winking and watery, and his fat face had a pale, worn look. But the feast was over, and the juniors gone.

Bunter, with deep feelings, blinked into an empty study at a bare table. Really the Owl of the Remove seemed to be getting no luck in his career as a practical joker!

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THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

On The Watch!

JAMES DUCK grinned.

Randolph Crocker scowled.

The Sportsman's scowling face was clearly visible to Jack Drake. But the schoolboy detective was invisible to the eyes of the scowling rascal who came out at the door of the hut on the spinney. He was not more than a dozen yards away, but he was parked in the branches of a beech-tree in the hedge of Friardale Lane, and through the interstices of the branches he had a bird's-eye view of the hut and the spinney.

It was two or three days since Crocker had been seen. Probably it had taken him some time to recover from the terrific thrashing he had received from Larry Lascelles. He was, indeed, far from recovered yet—so far as looks went. Both his eyes were darkened, his nose had a red, squashed look, and there were shady bruises on his hard face. Hence James Duck's grin as he looked down at him from the branches of the beech.

Crocker locked the door of the hut, put the key in his pocket, and tramped down the path to the gate on the lane. And Jack Drake's eyes gleamed over James Duck's glasses.

It was his chance at last, for which he had watched again and again in vain, but at last successfully. The Sportsman was leaving the hut, no doubt to walk down to the Cross Keys at Friardale, his favourite resort. It was only when he was absent that the schoolboy detective had a chance of searching the hut—and this was his chance.

That Randolph Crocker was the Greyfriars prowler, Drake knew. That he penetrated, unseen and undiscovered, into the school by way of a subterranean passage from the spinney he more than suspected. Under the ancient flagstones of the abbot's cell, on the site of which the hut was built, lay the secret—if the schoolboy detective could find it.

From the branches he watched the old boy kick open the gate and tramp out into the lane. There he stood, with his eyes fixed on the school gates at a little distance.

In the gateway two masters stood—Prout, the master of the Fifth, and Mr. Lascelles. It was upon the latter that the Sportsman's eyes were fixed, and Drake felt a chill as he read the bitter hatred and revenge in the hard, disfigured face.

That black and bitter look told how little the Sportsman was likely to stop if a chance came his way of taking vengeance for the thrashing the games master had given him.

As Crocker stood by the gate in the fence, watching, the two masters came out. It was a half-holiday at Greyfriars, and Prout evidently had captured Mr. Lascelles for a walk.

Prout was talking as they came by the corner of Friardale Lane, Larry Lascelles politely listening. Prout's conversation was one-way traffic; he never liked the other fellow to have much of the talking. Prout's frailty voice rolled up to the junior in the beech.

"I cannot agree with Hacker," Prout was saying. "I dislike extremely the idea of policemen in the school. And yet if no discovery is made, and if the prowler—"

Evidently Prout was on the old, old topic.

But the master of the Fifth broke off sharply as he saw the scowling face of

the man lounging at the gate of the spinney.

He fixed his eyes on Randolph Crocker with an expression of contempt and disdain that was really tremendous.

Drake, unseen, watched curiously. At any other time that scornful glare from Prout would probably have drawn something more emphatic than a glare back from the disreputable old boy. Crocker had punched Prout once, and certainly would not have hesitated to punch him again.

But his handling of a few days ago had given him the lesson he needed. Had Prout been alone, no doubt his evil temper would have broken out. But the presence of Larry Lascelles put a brake on it. The Sportsman did not want to repeat that painful experience.

"Pah!" snorted Prout.

That snort expressed his contempt, scorn, disdain, repugnance, and other feelings of the same kind for the man who had disgraced his school in earlier years, and had returned in later years to disgrace it again.

Crocker's discoloured eyes glittered at him. He made a movement, but checked it.

"You old fool!" he said, between his teeth. "You fat old fool!"

Prout purpled.

"Do not dare to address me, you rascal!" he boomed. "How dare you address me, you impudent rogue!"

Crocker clenched his hand. But for the games master's presence, Prout undoubtedly would have been booked for a jolt.

Mr. Lascelles stepped quietly between them.

"Stand back!" he rapped.

Randolph Crocker stepped back.

His hands were clenched almost convulsively. It was plain that he could hardly restrain himself from springing at the games master. Even the certainty of another record thrashing hardly held his evil temper and bitter hatred in check.

Mr. Lascelles fixed his eyes contemptuously on the scowling Sportsman.

"Listen to me, Mr. Crocker," he said quietly, but very distinctly. "I have dealt with you for your insult to the headmaster, and I desire to have nothing further to do with you. But I warn you to keep clear of anyone belonging to Greyfriars! You are a ruffian, a bully, and a brute, and you will not be allowed to molest anyone! If I hear of anything of the kind I shall call upon you immediately afterwards and deal with you again! It will be for your advantage to remember that!"

"I'll remember it!" Crocker's voice came husky with rage. "I'll remember it—and other things, too! And you'll have something to remember before long, Larry Lascelles!"

The games master shrugged his shoulders.

"I am not so keen on shindies as you appear to be, Mr. Crocker," he answered. "But if you desire to try your luck again, you have only to say the word—or to make yourself obnoxious to any of my colleagues?"

"There's more ways of killing a cat than choking it with cream!" said the Sportsman. "You wait a bit!"

"As long as you like!" said Mr. Lascelles, with a smile; and he walked on with Prout, who glanced back and gave another snort as he went.

Crocker stood watching them as they went down the lane. From the beech Jack Drake watched Crocker.

Anyone looking at the evil face could have read that the Sportsman's thoughts were of vengeance. But the schoolboy detective could read more than that,



Bunter's little round eyes almost bulged through his spectacles at the sight of a face emerging from the doorway of Study No. 1—a face streaked with ink, and with a mortar-board slanting over one ear. "Oh crikey!" gasped the fat Remove master. "It's Quelch!" "Bunter!" gurgled the Remove master. "You did this!"

for he had no doubt of the scheme that worked in the evil mind of the man he knew to be the Greyfriars prowler.

What he had done once he was planning to do again, and Ferrers Locke's assistant had no doubt of it; he had had no doubt of it since the day he had seen the rascal crumple up under Larry's lashing fists.

It was some weeks since suspicion had fallen for a time on Harry Wharton, the captain of the Remove. The broken blade of his penknife had been found in the drawer in Mr. Quelch's study, from which a bundle of currency notes had been pilfered by the prowler. It was, though Wharton was not aware of it, through the schoolboy detective that he had been cleared; and it was still a mystery, though almost forgotten, why the secret prowler had tried to put suspicion on him.

But Ferrers Locke's assistant knew. There had been a ragging at the hut on the spinney, and Wharton had given the Sportsman six with a cricket stump as a reward for tweaking the majestic nose of the Remove master.

Not for a moment had it occurred to Wharton that there was any connection between the batting of Crocker and the planting of the broken penknife in Quelch's desk. But that connection was clear to the schoolboy detective, and he had not forgotten. And, unless Jack Drake was mistaken, the same trick was likely to be played again when next the prowler prowled, but with a different victim.

Indeed, the words Crocker had just uttered, which seemed an idle threat to Larry Lascelles, were as good as proof to Jack Drake.

He dared not lift his hand to the games master again; but he was brooding over vengeance, and there was only one way—and that was the way.

Crocker stood lounging by the gate

in the fence, scowling after the two Greyfriars masters and smoking a cigarette. Apparently, he intended to go in the same direction, but was waiting for Larry Lascelles to get clear.

A fat junior, with spectacles gleaming in the spring sunshine, rolled along from the school. Billy Bunter, as he sighted Crocker, grinned—an expansive grin.

The very visible signs of damage in Crocker's face seemed to entertain the fat Owl.

Crocker glanced round at him.

Then he gave a quick glance down the lane. Lascelles and Prout were out of sight beyond the bend. Probably the evil-tempered rascal was glad to see a victim at hand upon whom to wreak his wrath, or perhaps Billy Bunter's fat grin irritated him. He made a jump at the fat junior, and Bunter, with a squeak of alarm, jumped back.

"I—I—I say—" gasped Bunter.

"Yaroo!"

Smack!

A terrific smack on one ear sent the fat Owl stumbling.

Smack!

Another on the other fat ear righted him again.

Bunter's frantic yell rang far and wide.

"Ow! Beast! Yaroo! Oooh! Oh crikey!"

A third smack just missed as the fat Owl flew. Billy Bunter headed for the school like a runaway locomotive. He yelled and roared as he flew.

Crocker, a grin replacing his scowl, turned, and slouched away down the lane towards the village.

He disappeared in one direction as the howling Owl disappeared in the other.

The coast was clear at last for Jack Drake. He slithered down the trunk

of the beech, cut up the path to the hut, and stopped at the door Crocker had carefully looked after him. Locked as it was, the door did not stop Ferrers Locke's assistant more than a moment or two, and then he was inside the hut, the door locked again after him.

A few moments more, and the schoolboy detective was in the back room, on his knees, an electric torch in his hand, scanning the old stone blocks with searching eyes. It was his chance at last—Crocker safe for the afternoon at the Cross Keys. And if there was a secret hidden under the old flagstones, Ferrers Locke's assistant was going to root it out.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Calling On Crocker!

"Ow!"

"Go it!"

"Wow!"

"Keep it up!"

Billy Bunter did not need telling to go it, or to keep it up. He went it, and kept it up—on his top note.

"Ow! Wow! I say, you fellows—Oooh! Ow, my ears! Wow! My napper's simply spinning! Wow, the beast! Oh crikey! Ow! I say, you fellows, the beast smacked my head—twice! Wow-ow-ow!"

"Smacked your head?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Ow! Yes! Wow!"

"Perhaps he was only touching wood for luck."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beast! Ow! I say, you fellows—wow!"

The Famous Five were in a group by the gates when Billy Bunter rolled

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The CLUE of the PURPLE FOOTPRINTS!



(Continued from page 13.)

in, his fat hands pressed to his fat ears, and his large mouth wide open, emitting sounds of woe and lamentation.

There was a football match with the Fourth that afternoon, which the heroes of the Remove were leaving to the smaller fry. They were debating what they were going to do with the half-holiday, when Bunter appeared in the offing, in that state of anguished woe.

"Smacked my head!" gasped Bunter. "Smacked it hard! Nearly knocked me over! The beast! Ow!"

"Anything in it to damage?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Beast!" moaned Bunter. "Ow! Wow! I never did anything, you know, but he jumped at me like a tiger, and—wow! Ow! Wow!"

"Loder of the Sixth?" asked Bob. "Loder's not a prefect now. If he's smacked a Remove man's head, we'll jolly well rag him!"

"Hear, hear!" said Frank Nugent.

"No! He's a worse beast than Loder!" groaned Bunter. "That beast Crocker—Ow! Wow! Oh crikey! Oooh!"

"Crocker!" exclaimed the Famous Five all together.

"I never did anything!" moaned Bunter. "He was at his gate—ow! I may have smiled—wow! He looked a picture, you know. Larry's made his face look like a Turkey carpet—ow! Wow!"

"So Crocker's getting his ears up again, is he?" asked Bob Cherry, with a warlike look. "If he hasn't had enough from Larry, there are fellows here ready to give him some more."

"And the morefulness will be terrific!" declared Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "Let us give him tit tatfully, and smack his esteemed and cheeky head."

"Let's," agreed Harry Wharton. "The cheeky cad isn't going to smack Remove fellows' heads! If he wants to smack a head, he can smack Larry's—not Bunter's. Come on!"

"Out of bounds!" said Johnny Bull.

"Oh, blow bounds!" said Bob Cherry. "Quelch is safe. He's in the library, digging into his jolly old manuscripts. Look here, are we going to let that cheeky cad smack a Remove chap's head whenever he jolly well likes?"

"No fear!" agreed Johnny. "Chance it!"

"Ow! Wow!" moaned Bunter. "Smacking a fellow's head, right and left, you know! I'd have knocked the cad down, only—only—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Famous Five, quite entertained at the idea of Bunter knocking down that hefty old boy.

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! Ow! Wow! My napper! Ow!"

"Come and help us handle him, Bunter!" grinned Bob.

"Oh, I—I'd come like a shot, old chap, but—but—but I haven't done my lines for Quelch—"

Billy Bunter rolled off to the House—though probably not in a hurry to do his lines for Quelch. Bunter had had enough of the Sportsman at close quarters, and did not want any more.

But the Famous Five were made of sterner stuff. They had been undecided what to do with that afternoon, and now they decided to expend part of it, at least, in impressing on Sportsman Crocker that he could not smack Remove fellows' heads with impunity.

They strolled away into Friardale Lane with an air of casual carelessness, lest any eye should be upon their movements. In the circumstances, they felt justified in over-stepping bounds; but they did not expect beaks or prefects to agree with them on that point.

"He's gone in," remarked Bob, as they passed the fence of the spinney.

Bunter had stated that Crocker was at his gate, but he was not to be seen there.

"We'll give him a call," said Harry Wharton. "Better go round to the back. Anybody may pass here on a half-holiday."

"Cut across the meadow," agreed Bob.

By a meadow footpath the Famous Five left the lane, and reached the rear of the spinney. At the back, towards the river, there was no fence, only a hawthorn hedge, through which they pushed a way.

They were now behind the hut, and they carefully kept it between them and the lane as they cut towards it.

Once behind the building they were safe from the eyes of passers-by in Friardale Lane.

"Here we are—here we are—here we are again!" sang Bob Cherry cheerfully. "Now for the Crocker bird!"

He gave a heavy thump at the back door of the hut.

Bang!

"He's there," said Bob, as he heard a movement within. "Hallo, hallo, hallo!" Called to see you, Mr. Crocker."

There was no reply from the hut.

"Deaf?" roared Bob. "We've called to smack your head, Randolph, same as you smacked Bunter's! Got that?"

The hut was silent. There was no answer, and no movement, and the door did not open.

The juniors might have fancied that Crocker had gone out, but for the movement they had heard when Bob first knocked. But they knew that someone was there, and it could hardly be anyone but Crocker, and his silence puzzled them.

Bang, bang, bang! went Bob's thumping on the door.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" he roared.

"Show up, you rotter!" shouted Johnny Bull.

Bang, bang!

"Cheeky cad!" said Bob, desisting from thumping at last. "I jolly well know he's there! He doesn't seem to want to see distinguished visitors. He's going to have his cheeky head smacked, all the same! Sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander."

It was rather perplexing to the Famous Five. True, on a previous occasion when they had handled Crocker, they had ducked him in the ditch. Hefty as he was, he was no match for the whole bunch of them. Nevertheless, he was generally so keen on a shindy that they quite expected him to show up.

Bob Cherry moved along to the back

window. That window, which had been broken, was boarded over inside. He rapped on the boards.

"You there, Crocker?" he bawled. "We've called to see you! We're going to give you a tip about smacking a Greyfriars chap's head! Gone deaf! Oh, great pip—" Bob broke off with a yell of astonishment.

There was a slit between two of the boards nailed over the window. Through that slit he could see into the back room. What he saw there made him jump clear of the ground in his amazement.

"What the dickens—" asked Harry.

"Crocker there?" asked Nugent.

"No!" Bob fairly stuttered. "It's Duck!"

"Duck!" howled Johnny Bull.

"That ass, Duck—there with Crocker!"

"Crocker's not there—only Duck!"

That fathead! That booby! That dud! What the thump is Duck doing there?"

"Duck!" repeated Harry Wharton blankly.

"That idiot, Duck!"

The Famous Five stood utterly amazed. They knew now why there had been no reply from Crocker. He was not there! Crocker had gone out—it was not the Sportsman they had heard—it was James Duck, the duffer of the Remove, who was in the hut on the spinney.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Come Out!

JACK DRAKE breathed hard.

The schoolboy detective had seldom been so exasperated as he was at that moment.

For days he had waited and watched for this opportunity; and now it had come—only to be interrupted. He had not been twenty minutes in the hut when the bang came on the back door.

After the first startled movement he had remained quite still and silent, hoping that the new arrivals would go away, and leave him to carry on. Then, as Bob Cherry's startled exclamation reached him, he knew that he was discovered.

At that moment—much as he liked the cheery Bob—he would have been rather pleased to punch his head!

Crocker, it was likely, would be gone for a couple of hours or more. In that time he had every hope of discovering the secret hidden under the old flagstones of the abbot's cell. If they left him to it—

A section of a ruddy face appeared at the slit between the boards at the nailed-up window.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob.

"Ducky!"

"You fathead!" breathed Drake.

"Shut up! Do you want to bring everybody in the county round this hut?"

"What are you doing there?"

"Minding my own business!" snapped Drake. "Go away, and do the same!"

"Crocker's not there?"

"Can't you see he isn't?"

"Well, come out of it!" said Bob.

"Oh, get out!"

"Look here, Duck, this won't do!" said Bob quietly. "We booted you off the spinney once, when you came here to see Crocker. You're not here to see him now; he's gone out. You're rooting over this place while he's gone. Crocker's a rat and a cad and a bully and a brute, but that's no reason why a fellow should pry into his place. You can leave that kind of thing to Bunter and—"

"Oh, you dummy!"

"Are you coming out?" snapped Bob. "No, you fathead! Go away!" "I'll go away fast enough—with you at the toe of my boot!" exclaimed Bob wrathfully. "If you won't come out I'll hook you out. That sort of thing ain't Greyfriars style, and you're going to chuck it, and I'm jolly well going to see that you do. This isn't good enough, you worm!"

"Hear, hear!" said Johnny Bull. Four members of the Co. were in agreement.

At one time it had seemed that Duck was taking up the manners and customs of the Bounder, and the Famous Five had booted him off the spinney to keep him out of bad company. Now it looked as if he was adopting the manners and customs of the Peeping Tom of Greyfriars—which, as Bob said, was not good enough. Bad and unscrupulous as they knew Crocker to be, no fellow had a right to root secretly in his place while he was absent—so far, at all events, as the Co. could see.

Harry Wharton did not speak. He knew Drake's secret, and the thought crossed his mind that perhaps it was in his capacity of detective that Drake was there. Crocker was a doubtful character. On the other hand, Drake was at the school to track down the prowler, and he could hardly be looking for clues to the prowler outside the gates. Wharton hardly knew what to think, and he said nothing as Bob stepped to the back door and banged again.

Bang! Bang! "Will you stop that row?" shouted Drake, through the window.

"Not till you open the door!" "You fool, you'll get a crowd here! That row can be heard from the lane."

"Better open the door, then!" retorted Bob coolly. "You're not sticking in there. You can't help being a fool, but you can help being a prying worm, and I'm going to help you help it!"

"Oh, you fathead!" groaned Drake. Bang! Bang! came on the door.

Bob Cherry put his beef into it. There was little doubt that if that loud banging went on it would draw attention from people passing along Friardale Lane.

"Better come out, Ducky!" grinned Johnny Bull, at the window. "What do you want to root over Crocker's place for, anyhow?"

"Idiot!" "Same to you, with knobs on! Come out of it!"

"The come-outfulness is the proper caper, my esteemed nosy Duck!" said Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh.

"Come out, Nosey Parker!" said Nugent.

Bang, bang, bang! on the door.

"Coming out, Peeping Tom?" roared Bob Cherry. "If you don't open this door I'll cut round to the front door and hook you out that way!"

"Oh, you fathead!" breathed Drake. "How the dickens did he get in, though?" asked Johnny Bull. "Crocker must have locked up when he went. He wouldn't leave the place open."

Drake set his lips as he heard that. "He's coming out, anyhow!" said Bob. "Now then, Paul Pry—"

"Will you clear off, and mind your own business?" hissed Drake.

Bang, bang! "Stop that row—"

Bang! "You fool, chuck it, and I'll come out!" hissed Drake from the window.

"Right-ho!" said Bob cheerily. "Back up, Ducky! Get ready to be booted back to the school!"

Drake, with feelings too deep for

words, crossed into the front room and peered from the window to ascertain that the coast was clear before he let himself out.

The coast was not, for the moment, clear. A bony figure was passing along the fence on the lane—that of Mr. Hacker, the master of the Shell. The Acid Drop glanced at the hut in the spinney as he passed, without, however, spotting the watching face behind the blind at the window.

He passed on, and was lost to sight.

Then Drake hurried to the front door and let himself out, swiftly locking the door after him. Two or three hats came in sight over the fence on the lane, and he cut swiftly round to the back of the hut.

"Oh, here you are!" said Bob Cherry. "You silly ass—"

"What were you rooting in Crocker's hut for?"

"Find out, fathead!"

"Well, I don't specially want to know," said Bob cheerily, "but I'm going to boot you—Here—stop!"

Jack Drake cut off at a run towards the trees at the back of the spinney, near the towpath. He was only anxious to get off the spot now that he had been forced to give up his search in the hut.

"After him!" roared Bob.

And he rushed in pursuit. His comrades followed him, and they came whooping through the trees on the track of the duffer of the Remove.

Drake scudded through the trees and reached the hawthorn hedge at the extreme edge of the spinney where it abutted on the towpath.

He crashed through the hedge and stumbled out on the towpath.

There was a startled exclamation as he did so. Two Greyfriars Sixth Formers, who were walking along the towpath, stopped to stare at him. The next moment Bob Cherry came crashing through, with his comrades at his heels.

"Stop!"

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Bob.

It was the voice of Wingate, the captain of Greyfriars.

The juniors stared round at Wingate and Gwynne, prefects of the Sixth.

"Half a dozen of them!" remarked Gwynne, with a grin.

"You young sweeps!" exclaimed Wingate. "You've been in the spinney—out of bounds!"

There was nothing for the juniors to say. Obviously, they had been in the spinney, out of bounds!

"Well?" replied Wingate.

"No harm done, Wingate," said Bob meekly. "We only went to smack Crocker's head, because he smacked Bunter's!"

Gwynne chuckled. Wingate frowned.

"You went there to kick up a row with that blackguard!" he exclaimed.

"Oh, no; not to kick up a row—just to smack his head!" explained Bob.

"But he was gone out, so—"

"So there was no smackfulness, esteemed and venerable Wingate!" murmured Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh.

"Go back to the school!" said Wingate. "You're gated for the rest of the day. And if I catch you at it again I'll report you to Queleh!"

Six juniors walked away to the school. Bike spins, or anything else out of gates, were washed out, for the Famous Five; the head prefect's word was law. So they went down to the football field, to watch the second half of the Fourth Form match, and to cheer the Remove footballers when they beat Temple, Dabney & Co. by three goals to one. After which there was tea with the Bounder & Co. in Study No. 4, and Crocker was dismissed from their minds.

He was not so easily dismissed from Jack Drake's. That opportunity, so long watched for, was gone; and the schoolboy detective could only wait for another—and wonder whether he would have a chance of discovering the secret of the hut on the spinney before the Greyfriars prowler prowled again!

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Cosh!

"WHARTON here?" "Yes, ass!"

"And Nugent?"

"Yes, fathead!"

"That's all right, then!" said Billy Bunter.

And he rolled into Study No. 4 in the Remove passage at Greyfriars, grinning.

There was rather a crowd in Study No. 4 already. Smithy and Redwing, to whom that study belonged, had guests to tea—the Famous Five of the Remove. Herbert Vernon-Smith was standing one of his spreads, and Harry Wharton & Co. were partaking thereof, when Bunter happened.

Smithy immediately reached for a cushion. He picked it up and took aim at the fat figure at the doorway.

"Cut!" he said briefly.

"Oh, really, Smithy—"

"When I want a porpoise to tea, I'll mention the fact!" said the Bounder. "Now hook it!"

Billy Bunter's spectacles turned on him with a disdainful blink.

"If you think I've butted in to tea, Smithy—"

"Haven't you?" asked the Bounder sarcastically.

"No!" roared Bunter. "I've had tea with Mauly! I mean, I'm not the fellow to butt in at a spread without being asked, I hope! Blow your measly spread! I just wanted to see whether Wharton and Nugent were here, that's all."

"Well, here we are!" said Harry Wharton, laughing. "Take a good look, and roll away, like a good barrel!"

Billy Bunter blinked at him. Then he blinked out into the passage. Then he blinked at the tea-party, and grinned again. It was an extensive and expansive grin. It seemed to extend almost from one of Bunter's fat ears to the other.

"Mind you don't go to your study!" he said.

"Eh? Why not?" asked Frank Nugent, staring.

"He, he, he!"

Smithy put down the cushion. Bunter, it seemed, had not after all asked himself to tea, as the Bounder had naturally suspected. Something else seemed to be occupying the fat mind of the Owl of the Remove. Whatever it was, it seemed to amuse Bunter!

"I say, you fellows, it's a jape on that fathead Duck!" Bunter proceeded to explain, between chuckles. "That silly ass will be coming up to his study soon—he, he, he! As it's your study, too, I thought I'd tip you fellows to keep clear—he, he, he! I say, listen for the crash!"

"The crash!" repeated Harry Wharton.

"He, he, he! Yes, rather! There will be a bit of a crash when he gets a Latin dic, a 'Holiday Annual,' and an inkpot, on his napper! What do you think?"

"Oh, my hat!"

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"You howling ass!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Have you been fixing up a booby-trap in Wharton's study?"

"He, he, he!"

"And suppose somebody else goes to the study, you blithering owl?" said Johnny Bull. "You got Larry the other day when you were japing Duck."

"That's why I've come to tell you, so that you won't go!" grinned Bunter. "I don't want you fellows to get it." Bunter chortled explosively. "Duck will walk right into it—you know what an ass he is! He will get it right on his napper—cosh! He, he, he!"

The tea-party in Smithy's study grinned.

Most of them had no doubt that James Duck, more often called the Goose in the Remove, would walk right into that trap, and never know it was there till it dropped on him. James Duck was regarded in his Form as the biggest ass ever, and practical jokers in the Remove had given him quite a lot of attention ever since he had come to Greyfriars. William George Bunter had joined the ranks of the practical jokers—though without much luck so far!

"It's rather rotten on a silly ass like Duck!" said Bob Cherry.

"The rottenfulness is rather terrific, my esteemed Bunter!" remarked Hurreo Jamset Ram Singh, with a shake of his dusky head.

"Yah!" retorted Bunter. "He's a beast! I put a pin on the form for him, in the Form-room, and he shifted it along when I wasn't looking, and I sat on it—and Quelch gave me lines for sitting on it—"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at!" snorted Bunter. "It was jolly sharp—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Smithy's tea-party.

Billy Bunter gave the tea-party a glare! Apparently he saw nothing at which to roar.

"Well, you just wait till he comes up to his study!" he said. "He will get it right on his nut—cosh! That will teach him not to play rotten tricks on a fellow with a bent pin! I say— Oh! Hark!"

A sudden sound from the Remove passage floated in at the open doorway. It was a startling sound. It came from the direction of Study No. 1.

Crash!

Bump!

Yell!

"Oh crikey! He's got it!" squeaked Billy Bunter, in great excitement. "I say, you fellows, he's got it! I say, come and look!"

Bunter, almost weeping with merri-ment, rolled out into the passage.

Smithy's tea-party followed him, grinning.

Somebody, evidently, had walked into that booby-trap, and had been knocked over by the sudden and unexpected descent of a Latin dictionary, a "Holiday Annual," and an inkpot, from the top of the study door.

Some of the juniors thought it was rather rough luck on such an utter ass as the new fellow, Duck. Still, they crowded out of Smithy's study to see the entertainment.

"He, he, he!" Bunter was almost breathless with mirth. "I say, you fellows—he, he, he!"

But the other fellows did not laugh—not when they had taken one glance down the passage towards the doorway of Study No. 1.

A figure sprawled in that doorway.

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All that could be seen of it, for the moment, was two long legs!

The short-sighted Owl of the Remove did not observe the length of those legs! The other fellows did! The Owl of the Remove had no doubt that James Duck was sprawling under the cosh from the Latin dic, the "Holiday Annual," and the inkpot! The other fellows had!

Those legs were much too long to belong to James Duck! They were too long to belong to any Remove fellow! Indeed, they were too long for a Sixth Form man! They were as long as any legs at Greyfriars, and though the juniors could not see the rest of the sprawler, they could guess at once to whom those legs belonged.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Bunter's done it this time!"

"The donefulness is terrific."

"Bunter, you ass—"

"Bunter, you blithering chump—"

"He, he, he!" chortled Bunter, still happily unaware of the awful catastrophe. "I say, you fellows—he's got it! Right on the napper! He, he, he!"

"He's got 'it, and no mistake!" gasped Harry Wharton. "You'll be getting something next, you fat clump!"

"He, he, he!"

Smithy's tea-party stood spellbound, staring at the long legs that wriggled and thrashed in the doorway of Study No. 1.

Billy Bunter rolled towards that study, fairly brimming over with glee.

"Got you, you swab!" he squeaked. "How did you like it? He, he, he! You made me sit up in the Form-room, you beast—now I've made you sit down! He, he, he! I say— Oh!"

The length of those legs seemed to dawn on Billy Bunter, and he broke off, blinking at them through his big spectacles.

The legs gathered themselves up at last. Then the rest of the sprawler came into view! Billy Bunter ceased to grin. He ceased to chuckle. His little round eyes almost bulged through his spectacles at the sight of a face emerging from the doorway of Study No. 1—a face streaked with ink, and with a mortar-board slanting over one ear at an intoxicated angle—but recognisable as the countenance of Henry Samuel Quelch, the master of the Remove!

"Bunter!" gurgled Mr. Quelch.

"Oh crikey!"

"Bunter! You—you did this—you dared—"

"Oh crumbs!"

"I came here," gasped Mr. Quelch, "to speak to my head boy! I will speak to you later, Wharton." Quelch dabbed at an inky countenance.

"Bunter! Follow me!"

"Oh lor'!"

"I shall administer severe—the most severe—punishment for this—this outrage!"

"I—I—I never did it!"

"What?"

"I—I—I—oh lor'—I—I never—oh crikey!"

"I heard your words, Bunter!" roared Mr. Quelch. "Not only did you play this dastardly trick, but you were actually rejoicing in your success! I heard you, Bunter!"

"Oh scissors!"

"Follow me at once!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"Ow!"

Mr. Quelch dabbed at the ink, set his mortar-board straight, and swept away to the stairs.

Billy Bunter blinked after him. Then he blinked round at the other fellows

with a dismal, dismayed dolorous blink.

"I—I—I say, you fellows, it—it was Quelch!" moaned Bunter. "I—I meant it for Duck, you know. I was japing Duck."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And—and—and Quelch got it! Oh lor'!"

Quelch had bidden the fat Owl follow him at once. But Bunter did not. His fat legs refused to carry him after Quelch—with that expression on Quelch's expressive face. Smithy's tea-party, grinning, went back into Study No. 4—leaving the fat Owl blinking dolorously in the passage.

From the bottom of his podgy heart, William George Bunter repented him of having joined the ranks of the practical jokers! He had had absolutely no luck! He had sat on his own bent pin in the Form-room. He had squirted soda-water over Larry Lascelles instead of Duck. He had scarified his own fat neck with the mustard sandwich. And now—this was worst of all! This put the lid on! Billy Bunter did not follow his Form-master. He stood in the Remove passage and groaned—the most dismal and dolorous practical joker ever!

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

The Disappearance of Bunter!

"BUNTER!"

No answer.

"Bunter!" boomed Prout for the second time.

Mr. Prout was calling the roll. But when he came to the name of the fat ornament of Quelch's Form, there was no reply to his boom. Billy Bunter was missing from the ranks of the Remove.

Prout marked Bunter absent and carried on. Mr. Quelch, from where he stood, cast a glance in the direction of the Remove—where there were a good many grinning faces.

Several times between tea and calling-over Bunter had been inquired after. All the Remove knew that Quelch was very anxious to interview that bright member of his Form!

Quelch, indeed, seemed to be looking forward to the interview! Bunter, evidently, wasn't! Bunter was coyly avoiding it!

He had been bidden to follow Quelch to his study. He hadn't. Inquiries did not elicit any news of his whereabouts. But everybody, of course, expected him to turn up for roll. A fellow could not cut roll. But Bunter did not turn up. He was conspicuous only by his absence.

"The howling ass!" remarked Bob Cherry, when the school was dismissed after roll. "The blithering owl! How long does he think he can go on dodging Quelch?"

"Does he think at all?" grinned the Bounder.

"Anybody know where he is?" asked Harry Wharton. "The sooner he turns up the better! Quelch is getting madder and madder!"

But nobody knew where Bunter was. All that the fellows knew was that he had disappeared from sight. He had not appeared at roll, he was not seen in the passages; he was not in the studies. In some deep lair, the fat and fatuous Owl was keeping doggo—evidently too terrified to turn up and face the wrath of his incensed Form-master.

If Bunter hoped that Quelch's wrath would dissipate in time, it showed that he had a very hopeful nature. A Latin dictionary, a "Holiday Annual," and an inkpot on his majestic head had roused Quelch's deepest ire—and he had



Billy Bunter wriggled round Hacker in a frantic attempt to struggle loose. Mr. Quelch's cane missed the fat junior by inches and landed on Mr. Hacker's calf. "Yooo-hooop!" The master of the Shell bounded, and his yells woke every echo of the House.

his stoutest cane all ready for Bunter. And this extraordinary proceeding on the part of the fat Owl was far—very far—from dissipating his wrath. Rather it intensified it.

Lord Mauleverer and two or three other good-natured fellows looked for Bunter after roll—it being only too clear that the sooner Bunter turned up, the better it would be for him. But they failed to find the fat Owl, and when the juniors went up to prep, Bunter was still missing.

It was really almost incredible that a fellow, having cut roll, would venture to cut prep also. But Billy Bunter did not appear in Study No. 7—and Peter Todd and Tom Dutton saw nothing of him there.

The Removites really began to wonder whether Bunter was going to turn up that evening at all. Still, it seemed that he was bound to turn up for supper. It was hardly possible for Bunter to miss a meal.

Prep was nearly at an end, when the door of Study No. 1 was cautiously opened; and Wharton, Nugent, and James Duck looked round at a fat face and a glimmering pair of spectacles.

"Bunter, you ass—"

"Bunter, you fathead—"

"Bunter, you chump—"

The three spoke all at once.

"I say, you fellows, don't yell!" exclaimed Bunter. "That beast Quelch may be about. I shouldn't wonder if he's looking for me. It would be like him!" added Bunter bitterly.

"You fat blitherer, go down to Quelch's study and get it over!" said Harry Wharton.

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"It will improve with keeping!" grinned Nugent.

"I say, you fellows, I suppose you

saw Quelch at roll. Did he look waxy?" asked Bunter anxiously.

"Sort of!" said Harry, laughing.

"You don't think he's getting over it?"

"Hardly!"

"It wasn't my fault, you know!" groaned Bunter. "I fixed up that booby-trap for that booby Duck! I thought the beast was coming up to the study. How was I to know that Quelch would come up? I never thought about Quelch. I'd forgotten all about him!"

"He hasn't forgotten about you! Go down, and—"

"Beast!"

"You can't keep on dodging him, fathead!"

Groan from Bunter. He was aware that he could not keep on dodging Quelch. At the same time, he did not want to see Quelch. Very much indeed the hapless Owl did not want to see Quelch!

"It's only a licking!" said the captain of the Remove encouragingly. "You've had lickings before, old fat man!"

"But he looked so jolly fierce!" groaned Bunter. "He seemed to be fearfully annoyed by getting that Latin dick on his napper. It was all Duck's fault. If he'd come up to the study, he'd have got it. Just like the cad to let Quelch get it, and get me into a fearful row. Dirty trick—just like he did in the Form-room the other day with that pin!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, cackle!" hooted Bunter. "You wouldn't cackle if Quelch was after you like a—a tiger that's tasted blood! I—I say, you fellows, do you think Quelch will have calmed down by supper-time? I can't miss supper—I'm fearfully hungry now!"

Billy Bunter blinked with anxious inquiry at the juniors in Study No. 1. Supper was a pressing question. He wanted to miss Quelch—but he did not want to miss supper.

With his head inside Study No. 1, Bunter naturally did not observe an angular figure that appeared on the landing at the end of the passage. So he remained happily unaware that his Form-master was coming up to the Remove studies to inquire after him once more.

"I say, you fellows, what do you think?" asked Bunter. "If that beast is still in a bad temper, I can't let him cop me at supper. Have you got anything in the study cupboard, Wharton?"

"Yes!"

"Can I have it, old chap?"

"If you like!"

"Oh, good! You're a splendid chap. Wharton! I always liked you. If I ever said you were a stuck-up ass, I never meant it. Only one of my little jokes, you know. I say, can I really have what you've got in the cupboard?"

"Certainly!"

"What is it, old fellow?"

"An empty biscuit-tin!"

"Wha-a-t?"

"You can have it!"

"Beast! Rotter! Swab! Pulling a fellow's leg when he's practically dying of hunger! Yah! Rotter! Stuck-up cad! Worm!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You can cackle!" hooted Bunter. "Beasts! I shall have to turn up for supper, and chance it with that awful old brute Quelch!"

"Bunter!"

"Oh crikey!"

Billy Bunter spun round in the doorway. His spectacles almost fell off in his horror and dismay at the sight of THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,624.

the Remove master rustling down the passage from the landing.

Quelch had brought a cane up under his arm. It was in his hand now. The expression on his face was inexpressibly expressive! Probably he had not been pleased by hearing Bunter's description of him. Certainly, he did not look pleased!

"Bunter! You—"

"Yaroooh!"

One glance at Quelch's face was enough for Bunter! Whether he could keep on dodging Quelch or not, he was going to dodge him now. Bunter flew!

"Bunter!" roared Mr. Quelch. "Stop! I shall cane you with the greatest severity! Stop!"

That, really, was not the way to make Bunter stop! It was the way to make him accelerate! Bunter did the Remove passage at a speed that was really remarkable, considering the weight he had to carry.

"Bunter!" shrieked Mr. Quelch.

Bunter vanished up the box-room stair.

"Bunter!"

But answer there came none! Billy Bunter had vanished—and he stayed vanished! And he was still in a vanished state when the Remove went to their dormitory.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

In The Dark!

SNORE!

"Urrghh!"

"Oh dear!"

Had anyone passed along Head's corridor at midnight, which, of course, no one did, those strange sounds would have been heard in the darkness.

In that dim, dusky corridor, not far from the door of the headmaster's study, there was an alcove in the wall, extending three or four feet back, panelled in oak, black with age, like the rest of the old corridor.

And in that alcove was a long, wide settee. Masters sat there sometimes when they waited to see the Head; but no one ever sat there at the witching hour of midnight.

But as the last boom of twelve rolled from the clock tower into the mild spring night, a snore was heard in that deep, dark alcove. It was followed by a mumbling grunt. Then by a dismal ejaculation, as a fat figure that had been extended on the settee sat dismally up.

"Oh lor'!" mumbled Billy Bunter.

He blinked wearily through his big spectacles into deep darkness.

In the Remove dormitory the rest of the Remove were sleeping the sleep of the just. But Billy Bunter was far from the Remove dormitory.

He had found quite a safe refuge—for the time.

After the Head had left his study and gone to his own house, that corridor was dark and untenanted. The settee in the alcove was broad and comfortable. To a fat Owl who dared not show up, it was a welcome lair. Once the Head was off the scene, Bunter was safe from discovery there. So there he was—curled up, fast asleep, when midnight boomed.

And fast asleep he would probably have remained till the rising-bell rang in the dewy morn, but for the unhappily vacant state of the inner Bunter. Slumber generally came easy to Bunter. He could have slept any—

where—as soundly on that settee as in his bed in the dorm. But he was hungry when he went to sleep. He stirred and at last awoke—ravenous.

He had cut supper! Only too well he knew that Quelch would have copped him there. He had to miss supper to miss Quelch. But it was awful! It was fearful! It was heart-rending!

"Oh dear! Ow! Oh crumbs! Oooh!" mumbled the fat and unhappy Owl, as he sat up and blinked.

"Oooh!" echoed back from the silent spaces of the ancient corridor, and Bunter shivered and was silent.

What hour it was he did not know. But he knew that it was late—that it was very late! With still more certainty he knew that he was hungry—frightfully hungry!

But hungry as he was, other thoughts were in his fat mind as his mumble echoed in the dark silence. It was awfully dark and lonely there—and Bunter liked neither the dark nor the loneliness.

Both had a disturbing effect on his fat nerves. He had not thought of this at an earlier hour—foresight was not one of Bunter's gifts. All he had thought of was keeping out of Quelch's way till Quelch had had time to cool down. Bunter still hoped that Quelch would—given time—cool down!

Now, however, even Quelch and his cane seemed rather less terrifying than the solitude and the silence. Bunter wished that he had chanced it and gone to his dormitory.

The thought of the prowler came most unpleasantly into his mind.

He shivered at that thought.

It was in the dark hours of the night that the prowler prowled; and in every moan of the wind, every crack of the ancient wainscots, Bunter fancied that he could hear a stealthy footstep.

"Oh lor'!" breathed Bunter again.

But he breathed it under his breath. He dared not make a sound, now that he had thought of the prowler.

Who that prowler was Bunter knew no more than any other fellow. But he knew, like the other fellows, that the mystery man was a dangerous man to meet in the dark. Once he had been collared by Loder of the Sixth—and had given Loder a jolt that knocked him out and blacked his eyes! It did not matter very much about Loder—but such a happening to Bunter would have been awful!

Sleep was impossible now. Bunter was too scared, and too hungry, to sleep! He sat and suppressed groans.

He thought of descending kitchenwards and scrounging foodstuffs. He thought of ascending dormwards and at least getting to bed with other fellows round about him. But he did not stir. He dared not go groping in the dark—at the risk of butting into an unseen, lurking form, if the prowler should chance to be prowling that night.

The wretched Owl was still awake, still blinking wearily into the gloom, when the stroke of one boomed.

Then he knew what time it was! It was fearfully late—or, rather, it was fearfully early! For the first time in his fat career Billy Bunter was longing for the sound of the rising-bell.

Suddenly, a few minutes after the boom had died away, he heard a sound—not one of the vague sounds in the corridor, but close at hand.

He started, with his fat heart leaping almost into his mouth.

He had heard sound after sound as he sat there; but he knew, all the

time, that they were due to his terrified imagination. But this time, he knew, it was not imagination—it was a real sound, close at hand.

Dumb with terror, Bunter sat frozen.

Was it the prowler?

He knew that it must be! Who else would be in Head's corridor at one o'clock in the morning? Bunter thought of what had happened to Loder of the Sixth in the dark, and his fat heart almost died within him.

That alcove was quite near the door of the Head's study. Once already the prowler had pilfered in that study. Bunter had no doubt that that was his object now. He must have come up the corridor—though it sounded to Bunter's frightened ears as if the unseen figure was actually in the alcove close to him!

There was a faint, brushing sound—the sound of someone moving, utterly invisible in the deep darkness.

It was no mistake—no trick of a scared imagination—someone was moving within three or four feet of the frozen, fat Owl. At that moment Billy Bunter would have changed his situation, gladly, for a caning from Quelch, with a Head's flogging thrown in. Never had the Owl of the Remove been so utterly scared.

To his immense relief, the brushing sound faded away—in the direction of the Head's study. He heard a click. A door had been unlocked. Everybody knew that on previous occasions the prowler had used a key that fitted the Head's door.

Bunter heard the lock click as it opened.

What might happen in the headmaster's study, now that the prowling pilferer was there, did not worry Bunter. What worried him was what might happen to him if the prowler butted into him in the dark.

That worried Bunter a lot. He had grinned at Loder's black eyes. But he did not feel in the least disposed to grin at the idea of stopping a similar jolt himself.

Slowly, silently, the fat Owl lifted himself from the settee.

The unseen figure had been terribly near him once—but had passed him unseen in the dark. One narrow escape was enough for Bunter. The brute, when he came back, might grope about, or even flash on a pocket-torch! Bunter had a chance to get clear while he was in the Head's study.

He crept away in the opposite direction, which led him to the corner on Masters' Passage. Trembling in every fat limb, he reached that corner and stumbled round it.

Cautious as he was, probably he made some sound. Suddenly, from the dark corridor behind him, a bright beam of light shot out.

Bunter, fortunately, was already round the corner. The light, shooting down the corridor, fell across the passage, which was at right-angles to it. A moment earlier it would have fallen on Bunter!

He stood still, hardly breathing.

He knew that the pilfering rascal in the Head's study must have heard, or suspected, some sound, and was now standing in the Head's doorway, flashing a light along the corridor, to ascertain whether anyone was there.

Only for a brief instant the light gleamed, then it was shut off, leaving the darkness darker than before.

In silent terror, Bunter listened. But there was no sound. The prowler seemed satisfied, and had turned back into the Head's study.

Bunter stirred and kept groping along

the passage wall. There was only one thought in the fat Owl's mind—to hunt cover before the prowler came out of the Head's study. He groped to the door of Quelch's study and turned the handle. The door was locked. Quelch carefully locked that door at night since the prowler's last visit.

Bunter groped on. Hacker's door was locked—so was Prout's—so was Monsieur Charpentier's. Then, to his great relief, a study door opened as he turned the handle, and he rolled thankfully in and shut the door after him.

Whose study it was he did not for the moment know, and did not care so long as he was safe inside.

He was safe now—safe from the mysterious prowler of the night. He stood blinking round him in a gleam of starlight from the window.

A pair of boxing-gloves lying on the table caught his eye. He was in the games master's study—that study where, a few days ago, he had waited for James Duck with the soda-siphon and greeted Larry Lascelles with a drenching! But he did not care whose study it was, so long as he was safe inside it while the prowler prowled.

With a gasp of relief, he sat down in Larry's armchair and wiped the beads of perspiration from his fat brow.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Man With The Moustache!

"OOOOOOH!" breathed Billy Bunter suddenly.

He was listening—his fat ears on the strain.

So far as Bunter could make out, the prowler had reached Head's corridor by way of Masters' Passage. If that was the case, doubtless he would return the same way. Bunter was listening for a sound of stealthy footsteps outside the study in which he had taken refuge—dreading to hear them, but hoping to hear them pass.

Whether the prowler was going back to a Sixth Form study or to one of the dormitories he could not guess—but he was feverishly anxious for him to be gone. In his terror of the prowler, Bunter had almost forgotten that he was hungry.

Once he was sure—quite sure—that the coast was clear, he could scout for the box of biscuits that he knew Larry kept in the cupboard under his bookcase; he had seen it on the occasion when he had borrowed a soda-siphon. Then he could go to sleep in Larry's armchair. But he did not venture to stir till he was sure that the prowler was gone! And now, to his straining fat ears, came a sound from the passage.

He listened—his fat heart thumping.

It was a stealthy, creeping footstep that Bunter would never have noticed had not his fat ears been on the strain. But he noticed it now!

It was approaching the study door, and he listened, to hear it pass. It did not pass! It stopped! There was a soft sound of groping over the outside of the door.

Billy Bunter started to his feet, his eyes almost popping through his spectacles.

The prowler had finished in the Head's study, but he had not finished for the night. He was coming to another study—the games master's study—the study in which the hapless Owl had taken refuge!

Not for a moment had it crossed the fat Owl's mind that such a thing might happen.

Even had he thought of it, he would never have supposed that Larry

Lascelles' study was the one the prowler would select. There was nothing there to tempt a pilferer, unless he had a taste for mathematical books or for boxing gloves and fencing foils.

But he had stopped at the door.

For once in his fat life, the Owl of the Remove acted swiftly. Terror sharpened his fat faculties. The night prowler was at the door—it was a matter of moments before he would be in the study. For once Billy Bunter understudied the hare instead of the tortoise.

Larry's armchair was in the corner by the window. A streak of lightning had nothing on Bunter as he backed behind the high back of the armchair and crouched down.

It did not take him a split second. He was squatted, palpitating, behind the armchair, when there was a sound at the door-handle.

He did not hear the door open, but he knew that it had opened. The faintest of faint sounds told him that it had closed again.

From the darkness came a sound of breathing.

The prowler was in Larry's study—not ten feet from Bunter. Bunter tried to still his breathing and the thumping of his fat heart. Only two or three yards from him was the brutal fist that had knocked Gerald Loder senseless in the dark! Bunter made no sound.

There was a stealthy sound of footsteps. To Bunter's horror, they approached the armchair.

The brute could not know he was there! How could he suppose that any fellow was in a master's study after one in the morning? Even had it not been dark, the armchair hid Bunter. Yet he was coming directly towards that armchair!

But he passed it a few feet away. It was the window he was approaching. And, as he stood at the window, Bunter saw him!

There was a space between the back of the armchair and the wall adjoining the window. From that space, the Owl of the Remove stared—with eyes glazed with terror. For a long moment the prowler—never before seen by any eye at Greyfriars—was full in his view, in the gleaming starlight.

His profile was towards Bunter. Only one side of his face was visible to the fat Owl.

Bunter was too terrified to be conscious of astonishment. But had he not been overmastered by fear, he certainly would have been astonished at what he now saw.

The face of the midnight prowler was covered from the eyes down to the mouth by a muffler, bound round his head to serve as a mask. Two irregular gaps in it served as eyeholes.

It was impossible to recognise him. Secret and stealthy as he was, it was evident that he had taken precautions against chance sight and recognition. Had some wakeful master or prefect flashed a light on him, he could not have known who he was or what he was like.

But that was not all.

The muffler, which hid the face, left the tip of the nose and the mouth free for breathing. And the mouth was almost hidden by a thick, bushy, straggling moustache.

Bunter hardly noticed it and did not heed it at the moment—he was too scared for that! But he saw it!

The prowler was reaching at the curtains over the window. There was a swish of rings on a rod and the thick, dark curtains were drawn across, leaving the room in the blackest darkness. The prowler was invisible again.

Bunter understood now. The rascal needed a light—and he had covered the

window before he ventured to put on a light in the study.

It was not likely that a light in the room would be noticed at such an hour from without, but it was possible, and the prowler was taking no chances. Some wakeful eye might have glanced from another window—and certainly a light in a room downstairs at one in the morning would have given the alarm.

Safe now from observation, the prowler turned on the light in the study.

That he had not the remotest suspicion that anyone was in the room was plain. He did not even cast a glance towards the armchair. He stopped at the master's table.

Bunter heard a faint click. He knew that a locked drawer had been unlocked. There was a sound of fumbling.

If the prowler was after loot, he was not likely to score. Larry Lascelles was far from a wealthy man. And whatever spare cash he had was probably in his pockets in his room above.

Bunter listened.

There were indefinable sounds from Larry's study table. Then Bunter heard a drawer close and lock.

The light was shut off suddenly. The curtains swished back on the rod.

Almost soundlessly, the study door opened and closed. The prowler was gone—Bunter was alone in the study.

But he did not stir. The barest possibility of the prowler coming back was more than enough to chain him in his hiding-place.

But the fat Owl's fat wits were working now. Terror was giving place to amazement.

Who the prowler was, was a mystery at Greyfriars. It was generally conceded that he must be a senior—some hefty Sixth or Fifth Form man—from the strength he had displayed in handling a prefect and a master. That he was not a Greyfriars man at all, but came from outside the school, was a secret known only to Jack Drake—and doubted by the Head and Mr. Quelch, to whom alone he had told it. But Bunter knew now.

It was a man he had glimpsed in the gleaming starlight at Larry's window. So far as size and height went, he might have been some Sixth Form man. But that shaggy, ragged, straggling, bushy moustache settled that matter. It was no schoolboy, senior or junior; it was a man who prowled the school at night—and not a man who belonged to the building.

Every master at Greyfriars, with the exception of Monsieur Charpentier, was clean-shaven. Mossoo had a black moustache and a black, pointed beard. The man Bunter had seen in the starlight was not a member of the Greyfriars staff—neither, obviously, was he a manservant. In utter, bewildering amazement, Billy Bunter realised that he had, unexpectedly and unknowingly, put his fat finger on a secret, unsuspected in the school—so far as he knew, at least!

The man he had heard and seen was the Greyfriars prowler—there was no doubt about that! But he did not belong to Greyfriars School! Whoever he was, he came from outside the school!

And Bunter, as he realised that, felt a cold shiver run through his fat limbs.

He had dreaded a jolt like Loder's, from some Greyfriars man desperate at the risk of recognition. Now he knew that the man who had been so near him in the dark was some crook—some law-breaker who had penetrated into the school in the hours of darkness. That was a terrifying thought to the fat Owl.

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He did not stir from his hiding-place, till the hour of two chimed out from the clock tower.

Then, at last, the cramped fat Owl crept out of the corner. Even Bunter felt sure, by that time, that the prowler would not come back to that study, even if he was still in the House, which was not likely.

Bunter did not venture to turn on a light. In the starry glimmer from the window, he scrounged Larry's biscuits from the cupboard and devoured them to the last crumb. Then he settled down in the armchair once more.

Two or three pounds of biscuits had at least taken the keen edge off his appetite—and he was able to sleep at last. The thought crossed his mind of stealing up to his bed in the Remove dormitory. But the dark passages and staircases, with the remote possibility that the prowler was still prowling, did not appeal to Bunter. Larry's armchair was deep and comfortable, and Bunter was sleepy—and in about a minute after the last biscuit had gone on the downward path, the Owl of the Remove was sleeping—and snoring!

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Whop!

CLANG, clang. The rising-bell was ringing when the door of the Remove dormitory opened and the grimmest of grim faces looked in.

Mr. Quelch's gimlet eyes shot to Bunter's bed.

That bed was empty!

It had not, evidently, been slept in! And Quelch, breathing hard, put his cane under his arm. It was not wanted yet. He had felt assured that Bunter would be there. But Bunter was not there.

The Remove fellows looked at their Form-master—some of them suppressing grins! The wild and weird antics of the fat Owl amused the Remove much more than they amused Mr. Quelch!

"Wharton!" said Mr. Quelch, in a deep voice.

"Yes, sir!" said Harry.

"Has not Bunter been here?"

"I think not, sir; I haven't seen him here."

"Very well!"

Mr. Quelch closed the door and departed. There was a ripple of merriment up and down the dormitory.

"That fat chump is keeping it up!" remarked the Bounder. "By gum! I don't envy him when Quelch gets within reach with that cane."

"Where on earth can the howling ass be?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Camping out in one of the studies, I suppose!" chuckled the Bounder. "If Quelch walks round and listens for a snore, he will soon spot him."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Quelch was walking round—whether he was listening for a snore or not! Having drawn the Remove dormitory blank, he tried the Remove studies—drawing them blank also. Then he decided to search on the ground floor—and as he stepped on the stairs, he had a sudden view of a fat figure below—at the foot of the staircase.

His eyes glinted down at Bunter.

The fat junior had, apparently, passed the night somewhere on the ground floor. Mr. Quelch supposed that the rising-bell had caused him to turn out. As a matter of fact, Bunter had not even heard the bell. He had lost too much sleep overnight to wake at the sound of a bell. But he had been awakened, all the same—by an early housemaid with a duster—who was quite startled by the sight of a fat junior curled up asleep in Larry Lascelles' armchair.

That astonished maid had shaken Bunter into wakefulness—and he had cleared out of the study. Now, at the foot of the stairs, Bunter was debating whether to cut out of the House, the door being wide open, or to go up to the Remove studies in the hope of scrounging foodstuffs in study cupboards before the fellows came down. Thus it was that the gimlet eyes spotted him from the landing above.

Bunter was undecided, so far, whether he was going to turn up for breakfast. That depended largely on the state of Quelch's temper that morning. He hoped to get news, when the fellows came down, on that urgent subject.

If Quelch had calmed down a bit, he might risk turning up—he had to turn up sooner or later! If—as was only too possible—Quelch was in a state of exasperation, prepared to give him the whopping of his life, he jolly well wasn't going to turn up.

That doubtful problem was suddenly decided for him, as he spotted a figure in cap and gown coming down the staircase rather like a thunderstorm.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

He gave that descending figure one terrified blink! Even the prowler in the night had hardly been more terrifying. Quelch's face was rather like that of the Alpine young man in the poem—his brow was set, his eye beneath flashed like a falchion from its sheath! And in his hand, his cane was gripped almost convulsively.

What was going to happen when he reached Bunter was only too clear!

Bunter forgot breakfast! He forgot scrounging foodstuffs, as a precaution against missing breakfast! He gave Quelch one blink, and revolved on his axis, and bolted for the door on the quad.

"Stop!" bawled the Remove master. Dignity was thrown to the winds. Quelch bawled! "Stop! You young rascal! Stop!"

Bunter raced! Quelch raced! But Bunter had a start! It was then that Mr. Hacker appeared in the offing. Hacker stared at the chase. Quelch bawled—or rather, bellowed:

"Mr. Hacker! Stop that boy! Stop him!"

"Oh! Certainly!" said Mr. Hacker. He cut in to intercept Bunter! He grabbed him by the collar! Bunter was going too fast to stop. His momentum carried him onward—but as the master of the Shell had a firm grip on his collar, he flew round Hacker, instead of flying past him.

"Yurroop!" spluttered Bunter. "Oh crikey! Leggo! Ow!"

"Hold him, Hacker!" panted Mr. Quelch.

Hacker held him! Quelch did the remaining stairs in two bounds, and reached the spot! Up went the cane!

Quelch put his beef into the swipe! Anger, exasperation, indignation, so long bottled up, found vent in that terrific swipe! It was such a whop as Quelch, in calmer moments, would never have administered. That cane came like a flail!

It was fortunate for Bunter, though somewhat unfortunate for the master of the Shell, that at the same moment, the fat Owl wriggled round Hacker in a frantic attempt to struggle loose.

The cane missed Bunter by inches.

It did not miss Hacker!

It should have landed on Bunter's trousers. It did land on Mr. Hacker's calf!

Hacker bounded!

The yell he gave as he bounded under that terrific swipe on his bony leg woke every echo of the House. He let go Bunter's collar, to clasp his calf with both hands—standing on the other leg, stork-like.

"Yooo-hooop!" roared Mr. Hacker.

He fairly danced on his single available leg.

"Good-good-goodness gracious!" gasped Mr. Quelch, utterly aghast at what he had done. "Hacker—my dear Hacker—"

Billy Bunter bolted into the quad. Quelch hardly noticed him go, in his horror of what he had done to Hacker.

"Oh!" roared the Acid Drop. "Ow! Oogh! Are you mad, Quelch? Wooooh! Are you entirely out of you—woogh—senses? Ow! Oh! Wow!"

"My dear fellow, I am sorry—it was intended for Bunter—that wretched boy moved—I—I—" Quelch almost babbled.

"Fool!" shrieked the master of the Shell. He danced and wriggled in anguish. "Fool!"

"Hacker!"

"Fool!"

Mr. Quelch compressed his lips. He could feel for Hacker—he could make allowances. But this was rather too much.

"Hacker! Please moderate your language!" he rapped. "An accident—an unfortunate accident—"

"Idiot!"

"Really, Hacker—"

"Dolt!"

Hacker, evidently, was not going to moderate his language. His state was too painful for that.

Mr. Quelch left him to it and hurried to the door—with an expression on his face which would have warned Billy to dodge, if he had not dodged already.

But Bunter had done some quick dodging.

Quelch glared out into the sunny quad! But he saw no sign of Bunter! Bunter, just then, would as soon have faced a tiger in the jungle as his Form-master. Bunter, once more, had vanished; and once more he stayed vanished!

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Clue At Last!

DR. LOCKE—"Mr. Quelch—"

"Again—"

"Again!" said the Head.

After breakfast that morning—at which Billy Bunter had not appeared—Mr. Quelch had been thinking chiefly of that member of his Form—till he received a message summoning him to his chief's study. Now he forgot all about Bunter and his antics.

"The prowler!" said Mr. Quelch, with a deep breath.

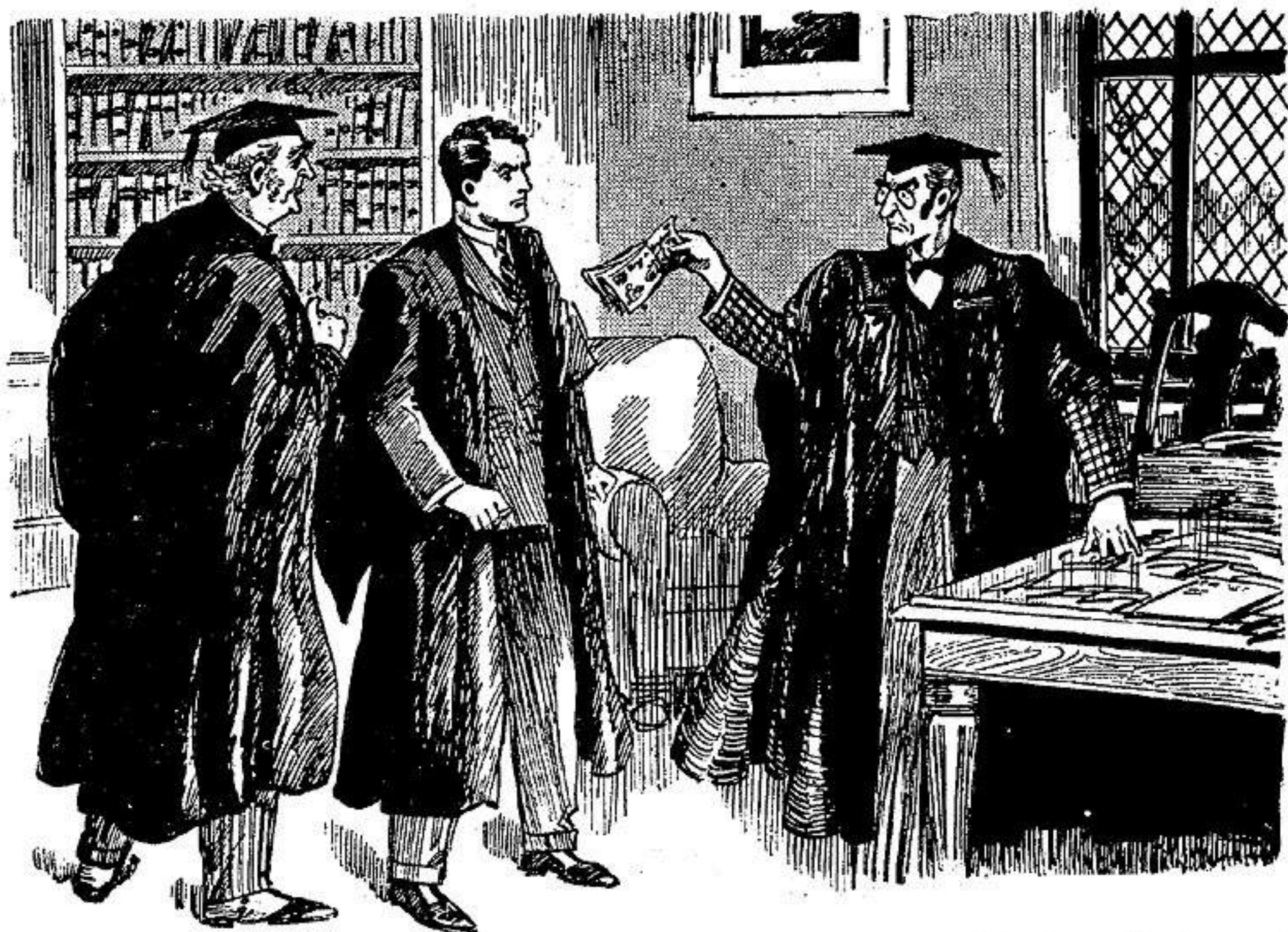
"The prowler!" said the Head.

"Then—last night—"

"It appears so," said Dr. Locke. "I was at breakfast when my secretary came to tell me that something had happened here. Mr. Wooscy says that the door was locked, as I left it last night—he opened it with his key. I came at once, and saw—what you see now."

Mr. Quelch's eyes were fixed on the headmaster's desk by the window. The desk had been forced open. Interior drawers had been wrenched out. Papers of all kinds were scattered over the desk and on the floor. Ink, spilt from an upset bottle, flowed over some of them, dripping from the desk.

The Remove master's face set hard.



Larry Lascelles stared like a man in a dream, as Mr. Quelch counted the notes. "These are the banknotes stolen from your study last night, Dr. Locke!" said the Remove master. "The Greyfriars prowler is now discovered, sir, and he stands before you!"

Two or three weeks ago he would have called in Jack Drake at once. Now he did not think of doing so. His faith in Ferrers Locke's assistant was quite gone.

He stepped to the dismantled desk and scanned it scrutinisingly. There was a glint in his gimlet eyes.

"Anything of value, sir?" he asked.

"Unfortunately, yes!" said Dr. Locke. "That desk has a lock which would defy anyone; but a professional cracksmen, and I have regarded it as safe, even if the person called the prowler should revisit my study. I did not foresee such violent measures as he has used—noise must have been made—the lock has been forced with a chisel, or some such instrument—"

"What has been taken, sir?"

"A number of banknotes, Mr. Quelch—six five-pound notes that were in the money-drawer with some loose change." Dr. Locke paused. "Drake!" he added.

"I fear that he is useless, sir! Unless we can ourselves succeed in tracing the author of this outrage we have no resource but to call on the aid of the police!" said Mr. Quelch.

"I fear that you are right, Mr. Quelch! This cannot continue! But—" The Head paused again. Obviously the idea of calling police into the school was very repugnant to him.

"But," said Mr. Quelch quietly, "let us use our own efforts first, sir; I hope—I believe—that on this occasion we may succeed in discovering the young rascal who has prowled the school so long with impunity."

He pointed to the streaming ink.

"That, sir, is a bottle of purple marking-ink, used for a rubber stamp,"

he said. "Mr. Woosey must, I think, have left it uncorked when last he used the stamp at this desk—and very fortunately so, as the pilferer knocked it over in his rough handling of the desk."

"I do not quite see, Mr. Quelch—"

"A stain from such ink, sir, is very difficult to remove. Look at this pool of it on the floor, sir! You can see that it has been trodden in."

Dr. Locke stooped and gazed at the smudgy pool of spilt purple ink on the oak floor.

"No doubt!" he said. "No doubt! Do you think, Mr. Quelch, that that may enable us to trace the culprit?"

"I think it is extremely probable, sir!" Quelch's eyes were gleaming. "This matter, sir, does not require either a detective or a policeman—it is a very simple matter. It is practically impossible for that prowler to have avoided leaving traces behind him wherever he went after stepping in that ink."

"Oh!" said the Head.

Stooping and scanning the floor with alert eyes, Mr. Quelch moved towards the door, the headmaster watching him.

"Look!" breathed Mr. Quelch.

The Head looked again. In three separate places between the desk and the door appeared purple stains on the oak—obviously left by the shoe that had stepped in the marking-ink.

"Bless my soul!" said the Head.

Mr. Quelch stepped out of the study into the corridor. His face was keen and eager. For the first time since the prowler had prowled at Greyfriars he had left a clue behind him—a clue which, as Quelch said, did not need a detective to follow it up.

The Remove master's penetrating eyes scanned the old oak floor of the corridor. He fully expected to find faint stains of purple ink on the oak. But the stains, when he spotted them, were not faint—they almost leaped to the eye when they were looked for.

"He turned this way, sir!" said Mr. Quelch. "He went towards the masters' studies. He may have rifled some other study, though we have not heard of it so far."

"True! If you can find further traces—"

"I have no doubt of it."

Further traces were easy to find. Purple stains were picked up on the oaken floor along the corridor, past the alcove, past the green baize door that led to the Head's house, and as far as the corner on Masters' Passage.

Quelch advanced, bent double, his gimlet eyes scanning. He was more than eager on the scent now—rather like a bloodhound tracking his prey!

Dr. Locke followed him, slow and stately.

Quelch passed the corner and scanned the adjoining passage. Then he turned to the left.

"This way, sir—you can see where he trod—"

"Quite!"

Even the stately old Head was keen and eager now. Both masters had high hopes that the mystery of Greyfriars was to be solved at last—the unknown prowler to be revealed. Jack Drake, punting a footer in the quad with other Remove fellows till the bell went for school, did not even know that anything was on! He was not needed! Quelch was more than equal to this!

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"Good gracious!" Mr. Prout, from the doorway of his study, stared at Quelch, going up the passage bending. "Mr. Quelch—what—what—"

"Mr. Prout, will you kindly see that no one enters this passage for the moment?" said Dr. Locke.

"Certainly, sir!" said the astonished Prout.

Quelch, unheeding, tracked on!

He stopped at the door of Mr. Lascelles' study. There he rose up-right.

"Look, sir! The rascal had ink on his fingers as well as his shoes! You can see—"

"Undoubtedly!" said the Head. Near the door-handle there was an unmistakable smear of purple ink on the wood.

"He entered this study, sir!"

"Unquestionably."

Mr. Quelch tapped at the door. Then he opened it. The study was vacant; Mr. Lascelles was out of the House.

Quelch stepped in, and the headmaster remained in the doorway, watching him.

Traces of the purple ink were easily picked up in Mr. Lascelles' study. Obviously, the prowler had been there, after leaving the headmaster's study. The table stood on a square of carpet; and the carpet showed numerous traces of the inky soles that had pressed it. There was another smear of ink on the table drawer—soon detected by Quelch.

But the drawer was locked.

Mr. Quelch stood looking at it, silent, for a long minute. The Head looked at Mr. Quelch.

Quelch's feeling was of puzzlement. From the Head's study, which he had pilfered by breaking locks, the prowler had come to Mr. Lascelles' study and stood where Quelch was now standing. That was certain. The natural inference was that he had come there to perpetrate a second robbery—as Bunter, the night before, had taken for granted.

But the drawer had not been forced open. It had been groped over—the purple stain showed that! But it was closed and locked! Why had the prowler, who had not hesitated to break

locks right and left in the Head's study, left that lock intact? He must have come there and stopped there to open that drawer—one wrench of his chisel would have opened it. But it was intact.

The Head stood looking at Mr. Quelch. Quelch stood with his eyes fixed on the table drawer, a strange expression growing on his face.

There was a long pause, and then Mr. Quelch, without a word, left the study—to carry his investigations further, leaving the Head to await his return.

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Prowler!

"SEEN Larry?"

Wingate of the Sixth had come out of the House inquiring for Mr. Lascelles.

Six or seven juniors looked round for the games master.

"Where's Larry?"

"Seen Larry?" bawled Bob Cherry.

"I think I saw him walking under the elms with Mr. Capper!" bleated James Duck.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! There he is!"

Mr. Lascelles was soon found. He was walking and talking with the master of the Fourth, and he glanced round at Wingate as the Greyfriars captain hurried up.

"The Head wishes to see you, sir," said Wingate. "In your study, sir."

"In my study?" repeated Mr. Lascelles, raising his eyebrows a little. Evidently he was surprised.

"Yes, sir. He told me to ask you to go there."

"Very well," said the games master; and, with a nod to Mr. Capper, he walked away to the House.

James Duck's steel-rimmed glasses followed him very curiously as he went.

Mr. Lascelles was surprised that the Head desired to see him in his study instead of the Head's own; but perhaps James Duck was not surprised.

Day by day, since Randolph Crocker had been thrashed on the Abbot's Spinney, the schoolboy detective had

been watching for the blow to fall, and he wondered whether it had fallen now.

Quite unaware of James Duck's interest—if he noticed the existence of that mild youth at all—Larry Lascelles went into the House and to his study.

The door stood wide open, and in the room stood the headmaster and Mr. Quelch.

Larry Lascelles started as he looked at them. Both faces were exceedingly grave, and he did not need telling that something was amiss, little as he could guess what it was.

"You wished to see me, sir?" asked the games master.

"Please come in and shut the door, Mr. Lascelles!" said the Head in a low, grave, quiet tone.

Larry came in and shut the door.

Quelch's gimlet eyes were fixed on him with an expression he could not understand; no more than he could understand why Quelch was there at all.

"Perhaps you will explain, Mr. Quelch," said the Head.

"Certainly, sir!"

"Has anything happened?" asked the puzzled games master.

"Last night," said Mr. Quelch, "the person called the prowler was abroad again, and the headmaster's study was robbed."

"I am sorry to hear it, sir! If I can be of any assistance—"

"A bottle of marking-ink was upset by the pilferer, who, by a fortunate chance, trod in it, and carried away the stains as he departed," said Mr. Quelch. "I will be brief. These stains led me here, Mr. Lascelles."

Larry started again.

"This is the first time I've entered the study this morning," he said. "If anything has happened here—"

"The person with stained soles stood at your table there," said Mr. Quelch, "but the drawer has not been forced."

Mr. Lascelles smiled.

"It contains nothing of value, sir, if it had been—a number of old letters and papers, football programmes, and so on."

"Every lock in the headmaster's study was violently broken," continued Mr. Quelch. "The pilferer refrained from breaking this lock."

"I hardly understand why."

"You heard nothing in the night, Mr. Lascelles?"

"Nothing."

"You were not aware of anyone entering your room above?"

"Not in the least."

"From this study," said Mr. Quelch in a low, clear, distinct voice, "I followed the traces of the purple marking-ink farther, Mr. Lascelles."

"Then I trust that it led to a discovery," said the young master, the perplexity growing in his face at Quelch's strange tone.

"I fear to think that it did," said Mr. Quelch. "Unmistakable traces led me, Mr. Lascelles, to the back staircase near Common-room door, which, as you know, is used only by masters. I picked up several stains on those stairs, and again on the landing above, leading—"

"To a dormitory?"

"No," said Mr. Quelch. "To the passage on which the masters' bedrooms open."

"Is it possible?" exclaimed Mr. Lascelles blankly.

"It is not only possible, but the fact," said Mr. Quelch, while the Head stood silent, his troubled eyes on Lascelles' face.

The games master stared from one to the other.

"The traces ceased at your bed-room

TERROR BY NIGHT!

Midge woke with a start. In the split second before full consciousness returned, he made out a vague, dark shape that loomed above him. His gaze riveted to the staring, saucer-like eyes of the Thing that straddled his body, gripping him so that his arms were held fast. Those eyes, baleful and expressionless, were part of a great, scaly head, with bristling tufts of short hair rising where the scales joined together. And, set below two long feelers, were foam-flecked, gaping jaws.

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door, Mr. Lascelles," continued the Remove master. "On the door-handle was a stain of purple ink from inky fingers. The prowler, obviously, went directly up to your room after leaving your study."

"If he entered, sir, I certainly did not hear him. I was not awakened in the night. I can scarcely understand this—" stammered Mr. Lascelles.

"I will only add," said Mr. Quelch in a grinding voice, "that all the traces I have so fortunately been able to follow led in one direction. The stains were left by the toes and soles of the shoes, infallibly indicating the direction taken."

"Then if you followed them farther, sir—"

"They proceeded no farther, Mr. Lascelles. I have said that they ceased at the door of your bed-room above. There were no further marks, and no return marks. The prowler did not pass on or return from your door."

"He must have left, Mr. Quelch."

"He did not leave."

The games master paled a little.

"Mr. Quelch, what do you mean?" he exclaimed.

"I mean exactly what I say!" retorted Mr. Quelch. "An unmistakable trail led from the headmaster's study to this study, and from this study to your room above, Mr. Lascelles, and there it ended. I can only conclude that, on reaching your room, the prowler had finished prowling for the night."

The games master understood at last. He gave a violent start, and his face reddened, and then paled.

"Is it possible, sir?"—his voice rose—"is it imaginable, sir, that you suspect me—me of being the Greyfriars prowler?"

"I have stated no suspicion so far," said Mr. Quelch. "I have stated the facts, which appear to speak for themselves."

"Dr. Locke, you do not believe—"

"No," said the Head slowly. "I do not, Mr. Lascelles. But these extraordinary circumstances must be explained."

"They can be explained," said Mr. Quelch, pointing to the table, "by opening that drawer which the prowler—if not Mr. Lascelles—so curiously did not break open. To all appearances, sir, it was Mr. Lascelles who visited your study surreptitiously in the night, who removed the banknotes and brought them here to lock in his drawer, and then went up to bed. If that is the case the banknotes are still there, and upon that rests the proof, one way or the other!"

"Let me speak!" exclaimed Larry Lascelles. "Of what you have described I understand nothing—or, rather, I understand that a deliberate attempt has been made to throw suspicion upon me. Why, I cannot guess; but, from what you have said, the fact is clear."

"Will you unlock that drawer?"

"Certainly I will! It contains, as I have said, old papers and letters, and you are more than welcome to look into it," exclaimed Mr. Lascelles. "Dr. Locke, I beg you not to judge by appearances!"

"Neither the headmaster nor I will judge you by appearances, Mr. Lascelles," said the Remove master. "You will be judged by what is, or is not, in that drawer. I am waiting to see it opened."

The games master breathed hard. What it looked like was as clear to him as to the Head or the Remove master. Even in his anger and indignation, Larry Lascelles could not help seeing

how clear it looked—that the prowler was not a Greyfriars boy, but a Greyfriars master, and that he was the man! All depended on what was found in the locked drawer.

But he had only to unlock the drawer to knock the whole thing into shreds and patches—so, at least, he believed.

He took out a key-ring and unlocked the drawer. Then, with compressed lips, he stepped back.

Mr. Quelch pulled the drawer open. It was more than half-full of papers. Nothing else was to be seen.

Dr. Locke breathed a sigh of relief.

"Mr. Quelch, I was sure—I felt sure that—"

"We are not finished yet, sir," said Mr. Quelch.

He lifted the drawer out and overturned it on the study table. A mass of papers lay there when he laid the drawer aside. He proceeded to search among them. There was a sudden glint in his eyes.

Larry Lascelles, watching him, made a sudden forward movement as something rustled in the Remove master's fingers.

"What!" he panted.

"Good heavens!" breathed Dr. Locke.

Quelch's face had been grim before. It was like a Gorgon's as he held up a little bunch of banknotes, tied with an elastic band.

Dr. Locke gazed at them, his kind old face pale. Larry Lascelles stared at them like a man in a dream. Mr. Quelch, in grim silence, counted them. There were six, and on almost all of them were stains of inky fingers.

"These, sir, are your banknotes, purloined from your study last night," said Mr. Quelch. "No doubt you can identify them by the numbers; but Mr. Lascelles, I think, will hardly claim that they are his property. The Greyfriars prowler, sir, is now discovered, and he stands before you."

A dead silence followed the Remove master's words. It was broken by a tap at the study door.

THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER.

What Drake Knew!

TAP!

The study door opened. It was the face of James Duck that appeared there, looking through the steel-rimmed glasses.

Larry Lascelles did not heed him. He was standing dumbfounded, horror-stricken, incapable of movement or speech. But the head glanced at him; and Mr. Quelch turned a sharp, hard stare on him.

"If you please, sir—" bleated Duck.

"Go away at once!" snapped Mr. Quelch. "You are not wanted here! Go!"

James Duck did not go. James Duck had come there to see whether Jack Drake was wanted, and one glance into the study told him enough.

Larry, white and dumb; the Head deeply troubled and distressed; Quelch, with a face like a gorgon, holding up a bunch of banknotes he had evidently taken from the games master's table-drawer. That was enough, and more than enough, for Ferrers Locke's assistant.

Quelch said that he was not wanted. Jack Drake did not agree. He stepped inside, and shut the door after him.

His Form-master's eyes glittered.

"I have told you to go!" he rumbled. "I repeat—"

"I think I have business here, sir," said Drake calmly. "Dr. Locke, will you tell me whether there has been another raid by the prowler?"

"Yes," breathed the Head.

"And suspicion has fallen upon Mr. Lascelles?"

"Yes."

"Then I am wanted here," said Jack Drake. "And I claim the right to be here, Mr. Quelch."

Quelch set his lips.

"Dr. Locke, is it your wish—" he began.

"Let the boy remain, Mr. Quelch. As the matter seems now to be at an end, in view of this terrible discovery, I—"

"I am the detective in this case, sir," said Drake. "I claim the right to be told, and to offer my view."

Snort! from Quelch.

Larry Lascelles seemed to wake as from a trance. He found his voice.

"Dr. Locke"—the words came huskily—"I swear—I give you my word, sir—that I knew nothing of this. I know nothing—"

The Head gave a sigh, but no other answer. Mr. Quelch's face was like iron.

Drake's quiet voice broke in.

"I shall prove that for you, Mr. Lascelles."

Larry glanced round at him. To him James Duck was merely a new boy in the Remove, whom he had found clumsy at games, and dense at mathematics.

"Mr. Lascelles must know now, sir," said the schoolboy detective. "He will say nothing outside this study. You know me once as Jack Drake, sir. I am Ferrers Locke's assistant, and here as a detective."

The games master could only stare.

"That is true, Mr. Lascelles," said the Head. "Drake is here to trace out the Greyfriars prowler, though this, I fear, has been done without his aid. Yet I still hesitate to believe that—"

"The facts speak for themselves, I think, sir," said Mr. Quelch. "I am amazed, shocked, but the facts—"

"Please tell me the facts, sir," said Drake.

"Do so, Mr. Quelch," said the Head. "Drake is here as a detective. He has a right to know. I pray that he may be able to throw some doubt upon what now seems so terribly clear and certain."

"Very well, sir," said Mr. Quelch, between compressed lips.

And in a few snapped words he repeated what he had told the games master.

Drake listened quietly.

"And this," he said, when the Remove master had finished, "has led you to think that Mr. Lascelles is the Greyfriars prowler?"

"It has led to the discovery that Mr. Lascelles is the Greyfriars prowler," said Mr. Quelch icily.

"I do not take that view, sir."

Quelch's lip curled sarcastically.

"Do you still adhere to your absurd theory that the prowler came from outside the school—after this, Drake?" he snapped.

"More so than ever, sir."

"Then you had better say no more."

"On the contrary, sir," said the schoolboy detective coolly. "I have a great deal more to say. I shall now tell you my version of what you have told me. The prowler pilfered in Dr. Locke's study last night for one object, and one object only—"

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revenge on Mr. Lascelles! Mr. Lascelles has a bitter enemy——"

"I know of none," said Mr. Lascelles.

"Luckily for you, sir, I know more than you do on that subject," said Drake. "Let me continue. The prowler did not knock over a bottle of purple marking-ink by accident. He knocked it over to appear accidental, but for the purpose of leaving the trail which Mr. Quelch followed."

"Nonsense!" said Mr. Quelch.

"He came to this study," pursued Drake, unheeding, "and placed what he had stolen in the drawer of that table."

"The drawer was locked."

"Locks are amenable to skeleton-keys, sir. He unlocked that drawer, placed the banknotes inside, and locked it again."

Grunt from Quelch.

"Then he left this study, and laid the trail of inky stains to Mr. Lascelles' bed-room," continued Drake. "Then he removed the inky shoes, and left, without leaving a trail."

"Oh!" breathed Larry Lascelles.

He was gazing at the schoolboy detective, hardly able to believe that this really was the Jack Drake he had known in Drake's days at Greyfriars.

"You—you believe this, Drake?" asked Dr. Locke doubtfully.

"I shall prove it, sir."

"Nonsense!" said Mr. Quelch, more emphatically than before. "That a prowling pilferer might be base enough to cast suspicion on another may be possible, but that he would part with the whole of his plunder for that purpose is simply nonsense! Why should he take the risk of pilfering at all—if he did not desire to retain his plunder?"

"In this case, sir, his object was not plunder, but revenge."

"You have heard Mr. Lascelles state that he has no such enemy. Neither is it possible that anyone in the school could——"

"I have told you, sir, that the prowler comes from outside the school."

"Nonsense!"

"What proof do you offer, Drake?" asked the Head. "Heaven knows I should be glad, relieved, happy, to take your view, but——"

"The proof is in your pocket-book, sir," said Drake.

"What? I do not understand——"

"Four or five days ago, sir, I told you, in your study, that when next the prowler prowled, suspicion would be cast upon an innocent man."

Dr. Locke started.

"I knew then upon whom suspicion would fall," said Drake.

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "It is impossible——"

"Dr. Locke, I wrote the name down, and placed it in an envelope, which I asked you to place in your pocket-book. Will you open that envelope?"

"Bless my soul!" said the Head.

Slowly he took out his pocket-book and opened it. He extracted the envelope which, till Drake reminded him of it, he had forgotten. There was a deep silence as he slit open the envelope, and drew out the paper within.

He held it up. He looked at it; Mr. Quelch stared at it; Larry Lascelles devoured it with his eyes. On that paper, written days ago in the Head's study by Jack Drake, appeared the words:

"When the prowler next prowls, suspicion will be cast upon Mr. Lascelles, he games master."

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Dr. Locke gazed at those words, dumbfounded. Mr. Quelch seemed unable to believe his eyes as he read them. Larry stood dumb.

"Bless my soul!" said the Head, at last. "Then—then you knew——"

"I knew, sir!"

Mr. Quelch gave a gasp.

"That—that paper has not left your possession, sir?"

"No, Mr. Quelch! It has been in my pocket-book ever since Drake wrote it in my study."

"Then—then——" Quelch stammered. He was utterly amazed.

"I think, sir," said Drake quietly, "that that makes the matter clear. Nearly a week ago I knew that after the next pilfering evidence would be found leading to Mr. Lascelles. I knew the man; I knew the offence Mr. Lascelles had given him; I knew his game from start to finish. I wrote down that warning, sir, to clear Mr. Lascelles when the time came—as now it has come."

"Good gad!" breathed Larry Lascelles, staring at Drake in sheer wonder. "But the man—who—I have no idea——"

"That is my business for the moment, sir. I intend to say no more till I have him pinned down. But I think I have proved my case."

Dr. Locke looked at Mr. Quelch. Mr. Quelch looked at Dr. Locke. Both of them looked again at the paper in the headmaster's hand.

The case was clear enough. The matter was exactly as Drake stated, as was proved by the fact that he had foretold nearly a week in advance precisely what had now occurred. The Head admitted it at once. Mr. Quelch admitted it more slowly, but he admitted it.

The Head was the first to speak, holding out his hand to Mr. Lascelles as he did so.

"Mr. Lascelles, you will forgive me—you will admit yourself how terribly convincing this looked——"

"I regret——" began Mr. Quelch.

Jack Drake quietly left the study. The bell was ringing for school, and Bob Cherry shouted to him as he came out of Masters' Passage.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! You'll be late, Ducky! Come on, fathead!"

And James Duck joined the Removos going to their Form-room, where they had to wait some minutes for their Form-master to arrive.

THE NINETEENTH CHAPTER.

Happy Landing For Bunter!

"I SAY, you fellows——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Had any brekker, Bunter?"

Groan!

Bunter, it seemed, hadn't had any brekker.

Bunter's place had been vacant in morning school. The hapless Owl was still dodging his Form-master—though even Bunter probably was realising by that time that he was making matters worse, instead of better. Now, after third school, the Removites saw him again.

Since, early that morning, Quelch had delivered the whop which Mr. Hacker had so unfortunately captured, Bunter had been in a vanished state—and no doubt would have continued in that state but for the painful urgings of the inner Bunter.

Fellows who had wondered when and where they would see the unhappy fat Owl again were not really surprised to find him blinking in at the window of

the school shop when they came out. That spot drew Bunter like a magnet at all times, and especially did it draw him now—now that he was feeling as if he had been several weeks in an open boat at sea.

"I say, you fellows, it ain't a laughing matter!" said the dolorous fat Owl.

"I—I say, is Quelch still shirty?"

"Just a few!" chuckled the Bounder.

"You don't think he—he—he's calmed down?" asked Bunter anxiously.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you have tears, prepare to shed them when Quelch gets a grip on you!" chortled Skinner.

"Beast! I say, you fellows, I—I can't go in and—see whether my postal order's come! Who's going to lend me five bob? I say, I'm fearfully hungry! I haven't had any brekker, and I can't go in to dinner, and——"

"You blithering Owl!" said Harry Wharton. "Cut in and see Quelch——"

"Beast!"

"Where have you been all night, you fat chump?" asked Bob Cherry.

"I got a snooze in Larry's study," groaned Bunter. "But——"

"Where?" exclaimed James Duck.

"In Larry's study. I say, you fellows, I've had an awful time!" groaned the dismal fat Owl. "The prowler nearly got me——"

"What?"

"Which?"

"It was awful!" mumbled Bunter, blinking pathetically at the staring juniors. "First he nearly got me in Head's corridor—I was on that settee, you know—and then, when I cut along to Larry's study and thought I was safe, he came there to pinch something from Larry—— Oh dear! If I hadn't got behind the armchair he would have had me and knocked me out like he did Loder—— Oh lor'!"

"Is he making all this up?" asked Bob.

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"The prowler was up last night—no mistake about that!" said Johnny Bull. "He bagged something from the Head's study again—I've heard that things were busted right and left——"

"Nothing's been said about Larry's study, though!" said Nugent. "Larry hasn't had anything pinched or we should have heard of it."

"Well, he jolly well came there!" declared Bunter. "He opened the drawer in the table—I heard the lock——"

"Or dreamed it?" asked Skinner.

"I tell you, I heard it!" yelled Bunter. "He must have pinched something from that drawer, or why should he have opened it? I can tell you fellows, I was scared—I don't often get scared, as you know——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But when I saw him——"

"You saw him!" yelled a dozen fellows.

"Yes—he pulled the blind over the window, you know, before he turned on the light, and I saw him—— Oh crikey!"

"You saw the prowler?" gasped Wharton.

"Yes! Oh lor'! Awful-looking beast! I can tell you fellows, I had a jolly narrow escape—if he'd spotted me behind that armchair—— Oh lor'!" Billy Bunter shivered at the recollection.

The juniors stared at Bunter, almost open-mouthed. Bunter—if Bunter's tale was true—had seen the mystery man—the only Greyfriars fellow who had!

"You—you—you actually saw him?" stuttered Bob Cherry.

"Oh dear! As plain as I see you, just for a minute!" mumbled Bunter,

"Lucky he didn't see me and knock me out like he did Loder of the Sixth—"

A tall and angular figure approached the crowd of excited juniors.

Mr. Quelch had spotted the missing member of his Form from his study window. He was losing no time in securing that missing member of his Form! Quelch came across from the House almost at a run.

The short-sighted Owl did not observe him. No one else heeded him—the fellows were too keenly interested in Bunter's amazing statement. They crowded round the fat junior—every fellow, for once, being eager to hear what dropped from his podgy lips.

"Who is he, Bunter?"

"Who's the prowler?"

"If you've seen him, who is he?"

"Name!"

"Cough it up, Bunter!"

It was a roar of eager voices. The angular figure that was swiftly bearing

down upon the spot came to a sudden halt. Quelch stood as if transfixed.

"I say, you fellows, I saw him all right!" mumbled Bunter. "You see, I thought I was safe in Larry's study—I never dreamed he would come there after going to the Head's! Can't he much in Larry's study to pinch, I should think. I can tell you I jumped when I heard him at the door."

"But who—?" yelled Bob.

"I got behind that armchair pretty quick!" said Bunter. "I thought of what the beast did to Loder, you know—that night Loder grabbed him and thought it was Smithy and was knocked out. You can bet I wasn't long in getting behind that armchair."

"Bet on that!" grinned the Bounder.

"And he came into the study?" asked Wharton.

"Yes, and when he pulled the blinds, I saw him, see? Then he turned on the light and I heard him unlock the

drawer in Larry's table—he must have pinched something there, I suppose! But he wasn't long there, and I can tell you fellows I was jolly glad when he went. Oh, crikey!"

"The gladfulness must have been terrific!" cried Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"But if you saw him, you fat ass, who is he?" yelled the Bounder.

"One of the Sixth?" asked Skinner.

"Oh, no!"

"Fifth?" asked Vernon-Smith.

"Oh, no! He wasn't a Greyfriars man at all."

"What?"

"What was he like, Bunter?" asked James Duck, very quietly.

"Eh? How should I know?"

"You tooting irabjous, fat-headed frump!" roared Bob Cherry. "Haven't you just said that you saw him as plain as you see me?"

(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.

ONE of my readers, who signs himself A. S. H., writes to tell me that when at school he had a really good voice, but on leaving, his voice suddenly broke. Thinking it was due to a cold, he took no notice of this, but as, after a year or so, there is no improvement, he writes to me for advice.

When my chum's voice first became hoarse it was simply the changing from a boy's voice to a man's voice; in other words, A. S. H.'s voice was breaking—a thing which always occurs when a boy reaches about the age of fifteen. After a few weeks, or perhaps months, my chum's voice should have developed into a tuneful, manly voice. As far as I can see, this has not been the case.

The only reason I can give for this is that while my chum's voice was undergoing the process of breaking, instead of resting it, he used it rather excessively. While the voice is breaking it should always be rested, otherwise you stand in danger of ruining your voice altogether.

A. S. H. should sing up and down the scale several times a day. First of all his top notes will be somewhat wheezy, but after a time they will become quite clear. Then he should sing the scale in a higher key.

THEY CALLED HIM A COCKNEY

Another reader—F. H. (Wilts)—wants to know why Cockneys are so called. The precise origin of the word, F. H., is "wrapt in mystery." A Cockney, of course, implies a person born in London within the sound of Bow Bells, who has all the imperfections of the London speech, and is absolutely ignorant of country customs. Some hold the opinion that it originally signified a little cock, or bantam; others that it meant a pampered child. Apparently, however, there does not seem to be any certainty about the matter at all.

Fred Griffiths, a chum from Lancashire, sends me an amusing example of the lengths to which

"alliteration"—that is, the use of words all beginning with the same letter of the alphabet—can be carried. I think it merits a small space in this chat. Here it is, just as Fred sends it to me.

Son: "Tell me what that big D means in that window?"

Father: "Decidedly. That displayed D denotes that the despairing domestics of that detached domicile desire that the distinguished dustman, during his daily diversions, should deem it his delightful duty to deliberately dislodge all the dirty, dusty deposit in his dilapidated dustcart."

Son: "Crikey!"

I have had several requests from new readers of the Magnet for the names of the juniors in the Greyfriars Remove. Here they are:

Harry Wharton, Tom Brown, Percy Bolsover, Johnny Bull, George Bulstrode, William George Bunter, Robert Cherry, Piet Dalarey, Micky Desmond, Napoleon Dupont, Tom Dutton, Sampson Quincey Illey Field, Fisher T. Fish, Peter Hazeldene, Richard Hilary, Oliver Kipps, Mark Linley, Herbert Mauleverer, David Morgan, Monty Newland, Frank Nugent, Robert Donald Ogilvy, Richard Penfold, Richard Rake, Tom Redwing, Richard Russell, Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, Harold Skinner, Robert Smith (minor), Sidney James Snoop, William Stott, Peter Todd, Anthony Treluce, Herbert Trevor, Herbert Vernon-Smith, Jimmy Vivian, William Ernest Wibley, and Wun Lung.

I will give the names of the juniors in the other Forms in subsequent issues of the Magnet.

A most interesting query comes from Roy Walker, of South Shields, who asks my views about boys having girl chums.

My older readers know exactly the opinions I hold about girl and boy friendships. I feel they can serve a healthy and useful purpose if they

are carried on with the full approval of the parents on both sides, providing no foolish thought of courtship is indulged in. A lad feels there is something in the friendship of a girl chum that uplifts him, and fills him with the desire to live well, keep steady, and do great deeds. And so long as both parties to the friendship remain true to themselves, I am sure no fair-minded man or woman would wish to deny them the happiness they enjoy.

I think there's just space for some RAPID FIRE REPLIES

T. M. (Torquay).—A book-length story of Harry Wharton & Co. appears every month in the "School-boys' Own Library." The story on sale next Thursday is entitled "Billy Bunter's Cruise." The other two stories in this popular library are "Rookwood Calling!" featuring Jimmy Silver & Co., the popular chums of Rookwood School, and "Hidden Gold!" starring Nipper & Co., the boys of St. Frank's.

ROY BONNY (Princetown).—Alonso Todd left Greyfriars some considerable time back, and there is no likelihood of his returning for the time being, anyway.

"BOB" COOPER (Croydon).—There is a First Form—more commonly known as the "babes"—at Greyfriars, although little is heard of them.

No room for more replies this week. Have I got room for next week's programme? Only just!

"DRAKE GETS HIS MAN!"

By Frank Richards

is the title of the extra-long story of your old favourites, Harry Wharton & Co., and incidentally is the final yarn in the series featuring Jack Drake, the boy 'tec. As the title reveals Drake "gets" his man. But how? You'll be surprised when you read all about it next Saturday. Latest information about what's happening at Greyfriars will be found in the interesting edition of the "Herald," while "My Page" will be taken over by Cedric Hilton. Sounds good, chums, doesn't it? And it is good, too, believe me.

YOUR EDITOR.

"Yes, but he had a muffer over his face," explained Bunter. "I couldn't see through that, of course. All I could see of his face was his chin and mouth, and a big moustache—"

"A big moustache," repeated Harry Wharton. "If Bunter's got that right, it wasn't a Greyfriars man!"

"Couldn't have been!" said Nugent, in wonder. "Sure of that jolly old moustache, Bunter?"

"Eh? Yes, of course!! A big thick moustache—hanging over his mouth," said Bunter. "Then I knew he wasn't a Greyfriars man, and—and—and he must have been a burglar, or something— Oh crikey! I can tell you fellows I was jolly glad he never saw me! I mean to say, if it had been a Greyfriars man, he might have knocked me out, like Loder was—but a burglar might have— Oh crikey!" The fat junior shuddered. "I say, you fellows, do you think Quelch would let me off if—if he knew what I'd been through? I mean to say, he's a beast, but he must have some feelings, you know, and after what I've been through—"

"BUNTER!"

"Oh crikey!"

Bunter bounded at that familiar voice. He cast a wild blink at Mr. Quelch and jumped to escape.

But the crowd round him was too thick. A grasp of iron fell on Bunter's collar. He roared:

"Ow! Leggo! I—I wasn't going to run away, sir! I—I only want to tuck-tuck my shoelace, sir, if—if you'll let go my collar—"

"Bunter, come with me—"

"It wasn't me!" yelled Bunter. "I never put up that booby-trap in Wharton's study, sir, and I only put it up for Duck to walk into! He never walked into it, sir, getting me into a row, the cad! Just like the beast! I never did it, sir—I never knew it was

there—I was—was quite surprised when you got it, sir—not knowing that it was there—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bunter, you foolish boy, be silent! In view of what I have just heard you say, I shall overlook your extraordinary conduct—"

"Oh, thank you, sir!" gasped Bunter. "I felt sure you'd take my word, sir, that I never did it, and only did it for that beast Duck—"

"I am alluding to what I heard you say about the prowler, Bunter."

"Oh, yes, sir! I've had an awful time, sir. I—I—I felt sure, sir, you'd let me off if you knew what an awful time I've had—"

"You will come with me, Bunter, and repeat your statement to the headmaster."

"Oh, yes, sir! It—it ain't a whopping!" asked Bunter anxiously. "You—you ain't taking me to the Beak to be whopped, sir?"

"Be silent!"

Billy Bunter, in a mingled state of hope and alarm, was marched off to the House by his Form-master.

What followed was quite mysterious to Bunter.

In the Head's study Dr. Locke listened to his tale with a deep attention which he most certainly had never bestowed on Bunter before. Then, to Bunter's astonishment, Mr. Lascelles was called into the study, and Bunter had to tell his tale over again. What Larry had to do with it was quite a mystery to Bunter.

But he could see by that time that he was not going to be whopped, so that was all right! Finally, he was dismissed—unwhopped—and departed in a state of great relief.

He lingered for a moment at the rack, to see whether his postal order had come, and found that it hadn't, and then scuttled out into the quad.

To wait till dinner was a sheer impossibility; but he found Good Samaritans in the Remove—and very soon he was telling his tale over and over again, to an accompaniment of munching and crunching in the tuckshop. Which was quite a happy ending to Billy Bunter's wild adventures.

Mr. Quelch spoke to James Duck of his Form after dinner that day. He coughed and coughed again, and yet again, and finally he got it out.

"Drake, I regret that I have—ahem—that I—in fact, that I lost faith in you—hem! I realise now—hem—"

Quelch paused. "If any lingering doubt remained in my mind, it has, of course, been completely eradicated by what that foolish boy Bunter so fortunately witnessed during the night. I—hem—I must admit, Drake, that—hem—in fact, that you have been—hem—right!"

"Thank you, sir!" murmured Drake.

"No doubt remains," said Mr. Quelch. "Amazing as it is, incomprehensible, in fact, it appears beyond doubt now that the person called the prowler is actually some person from outside the school, as you have all along declared. Bunter's description leaves no doubt on that point. Needless to say, Drake, the matter now remains wholly in your hands—and you will carry on, with my complete faith, and the headmaster's, in your ultimate success."

Which was very agreeable hearing to the schoolboy detective!

THE END.

(The final part in this exciting series — "DRAKE GETS HIS MAN!" — is better than ever. You can only make sure of reading it by ordering next Saturday's MAGNET early, chums!)

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GREYHOUNDS NOT ALLOWED AT GREYFRIARS! By Our Pets' Expert

Vernon-Smith made me smile when he called the other evening to ask what I thought of the idea of his keeping a greyhound in the school "menagerie."

"Get a hunch you're going to win a lot of prize money, old sport?" I chuckled. "If so, forget it!"

"Rats to that!" Smithy retorted cheerfully. "I'm asking you as the 'Herald' Pets' Expert. Think there'd be any objection to my keeping a greyhound?"

"I don't think, dear man—I know!" was my prompt answer. "Your reputation has had just a little too much publicity in the past, Smithy. If Wharton or somebody like him wanted to keep a greyhound, the beaks might allow it, knowing there'd be nothing more in it than that. But if you kept a greyhound, they'd at once suspect you intended racing it at some low-down racing track. Which, of course, you would!"

"Well, I don't see much fun in owning a greyhound without racing the thing!" grunted the Bounder. "It would have to be done on the strict q.t., of course."

GREYFRIARS FOOTER TRIUMPH WELL EARNED! Declares H. VERNON-SMITH

Well, pals, I really think this is one of those rare occasions when my fellow-footer players and I can sit back and wait for you to give us three hearty cheers without worrying about what we have done to deserve it! We have won our game against St. Jim's—and with it the league championship—and to stop all possible argument, we piled up five goals against a more singleton from Tom Merry's team.

Yes, thinking it over fairly and squarely and coolly and calmly, I am of the opinion that just for once I can allow you all to give us a cheer without feeling a blush of embarrassment suffusing my pale and delicate cheeks.

Thanks, old beans! You nearly deafened me!

The epic story of the great match really deserves a complete number of the "Greyfriars Herald" to itself. But we can't manage that, I'm afraid, so I must try to do it justice in a few pithy paragraphs. Here goes!

First half. Stern, strenuous struggle. St. Jim's giving nothing away. Both teams slightly ragged—influence of wildly excited crowd to blame. St. Jim's goal threatened several times. Improvement in play after half an hour. Speed and science conspicuous. Defence on top. Just before half-time St. Jim's break through. Tom Merry scores. Frantic cheers from St. Jim's supporters and generous applause from

"Chuck it old bean!" I grinned. "If you want to go in for dingy games of that kind, I advise you to get your pals down at the Cross Keys to keep the dog for you. Don't mix it up with the menagerie here, anyway!"

Since then I have heard nothing more of Vernon-Smith's greyhound. I don't suppose anything more will be heard of it, anyway. There will



have to be considerable changes at Greyfriars before we get racing greyhounds among the school pets in the "menagerie."

Meanwhile, however, I should like to say that dog owners at Greyfriars

home fans for a good effort. Second half. Same rapid pace as first. "Can't keep on! One of 'em will crack up!" One of them does—St. Jim's! St. Jim's slacken noticeably. Greyfriars still fresh. Several fierce Greyfriars raids on St. Jim's goal. Finally—a smashing goal from Wharton. Spasmodic attacks by St. Jim's soon yield to sweeping assaults on citadel by home team. Hurreo! Singh puts Greyfriars into winning figures with a fine "header" from a corner kick. St. Jim's weakening rapidly. Wharton scores again. St. Jim's incur penalty kick for handling in the area. Wharton takes it and scores one more. Home team's fifth goal, scored just before final whistle, only emphasises marked superiority over visitors.

Well, that's all the space that can be spared for the greatest game of the season—and I can only hope that you'll manage to make sense of my machine-gun method of reporting it.

By the way, modesty almost prevented me telling you that I scored the fifth goal myself, but I'd better mention it or you'll all be writing in to ask who did!

With the results tabulated below the championship table, as you will see, attains completion. The other games were all, I believe, fought out very keenly, but the results make no changes in the table, which was already, in fact, pretty well set, apart, of course, from the leading positions.

Rookwood finished a very successful season with a 5-0 nil victory that

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do sometimes experience the thrill of racing their pets, though not, of course, on greyhound tracks!

Yesterday, coming away from the "menagerie," I barged into a crowd of fellows having the cheeriest time imaginable, racing their dogs against each other.

Bulstrode was there with his wire-haired terrier, Temple with his bull-pup, and Tubb of the Third with his spaniel. These three owners stood in a line, whistling to their dogs, which were held by friends some distance away.

At a signal, the dogs were released. Boy, you should have seen those hounds streaking across the turf to their masters! It was a treat to the eye and no mistake!

I watched it done three times. The bullpup won twice and the terrier once, while the spaniel finished up last each time—by no means disgraced, however, though well beaten!

Dog-owners evidently get plenty of fun out of their hobby—which explains why dogs are more plentiful than any other kind of quadruped in Pets' Corner at Greyfriars!

carried them within a single point of the St. Jim's goal average.

Bagshot made amends for recent failures by a smart win at Redclyffe. Abbottsford made a couple of draws that left them right where they started. Incidentally, the second draw occurred on their own ground and the team that held them was Claremont—the wooden spoonists! The fact that Claremont did this proves conclusively that their dismal league record has by no means unnerved them. Another season, maybe, we shall see them right at the top of the table. You never can tell at footer!

Next week I hope to comment briefly on highlight and interesting odds and ends about the footer season to which we shall all soon be bidding a fond farewell. Look out for it, pals!

RESULTS.

Wednesday	Redclyffe	2	Bagshot	3
	St. Jude's	0	Abbottsford	0
Saturday	Abbottsford	2	Claremont	2
	Greyfriars	5	St. Jim's	1
	Rookwood	5	Redclyffe	0

CHAMPIONSHIP TABLE.

	P.	W.	D.	L.	F.A.	Pts.
1. Greyfriars	18	13	4	1	61	13
2. St. Jim's	18	14	1	3	43	22
3. Rookwood	18	10	4	4	42	22
4. Bagshot	18	9	3	6	28	27
5. Highcliffe	18	6	5	7	36	35
6. St. Jude's	18	5	5	8	30	37
7. Abbottsford	18	4	6	8	26	38
8. Ryleombe	18	4	4	10	26	42
G.S.						
9. Redclyffe	18	4	2	12	17	42
10. Claremont	18	1	6	11	15	46

**HARRY WHARTON
GARDENING**

When three separate requests reached me by one post this week for a weekly "hints for gardeners" feature, it reminded me rather sharply that the gardening season is really here again!

Gardening is admittedly a subject we rarely touch on, the columns of the "Greyfriars Herald." Quite a number of our readers, nevertheless, are keenly interested in it.

We have some fine gardens at Greyfriars—in particular, the Head's private garden, which is regarded as a very beautiful specimen of the old-fashioned kind of English garden. Nobody with an eye for beauty could fail to be

"MAULY AT BARBER'S PUT WHISKERS ON ME!" Says SIR JIMMY VIVIAN

When I bumped into my cousin Lord Mauleverer outside Chunkley's in Court-field, I promptly suggested the two of us walking up the town.

"What about a few larks with the tradesmen, eh?" I breezed. "We can turn on the hose in the fish-monger's shop—on purpose, of course."

"Oh, gad!" Mauly gasped, on his usual note of faint horror.

"We can chase each other round the grocer's and knock over a few tins in doing it—"

"Oh, gad!"

"We can—"

"Sorry, dear man!" gasped Mauly, with suspicious haste. "I've just remembered I've got to go into Chunkley's hairdressin' saloon to get my hair cut. So-long, ol' bean!"

"That's all right," I told him cheerfully. "I'll come with you and wait 'till you're finished. Then we can have some fun!"

I wouldn't "no" for an answer; and when Mauly lounged into Chunkley's barber shop, I marched with him.

Mauly's my cousin and I've got a cousinly liking for the chap. I don't like leaving him to root about on his own too much. It's not healthy.

Of course, I know he's

interested in the science which produces such happy effects.

Apart from the ornamental gardens and shrubberies to be seen in the best-patronised parts of the school grounds, there are also some miniature gardens, tucked away among the elm trees behind the porter's lodge. These are the school "plots"—sacred to our amateur gardeners. Anybody in the school apart from fags can have one on application. But once a chap takes one on, he has to look after it properly.

The readers who want a weekly gardening article are all, I believe, regular Greyfriars plot-holders.

I should very much like to help them. But, with all the good will in the world, I really cannot start reserving valuable space in this paper for technical tips on pruning rose bushes or hoeing 'taters!

and dignified dance round the chair, examining your brainbox from all sides.

Then he claps his hands and the boy starts whacking hot towels all over your features.

The barber squirts liquids and powder at you before he begins. Eventually, he starts work with relays of electric clippers—big ones first, then smaller and smaller, till he gets down to the smallest in stock. Then he performs more magic with many pairs of scissors. And after that with razors.

"Going to be much longer, Mauly?" I called out, after the programme had lasted about half-an-hour.

The barber chap stopped



supposed to dislike doing anything very energetic; but that's just the lazy way he's got into. I felt sure once we got going that he'd enjoy a punt round the town looking for trouble just as well as I'd enjoy it myself. So I sat down and read magazines while Mauly had his hair cut.

I little knew what I had let myself in for!

I don't patronise Chunkley's for hair-cuts myself. Where I go hair-cuts are hair-cuts, and that's all there is to it. The barber uses a pair of scissors, squirts a spray over your napper, and brushes your hair flat, and that finishes it. The whole job takes five minutes.

I soon found out that a hair-cut at Chunkley's is quite different.

To begin with, you sit down in a glorified dentist's chair and an overalled engineer gives you a ride in it till you reach the right height and angle.

After about ten minutes, he fades out and the barber appears, followed by a boy carrying boxes of clippers and razors and scissors and piles of steaming towels.

The barber does a slow

I am not a gardener myself. Although I like shady lawns and colourful flowerbeds as much as the next man, I have not yet acquired a taste for actually making them.

Even if I were a gardener, I think I should hesitate a long time before turning the old "Herald" into a gardening manual. But not being a gardener at all, I can turn it down flat without any hesitation!

I am sure, anyway, my gardening chums will realise for themselves, if they think it over, that it is impossible for us to help them in this particular way. We of the "Greyfriars Herald" certainly wish them well. We hope their hardy annuals grow hardier every year, that their roses win all the big prizes, and that their giant marrows become ever more gigantic.

HARRY WHARTON.

conclusion that the bounder was asleep!

It annoyed me for a minute, I'll admit. I stepped up to the chair and tweaked his nose.

"Going to be much longer?" I snapped.

Mauly yelped.

"Ow! Leggo, dear man! Much longer? No, not much! About a couple of hours or so, I suppose!"

I sagged at the knees!

"A couple of hours?" I shrieked. "How can you be a couple of hours, you dummy, when this chap has nearly finished cutting your hair?"

"Oh, gad! That's only the foundation work, dear man!" Mauly replied. "After that, we really get down to it. I have to have a singe, of course; then I usually have an oil shampoo; an' then vibro-massage; then I have electric treatment for my follicles; an' then—"

"And what do you do while all this is going on?" I hooted. "Sleep?"

Mauly closed his eyes and nodded dreamily.

"Yaas; that's the idea, of course! That's why I come to Chunkley's for my hair-cut. They take their time over it an' it gives a fellow a chance of a nice, quiet snooze an'—yarcooooop! Ow-ow-ow!"

Mauly finished up with a wild yell, as I stuffed a hot towel into his mouth and squirted a spray of bay rum into his eyes.

After that, I walked out and left him.

Mauly at the barber's had properly put whiskers on me!

JAPERS' EXHIBITION MAKES BIG HIT! Triumph for Greyfriars Industry

The Greyfriars Japers' Exhibition opened on Saturday with a flourish of trumpets and closed on Friday with a dirge on the bagpipes, played by Ogilvy of the Remove.

The idea at the back of it was summed up by Lord Mauleverer in his gracious speech at the opening ceremony.

"In these go-ahead days begad," he said, "no chappie can afford to live in the past. That goes for a chappie's japes as well as anythin' else. Yaas!"

"Time marches on: an' the chappie who is content to rely on the hoary old japes his pater played before him is likely to get severely left, begad!"

"After givin' this unique exhibition the once-over, no man will have any excuse left for relyin' on traditional japes to provide him with fun. On the contrary, he will have at his command such a wealth of material for original japes that his only difficulty will be which particular jape to select out of the embarrassingly wide selection at his disposal!"

Amid loud cheers, his lordship then broke a bottle of ginger-pop over the turnstile and declared the exhibition open.

He afterwards subsided into a chair which turned out to be one of the exhibits—a chair with rubber legs. The roars of applause changed to roars of laughter when Mauly went sprawling on the floor!

The exhibition "hall," which was a temporarily vacant greenhouse, kindly loaned by Mr. Mimble, was a great centre of attraction all the week. Experts were in attendance to explain the show to the visitors, and the president of the exhibition, Harold Skinner, personally acted as guide to many parties. His dry wit and attractive irony delighted visitors from other schools.

The latest and greatest ideas in japing were on show. Booby-traps that could be fixed up in two seconds stood side-by-side with luscious-looking jam tarts that started howling as soon as you got your teeth into them! Life-like imitation mice, beetles, and spiders competed with water-pistols and explosive cigarettes for the attention of the public!

Some of the tricks on show were really too ingenious for words. There was, for instance, a picture of an old man who appeared, if you looked at it long enough, to be solemnly winking at you; and there was also a pillow which distinctly cried "Help!" at intervals, whenever anybody rested on it.

Perhaps the most popular feature in the exhibition was the Advice Bureau. Here you could obtain expert advice on japes, jokes, hoaxes, and log-pulls. For a small fee your ideas were subjected to keen criticism. For an additional payment you were given some brand-new wheezes to work on. For the sum of ten-bob the bureau would take over the whole job and do it for you!

Such was the extent of the work undertaken by the bureau that we understand it will take them most of the summer to clear it up!

Altogether, in the words of more than one of the visitors, "a triumph for Greyfriars industry," this Japers' Exhibition. Our own view of it is that it was a bright and breezy brain-wave, anyway.

It ought to become a popular annual institution, if the beaks give it a chance to survive. But you can take it from us, they won't!