

THE
MAGNET

"THE BOUNDER ON THE TRAIL!"

Amazing
School-Adventure
Yarn of . . .

HARRY WHARTON & CO.

The Magnet

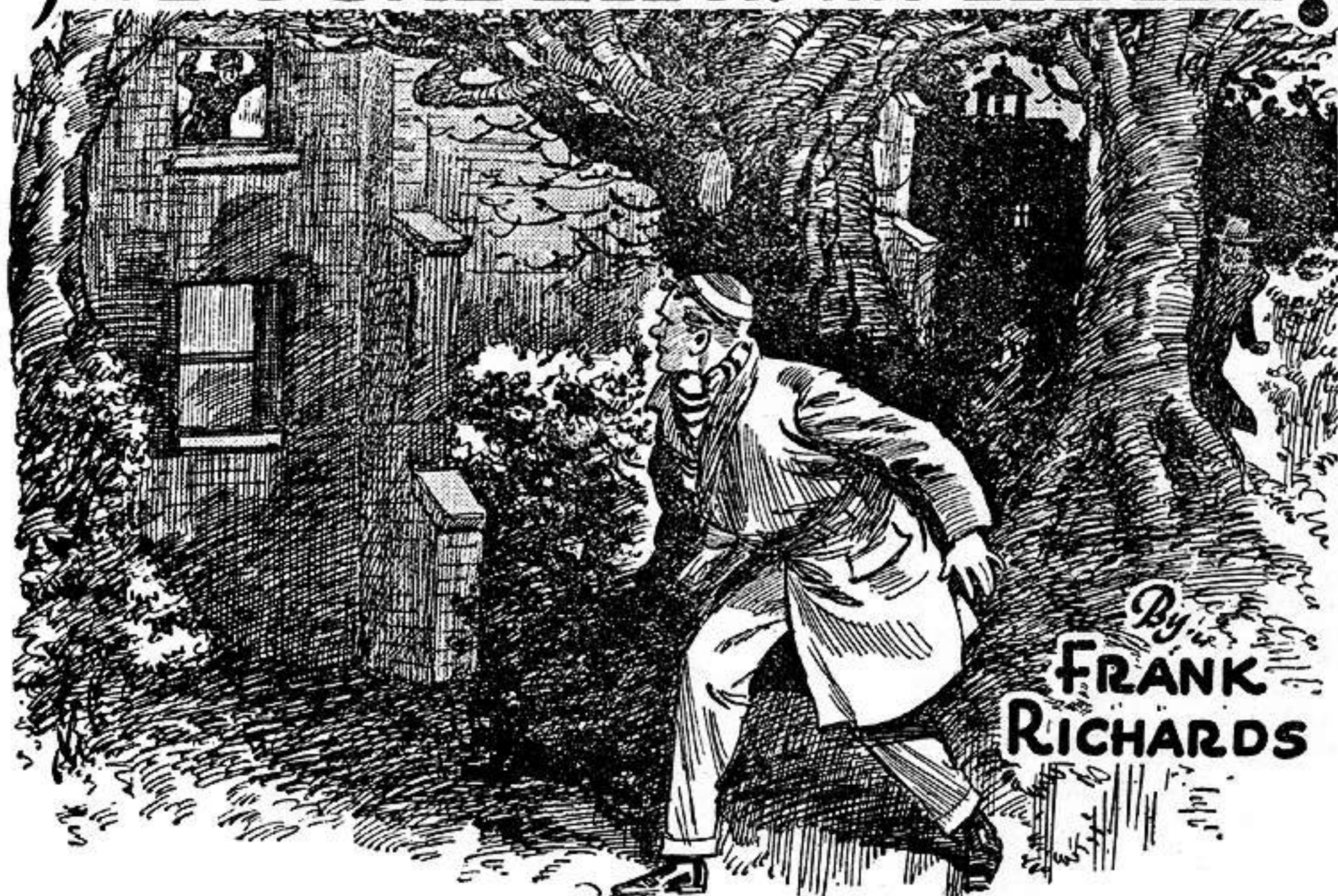
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"SPYING—EH?"

WHILE GREYFRIARS SLEEPS, MR. LAMB, THE NEW MASTER OF THE REMOVE, IS WIDE AWAKE—WATCHING AND LISTENING! IT'S ALL VERY MYSTERIOUS AND PUZZLING TO VERNON-SMITH, THE BOUNDER OF GREYFRIARS!

The BOUNDER on the TRAIL!



By
**FRANK
RICHARDS**

THE INVISIBLE DOG!

"**B**OW-WOW! Wow!"

It was quite a surprising sound, in the Remove Form room at Greyfriars School.

Mr. Lamb, the master in charge of the Remove, jumped.

Most of the Remove fellows stared round.

Billy Bunter sat and grinned.

Billy Bunter, the fat Owl of the Remove, was almost the only fellow who was not surprised to hear a dog suddenly bark in a Form-room where class was going on.

"My goodness!" ejaculated Mr. Lamb.

Geography was going on in the Remove. A big map was unrolled on the blackboard. Mr. Lamb, with a pointer in his hand, was pointing out unpronounceable places in Eastern Europe. But he ceased to do so at once as that dog suddenly barked, and spun round from the blackboard.

The Greyfriars Remove at the moment were not giving Mr. Lamb a lot of attention.

Had Mr. Quelch, their old Form-master, been in charge, their attention would have been concentrated on that map, as if they loved geography. Quelch was the man to keep his Form up to the mark.

But the Pet Lamb was an easier proposition than Quelch.

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Vernon-Smith gave a start as the lower sash of Mr. Lamb's window was pushed up, without a sound. Dim as it was, the Bounder perceived the head and shoulders of his Form-master!

Harry Wharton & Co., in low tones, were discussing a coming Soccer match. Lord Mauleverer was yawning. Billy Bunter had been chewing toffee all through the lesson, till now—having come to the end of his supply of toffee. Other fellows seemed to be interested in anything but geography. Few were absorbing geographical knowledge.

But the Lamb did not seem to mind. Except on the rare occasions when he flew into a fearful temper, he lived up to his nickname of the Pet Lamb.

Herbert Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars, had been making signs to Billy Bunter—till the dog barked! Then the Bounder grinned and ceased to make signs to the fat ventriloquist of the Remove.

All the Remove fellows knew about Bunter's ventriloquism. His old Form-master, Quelch, had known. But Mr. Lamb, being new to Greyfriars, did not know, and did not dream of suspecting.

"Bow-wow! Boo-woo! Wooooh!" came the bark again.

Mr. Lamb stared round the Form-room, over his gold-rimmed glasses. Some of the Remove fellows, catching on to it that this was one of

Billy Bunter's ventriloquial tricks, chuckled. But so life-like was that bark that many fellows, not thinking of Bunter, fancied, like Mr. Lamb, that there really was a dog in the Form-room.

"Wharton!" exclaimed Mr. Lamb.

"Oh! Yes, sir!" answered the captain of the Remove.

"There is a dog here! Someone has brought a dog into the Form-room! Please drive it out at once, Wharton!"

"Oh! Ye-e-es, sir!" stammered Harry.

He rose to his feet. It was not easy to carry out Mr. Lamb's command, and, having caught the fat grin on Billy Bunter's podgy face, he guessed that there was no dog in the Remove-room—only the bark! However, he went round the room, looking for the dog that was not there.

Gurrrrrg! came a sudden, horrible snarling growl.

It came—or seemed to come—from directly behind Mr. Lamb, as he stood watching Wharton in search of the non-existent dog.

"Oh!" gasped Mr. Lamb.

He almost leaped clear of the floor in his surprise and alarm. That savage growl sounded as if it came

from a vicious dog, about to snap—and Mr. Lamb did not want his calves sampled. He fairly bounded, his elbow coming with a bang against the blackboard.

The easel rocked. There was a terrific crash as it went over, easel, blackboard, map, and all.

Crash! Clatter! Crash!

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled all the Remove.

Most, if not all of them, had tumbled by this time.

The Remove fellows knew that the Bounder, who had a feud on with the new master, bribed Billy Bunter with jam tarts and doughnuts to play ventriloquial tricks on the unwary Lamb. So they guessed that the fat ventriloquist was at it again. Lamb's startled bound, and the crash of the blackboard, made them yell. This was better than geography!

"He, he, he!" gurgled Billy Bunter.

"Oh!" gasped the Lamb. "Where—where is that dog? Where—" He stared round him; but that dog seemed to have borrowed the cloak of darkness of the ancient giant-killer, for it was completely invisible.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wharton! Can you see the dog?"

"N-n-no, sir!"

"What boy brought a dog into the Form-room? I demand to know his name at once!" exclaimed Mr. Lamb.

The Pet Lamb's usual amiable and docile look had vanished from his face. His brows were knitted and his eyes glinting.

He was annoyed and getting exasperated, and at such times the Lamb could be very unpleasant.

Generally, the Remove ragged almost as much as they liked. Mr. Lamb was art master at Greyfriars, and he was only taking the Remove during Mr. Quelch's absence. The Remove rather considered themselves entitled to rag a master who wore a velvet coat and his hair long—and, as a rule, the Lamb was amiable. But when his temper did break out he was more like a tiger than a lamb—and his look showed that it was breaking out now.

"Bow-wow!" came the bark again.

Mr. Lamb glared round.

Bob Cherry gave the fat ventriloquist a nudge. The danger signals were plain enough to be seen, and in Bob's opinion it was time for the fat Owl to chuck it.

"Shut up, you fat ass!" whispered Bob.

"Yah!" was Billy Bunter's elegant reply.

"You're making the Lamb fearfully wild!" whispered Frank Nugent.

"Who cares?" grinned Bunter.

"Lamb may spot you!" breathed Johnny Bull.

"Oh!"

Mr. Lamb, pointer in hand, was going round the Form-room. His look indicated that that dog—when he found it—was going to get a terrific swipe from the pointer. In the circumstances, however, he was not likely to find it.

"Carry on, Bunter!" whispered Vernon-Smith.

"I—I say, Smithy, suppose—"

"You fat ass, it's as safe as houses. Carry on!"

Billy Bunter blinked at Mr. Lamb through his big spectacles. The art master was rooting round the Form-room, puzzled and angry, glaring into every corner for the imaginary dog.

He was not even looking at the juniors. Clearly, he had not the faintest suspicion that that bark was produced by a member of his Form.

Encouraged by that certainty, the fat ventriloquist carried on.

"Bow-wow-wow!" came the bark again. It was exactly the bark of Dr. Locke's Yorkshire terrier; though how that terrier could have wandered into a Form-room, and where he was, if he had, mystified Mr. Lamb.

This time the bark came—or, at least, appeared to come—from behind the Form-master's high desk.

Mr. Lamb made a rush towards the desk, and rushed round it, the pointer uplifted.

The Remove watched him, with grinning faces.

The uplifted pointer did not descend. There was nothing, except the Form-master's high chair, for it to descend upon! It remained suspended in the air, while Mr. Lamb stared blankly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bolsover major jumped up.

Excitement in Plenty for HARRY WHARTON & CO., the Chums of GREYFRIARS.

"Shall we look for the dog, sir?" he exclaimed. This was a chance of turning the Form-room into a state of wild confusion that was not to be missed.

"Yes, shall we, sir?" exclaimed Peter Todd.

"Yes, let's!" exclaimed half a dozen fellows.

There was a rush of a mob of Removees out of their places. Bolsover major barged into the high chair at the master's desk, and sent it over with a crash! That was the beginning!

But, as it happened, it was also the end! The Lamb was in one of his tantrums by this time! As the chair crashed over, he whirled round the pointer, and it came across Bolsover's shoulders with a terrific swipe!

"Yarooooop!" roared Bolsover major. His bellow rang far beyond the Form-room.

"Go to your places!" thundered Mr. Lamb.

"We—we're looking for that dog, sir," stammered Peter Todd.

Swipe!

"Oh crumbs!"

Toddy shot back to his place. So did the other fellows. With the Lamb handling the pointer in that style, it was evidently no time for a rag. Mr. Lamb was left to hunt for that mysterious dog, unassisted by members of his Form.

MYSTERIOUS!

MR. LAMB gripped the pointer in his hand, breathing hard.

The Remove fellows, sitting in their places now, watched him curiously.

Herbert Vernon-Smith had a sneer on his face.

The Bounder had fallen foul of Mr. Lamb the first day of term, and Lamb had dealt with him with a heavy hand. Smithy's was not a forgiving nature.

Really he had a grievance. Lamb, as a rule, seemed so docile, and such an amiable ass, that fellows were really encouraged to rag him. Generally they got by with it. A man had no right, according to Smithy, to be a tame rabbit one minute and a tiger the next.

In fact, the keen and suspicious Bounder declared that Lamb's amiable simplicity was only a pose—spoof from beginning to end—and that underneath it he was as sharp as a needle, and had a savage temper. Though why the art master should take the trouble to play a part, even the Bounder did not profess to explain.

Anyhow, it was clear that the Pet Lamb was now in one of his rare but savage tempers. That dog, if the angry Lamb found it, was not to be envied. With the pointer gripped in his hand Mr. Lamb searched through the Form-room, ready to swipe at the terrier as soon as that terrier was spotted.

He came at length to the wall-cupboard at the end of the Form-room—a cupboard in the wall, that extended from floor to ceiling, where rolled maps and the blackboard and easel were kept when not in use. It was the only spot he had not searched, and it seemed as if the dog must be there. But that cupboard was locked, and the key was missing.

The Lamb tried the handle, and breathed harder. Then he turned and looked at his watching Form.

"Who has taken the key from this cupboard?"

No answer.

"Someone has locked a dog in this cupboard, and taken away the key!" said Mr. Lamb. "Who was it?"

Someone, it was clear, had abstracted the key from the lock, whether he had locked a dog in the cupboard or not! And that the dog was in the cupboard seemed to be demonstrated the next moment by a bark from the interior—or which, at all events, sounded as if it came from the interior of the map-cupboard.

"Bow-wow-wow-wooh!"

Lamb's eyes glinted over his gold-rimmed glasses.

"Wharton!" he rapped.

"Yes, sir!" answered Harry.

"Do you know what has become of the key of this cupboard?"

"No, sir!"

"You should know, as head boy, Wharton. You will take a hundred lines."

Harry Wharton compressed his lips and said nothing. He had no

doubt that the Bounder had found an opportunity of abstracting that key, as a part of his scheme in setting on the Remove ventriloquist to worry the Lamb. But he certainly did not intend to make that suggestion to Mr. Lamb.

"Bow-wow-ow-oooh!" came the bark again.

Mr. Lamb grasped the handle of the cupboard door and gave it a powerful wrench. But he could not wrench open a locked door.

"Bow-wow-wow!"

Crash!

Mr. Lamb brought the pointer down on the cupboard door—perhaps to scare the troublesome dog into silence, or perhaps in sheer temper.

There was a chuckle in the Remove.

"I say, you fellows, ain't he shirty?" gurgled Billy Bunter.

"The shirtyfulness is terrific!" grinned Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"He, he, he!"

Mr. Lamb spun round from the cupboard. He seemed to be almost foaming by this time. The Remove became grave again at once, as his angry eyes glared at them—with one exception.

Billy Bunter was grinning from one fat ear to the other, as Lamb's eyes fell on him.

"Bunter!" rapped Mr. Lamb, striding towards the Form.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter, ceasing to grin on the spot. "I—I say, it—it wasn't me, sir—I never—I wasn't—I didn't—"

"You are laughing, Bunter!"

"Oh! No, sir! I—I've never laughed in my life!" gasped Bunter.

"I—I—I mean to say—Yaroooh!"

Swipe!

"Yooo-hooooop!"

Swipe, swipe!

Mr. Lamb's pointer established contact with the plumpest shoulders at Greyfriars.

Billy Bunter roared on his top note.

The Lamb, seeming to find solace in it, swiped, and swiped again, and the unfortunate fat Owl bounded out of his place, yelling.

"Yaroooh! Stoppit! Oh crikey! It wasn't me—Yaroooh! I never—whoop! I say—Oh scissors! Whoooh-ooop!"

There was a tap at the Form-room door, and it opened.

Dr. Locke, the headmaster of Greyfriars, appeared there.

Mr. Lamb, striding after the yelling fat Owl, stopped suddenly.

Billy Bunter went on yelling. He had plenty of cause to yell, and he yelled, and put his beef into it.

Dr. Locke raised his eyebrows.

This was the first time he had seen Mr. Lamb in one of his tantrums. It seemed to surprise him, and evidently did not please him.

"Mr. Lamb!" said the Head coldly.

It was astonishing to the juniors to see how suddenly and swiftly the art master changed back from a tiger into a lamb. His face had been quite furious; but even before the Head finished speaking, that look vanished as if wiped off by a duster, and he was the meek Lamb again.

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"The noise from this Form-room, Mr. Lamb, can be heard in other Form-rooms," said Dr. Locke. "Are you having trouble with Mr. Quelch's Form?"

The Head gave the Remove a look. If it was a rag on that simple new master, Mr. Lamb, that had called him away from the Sixth Form room, the raggers had a bad time coming.

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!" came from Bunter, crescendo.

"Be silent, Bunter!" snapped Dr. Locke.

"Yow-ow-ow! Yes, sir! Yow-ow! I'm fearfully hurt, sir—Wow! I've got a fearful—wow—pain, sir! Wow!"

"I shall cane you, if you are not silent, Bunter!"

"Oh crikey!"

Billy Bunter contrived to be silent.

"Now, Mr. Lamb, what—"

"I am sorry, sir, that you should have been disturbed by noise from this Form-room!" bleated the Lamb—quite the old Pet Lamb again. "There is a dog locked in the cupboard—"

"What?"

"I think it must be your Yorkshire terrier, sir—it certainly sounded like it—"

"Upon my word! Have you actually heard a dog bark from that cupboard, Mr. Lamb?" exclaimed the Head.

"Yes, sir, several times, and—"

Dr. Locke stalked majestically across to the cupboard at the end of the Remove room. He grasped the door-handle. Then he made the interesting discovery that the door was locked.

He turned, and surveyed the Remove with majestic wrath.

"Where is the key of this cupboard?" he thundered.

"There's a key on the floor, sir," said Vernon-Smith, pointing to it. The Bounder did not add that he had kicked it along the floor to where it lay.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed the Head. "Mr. Lamb, will you kindly hand me the key?"

Mr. Lamb kindly handed him the key.

The Head inserted it in the cupboard lock. The whole Remove watched him breathlessly. Lamb had told him that there was a dog in that cupboard, as he believed there was. All the Remove knew that there was not. They wondered what the Head was going to say when he looked into an empty cupboard for a dog that was not there.

Dr. Locke pulled the door open.

"Peter! Peter!" he called. Peter was the name of the terrier.

Peter, had he been there, certainly would have scampered out. But Peter was not there to scamper. There was no response.

"Peter! Peter!" repeated the Head.

Silence from the cupboard.

Dr. Locke, puzzled, put his head into the cupboard. He peered into roomy recesses. He moved several rolled wall-maps that stood on end. But he failed to discover Peter, or any other canine quadruped.

He breathed rather hard, as he turned towards the art master.

"There is no dog in this cupboard, Mr. Lamb," he said distinctly.

"My dear sir!" exclaimed Mr. Lamb. "I heard the barking—it interrupted my class. There certainly is a dog in the cupboard—"

"Will you kindly look, Mr. Lamb?"

Mr. Lamb looked.

The expression on his face was quite extraordinary when he had peered into every corner of a cupboard that certainly did not contain a dog. Having explored that cupboard, Mr. Lamb stood blinking blankly.

"I—I—I—" he stammered. "There certainly was a dog in the Form-room, and I—I certainly thought—"

"Evidently a mistake," said the Head icily; and he majestically paced back to the Form-room door and departed.

Mr. Lamb blinked into the cupboard again. Then he shut it and turned to his Form. He was evidently a very puzzled and perplexed man. In silence, he set up the blackboard again, and geography was resumed.

Vernon-Smith made a sign to Billy Bunter; but he made signs in vain. The fat Owl was wriggling painfully from the pointer. Bunter was not going to risk getting any more of that pointer. There were no more mysterious barks and growls in the Remove room that afternoon.

ANY PORT IN A STORM!

"RAIN!" said Bessie Bunter, miserably.

Heavy spots were falling.

"Who's got an umbrella?" asked Bessie.

Nobody had!

"Isn't that like boys?" inquired Miss Bunter, in crushing tones.

Five boys in the happy party made no reply.

Really, the Famous Five of the Greyfriars Remove could not quite see why it was any more like boys than like girls. Nobody had an umbrella. Really and truly, umbrellas were more in a girl's line than a boy's line! Seldom, if ever, did Greyfriars fellows take their walks abroad on half-holidays armed with umbrellas!

Nobody had supposed that it was going to rain, least of all Bessie Bunter, who would not have been a mile from Cliff House School on an unsheltered path by the cliffs if she had suspected that rain was to come.

It had been a fine though cold January afternoon when Harry Wharton & Co. walked over to Cliff House from Greyfriars. It had been quite fine and, indeed sunny when Marjorie Hazeldene and Clara Trevlyn joined them for a walk by the cliffs. Not having met since the Christmas holidays, the Famous Five were very pleased to see their girl friends of Cliff House again, and if not equally joyful to see Miss Elizabeth Bunter, they were at least meticulously polite to that attractive and plump young lady.

Bessie Bunter had enjoyed the walk

so far. Bob Cherry had come provided with a box of chocolates, for light refreshment during the walk. Miss Bunter had offered to carry the box—nay, insisted upon doing so. Having generously supplied the whole party with one each, Miss Bunter had dropped behind, enjoying her own company and that of the box of chocolates. So the walk had been quite a success so far, from Miss Bunter's point of view.

Now there was a change. The chocolates had gone—the rain had come! And there was no umbrella within a mile!

"You didn't think of bringing an umbrella, any of you?" asked Miss Bunter, surveying the Famous Five through the big spectacles that were so like her brother Billy's.

"Never thought of it," admitted Bob Cherry.

"The thankfulness was not terrific," confessed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"We don't lug umbrellas about, as a rule," remarked Johnny Bull.

"And it didn't look like rain!" said Frank Nugent.

"Lovely afternoon when we started," remarked Harry Wharton. Miss Bunter sniffed.

"And you never brought one, Marjorie?" she said.

"No, Bessie," answered Miss Hazeldene. "It looked so fine——"

"And you didn't Clara?" continued Miss Bunter. "You haven't got an umbrella, Clara?"

"Not unless I slipped one into my bag and forgot it," said Miss Clara.

Whereat there were smiles. Miss Clara's bag was about large enough to hold a couple of handkerchiefs. The remark, evidently, was sarcastic.

"We had better walk fast," suggested Marjorie.

"Run!" suggested Clara.

"If you think I can run——" hooted Bessie.

There was a pause. Nobody really thought that Bessie could run—not very far, at any rate. Bessie, like Brother Billy, had a lot of weight to carry.

"It's coming down," said Bessie, as more drops fell and splashed on the chalky cliff road.

"Can't expect it to go up," remarked Miss Clara—"rain never does!"

"Cat!" said Bessie.

"Hem!" said Harry Wharton. "We'd better walk as fast as we can! After all, it's only a mile back to Cliff House."

"If you think I can walk a mile in the rain, drenched to the skin, and my hat spoiled, I think you're a very selfish boy," said Miss Bunter.

"Oh!"

"Raining cats and dogs, and nobody—not one of you—thought of bringing an umbrella!" said Miss Bunter, with ineffable scorn.

"But you didn't, either," said Frank Nugent—a rather unfortunate remark. It was true that Miss Bunter hadn't; but sweet reasonableness was not counted among Bessie's gifts.

"That's like a boy," said Miss Bunter. "Arguing while we stand soaking in the rain! I expect I shall catch a cold! Of course, nobody cares!"

"What about looking for a shelter till it blows over?" suggested Harry Wharton.

"Where is there anything?" demanded Miss Bunter indignantly. "There's nothing that I can see."

"Let's look for one."

"Lot of good looking for one when there isn't one! I suppose that's what a boy calls common sense!"

"Well, we've got to walk through the rain or else find a shelter," pointed out the captain of the

or three fishing-boats could be seen running for the bay at Pegg. Far out at sea a trawler, probably engaged on mine-sweeping, loomed dimly through the mist. A steamer was half-seen like a ghost on the misty horizon.

Inland, there were fields, stretching away from the cliffs to Friardale Wood, and the village of Friardale and Greyfriars School.

No buildings were on that road, save a few summer bungalows dotted

GREAT HEAVYWEIGHT CONTEST!

Bunter Beats Snoop! TERRIFIC SCRIMMAGE!

THE great fight between Bunter and Snoop (over a slight matter of two tarts and a doughnut) was staged in the gym last night. Bunter was pushed into the ring by a dozen fellows and Snoop was dragged in to meet him by a dozen more. They backed away in order to give each other plenty of elbow room. Bunter said: "Yah!" and Snoop said: "I'll slaughter him!"

A great crowd cheered vociferously as the bell went for

ROUND ONE.—Bunter and Snoop both hurriedly left the ring and were pushed back. Snoop circled round Bunter. Bunter circled round Snoop. They both circled round each other. Bunter paused to tell his admirers what he proposed to do to Snoop in half a minute. Snoop squirmed about by himself in a corner and had a short consultation with his seconds. The gong went at this point. Round even.

ROUND TWO.—Bunter opened up a large gash in the atmosphere with a right hook, which travelled in the opposite direction from Snoop. Bunter's glasses were knocked off by this and he spent the rest of this round looking for them. Snoop was being held in the ring by his seconds. Round even.

ROUND THREE.—Bunter announced that he was going to make Snoop cringe. He sidled cautiously up to Snoop, who sidled away and let out a half-swing, which Bunter easily dodged. They both sidled away from each other and remained for some time at opposite corners

of the ring, fighting fiercely with the surrounding air.

ROUND FOUR.—Nothing of any note occurred in this round, which finished even.

ROUND FIVE.—As far as could be seen, there was no activity on either front. Bunter seemed to be asleep. Snoop was telling a reporter what he proposed to do with Bunter. Even.

ROUND SIX.—Bunter was awakened and fought so furiously that he tripped over himself and sprained on the floor. He stopped there. Snoop had not left his corner. Round even.

ROUND SEVEN.—Snoop came for Bunter, who retreated hurriedly until, brought to bay by the ropes, he turned on Snoop, who then also retreated. No blow had been struck when the gong went. Round even.

ROUND EIGHT.—Snoop adopted a doubled-up posture and crept about the ring like a leopard waiting to pounce. Bunter stood and watched him. There were moments when it seemed that the two would come into contact, but the danger passed and the round finished even, without violence from either side.

ROUND NINE (AND LAST).—Stimulated by the offer of a feed if he beat Snoop, Bunter rushed across the ring and hit Snoop into the dressing-room for six. Unfortunately, the gong for the start of the round had not yet sounded, so Bunter was disqualified and Snoop, when he recovers consciousness, will be the winner.

Interviewed after the fight, Mr. Skinner, the winner's second, remarked: "Our man had the fight in his pocket the whole time. He was saving himself up magnificently, and was not even winded once. If he recovers, we shall match him with Bolsover major."

One can almost hope he won't recover—for his own sake!

Remove. "I can't think of anything else."

"Do boys ever think at all?" asked Bessie.

"Hem! Come on!" said Harry, hastily.

Even Bessie Bunter seemed to realise that no useful purpose would be served by standing still, with the rain coming down more thickly every minute. The party turned back towards distant Cliff House.

Beyond the edge of the chalky cliffs the sea boomed on the beach, and a misty vapour thickened over the North Sea. The weather had changed emphatically for the worse, and two

about, all locked up in the winter. It really was not a nice spot to be caught in a sudden downpour of rain, with a total absence of umbrellas.

So far as seven members of the party could see, the situation was not to be improved by grouching. But Miss Bunter seemed to find some comfort in it.

"I'm getting wet!" she announced, when the walkers had covered about fifty yards.

"What we really wanted was some dry rain," remarked Miss Clara.

"Cat!" said Bessie crossly.

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"What about walking a little faster?" murmured Marjorie.

"I can't race!" said Bessie. "I think somebody might find a shelter I really think that! But don't mind me! It doesn't matter if I catch my death of cold! I know that!"

Harry Wharton looked round through the dropping rain.

It was not very bad yet—but clearly it was going to be bad. The Famous Five and two of the Cliff House girls would have preferred a rapid scamper back to Cliff House. But rapid scampers were not in Bessie's line—she marched along at her usual easy rate, and the general pace had to be accommodated to that of the slowest of the party. And, at any rate, it was clear that the party were going to be caught in a fearful downpour before they were half-way to Cliff House. So if any sort of a shelter was available, it was a case of any port in a storm.

"What about that chalet—it is called Sea View—somewhere along this road?" asked Marjorie.

"Shut up at this time of the year," answered Harry.

"I'm not sure of that! I've heard that men were there digging out an air-raid shelter in the holidays," said Marjorie. "That looks as if somebody was going to live there. If anybody was there, they'd be sure to let us step in out of the rain."

"It's some distance off the road," said Harry, dubiously. "May as well try, I suppose—there's nothing else anywhere near here."

"Buck up!" grunted Johnny Bull. "The sooner the better, if we're going to!"

The party moved on. They stopped at last at a roadside fence, which enclosed about an acre of ground, dotted here and there with trees and thickets of hawthorn.

Lying a considerable distance back from the road was a timber building, built in imitation of the style of a Swiss chalet, with a big wooden veranda in front, that in fine weather gave a wide view over the cliffs and the sea.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Somebody's there!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

He pointed to a spiral of smoke that rose from a chimney in the steeply slanting roof.

"Oh, good!" said Harry. "We'll try it on!"

There was a gate in the fence.

Harry Wharton opened it, and the party passed through. The path up to the house was wet and muddy, the gravel that had once covered it having sunk away in the earth. It was lined on either side by poplar-trees, now weeping in the rain.

The damp party tramped and squelched up that long path, and reached the door of the chalet, which gave on the veranda.

Bob Cherry grasped the knocker.

Bang!

Bob never had a very light touch. His bang on the knocker rang and echoed through the house, over the gardens, and along the cliff road.

Any occupant of that building must have heard, unless he was stone

deaf. But the door was not opened, and there was no sound of a movement within.

Bang, bang!

"Go it!" said Johnny Bull. "Make 'em think it's an air raid, and bombs dropping; then they may come out to cut into their shelter!"

"Fathead!" said Bob. "Got to make them hear, if they're at home!" Bang!

It seemed that the tenant of the chalet was not at home. If he had ears to hear, he could hardly fail to be aware that somebody was at the door—if he was there! Apparently he was not.

The party looked at one another. Under the slanting veranda roof they were out of the falling rain, though the wind from the sea blew in plenty of wet on them. But the idea of getting shelter at Sea View was, evidently, off.

"Nobody at home!" said Harry. "Better push on!"

"Shan't!" said Bessie.

"Oh!"

"This is better than the rain!" said Bessie Bunter. "I'm not going to take another step in the rain! So there!"

And the party, in a group by the door, sheltered by the roof, waited—while the rain came down thicker and faster, till at last it was falling in sheets; and the hardiest member of the party was glad that he was not plugging through it on the open cliff road.

MR. PARKER OBJECTS!

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

The party had been a quarter of an hour or more in the veranda of the seaside chalet. They got as close to the door as they could, as the rain blew in on the wind.

Bob, who generally found it difficult to keep still, moved about, tramping on wet planks. He was at the end of the veranda, at the side of the house, when he caught sight of a figure in the wet gardens.

Not ten yards from the chalet was a bunch of poplars, and among the trees was what looked like an extensive mound of earth. Turf had been laid over it, but it was easy to see that it was not a natural mound, but of recent construction.

Bob was glancing towards it, when, to his surprise, he saw a man emerge from apparently nowhere, under the weeping poplars.

For a moment he stood quite astonished.

Then he understood. That turf-covered mound of earth was cover and camouflage over an air-raid shelter. He remembered what Marjorie had said—and had no doubt that what he was looking at was the air-raid shelter—and that the man who had so suddenly appeared in sight had emerged from the dugout.

He was a stocky man, with pimples on his face; not very agreeable to look at. Bob wondered whether he was the tenant of the chalet. If so, his reappearance on the surface of the

earth was a spot of luck for the party caught in the rain.

The stocky man gave a grunt, which Bob heard, as a splash of rain descended on him; then he turned up his coat collar and came towards the building at a run, evidently anxious to get out of the rain.

Bob stepped back to his friends.

"Somebody's coming!" he said. "The jolly old tenant was down in his jolly old dugout, getting ready for Hitler's next, I suppose. Here he comes."

The stocky man came up into the veranda so quickly that he did not see the party sheltering there till he almost ran into them. He had a key in his hand, ready to unlock the door.

But at the sight of the little crowd of schoolboys and schoolgirls, he stopped dead, staring at them angrily, and dropped the key back into his pocket.

"Who the dickens are you?" he exclaimed rudely. "What do you fancy you're doing here?"

"Sheltering from the rain, if you don't mind!" answered Harry Wharton politely.

"I do mind!"

"Sheltering from the rain, all the same!" said Johnny Bull gruffly.

The stocky man looked at him.

"Don't give me any lip!" he grunted. "I don't want you here! Get out of this!"

The juniors looked at him and exchanged glances. Marjorie compressed her lips—Clara cheerfully turned up her nose. Bessie Bunter gave the man a glare through her spectacles that almost cracked them.

"Shan't!" said Bessie.

"What?"

"Think we're going out into that rain?" demanded Miss Bunter. "If you weren't a brute, you'd ask us inside the house!"

"Bessie dear!" murmured Marjorie. Clara chuckled.

The stocky man scowled.

"I've said get out!" he grunted. "I've had some of my chickens pinched! I don't want a mob of schoolboys around here!"

"Think we pinched your chickens?" hooted Johnny Bull.

"I shouldn't wonder if you did! Somebody did! Get out of it!" said the man with the pimples harshly.

"My dear man," said Harry Wharton quietly, "we'd go like a shot, but the girls can't go through this rain."

"No business of mine! Get going!"

"Hold on!" said Johnny Bull. "Before you give orders, my man, we'd like to know whether the place belongs to you. You don't look to me the sort of man to hire a place like this."

"Do you want your head cuffed?" asked the stocky man.

"Yes—if you can do it!" retorted Johnny. "Cuff away—and see how long it will take me to push your cheeky nose through the back of your cheeky head!"

"You haven't answered the question, my man!" said Harry Wharton, as the stocky man glared at Johnny.

"If you don't belong here, we've as much right here as you have!"

"I'm the caretaker!" grunted the stocky man. "Name of Parker, if you want to know! You can ask the tradespeople of Friardale, if you ain't satisfied. Now get out of it! I ain't having any more of my chickens pinched!"

"They don't usually have caretakers in these seaside bungs," said Johnny Bull.

"Well, there's one here, and I'm him!" grunted Mr. Parker. "Now will you get out of it?"

"No!" said Bessie Bunter.

was getting angry. He made a movement towards the cheery Bob.

"Hit him in the eye, Bob!" advised Miss Bunter.

"Eh?"

"Kick him!" said Bessie.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If he wasn't a beast, he would ask us inside to sit down, till the rain stops!" said Miss Bunter. "I dare say he only wants a tip! Give him half-a-crown—I would, only I haven't one."

The stocky man glared round the party. Then he glanced out at the cliff path that ran before the chalet

go, rain or no rain. Not so Bessie Bunter! Bessie wasn't going out in the rain! If that man was brute enough to want to drive schoolgirls out into a heavy rain, Bessie was prepared to hurl defiance in his teeth, so to speak.

"I'm not going!" said Bessie firmly. "If I were a boy, I'd knock him down. If my brother Billy was here, I'd ask him to thrash him. I'm not going, at any rate! I'll scratch him if he tries to make me, so there!"

As Bessie distinctly and definitely refused to budge, it was clearly im-



Mr. Lamb swiped and swiped, and Billy Bunter roared on his top note. Suddenly the door opened, and Dr. Locke appeared. It was the first time the headmaster had seen Mr. Lamb in one of his tantrums!

"Perhaps we'd better go," said Marjorie.

"You can go if you like!" said Bessie. "I'm not going out in the rain. If he tries to make me go, I'll scratch him!"

The stocky man stared at Miss Bunter and grinned for a moment.

Bessie glared defiance at him.

"We won't ask this sportsman to let us sit down inside," said Bob Cherry. "He doesn't seem frightfully hospitable. But, my dear chap, we're doing no harm in your jolly old veranda."

"I don't want you about my place!" grunted the stocky man.

"What a coincidence!" said Bob. "We don't want you about the place, if you come to that. It's really worse for us than for you—we're ever so much nicer than you are."

The stocky man's eyes glinted. He was surly and inhospitable; and he

at a distance. Then he turned back to the party, scowling.

"Look here, you've got to go!" he said. "I don't want you here, and I won't have it! Get out, before I turn you out!"

"Let us go, for goodness' sake!" said Marjorie.

"Shan't!" said Bessie. "Why don't you punch him, Bob Cherry? You're big enough to knock him spinning!"

Bob Cherry was feeling rather like acting on Bessie's advice. Mr. Parker was asking for a punch—begging for it. Still, if he was caretaker, in charge of Sea View, he was within his rights, surly and inhospitable as he was. Punching him would have been rather a high-handed proceeding.

To avoid a row, the Famous Five would have risked the rain, and Marjorie and Clara were anxious to

possible to go. But the stocky man was getting angrier and angrier.

Why he was so surly was quite a mystery, for even an inhospitable and bad-tempered man might have allowed a party of schoolboys, and especially schoolgirls, to remain under the shelter of the veranda roof. He could have gone into the house and left them to themselves, if he did not want their company indoors. The man seemed an unreasonably bullying brute. But whatever was his objection to the party remaining, it was plain that he was determined about it.

"Last time of asking!" he snarled. "Going or not?"

"We can't go and leave a girl here, and Miss Bunter won't go!" said Harry Wharton quietly. "Have a little sense!"

"Catch me going!" said Bessie. THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,666.

"Hit him in the eye, Bob! Kick him off the veranda!"

The stocky man made a stride at Harry Wharton, and grasped him by the shoulders.

"You first!" he snapped.

Evidently, his idea was to pitch the schoolboys out, one after another, no doubt supposing that the schoolgirls would follow.

But it was not so easy as he expected to pitch the schoolboys out.

Harry Wharton's eyes gleamed as the man grasped him.

"Hands off, please!" he said, still quietly.

Mr. Parker did not take his hands off. He wrenched the captain of the Remove towards the front steps of the veranda. That was enough—more than enough—for Harry Wharton! His clenched fist flashed out, catching the pimply man on a pimply chin!

Crash!

Mr. Parker went over backwards, as if he had been shot!

He thumped down on his back on the wet planks, spluttering.

Marjorie and Clara looked on breathlessly; Bessie Bunter gave a squeak of delight. The Co. gathered round, with grim faces.

"That's the stuff!" squeaked Bessie. "Give him some more! Roll him out in the rain! Kick him!"

For nearly a minute the man lay spluttering, evidently astonished and enraged to find himself where he was. Then he scrambled up, his face ablaze with rage. But he checked himself, as he was about to spring at the captain of the Remove.

The Co. stood ready to collar him, and it was borne in on his mind that if the juniors chose to resist he had no chance whatever of handling them—indeed, there were some in the party that he could not have handled singly. He stood panting and muttering; and then, turning away, drew the key from his pocket again, unlocked the door, and went into the house, slamming the door after him.

"Good riddance to bad rubbish!" said Bessie Bunter.

And that was that!

TROUBLE TO COME!

"NICE man!" remarked Bob.

"Cheeky cad!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Well, he's gone!" said Nugent. "Blow the rain—it's still coming down!"

It was a rather uncomfortable situation for the party. They would have been glad to go—very glad. But the rain was still coming down in torrents—and whatever the rest of the party wanted, Bessie Bunter was not going out in the rain.

Leaving the charming Elizabeth to herself was obviously impossible, so everybody had to stay. But, really, nobody was keen on putting his head out into that heavy rain.

"I suppose we're trespassing here, in a way!" said Harry. "But it can't be helped! We can't leave Bessie here!"

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"I should jolly well think not!" exclaimed Bessie indignantly. "And if you think I'm going out in this rain, you're silly, even for a boy."

"Well, it can't last for ever!" said Bob Cherry. "But I'm blessed if it doesn't look as if it's going to!"

"Blow!" said Johnny Bull.

"The blowfulness is terrific!" murmured the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Will this blessed rain ever stop?" asked Nugent.

Really, it looked as if it wouldn't!

There was a sound of an upstairs window opening. The juniors glanced up, but the roof of the veranda was in their way, and they could not see the upper window, or the man who had opened it. They did not hear it shut again.

"Must like fresh air, that chap, if he's sitting at the open window!" remarked Bob Cherry. "Not much of a view to-day."

"Blow the rain!"

"Bless the rain!"

"Have you got any more chocolates?" asked Miss Bunter.

"Sorry—no!"

"Any toffee?"

"No!"

"Any anything?"

"No!"

"Oh dear!" said Bessie.

The juniors looked out anxiously into the rain. Really, this was not a happy afternoon.

A figure came in sight from the direction of Friardale, plugging along under an umbrella.

It was the first pedestrian they had seen on the road over the cliffs, which was lonely in the winter.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob. "I believe I know that chap!"

"I think I've seen him!" said Harry.

They could see little of the man coming up the road, but there was something familiar in his aspect.

They watched him till he reached the gate in the fence, and then he turned towards the gate, and they all saw who he was.

The Pet Lamb!" exclaimed Bob.

"The Pet Lamb!" repeated Marjorie. "Who is that?"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"It's a Mr. Lamb, really—we call him the Pet Lamb!" he explained. "I say, he can't be coming here, can he?"

Mr. Lamb stood looking over the gate, with a sharp glance over his gold-rimmed glasses.

He must have seen the pimply man at the upper window, though Mr. Parker was out of the juniors' view. They saw that his glance was upward, at first; then he fixed his eyes on the group on the veranda.

At the distance, from the road, and in the shadow of the slanting veranda roof on a misty day, they were not easily seen, and Mr. Lamb did not seem to have noticed them at first. But he noticed them now.

"I daresay he's wondering what the dickens we're doing here!" said Frank Nugent.

"He can guess, if he's got any sense!" grunted Johnny Bull. "I suppose he's noticed that it's raining."

The juniors, seeing that Mr. Lamb had recognised them, capped him respectfully.

Mr. Lamb stood for several moments, staring at them hard—then he walked on, in the direction of Pegg, where Cliff House lay. In a few minutes he disappeared up the cliff road in the rain.

"Blessed if I didn't think he was coming here for a minute!" remarked Bob Cherry. "I suppose we haven't frightened him off, if he was?"

The window above was heard to close.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's another jolly old walker who likes the rain!" exclaimed Bob, a minute or two later.

From the direction of Friardale—the direction from which Mr. Lamb had come—a second pedestrian appeared.

He was wrapped in a raincoat, with a hat pulled low over his brows. He passed the gate without a glance towards the chalet, and evidently did not notice the juniors there.

But they all saw him, getting a clear view of his profile; and they all knew him at once; that olive-skinned face was not to be mistaken.

"That's Robinson!" said Bob.

"The Head's new chauffeur!" assented Harry Wharton.

"That's the second chap from Greyfriars who likes a walk in the rain!" remarked Bob.

Robinson disappeared towards Pegg, as Mr. Lamb had done. The cliff road was left solitary and deserted again.

The rain still came down heavily. The unhappy party in the veranda waited while the long minutes crawled by.

Presently the sound of the radio came from the building. The stocky man had closed the upper window after Mr. Lamb had passed. Now, it seemed he had turned on the wireless—probably a great relief to the solitude to a caretaker in such a lonely spot.

Half an hour dragged wearily by. Then at long last the heavy rain thinned down, and gradually stopped, and a glimmer of sunshine came out.

Then, at length, Miss Bunter announced that she was prepared to move. The rest of the party were glad to hear it.

The front door of the chalet opened and a pimply face looked out. The stocky man scowled at the Greyfriars fellows.

"You're still 'ere, are you?" he grunted.

"Just going, old bean!" answered Bob affably. "Thank you for having us!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You're a funny young cove, ain't you?" grunted Mr. Parker. "P'r'aps you won't feel so funny about it when I complain to your schoolmaster of this here trespass—and hitting a covey! You got trouble to come, and you can lay to that!"

"Brute!" said Bessie Bunter.

"What?"

"Pig!" said Bessie.

"Oh, my hat—come on!" said Harry hastily; and the party trooped

out of the veranda, the pimply man scowling after them as they went.

Half an hour more, and they were at Cliff House—where tea in the school-room comforted them for the tribulations of the walk on the cliffs. And as there was a cake, a pot of jelly, and two kinds of jam, Bessie Bunter beamed over the festive board and was in the best temper.

A RIFT IN THE LUTE!

"YOU fat ass——"
"Oh, really, Smithy——"
"You footling funk!"

"Look here——"
"I've a jolly good mind to boot you!"
"Beast!"

The Famous Five, coming up to Remove studies after their return from Cliff House, heard that cheery dialogue in the passage.

Herbert Vernon-Smith was addressing his compliments to William George Bunter, who was blinking at him uneasily through his big spectacles.

The Bounder was given to outbursts of temper rather like Mr. Lamb's, only a good deal more frequent.

Billy Bunter was uneasy—but he was obstinate. And Smithy was getting angrier and angrier.

"You fat, footling, frabjous, fat-headed frump——" went on the angry Bounder. "You footling, funky freak——"

"Look here, you cheeky beast——"
"Will you do it or not?" hooted the Bounder.

"No, I won't!" hooted back Bunter. "Why, I've said I wouldn't! Think I could tell a lie?"

"What!" gasped Smithy.

"Oh, my hat!" moaned Bob Cherry. "Hold me while I faint, you fellows!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter blinked round at the Famous Five. They gurgled. Certainly they approved wholeheartedly of a fellow not telling lies. But they could not help thinking that it was a sudden and startling change in William George Bunter.

George Washington, according to his own account, could not tell a lie. But Billy Bunter had never, so far, dreamed of following George's shining example. Billy Bunter not only could, but would, and did—often and often. Indeed, he was believed, in the Remove, never to tell anything else. When it came to fibbing, Goebbels was a mere also ran in comparison with Bunter!

"I say, you fellows, blessed if I see anything to cackle at!" said the fat Owl indignantly. "You fellows mayn't be so particular—but if you think I would tell a lie——"

"Help!"
"Besides, I should get whopped!" added Bunter, blinking at Smithy. "Of course, I don't care so much about that! Still, I don't want to be whopped!"

"There's the cat out of the bag!" remarked Johnny Bull.

"But what on earth's the row?" asked Bob. "What's up?"

"That fat ass is funking pulling Lamb's leg with his putrid ventriloquism!" snarled the Bounder.

"Oh! That's sense!" said Harry Wharton. "Enough's as good as a feast, Smithy!"

"Tain't exactly that!" said Bunter. "I'll make a dog bark, or a cat mew, in the Form-room, as often as Smithy likes. But I ain't going to trot out Quelch's bark any more. It's too jolly risky!"

"Oh! Sits the wind in that quarter!" grinned Bob Cherry. "Bunter seems to have more sense than you, Smithy!"

"The flabby funk!" growled

the most extraordinary effect on the Lamb.

It was the Bounder's idea to carry on with that stunt, having discovered so unexpected a weapon against the master whom he had set out to rag in every possible way.

But the Remove ventriloquist was jibbing.

"It's too jolly risky!" said Bunter, shaking his head. "Besides, I said I wouldn't. That detective chap, Ferrers Locke, is hunting for old Quelch, and they told him about it, and he came here to look into it. I don't know how he spotted me, but he did, and he knows it was me!"

BOLSOVER ON CHIVALRY!

Shock for Interviewer

OUR Special Interviewer found Bolsover major in the quad, and asked if he had any opinions about anything, and if not, why not. He told Bolsy he wanted to give our readers an idea of the views and opinions of a beastly bully.

"Who's a bully?" bawled Bolsy. "As a matter of fact, I can't bear bullying. I think it's disgraceful. I know it goes on here—in fact, there's an example of it going on over there now. That young ruffian Tubb, of the Third, is kicking young Myers of the Second. 'Scuse me a minute.' He went over and dragged Tubb away from his victim.

"If there's one thing that makes my blood boil," he continued, getting Tubb's head into chancery, "it's seeing a fellow bullying a smaller chap than himself. This young sweep ought to be ashamed of himself," he added, throwing Tubb to the ground and kicking him in the slats. "He wasn't even fighting the kid—he was kicking him. Now that's a thing that ought never to be allowed."

He picked Tubb up and dusted the ground with his inert form.

"In the days of chivalry," he said, as he bashed Tubb's frame on the ground, "any man of honour would have stepped in at once to prevent a stronger and bigger man attacking a fair maiden. I know Myers isn't a fair maiden, but the

principle's the same. And," he went on, throwing Tubb's remains into a litter-basket, "I intend to see that no man at Greyfriars hits a fellow smaller than himself."

"At the same time," he continued, turning and clutching hold of Myers, "I must say I don't think Tubb would have booted this kid unless he had been cheeky or something. I know these young sweeps are cheeky. They're sometimes cheeky to me!" He pounded and pummelled. "I believe in being absolutely fair to everyone, if possible. I've slaughtered Tubb for bullying, but I shan't allow fags to be cheeky."

"Now there are some fellows," he went on, kneeling on Myers and tearing him apart, "who thoroughly enjoy setting about fags. I'm not like that. This sort of thing," he said, booting what was left of Myers into the litter-basket, "pains me terribly, but I feel that chivalry requires it to be done. It's really to protect smaller fellows—that's all. For instance, you are much smaller than I am, and I feel it would be good for you to have some sort of lesson against accusing fellows unjustly of being bullies—if you see what I mean?"

At this point, he grasped Our Special Interviewer, and we had to pick this manuscript out of the remains in the litter-basket. But getting news is always an arduous business, and we're used to it.

P.S.—We have a vacancy on our staff for a Special Interviewer. Salary, two doughnuts per week and commission. Applicants should state age, weight, previous experience, and measurement of muscles. Don't all apply at once.

Smithy. "It frightens Lamb out of his seven senses when he hears Quelch's voice about the place—and that fat idiot can imitate it to a T. You know it scares Lamb!"

The Famous Five were well aware of that. For whatever mysterious reason it might be, they knew that Lamb had been startled out of his wits by the fat ventriloquist's reproduction of the missing Form-master's voice. It was all the more astonishing, because Lamb was supposed never to have met Mr. Quelch and to be, therefore, unacquainted with his voice.

But astonishing as it was, there was no doubt about the fact. The sound of Quelch's voice, giving the impression that Quelch was at hand, had on several occasions produced

"Locke's gone back to London long ago!" grunted the Bounder.

"Yes. But if it happened again, they'd tell him again!" argued Bunter. "And then I should get landed with the Head. I should get a flogging! Not that I care much about that, but having told Locke I wouldn't do it any more, of course I can't. It would be telling a lie!"

"Bunter couldn't do that, Smithy," said Bob Cherry gravely.

"Of course I couldn't!" agreed Bunter. "I never have!"

"Oh crikey!"

"And I never will!" said Bunter firmly. "I'm a bit more particular about such things than Smithy! Anything else—not that!"

The Bounder glared at Billy

Bunter as if he could have eaten him.

"You fat funk, you mean you're afraid of a whopping!" he snarled. "Go and eat coke, you flabby freak!"

Vernon-Smith stamped into his study. Whether it was because he couldn't tell a lie, or because he was afraid of a flogging, it was clear that the fat ventriloquist was not going to reproduce the kidnapped Form-master's voice any more. Smithy—much to his disappointment and chagrin—had to give up that stunt for good.

Billy Bunter rolled to the door of Study No. 4 after the Bounder. He blinked into that study.

"I say, Smithy—" he squeaked.

"Get out!"

"I say, old chap, don't be shirty, you know!" urged Bunter. "I'm not going to frighten the Lamb with Quelch's bark any more, but anything else—"

"Shut that door!"

"But I'm tea-ing with you, old chap!" exclaimed Bunter. "I'm going to— Yoo-hoo-hooooop!"

A cushion swiped in the doorway.

Billy Bunter staggered across the passage, roaring.

There was a chuckle in the passage.

Billy Bunter had tea'd in Smithy's study regularly every day since those ventriloquial stunts had started. Now the horn of plenty had suddenly run dry. If there was going to be no ventriloquism, there was going to be no tuck!

"Ow! Oh crikey! Beast!" gasped Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows, fancy that!" exclaimed Bunter indignantly. "I've a jolly good mind to go into that study and mop it up with that cad Smithy!"

"Do!" urged Bob. "We'll wait here and gather up what's left of you—if there's anything!"

"Oh, really, Cherry! I say, I haven't had my tea!" said Bunter. "My postal order hasn't come! I was expecting a postal order to-day from one of my titled relations, you know!"

"That's the chap who cannot tell a lie!" remarked Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, it's pretty thick Smithy letting me down like this, after all I've done for him!" said Bunter. "Which of you fellows is going to lend me half-a-crown till my postal order comes?"

"The whichfulness is terrific!" grinned Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Beasts!" said Bunter.

He rolled back to the doorway of Study No. 4. He blinked very cautiously round the door, ready to dodge.

"I say, Smithy, old chap—Beast!"

Bunter's fat head was jerked back just in time, as a cushion flew. The cushion missed by an inch, whizzed across the passage, and dropped at the opposite wall.

Billy Bunter's eyes gleamed behind his spectacles. Evidently there was

not the faintest hope of tea in Smithy's study that day.

But the indignant Owl knew how to get even with the ungrateful Bounder.

"Vernon-Smith!" bleated a voice so exactly like the Lamb's that it made the Famous Five jump as they heard it. "Vernon-Smith! How dare you throw a cushion at a boy in the passage? Take a hundred lines, Vernon-Smith!"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bob.

Really, it was weird to hear the fat ventriloquist reproduce the Lamb's bleat, as accurately as he could reproduce Quelch's bark! Bunter could do these things.

There was an angry grunt in Study No. 4. The Bounder evidently took that voice at face value, so to speak, and had no doubt that the Lamb was there.

"Do you hear me, Vernon-Smith?" bleated Bunter. "Answer me at once, you ill-mannered and disrespectful boy!"

"Yes, sir!" came almost in a hiss from the study, and Harry Wharton & Co. grinned.

"Take those lines down to my study before preparation, Vernon-Smith!" bleated the Lamb's voice.

"Very well, sir."

The Bounder's scowling face appeared at the doorway of Study No. 4, looking out. He almost fell down with astonishment as he saw that Mr. Lamb was not in the passage.

"What—" he gasped.

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

"Oh!" gasped Smithy, catching on. "Bunter! Why, I'll—"

"Oh crikey! Keep off, you beast!" yelled Bunter, in alarm. "It wasn't me— Oh crumbs! I say, you fellows, keep him off!"

Billy Bunter dodged round the Famous Five with the angry Bounder in pursuit.

The chums of the Remove grasped him, grinning.

"Hold on, old bean!" chuckled Bob. "You were asking Bunter for a spot of ventriloquism—now you've got it. What are you grousing about?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let go, you fools!" yelled the Bounder.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Better cut, Bunter!" said Harry Wharton, laughing.

That advice was too good not to be taken. Bunter cut—and vanished out of the Remove passage, while the Co. held Smithy. After which the Bounder favoured the grinning five with the blackest of scowls, stamped back into his study, and slammed the door with a slam that rang the length of the Remove passage.

CAUGHT!

"Oh gad!" breathed Vernon-Smith.

His heart jumped. He shut off a flash-lamp swiftly.

It was rotten luck for Smithy. He was in Mr. Lamb's study. He knew that the Lamb was out. Otherwise, he would not have been there.

Smithy was a cautious fellow on the warpath. He had ascertained, before he paid that surreptitious visit to the Lamb's study, that the Lamb had gone out that afternoon and that he had not yet come in.

The early winter darkness had closed down, and all Greyfriars fellows were within gates, and the school gates were closed and locked. But masters were a law unto themselves, and Lamb, of course, as a master, had a key to the masters' private gate. He might come in any minute—but the Bounder did not need many minutes in his study, and it looked like a good chance.

In his pocket Smithy had a bundle of Chinese crackers, which he had unearthed from his study cupboard. That bundle he was going to pack into the study fireplace, where the fire was laid, ready for the Lamb to put a match to it when he came in. Last term Price of the Fifth had played that trick on his Form-master, Prout, and Smithy remembered it, when he was turning over in his mind ways and means of getting back at the Lamb.

But Smithy's luck was out.

He was rather glad that he had not yet got going with that trick, when he heard the Lamb's bleat in the passage outside.

Evidently the Lamb had come in—at an unlucky moment for the Bounder. He had done nothing in that study so far, which was so much to the good in the circumstances; but when the Lamb found him he could hardly fail to guess why he was there.

And Smithy did not trust to the Lamb's docile temper at all. He had had a sample of Mr. Lamb's temper at its worst—which was the cause of his present feud. Smithy believed that Lamb's simple and amiable outward aspect was merely a pose, which covered a hard, sharp, and bitter nature. Certainly the Lamb's temper, when it did break out, was distinctly unpleasant.

Smithy expected trouble, if the Lamb caught him there. Lamb might pretend, if he liked, to be an amiable ass; but Smithy, as he fancied at least, knew him better than that.

So the sound of the Lamb's bleat in the passage was alarming.

"A very disagreeable afternoon, Mr. Capper—very!" the Lamb was saying. "I was caught in the rain—fortunately, very fortunately, I had my umbrella. I am somewhat susceptible to the weather. It was very fortunate that I had my umbrella."

"Very!" came Mr. Capper's reply, in the slightly amused tone in which the other members of the staff often addressed the innocent Lamb. "I am very glad you did not get wet, Mr. Lamb."

"The fact is, I did get a little wet, notwithstanding the umbrella," said Mr. Lamb. "I am going to change my shoes at once. I think it is always best to be very careful in such matters—I am so susceptible to colds. I am not a very strong man. I have often envied you your robust health."

The Bounder's lip curled bitterly as he heard that from outside the door.

He had felt the angry grip of the Lamb in one of his tempers, and it had been a grip of iron. The Lamb was twice as strong as Capper, and the Bounder knew it, if the master of the Fourth did not.

He heard Mr. Capper laugh.

"Lose no time, my dear Lamb—you cannot be too careful, as you say," he said. "I must not delay you."

The Fourth Form master went on down the passage.

Lamb's hand was on the door-handle the next moment. And in that moment the Bounder, without stopping to think, ducked behind a big desk that stood across a corner of the study.

If Lamb was only coming in to change his shoes, and then going to Common-room to tea with the other masters, it was likely that he would be only a few minutes in the study, and the Bounder had every chance of remaining out of sight for those few minutes and remaining undiscovered. It was a chance worth trying, by a fellow who had experienced how heavy the Lamb's hand could be when he was in one of his tempers.

The door opened, and the Lamb stepped in and switched on the light.

He shut the door after him, and stepped across to the fireplace. There he stooped and applied a match to the fire—which crackled up. Fortunately—as Smithy was still in the study—the crackers were still in Smithy's pocket and not where he had planned to place them.

But the Lamb did not sit down to change his shoes. He stood for some minutes before the fire, doubtless to warm himself, after being out in the bitter January weather. Then, to the Bounder's horror, he stepped across to the desk.

It was a big desk, and screened the junior behind it completely. It was a new addition to the study since Mr. Woosey's time; Lamb had had it brought there. It was a heavy and massive oaken desk, with plenty of drawers, large and small; in the larger of which the art master kept portfolios of drawings. Behind that desk Smithy was safe out of sight, if Lamb did not look over it.

Had he sat at the desk to write, Smithy would have been safe, so long as he kept as still as a mouse. But the Lamb did not sit at the desk.

On the flat top stood the telephone.

Smithy, peering up, saw a hand grasp the receiver of that instrument. Lamb was going to phone.

For a moment longer Smithy still hoped that he would remain undetected. Lamb was not a tall man—and the top of the desk was rather high. But that hope quickly vanished.

The art master picked up the receiver, and leaned over the desk. And, in doing so, he could scarcely fail to see the Removite ducking behind his desk.

There was a sudden, sharp exclamation as Mr. Lamb's eyes fell on Vernon-Smith. He jammed the receiver back, with a violence that made the instrument rock. The glare of rage that came into his eyes gave the

Bounder, reckless as he was, something like a chill.

He knew at that moment that it was not only finding him there so unexpectedly that enraged the Lamb. Smithy, if he had remained unseen, would have heard what was said on the telephone. And he knew, by a sort of instinct, that Lamb did not want him, or anyone, to hear; and that it was the narrow escape of being overheard that enraged him to such an extent.

"Come out of that, Vernon-Smith!" said the Lamb, in a hard, concentrated voice, very unlike his usual amiable bleat.

Vernon-Smith, breathing hard, stepped out, without a word. He was fairly caught, and he knew that he had to go through it now.

"So you were spying in my study!" Lamb's voice came hard, sharp, and his face was black and bitter with rage. He was so enraged that his hands were trembling, as if he could scarcely keep them off the junior.

Smithy's heart was beating rather unpleasantly. He did not answer, but stood watching the man's angry face in silence.

It was hard to believe that this was the same man who had been bleating so innocently and amiably to Mr. Capper in the passage a few minutes ago. If Smithy had not already divined the man's real nature, he would have done so now.

And in his mind was a strange and suspicious thought. What could Lamb have been going to say on the telephone that it mattered so much if a fellow happened to hear? What was there to spy on in his study?

Smithy was there for a jape—he had taken it for granted that the Lamb would know at once that he was there for a jape—yet the Lamb did not seem to think anything of the sort—he asked Smithy if he were spying. What was there in an art master's study to be spied upon?

Mr. Lamb seemed, for some moments, to be about to grasp the Bounder and box his ears right and left, as he had done twice before. But he checked himself, turned to the table, and picked up a cane.

Smithy drew a deep, deep breath. He knew, by the grip on the cane and by the cruel gleam in the man's eyes, that he was going to have it hard.

But he had asked for it—he was there, in Lamb's study; and Quelch, in the old days, would have caned him—though not as he could see that the Lamb was going to cane him.

Lamb pointed to a chair with the cane.

"Bend over that chair, Vernon-Smith!"

In grim silence, the Bounder stepped towards the chair. In silence he bent over it.

Then came the six!

The savage force that Lamb put into the swipes made the Bounder's flesh almost cringe. He would not utter a sound—he shut his teeth to keep back yells of pain; but never, in his days as a reckless hunter of trouble, had Herbert Vernon-Smith had so severe a caning before.

Even Mr. Lamb, savage as he was, stopped at the accustomed six. He threw down the cane.

"Let me find you in my study again, Vernon-Smith, and you shall regret it!" he said. "Now go!"

In silence, with a white face, the Bounder went.

HARD HIT!

HARRY WHARTON gave a jump. "Smithy, old man!" he exclaimed.

He was on the Remove landing when Vernon-Smith came up—and the Bounder's look startled him.

Smithy's face seemed as white as chalk. He was breathing in gasps, and he walked unsteadily. At a glance, it could be seen that he had been through it hard. The captain of the Remove was not always on the best of terms with the Bounder, and he had little sympathy with his feud against Lamb. But he could not help feeling concerned at seeing any fellow in this state.

"What on earth's happened, Smithy?" he exclaimed. He touched the Bounder's arm as he passed.

Vernon-Smith did not speak. He tramped on without a word, looking neither to the right nor to the left, to his study in the Remove.

Wharton stood looking after him, concerned and dismayed, and then followed him up the passage. He heard the startled voice of Tom Redwing, the Bounder's chum in Study No. 4, as Smithy entered.

"My dear chap! What—"

"That cur!" The Bounder's voice came choking. "That brute—that hooligan—that spoofing rat, Lamb!"

Harry Wharton stepped into the study.

Redwing gave him a dismayed look. Vernon-Smith stood leaning on the mantelpiece, breathing unevenly. He gave the captain of the Remove a glare.

"What do you want?" he snarled.

"Nothing, old chap, if you don't want me!" said Harry quietly, and he stepped back to the doorway.

"You needn't go!" said Vernon-Smith, ashamed perhaps of his savage snap, for he could read only friendly concern in Wharton's face. "Shut the door, though—I don't want to put up an exhibition to all the Remove!"

Wharton shut the door and stood by it.

"Did Lamb—" he asked. He could see that the Bounder had had a savage beating. Likely enough, he had asked for it; but that was no excuse for going over the limit.

"Yes!" said Vernon-Smith between his teeth. "Lamb—the Pet Lamb—the dear Baa-Lamb—the brute and ruffian! By gad, I'll make him sorry for it, too! Quelch used to lay it on hard when his back was up—but Quelch was never a cruel brute. That man is—a cruel brute!"

"But why—"

The Bounder gave a scoffing laugh, followed by a gasp of pain he could not repress.

"He caught me in his study!" he said. "Quelch would have given me six. Have you ever seen me crumpled up like this, after six from Quelch?"

"No!" said Harry. "That man's got a savage spot in him, Smithy! Did you rag his study, or what?"

"No—I hadn't time! I'd done nothing, only"—the Bounder sneered—"I ducked out of sight, and if he hadn't spotted me, I should have heard what he was just going to speak into the telephone. That was why."

"Why should he care about that?" asked Redwing, staring. "Even if he were going to speak on a private matter, there couldn't be much harm done, if a fellow happened to hear."

"He's got his secrets!" said the Bounder. "He asked me if I were spying in his study! What is there to spy on?"

"Goodness knows!" said Harry blankly. "Bunter might look into a man's letters, like an inquisitive ass—but he couldn't fancy you would. Are you sure that was what he said?"

"Yes, that was the word—spying!" said Vernon-Smith. "I'd like to know what he was afraid I might see there—and what he was afraid a fellow might hear on the telephone."

"Afraid, old chap—" said Redwing.

"Yes, afraid—as he was afraid of meeting Quelch, as you jolly well know. He slammed a door once when he heard Bunter put up Quelch's voice in the passage—and he's just as afraid of a fellow spotting something in his study! He's got secrets of some kind."

Wharton and Redwing made no answer to that. They could hardly picture an art master at a school having secrets that were of much consequence. The Bounder was keen, but he was suspicious, too; and his beliefs were coloured by his feelings.

Vernon-Smith gave a shuddering wriggle. He was in pain, though, with his usual hardihood, he kept it under, and would gladly have repressed every sign of it, if he could.

"If the Head knew what a cruel brute that man was, he wouldn't let him take charge of the Remove—or stay at Greyfriars at all!" he said. "The Head thinks he's soft, as all the beaks do. I know the brute—it's spooof from beginning to end, though why he plays such a game, I don't know. Think the sort of man Lamb's taken to be would give any fellow what I've just had?"

"He's got a rotten temper when he lets it rip!" said Harry. "What the dickens did you go to his study for?"

"Because he was out! I was going to park crackers in his grate, as Price of the Fifth did with his beak last term. But he never knew that—never knew anything, except that I was there. By gad! He's going to get the crackers, all the same—not in his study, though."

The Bounder's eyes glinted. "Don't be a mad ass, Smithy!" said Harry uneasily. "Much better to steer clear of the Lamb!"

"I'll watch it! He won't catch me when he gets the crackers to-night!" said the Bounder.

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"To-night!" repeated Redwing. "Smithy, you ass, if you went to a beak's room at night with crackers, you—"

"Oh, I shan't go to his room!" sneered Smithy. "He keeps his door locked at night—"

"How the dickens do you know?" asked Harry.

"Because I went to his door one night with a squirt, that's how!" sneered Vernon-Smith. "No getting at him by his door. But he's got a window."

"His window's twenty or thirty feet from the ground," said Wharton, staring. "All the bed-room windows are. Do you fancy you could climb to his window and chuck in crackers, you ass?"

"No! I can chuck a stone through a pane, though—"

"Smithy!" gasped Redwing, aghast.

"I think that will rouse him out!" said Smithy. "And when he shows up at the window, he gets the crackers in a bundle."

"You mad ass!" exclaimed Harry. "You'll be sacked like a shot if anything of the kind comes out!"

"I know that! Are you going out for a pre. when I get out of the dorm to-night?" jeered the Bounder.

"Don't talk rot!" answered Wharton gruffly. "It's frightfully risky—and look here, it's not the sort of thing a fellow can do—"

"Isn't it?" said Smithy, between his teeth. "You'll see! I shan't sleep a lot to-night—I shall be feeling this all night and all to-morrow, too. I shan't need calling at midnight, I expect. You'll see!"

"For goodness' sake, Smithy—"

"Oh, chuck it! I'll make that vicious little rat jump out of his skin! Wait and see!"

"Well, I think you're an ass!"

"And I think you're a fool!"

The captain of the Remove left the study without replying to that. He was sorry for Smithy, and sympathetic; but he did not want to listen to wild schemes of vengeance.

He rather hoped that when the first effects of that licking had worn off Smithy would think better of it, and give up that reckless scheme—for there was not the slightest doubt that such an act would cause a terrific commotion, and that it would mean the sack for the perpetrator if he was discovered.

What Harry Wharton hoped, Tom Redwing hoped still more earnestly. He was alarmed for his wayward chum in his present mood. But he knew only too well that argument was wasted on the obstinate Bounder.

At prep that evening in Study No. 4 Vernon-Smith gave little attention

to his work. His black brow showed that he was brooding over his resentment and his scheme of vengeance.

After prep, Tom spoke to his chum before the Remove went down.

"Look here, Smithy, old man—" he began.

The Bounder gave him a dark look.

"Are you going to spout pi-jaw?" he asked. "If you are, you can save your breath!"

"I wish you'd chuck it!"

"Give us a rest!"

"But look here—"

The Bounder slouched out of the study, leaving Tom Redwing to finish his sentence to the desert air.



Crash! Harry Wharton's clenched fist flashed. Parker toppled backwards as if he had been shot.

"Give him s

Evidently, Smithy's mind was made up.

CLUE OR NO CLUE?

JOHN ROBINSON, the Head's new chauffeur, stood in his room over the garage—a room of which the window was carefully blacked out, not only for reasons of A.R.P.

John Robinson would not have liked an eye to fall on him.

The dark-haired, olive-skinned chauffeur was rather strangely occupied. He was, in fact, taking off his dark hair, revealing a close crop of brown underneath it.

Which undoubtedly would have astonished any inhabitant of Greyfriars School, except the headmaster, who alone knew that John Robin-

son was Ferrers Locke, the celebrated detective of Baker Street.

Having placed that black hair in a box, John Robinson next proceeded to remove his olive complexion.

His face was thoughtful as he worked.

Ferrers Locke, since he had been at the school in the guise of the Head's chauffeur, had been a busy man. True, in days of rationed petrol, the car was not so much used as of old. It was by night that the Baker Street detective put in most of his work, seeking for a sign of Slim Jim, the cracksman—known to be working that neighbourhood.



out, catching the pimply man on his chin. Mr. "That's the stuff!" squeaked Bessie Bunter. "some more!"

Scotland Yard had hunted Slim Jim for years. More than once, Ferrers Locke had thought of taking up the trail of the mysterious and elusive cracksman—and now the kidnapping of Mr. Quelch, the Remove master of Greyfriars, made it necessary for him to do so, since Dr. Locke had called him in to search for the kidnapped Remove master.

Only Mr. Quelch had ever seen that man of mystery unmasked. Quelch had been kidnapped for the cracksman's safety. Where he was hidden away it was impossible to surmise, but if Slim Jim was laid by the heels the rescue of the kidnapped Form-master would follow.

Who was Slim Jim?

A dozen times or more he had been seen, but always with a black mask covering his face. His name was as

unknown as his looks. Slim Jim was merely a police nickname, applied to him because he was known to be able to wedge his way into a building by small windows, to which he seemed to climb as actively as a cat.

In his daily life he might have been anything—the only certainty was that he kept up respectable appearances or he would have been suspected before this.

What was he?

There had never been a clue—till now! Was there a clue now? Ferrers Locke was not sure! But he was going to be sure.

It was Slim Jim's way to centre on some vicinity, cracking crib after crib within a wide radius, then suddenly ceasing after a few weeks or months to be heard of there—or to be heard of at all till his well-known style was detected in another neighbourhood, perhaps a hundred miles away.

Did that mean that he was a man who took up some post of a temporary kind, and remained in it till his term of engagement expired—leading an unsuspected life outwardly while in the dark of the night he donned the black mask of the safe-cracker?

Locke believed that it did.

It was to be in the centre of Slim Jim's present hunting-ground, unsuspected, that Locke had taken up his quarters as the Head's chauffeur at Greyfriars School. That Slim Jim, in his outward, respectable character, had visited the school at least once, he suspected—the kidnapping of Quelch seemed to indicate as much. But that the secret cracksman was to be found at Greyfriars was an idea that had never crossed Locke's mind—till now.

But now—

Now he did not think it probable. But it was possible—and the remotest clue was worth following up.

Billy Bunter—all unknown—had given Locke that clue—if it was a clue. The kidnapped master's voice had been heard in the school—and Dr. Locke had reported it to the Baker Street detective—with the result that the fat ventriloquist had been discovered and warned off.

If that had been all, Locke would have dismissed the matter from his mind. But it was not all. From Bunter, Locke had heard of the Bounder's campaign—and that Lamb, for some inexplicable reason, was alarmed when Quelch was supposed to be in the offing.

There was one man, undoubtedly, who had cause for fear if Mr. Quelch came in sight of him—Slim Jim, whose features the Remove master knew.

And Mr. Lamb had been known to lock his door when Quelch was sup-

posed, owing to the trickery of Billy Bunter, to have got back to Greyfriars, and on another occasion he had slammed a study door when Quelch's supposed voice was heard in a passage.

Why?

Was he, as he looked, a nervous little ass, liable to be startled by anything out of the common? Or was it possible that he had a reason of his own for fearing to meet the gimlet eyes of Henry Samuel Quelch?

Was this the clue Ferrers Locke had so long and so patiently sought?

Since that interview with Bunter, Locke had made a few discreet inquiries. Lamb was a new man at Greyfriars—he had arrived on the very day that Quelch had been kidnapped.

Had Slim Jim then seen the man who knew his face, realised that he was a master in the school at which he had just taken up a post, and struck his blow promptly to avert danger?

If so, he must have seen Quelch without Quelch having seen him. That was likely enough. At the first glimpse of the man who knew his face, the cracksman would be instantly on his guard.

Was it possible?

The Lamb looked the part he played—an amiable ass, unmercifully ragged by the juniors. But Ferrers Locke had not forgotten one occasion when he had come on the Lamb whopping Billy Bunter so savagely that he had felt called on to intervene. There was an angry and cruel temper hidden under the docile exterior of the little art master.

And he was a man below the medium size. Slim Jim also was a man below the medium size. He had taken up a post in this district—the district that Slim Jim was working. A crib had been cracked during the Christmas holidays; Mr. Lamb had spent part of the holidays at the school.

Ferrers Locke had been keeping an eye open for Mr. Lamb for some days. That afternoon he had seen Mr. Lamb leaving the school; and the Head's chauffeur had taken a walk in the same direction.

Harry Wharton & Co., when they stood sheltered from the rain under the veranda at Sea View, had little guessed that John Robinson, when he passed the gate, had been shadowing the art master, who had passed a few minutes earlier.

But that shadowing had told the detective nothing. Mr. Lamb had walked the length of the cliff road. He had walked into Pegg and stopped for shelter and a cup of coffee at the Anchor Inn there. Then he had walked back to Greyfriars School. And that was all! Certainly he had met no person of a suspicious kind. He had met no one at all. Certainly, too, he had not been surveying the ground for future operations by Slim Jim. His walk had taken him by the unoccupied bungalows on the cliff road. If he had gone out with any intention but that of taking a walk he had changed that intention.

though he certainly did not know that he was being shadowed—Locke was sure of that.

Ferrers Locke was turning it over in his mind, as he removed his outward appearance of John Robinson and assumed another disguise—his face disappearing under a thick beard and moustache and heavy, shaggy eyebrows.

One thing, at all events, was clear—if by any chance the new art master at Greyfriars was Slim Jim, he had to get out of the school at night to carry on the crackman game.

For several nights Locke had concentrated on the window of Lamb's room. That window was high from the ground—but there was an old oak close by it, and Slim Jim was known to be an active and nimble climber. If he left the school at night, that would turn a vague suspicion into something like certainty—and if he did, it was most likely by that window, in the shadow of the branches of a tall tree, that he would leave.

Whether he was at last on the trail or not, Ferrers Locke did not know. But he was going to give Mr. Lamb his very special attention until he was sure about him, one way or the other.

He switched off the light, and in darkness stepped down the staircase at the side of the garage building. With hardly a sound, he let himself out at the door into the dark night.

A sharp wind and a spot or two of rain greeted him. Silent as a shadow, he moved away in the gloom.

There was no light from any window in the school; the black-out reigned; not a gleam of light escaped from the building.

Ferrers Locke reached the spot at the back of the house where Mr. Lamb's window looked out into the branches of an ancient oak. He took up his position behind the trunk of the tree—a great trunk, more than three feet in thickness.

From that cover, the detective's eye was on Mr. Lamb's window—wet and glimmering faintly in the gloom. For several nights he had watched as he was watching now—and nothing had happened. But he was icily patient.

And if anything was going to happen, it was likely to happen soon, he knew that. Slim Jim's last exploit in the crib-cracking line was more than a week old. Seldom did he allow a longer period to elapse between two jobs when he was working a special neighbourhood.

Locke, a dark shadow blotted out in darkness under the tree, waited and watched, indifferent to the long minutes that dragged slowly by.

He was early on his watch, but he hardly expected anything to happen, if anything happened at all, before midnight. Slim Jim—if the man was Slim Jim—could swing himself down easily by way of that tree, high as the window was—and the spot was in deep gloom. If he came at all, he would come that way—unless he took the alarm—and the detective was not likely to give an alarm.

Dully through the dim, damp night

came the chime of twelve. It was midnight.

Locke waited.

His eyes were fixed on the faintly glimmering window.

There was no movement at that window. But suddenly a sound came to the detective's ears—the sound of stealthy approaching footsteps.

He gave a start.

He had been on the watch for over an hour. Lamb's window had not opened. Lamb, whether he was sleeping or not, was in his room. Who was approaching softly and stealthily, creeping in the silence and darkness of the night?

Ferrers Locke stilled his breathing as a dark, muffled figure loomed dimly in the gloom and stood under the shadowy branches, staring up at Mr. Lamb's window!

From behind the tree, Locke's eyes fixed in perplexed surprise on that shadowy figure!

Evidently the Baker Street detective was not the only person at Greyfriars who was interested in Mr. Lamb's window at the silent hour of midnight!

THE BOUNDER'S JAPE!

THE cold wind blew, with a sprinkle of raindrops, in the face of the junior who opened the window of the Remove box-room as the boom of midnight echoed dully through the gloom.

The Bounder of Greyfriars looked out into the winter night.

He was warmly clad in coat and muffler, with a cap pulled low over his forehead, but the January night was bitter. The leads below the box-room window glistened with wet.

It was not an attractive expedition on which Smithy was bound—a cold, wet night, and the absolute certainty of expulsion if he was found out. But he did not think for a moment of hesitating. If only because he had said that he would do it, the Bounder was determined to carry on, reckless of danger, and reckless of consequences.

He had crept quietly from bed, and dressed silently in the dark. Not even Tom Redwing had awakened. He had crept down to the Remove passage, and was now in the box-room at the end of that passage—by the window of which the scapegrace of Greyfriars had broken bounds many a time and oft. It had been easy enough for him to keep awake that night—aching from that tremendous licking in the Lamb's study.

For a minute he stood looking from the window, then quietly he clambered out.

Standing on the leads, he shut down the sash to within an inch or so.

It was slippery on the wet leads. He trod cautiously to the edge, where a rainpipe gave a rather perilous descent to the earth.

Carefully he lowered himself, grasping the rainpipe, and descended hand below hand.

There was hardly a glimmer of stars in the rainy sky. But the Bounder knew his way well enough in the dark.

He skirted the buildings, and five minutes later stood under the shadowy branches of the big old oak, under the Lamb's window.

He stared up at that window, faintly glistening, his face set and bitter. His hand in his overcoat pocket rested on the bundle of crackers.

His plan was cut and dried. With a nerve that no other fellow at Greyfriars possessed, he was going to fling a stone up at that window, breaking a pane. That was sure to bring the occupant of the room to the window to see what was happening.

It was sure, also, to earn the Bounder a sentence of expulsion, if it was discovered that he had done it! But to that, in his present bitter and vengeful mood, he gave not a single thought.

Lamb, if the Bounder calculated correctly, would open the window and look out. There could hardly be any doubt about that. As soon as the window was open, Smithy was going to touch off the fuse of the crackers with a match and hurl the bundle into the room above. The sudden roar of exploding crackers in his room in the middle of the night could hardly fail to make the Lamb jump out of his skin, as the Bounder had expressed it.

Vernon-Smith stood there for some minutes, watching the window—little dreaming that behind the trunk of the oak, only a few feet distant, another prowler of the night was watching him!

Ferrers Locke made no sound.

He was utterly amazed by the arrival of the shadowy figure he was watching. But from its height, if nothing else, he soon discerned that it was a schoolboy—and although he could not make out Vernon-Smith in the dark, there was something familiar in the figure—he knew that it must be some Greyfriars junior he had seen before.

Why he was there at such an hour was an utter mystery to the Baker Street detective. He waited, and watched, in silence.

Vernon-Smith stirred at length. He stooped and groped on the ground, and rose with a stone in his hand.

But as he turned his eyes on the window again, he gave a start. He did not need that stone, after all. The window was opening.

In blank amazement the Bounder stared up, unseen himself.

It was past midnight. But the lower sash of the Lamb's window was pushing up without a sound. Dim as it was, Smithy could make out a head and shoulders at the open window, leaning out, looking down, and apparently watching and listening.

To Smithy, this was utterly unexpected and surprising. A breaking pane of glass certainly would have drawn the Lamb to the window. But nothing had happened—there had been no alarm of any kind. For what mysterious reason was the art master of Greyfriars opening his window in the middle of the night, when all others slept?

Smithy's heart beat faster. Could

the man suspect him—did he know or guess that he was there?

But it was impossible! How could the Lamb know? It was not on account of Vernon-Smith that he had opened that window. To Smithy, it was simply a puzzle.

To Ferrers Locke, it was not. He had half-expected it! It was confirmation of his suspicion. And the detective set his lips hard.

If Lamb descended from that window by way of the old oak, all he had to do was to shadow him and he would know all—if that schoolboy had not been on the spot! That was likely to spoil everything!

For a long minute, Vernon-Smith stared up at that shadowy head and shoulders at the window. To him, it did not occur that Lamb had any idea of descending from the window. He only wondered why the man had opened it at all, at such an hour and on such a night.

But that mattered nothing to him. This was his chance! He dropped the stone quietly, and jerked the bundle of crackers from his pockets.

About a dozen repeating crackers were fastened together in a close bundle, the fuses intertwined. Keeping well back in the shadows, Smithy scratched a match, touched the fuse with the flame, and almost in the same moment hurled the bundle up at the open window.

It shot through the window, a foot from the art master's head, and landed in the room within.

He heard a startled exclamation from the man at the window. That whizzing past his ear warned Lamb that someone was below. Instantly, the head and shoulders disappeared, and the sash was shut down.

But the fireworks were already in the room. Following the sudden shutting of the sash came the bang of the explosion.

Bang, bang, bang, bang, bang, bang!

In the silence of the night the din of the exploding crackers fairly roared. The sound reached the Bounder's ears, even at the distance.

Bang, bang, bang, bang!

Vernon-Smith chuckled. He pictured Lamb dancing round and spluttering in the dark, startled out of his wits by that sudden, deafening explosion in his room.

Bang, bang, bang!

The Bounder stayed no longer. He cut away in the dark—he had to get back to his dormitory as rapidly as he could. It was quite possible that the whole House might be roused by that roar of fireworks in Lamb's room.

Ferrers Locke stood gritting his teeth.

Until it happened, he had not had the remotest idea of the Bounder's intention. Now it was too late!

Lamb, it was certain, would never emerge by that window now—if such had been his intention—not now he knew that someone had been below—and might still be below. If Lamb was Slim Jim, he had been warned—he would never use that window as a means of egress again. What other window—among hundreds?

Locke breathed hard and deep.

He had been on the verge of making a discovery—of learning the truth, whatever it was—of either spotting Slim Jim, or eliminating Lamb from the case. Now he was left where he had started!

PROCLAMATION BY THE REMOVE! OYEZ! OYEZ! OYEZ!

WHEREAS William George Bunter, Esquire, hereinafter called the Fat Fraud, did on Wednesday last pick up in the Quadrangle a wallet containing a five-pound note, the property of Cedric Hilton, Esquire, of the Fifth Form—

AND WHEREAS he did not immediately return the said wallet to its owner, but did first of all feloniously and with malice aforethought exhibit the said five about the Remove as a remittance from his pater, William Samuel Bunter, Esquire, of Bunter Court—

AND WHEREAS he did then secretly return the five to its owner, at the same time inviting his guileless comrades in the Remove to a feed at the Courtfield Bunshop—

AND WHEREAS he did take half the Form, with considerable swank and much patronage, to the Bunshop aforesaid, and there ordered foodstuffs right and left without regard to expense—

AND WHEREAS he did himself walk into the lion's share of this feed, and consumed enough tuck to keep a healthy elephant for a fortnight—

AND WHEREAS it did transpire, when the bill was presented, that he had only fourpence in his pocket, and that the five aforesaid was the property of a Fifth Form man—

AND WHEREAS his guests then had the pleasure of paying six pounds fourteen shillings and tenpence for his misdeeds—

NOW BE IT KNOWN that the Grand Council of the Remove in conclave assembled have indicted the said Fat Fraud for malicious and wholesale spoofing, and have resolved, under the Great Seal of the Form, to make his fat life a misery as from this date.

THEREFORE it is hereby commanded that all loyal and faithful citizens of the Remove do at every opportunity impress upon the said Fat Fraud the decision of the Grand Council, by means of Bumpings, Ragging, Duckings, Bootings, and Blacking of the Eye.

HEREAFTER FAIL NOT AT YOUR PERIL.

Signed for the Grand Council,
PETER TODD,
Attorney-General.

He suspected—but he did not know—the chance, or rather the certainty, had been dashed away by a wild and reckless schoolboy jape. There was nothing for it, but to exercise patience—for John Robinson to carry on, at the garage, and watch and wait!

Little did the Bounder of Greyfriars guess the harm he had done, as he scuttled back to his dormitory, in the dark, and plunged into bed.

A PUZZLE!

“YOU ass!” Harry Wharton made that remark, to the Bounder, after breakfast the next morning.

Smithy grinned.

“Heard any news?” he inquired.

“Well, yes, as the whole House is talking about it,” said Harry. “It was you, I suppose—”

“I wonder!” drawled Smithy.

“There’s going to be a row, you can bet on that!” said the captain of the Remove. “As far as I’ve heard, Lamb’s said nothing, blessed if I know why. But plenty of people seem to have heard that bang in the night.”

“It was loud enough to be heard!” agreed the grinning Bounder.

“You howling ass! I’ve just heard Prout saying to Capper that he thought it was bombs, when it woke him up.”

“Oh, my hat!” ejaculated Smithy. “Did old Pompous think Hitler was after him? Ha, ha, ha!”

“It’s not a laughing matter, you fathead!” said Wharton, frowning. “A fellow’s expected to have more sense. The Lamb’s such a nervous little ass, it might have startled him out of his wits!”

The Bounder laughed.

“He isn’t the nervous little ass he makes out,” he answered. “That’s all spoof! He’s as hard as nails, under it!”

“Oh, rot! There’ll be a row!” said Harry. “It’s the sack if it comes out!”

“It won’t!” said the Bounder coolly. “I’ve covered up my tracks pretty well. They can’t prove anything—even if the Lamb suspects. And it looks to me as if he doesn’t mean to say anything. I’ve heard talk about a bang in the night, but nothing about the bang having happened in Lamb’s room. He doesn’t seem to have told anybody that.”

“Yes, that’s so!” admitted Harry, puzzled. “But he’s bound to raise Cain about it all the same—any beak would!”

“I’m not so sure!” sneered Smithy. “Lamb may not want to step into the limelight! There’s a few things about the jolly old Lamb that puzzle me quite a lot—and he may not want the whole school puzzling about them. For instance, it’s a bit uncommon for a beak to turn out of bed and open his window after midnight, isn’t it?”

Harry Wharton started.

“Very, I should think,” he answered. “I’ve heard that old Prout sometimes rolls out, when he can’t sleep, but I can’t see him opening his window at midnight on a rainy January night. Do you mean to say that that was what the Lamb did?”

“Just that! I was going to crack a pane, to make him do it, but he saved me the trouble by opening the window on his own.”

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"At midnight!" ejaculated Wharton.

"About a quarter past."

"And you—"

"Lamb having been so obliging as to open the window, I shied the crackers in!" said the Bounder coolly. "He shut the window the next moment, with the crackers inside. If he kicks up a shindy about those crackers, he will make a lot of fellows wonder why his window was opened at midnight."

"You're sure?" asked Harry blankly.

"Go round and look at the window! You'll see that it's not broken! But the crackers went in all right."

"Well, I'm blessed if I can make it out!" said Harry. "May have wanted a spot of fresh air if he couldn't sleep, but a rainy and windy night—it's queer."

He looked rather suspiciously at the Bounder.

"You're not pulling my leg?" he asked.

"Not at all, old bean! I can't make that man out!" said Vernon-Smith. "He's as hard as nails, as savage as a wolf, and he puts up a show of being a tame bunny rabbit. He gets the wind up at a hint that old Quelch has come back—yet he's supposed never to have met Quelch! Never met him, yet knows the old bean's voice as well as we do! He pitches into me like a hooligan, because I nearly heard him on the phone. What was he going to say that was so fearfully secret? And he turns out of bed at midnight and opens his window. Why? Was he going out?"

"Going out—by the window?"

"I never thought of it at the time. I've wondered since," said the Bounder coolly.

"If he wanted to go out, I should think he would go out by the door!" said Harry Wharton, laughing. "People generally do."

"Unless it was a secret—as secret as what he was going to say on the phone, when he spotted me behind his desk."

"But why?"

"No good asking me that! I've said that he's got his secrets—I don't know what they are."

"Well, I think you're an ass—and you'd better not tell that story up and down the Remove!" said Harry.

"What will you bet that he'll say nothing about those crackers having gone off in his room?" asked the Bounder.

"Fathead! I jolly well know he will make a row about it."

"And if he doesn't?" persisted Smithy.

"If he doesn't, it will look jolly queer! But he will!"

"Wait and see!" grinned Vernon-Smith.

The bell for classes called the Remove to their Form-room.

Harry Wharton gave the Lamb a very curious look when he let the Remove in.

The Lamb presented his usual amiable aspect. He bleated his usual good-tempered good-morning to

his Form. If he had any suspicion that the jape of the previous night had been perpetrated by a member of his Form, he made no allusion to it.

He did not seem unduly disturbed. If he had jumped out of his skin when those crackers banged in his room, he had quite recovered.

Twice or thrice, however, Wharton noticed that his eyes fixed on the Bounder in a very penetrating way, and he wondered whether Lamb suspected Smithy. It was probable enough, in view of the whopping he had given Smithy in his study.

At all events, nothing was said on the subject.

Wharton was more puzzled than ever when the Remove went out in break.

But he was not only puzzled, but quite startled when, a little later, coming into the House, he passed Mr. Lamb and Mr. Capper at the door, and some of their words floated to his ears as he passed.

"No one," Mr. Capper was saying, "seems to know exactly what occurred. Prout fancied at the time it was enemy raiders. What did you think, Mr. Lamb?"

"I am afraid I heard nothing!" said the Lamb. "I am a very sound sleeper—very sound indeed. And I had a long walk yesterday afternoon—a very long walk, which made me unusually tired, so perhaps I slept more soundly than usual."

"I heard it most distinctly!" said Mr. Capper. "I should have said that it came from one of the masters' rooms. But I can learn nothing about it. You actually did not hear it at all, Mr. Lamb?"

"No, as I sleep so soundly—"

Harry Wharton heard no more as he passed on. He went up the staircase in quite a bewildered frame of mind.

Smithy was right—the Lamb intended to say nothing. Such an occurrence might have been expected to cause a terrific commotion. Yet the Lamb was not only going to say nothing, but he was taking the trouble to conceal the fact that the firework explosion had occurred in his room. Why? Did he, as Smithy suggested, prefer not to draw attention to the fact that he was up at midnight, and had opened his window? But again, why?

It was a puzzle. But the captain of the Remove could not help thinking that it backed up Smithy's suspicion—that the Pet Lamb of Greyfriars was a man who had secrets to keep.

TROUBLE!

"I SAY, you fellows—"

"Don't!" interjected Bob Cherry.

"Eh? Wharrer you mean?" demanded Billy Bunter.

"Don't say anything! You say too much! Give that podgy chin of yours a rest! Chins ain't supposed to be non-stop!"

"You silly ass!" roared Billy Bunter. "I say—"

"There you go again! Pack it up!"

"The sayfulness is terrific, my esteemed awful Bunter!" grinned Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "Speechfulness is silvery, but silence is the bird in hand that goes longest to the well and saves a stitch in time, as the English proverb remarks."

"I say—" roared Bunter.

"He's wound up!" remarked Johnny Bull.

"I say—" shrieked the fat Owl.

"Bow-wow!"

The Famous Five, in the quad after dinner, were talking football, and that topic seemed to absorb their attention, leaving them with no desire for Billy Bunter's conversation.

Harry Wharton waved a hand at the fat Owl.

"Go and talk to Fishy!" he suggested. "If you must wag your chin Fishy will let you talk if you let him talk twice as much."

"Good egg!" said Bob heartily. "Cut off, Bunter! There's Fishy over by the elms—go and say it to him."

"You silly ass!" roared Billy Bunter. "It's a message from the Baa-Lamb!"

"Oh! Cough it up, then!"

"And you're jolly well going to be whopped, too, the lot of you!" said Billy Bunter. "And if you ask me, it serves you jolly well right!"

"'Nobody asked you, sir,' she said!" chanted Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, you've got to go to Lamb's study!" snorted Bunter. "He's just told me to find you and send you there. I expect it's a whopping—in fact, I know it is. And I shall jolly well laugh when you come out wriggling—so yah!"

And the indignant fat Owl rolled away.

"What the dickens does Lamb want the lot of us for?" asked Frank Nugent. "Nothing's up, I suppose?"

"Can't be a whopping, anyhow," said Bob. "Lamb was all right in Form this morning. Blow the man—let's go!"

And the Famous Five, wondering what was up, if anything was, repaired to their Form-master's study.

Mr. Lamb was at his drawing-board, with a brush dipped in Indian ink in his hand, when they presented themselves. He laid down that brush as the juniors entered, and stepped to his table—on which lay a cane.

Ten eyes turned on that cane—rather uneasily. Five consciences were quite clear; but it certainly looked as if the cane was going to be featured in this interview.

Harry Wharton wondered for a moment whether the Lamb suspected the Co. of having been concerned in the firework episode of the previous night. He could think of nothing else.

"Bunter said you wanted us, sir!" said Harry.

"Oh! Yes! Quite so, Wharton!" bleated the Lamb, peering at him over his glasses in his owlish way. "I regret—I regret very much—that it is my duty to punish you."

"Indeed, sir! May I ask what we have done?" inquired Wharton.

"Certainly, certainly! This matter has been placed in my hands, as your Form-master!" explained Mr. Lamb. "I dislike administering punishment in my Form, as I am sure you all realise—I do not think I have ever had occasion to punish any of you so far—"

"Why break the record, sir?" suggested Bob Cherry affably.

"Eh? What?" The Lamb blinked at him. "I am sorry, Cherry—very sorry; but I cannot pass this matter over—such a very serious matter as trespassing on private property, and assaulting the caretaker of the premises—a very serious and disgraceful matter."

"Oh!" gasped the Famous Five, all together.

They understood now what was up. They had, as a matter of fact, almost forgotten the row with the pimply man, and Mr. Parker's threat of trouble to come. But now, it seemed, Mr. Parker had carried out his threat of complaining at Greyfriars of the trespass.

"Will you please let us explain, sir?" asked Harry Wharton quietly.

"There is nothing to explain, Wharton. A complaint has been received that five Greyfriars boys trespassed yesterday afternoon, at a place called—what was it—Ocean Prospect, I think—"

"Sea View, sir!" said Bob.

"Yes, yes, yes, Sea View!" assented the Lamb. "Sea View, certainly. No names could be given, only the number of the boys concerned; but as it happens, I chanced to walk in that direction yesterday afternoon, and I saw you at some building—"

"Yes, sir; but—"

"I do not know whether that building was Sea View, but I have no doubt that it was, in the circumstances—please tell me, at once, whether it was at Sea View that I saw you—"

"Yes, it was! But—"

"Then that settles the matter," said Mr. Lamb.

"If you will listen, sir—"

"Certainly, certainly!" said Mr. Lamb amiably. "According to the report that has been received, the caretaker, a man named Barker—"

"Parker, sir!"

"Was it Parker? Well, well, the caretaker, at all events, ordered the boys away, and they refused to go, and one of them struck him. Is that correct?"

The Famous Five looked rather grim. Put like that, it really did sound rather serious.

"That is correct, as far as it goes, sir!" said Harry. "But please let me explain. You will remember that the rain was falling heavily—"

"No doubt, no doubt!" agreed Mr. Lamb. "I was afraid that I might catch a cold. Fortunately, I did not! But go on, Wharton."

"There were three Cliff House girls with us, sir. We got into the veranda for shelter from the rain. The man Parker was not there when we arrived—he came out of an air-raid shelter in the garden, after we were there. We asked him civilly to

let us shelter from the rain, and he refused. We could not take the girls out into the rain, sir—one of them, in fact, refused to go out in the rain, and we could not leave her there. The man was a surly brute—"

"No doubt! No doubt! But trespass—"

Mr. Lamb picked up the cane. "And striking a blow—"

"I punched the man, sir; but not till he laid hands on me!" said the captain of the Remove.

"I am afraid, Wharton, that what you say is no excuse! A caretaker has a legal right to order trespassers off his premises—indeed, his employer would doubtless expect as much of him—and he has, I believe, a right to use force if such trespassers refuse to leave. Trespassing is a very serious thing—it is an actual infraction of the law."

"We were not trespassing!" grunted Johnny Bull. "Anyone in a civilised country has a right to ask to stand under a veranda roof, in a downpour of rain."

"We should have left, but for the girls!" said Harry. "We couldn't get them drenched to please that surly brute!"

"Quite so, quite so!" said Mr. Lamb. "I understand perfectly—but the fact remains that a trespass, and an act of violence, were committed, and that this man Barker—or Parker—actually threatens to report the matter to the police, which would be very disgraceful to the school. It is very unfortunate; but you most certainly should not have trespassed, and still more, should not have struck a man who was only doing his duty to his employer. You will bend over the table, Wharton."

Harry Wharton drew a deep breath.

So far as he could make out, Parker must have complained to the Head, and Dr. Locke had left the matter to the Lamb, as the Form-master concerned. The Lamb had not said so, but that was the impression his words gave.

The Famous Five were to be punished, as if they were a mob of young hooligans who had trespassed and kicked up a shindy. It was unjust; and Harry Wharton's anger and resentment were rising fast.

"Do you hear me, Wharton?" said Mr. Lamb.

"Will you kindly tell us, sir, what else we could have done when there were three girls in the party, and the rain was coming down in torrents?" asked the captain of the Remove, his eyes flashing.

"I think, Wharton, that you should not have trespassed in the first place," said Mr. Lamb. "I am bound to impress upon you that such things must not occur, lest there should be any recurrence of this disagreeable episode. I advise you to keep a distance from Ocean View—I mean, Sea View—as the caretaker is, as you say, surly. Bend over the table, please."

In silence, with deep feelings, the captain of the Remove bent over the study table.

What followed was rather a surprise to the Co. Lamb was said merely to flick on the rare occasions when he did use the cane. Certainly he had

made a very marked exception in the Bounder's case.

But he did not flick now! He laid on six strokes with a heavy hand—a tougher six than Mr. Quelch had ever handed out to any member of his Form.

Wharton made no sound, but his face was a little pale, and his eyes smouldering, when it was over, and he stepped back.

One by one the other four went through it. And in each case it was a full six—and every stroke well laid on. Seldom, if ever, had the whole Co., together, gone through it like that.

Mr. Lamb laid down the cane.

"I am sorry for this!" he bleated. "Very sorry! I dislike very much administering punishment. Do not let anything of the kind occur again. You may leave my study!"

The Famous Five left the study in silence. With deep feelings, they went down the passage.

At the corner, a grinning fat face greeted them.

"He, he, he! I say, you fellows, did it hurt?" inquired Billy Bunter agreeably. "I say—yaroooh!"

Bob Cherry kicked Bunter, and the Famous Five passed on, leaving him roaring. They went out into the quad in grim silence.

Harry Wharton broke the silence.

"Smithy's right about that man!" he said. "His fluffy ways are all put on—he's a brute!"

And the Co. nodded a dismal assent. So far as the Famous Five were concerned, the Pet Lamb's popularity was down to zero.

THE IRON HAND IN THE VELVET GLOVE!

BANG!

It was a desk-lid dropping suddenly. It sounded like a rifle-shot.

Bolsover major was the culprit.

It was Saturday morning in the Remove Form room, and Bolsover seemed disposed for a little fun with the docile Lamb.

"My goodness!" The Lamb peered round over his gold-rimmed glasses. "What—what was that?"

"Sorry, sir—quite an accident!" yawned Bolsover major.

"You must be more careful, Bolsover—you must really be more careful!" bleated the Lamb. "You startled me very much. I am sure that you did not intend to do so, Bolsover—but, actually, I was very startled. Please, please be more careful!"

Bolsover major winked at Skinner.

Evidently that soft ass, the Pet Lamb, was in one of his most amiable and unsuspecting moods. This was a chance for everybody.

Bang!

It was Billy Bunter next.

Bolsover having got by safely, the fat Owl was following his shining example. Bunter banged his desk-lid as hard as he could.

"Dear me! Was that you, Bunter?" exclaimed the Lamb.

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"Oh, no, sir! Not me, sir!" said Bunter hurriedly. He remembered that the Lamb, when he did get shirty, had a heavy hand.

But the Lamb did not seem shirty now.

"Do not let it occur again, Bunter," he said mildly.

"Oh, yes, sir! I mean, no, sir."

The lessons went on.

Harry Wharton gave the art master a curious look. If this was a part that Lamb was playing, as the Bounder suspected, and as Wharton half-suspected, he played it well. Certainly he looked, and acted, like a master who was easily deceived and easily ragged.

Bob Cherry made a movement, and the captain of the Remove gave him a warning glare. There was a football match that afternoon with the Shell, and Bob was wanted. It was no time to play tricks on so uncertain a customer as the Lamb. Bob desisted in time.

Bang!

Wibley's desk-lid went. Mr. Lamb, who was explaining some of the beauties of English literature to his class, was interrupted again.

"Wibley! Wibley! Do please be more careful!" bleated the Lamb. "These constant interruptions are very disturbing."

"Oh, certainly, sir!" said Wibley.

Bang!

The Bounder's desk-lid went with a quite terrific bang. Smithy, generally the leader in a rag, was following on.

Mr. Lamb turned towards him, lowering his book. There was a glint in the eyes over the gold-rimmed glasses.

"Vernon-Smith! I will not allow this! I will keep some order in this Form-room! You will be detained this afternoon, Vernon-Smith. Come to my study at two o'clock for a detention task."

The Bounder did not answer.

He sat breathing rage.

He had asked for it! He was fairly caught! Bolsover, Bunter, and Wibley had escaped with impunity—the Lamb had dropped on him like a shot. Too late, the Bounder realised, or at least guessed, that the man had been waiting for a chance at him.

He knew, or suspected, who had flung that bundle of crackers into his room a few days ago. For reasons of his own, whatever they were, he did not care to make inquiries after the delinquent. But he suspected Smithy, and had an eye on him—and he jumped at his first chance, as the enraged Bounder saw when it was too late.

Harry Wharton gave the Bounder a look of mingled anger and dismay.

Smithy was inside-right in the Remove team that was playing that afternoon, and he could not be spared. In a match with the Shell, the Lower Fourth needed their best men, and Smithy was one of the best.

Wharton wondered whether the Lamb was aware of that. He never seemed to take any interest in games; not once had he turned up on Little

Side to watch the Remove play. Whether he was aware of it or not, he could not have given the Bounder a detention at a more unlucky moment. A caning would not have mattered—a detention mattered very much in the circumstances.

Sometimes, when the Lamb gave a fellow lines or extra school, he forgot it afterwards, or appeared to do so—which was in keeping with his lamb-like character. But Smithy knew that he would not forget this time—and the captain of the Remove was sure of it, too.

Vernon-Smith sat with a black brow till third school ended. When the Remove went out, the Head Boy of the Form lingered to speak to his Form-master before he went.

Mr. Lamb, at his high desk, gave him an amiable, inquiring look.

"What is it, Wharton?" he asked pleasantly. The Lamb seemed to have forgotten all about that whopping in his study—though the Famous Five had not forgotten it.

Wharton hesitated a moment. He could not help suspecting that there was a cruel, cat-like nature under the Lamb's fluff, as the Bounder called it. But Lamb's pleasant manner encouraged him to proceed. He was football captain in the Remove, and had a right to speak.

"It's about Vernon-Smith, sir!" said Harry. "We're playing football this afternoon, sir—"

"I am glad to hear it!" said the Lamb, beaming. "A very healthy game—a manly game—a game that will help to fit you to take your places when some day you are called upon to serve your country. I hope you will have a good game, my boy."

"Thank you, sir! Smithy is in the team!" said Harry. "I dare say you haven't noticed our list—it was posted up yesterday."

"I am afraid I may have overlooked it," said the Lamb blandly. "Is Vernon-Smith's name in it? I am sorry you will have the trouble of selecting another player; but no doubt there are many boys in the Remove who will be glad to play in Vernon-Smith's place."

"Oh, yes, sir, nearly all the Form! But that isn't quite the point," explained Harry. "We're playing the Shell, an older and bigger Form, and we want our best men. Smithy's one of the best. If he's detained—"

The Lamb raised his eyebrows.

"Did you say 'if'?" he inquired, with an air of mild surprise. "You heard what I said to Vernon-Smith, Wharton. There is no question about the matter. He is detained."

"Yes, sir; but perhaps you wouldn't mind giving him a detention one day next week instead of to-day, as he is down to play—"

"Dear me!" said the Lamb. "Do you mean to imply, Wharton, that Vernon-Smith's action in class was an accident? Is that your meaning?"

Wharton coloured.

"No, sir! I'm not excusing him. I only mean that he's specially wanted in football this afternoon—"

"And you mean that a junior football match is a matter of more im-

portance than the maintenance of order and discipline in a Greyfriars Form-room?"

"Oh, no! But—"

"If that is not your meaning, Wharton, I hardly follow you!" said the Lamb amiably. "Please explain yourself."

Harry Wharton breathed hard. He had a strong feeling that the man was only playing with him, like a cat with a mouse—that he knew perfectly well that Smithy was down to play that day, that Smithy was a keen footballer, and that a detention that afternoon was the most irksome and disagreeable punishment that could have been inflicted on him.

If that was the case, it was not very useful to go on. But the captain of the Remove made another effort. He did not want to lose his best forward, if he could help it.

"I mean, sir, that it will be a hard knock for all of us, if Smithy is kept in the Form-room this afternoon. A detention on Wednesday, instead of to-day, would come to the same thing, sir."

"Not quite the same thing!" said the Lamb, shaking his head. "You are aware, Wharton, that I allowed three incidents to pass without punishment during class, though I doubted very much whether they were accidental. At the fourth, I could not help feeling certain that defiance of authority was intended. I am a very tolerant master, Wharton—too tolerant, I sometimes fear—indeed, I believe I am called by an absurd nickname in the Form, for that very reason." The Lamb smiled. "But I must be firm sometimes, Wharton—I have to justify the head-master's trust in me."

"But, sir—"

"I regret," said Mr. Lamb, "that there is nothing more to be said, Wharton. You may leave the Form-room, my boy."

Harry Wharton left the Form-room with set lips. Under the Lamb's amiable manner was a nature as hard as iron. He knew that now. It was the iron hand in the velvet glove. The Lamb had picked this chance, and nothing would have induced him to relax.

Bob Cherry was waiting for his chum, when he came out, with a rather anxious face. He guessed why Wharton had remained behind.

"Nothing doing?" he asked, as he read the frowning face of the captain of the Remove.

"No! That fellow's a cad!" said Harry bitterly. "He's been watching for Smithy, like a cat for a mouse. He's stealthy! By gum, I wish poor old Quelch could get back, and let that blighter stick to his drawing-boards and his dashed art class! He makes me sick!"

"That ass Smithy was bound to ask for it!" grunted Bob.

"Oh, yes, he can't help playing the goat, of course. All the same, that man's a rotter to catch him like this."

And Harry Wharton went out, frowning, into the quad—angrily turning over in his mind possible substitutes for his selected insider right that afternoon.



Harry Wharton stumbled over the spluttering Mr. Lamb and, for a moment, sprawled across his face. Quick on the uptake, Vernon-Smith shot out of the doorway!

BUNTER IS WANTED!

"I'M playing!"

"Oh, don't be an ass!"

"I'm playing!" repeated the Bounder stubbornly. "That cur isn't going to catch me out like this! What man have you got to put in my place?"

"Half a dozen!" grunted Wharton.

"As good?" sneered the Bounder.

"No—you know that! Why can't you have sense enough not to rag in the Form-room—especially just before a match?" exclaimed the captain of the Remove angrily. "You might have known that Lamb would not let you off for what you did. He was only waiting."

"Yes, I know that now!" said the Bounder, between his teeth. "I shall be on my guard another time."

"That won't help now."

"I've said I'm playing!"

Wharton shrugged his shoulders angrily. After dinner, he was still thinking out what name to put in the place of Vernon-Smith's, already scratched out of the list posted up in the Rag. He was not in a mood for any tall talk from the arrogant Bounder.

"Lamb never takes any notice of games," went on Vernon-Smith quietly. "He's never looked at a match, and never put his nose into the changing-room. He won't have the foggiest idea that I'm playing—if I get out of D.T. without being spotted."

"Oh, don't talk out of your silly hat! You say you know yourself that he has been watching for a chance—now he's got it. Think he won't take

jolly good care that you don't walk out of the Form-room?" snapped Wharton impatiently. "Think he won't give you a look-in while the match is on? He won't trot down to Little Side, but he will trot as far as the Form-room—you can bet your hat on that!"

"I've got that cut and dried."

"Oh, rot!"

"You can take it from me that I'm playing!" said the Bounder doggedly. "Leave my name scratched out, in case that stealthy blighter takes another squint at the list. Pick another man, if you like, for show! But you'll find me in the changing-room at half-past two."

"Rot!"

"Well, I mean it!" said Vernon-Smith curtly, and he turned and walked away from an angry and disgruntled football captain.

Wharton gave a grunt of annoyance. Such a scheme was quite in keeping with the Bounder's reckless way. He would pull it off if he could.

But he could not, so far as Wharton could see. If he left the Form-room undetected, it was all right, providing he was not missed after he had left. But that was an impossibility. Wharton knew, and Smithy knew, that the implacable Lamb would keep an eye on the Form-room that afternoon. Smithy had to go in half an hour before the game started, and he had to remain till it was over—and the Lamb would see that he did.

There was a sneering grin on the Bounder's face as he left the captain of the Remove. He looked round the

quad, spotted Billy Bunter, and beckoned to that fat youth.

"Come along to the tuckshop, old fat man!" said Smithy.

Bunter did not need asking twice!

It was only a quarter of an hour since he had packed away a good dinner. But Billy Bunter always had space to fill.

They went into the school shop together, the fat Owl grinning with happy anticipation.

Herbert Vernon-Smith proceeded to give orders. There were plenty of unrationed articles, of a sticky nature, at the disposal of any fellow who had plenty of money—and the Bounder had lots. A most enticing pile gradually mounted up before the Bounder, on which Billy Bunter's eyes and spectacles fastened with deep yearning.

But when he stretched out a fat hand, the Bounder coolly knocked it aside.

Bunter blinked at him in indignant surprise.

"Look here, ain't this a spread?" he demanded warmly. "What have you lugged me here for if it ain't a spread?"

"Shove all that stuff into your pockets—"

"Eh?"

"And carry it to my study for me."

"But—"

"Get going, fathead!"

This was rather perplexing to the fat Owl. If those good things were to be devoured, Bunter could not see why they should not be scoffed on the spot. He was ready—more than

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ready to begin! His capacious mouth was watering. On the other hand, if he was not scheduled to scoff the tuck, he certainly did not want to sag at carrying it to Smithy's study.

Still, the remotest chance at such a supply was not to be neglected.

Smithy paid for the goods—the handsome sum of fifteen-and-six—and Billy Bunter parked them in various pockets till he bulged all over. Luckily, he was able to fill his mouth with bullseyes, while the Bounder's back was turned for a moment! That was something to go on with.

"Come on!" said Smithy.

"Grogg!" Bunter gurgled through bullseyes. "I'm—grogg—coming!"

He followed the Bounder out of the tuckshop. They went into the House together, and up to Smithy's study in the Remove.

Vernon-Smith carefully closed the door and pointed to the armchair.

Bunter sat down—blinking in surprise. Smithy did not tell him to turn out the cargo on the study table. Bunter sat down with his pockets full.

"Now, listen to me, you fat ass!" said the Bounder quietly. "I want you to do something—and if you put it through, you can scoff all that tuck—till you burst!"

"Oh, really, Smithy—"

"You'd like to sit in the Form-room, scoffing tuck, I suppose?"

"I'd rather sit in my study."

"Well, your study won't do!"

"I'll sit anywhere you like, old

chap!" said the amazed Owl. "If you want my company while you're in detention, I'll come all right—I'll chance it with the Lamb—he's a silly ass, anyhow!"

"Idiot!"

"Well, look here—"

"Last week," said the Bounder, "you made that cad Lamb get the wind up, by putting up old Quelch's bark—"

"I—I say—" Bunter looked alarmed at once. "I'm not going to put that up again. I told Locke I wouldn't, and I can't—"

"Shut up, fathead! It's not that! But if you can do Quelch's voice like that, you can do someone else's—mine, for instance."

Bunter blinked at him, more and more astonished.

"Could you?" snapped the Bounder.

"Eh? Of course I could!" said the fat ventriloquist. "I can imitate any voice a bit out of the common—any voice that has anything queer about it—"

"What?"

"Don't yell at a chap!" said Bunter peevishly. "I mean, just an ordinary voice with nothing about it isn't easy to imitate, of course. It has to be a bit out of the common, like Quelch's bark, or old Prout's boom, or Mossos's silly squeal. Your voice would be easy—it's a bit like a saw— What are you glaring at a fellow for, Smithy?"

Vernon-Smith breathed hard. He knew that his voice was rather sharp and strident, easily recognised, and

unmistakable in the Remove. But he did not seem to like Bunter's description.

"Not exactly like a saw," said Bunter thoughtfully. "More like a file on a saw—a file that wants oiling, if you know what I mean."

"You fat fool!" roared the Bounder.

"Oh, really, Smithy—"

"Well, if you can do it, let's hear you, you blithering ass!" growled Vernon-Smith. "That's what I want."

"O.K.!" said the fat Owl cheerfully. "Just listen!"

He rolled out of the armchair and opened the door, blinking into the Remove passage.

Several fellows were in the passage, and Billy Bunter—keeping back out of view—called:

"Fishy! I'd like to see that pen-knife."

Vernon-Smith started. The voice in which the fat ventriloquist called was nothing like Bunter's own. Whether it was like Smithy's, Smithy could hardly tell, for no one knows exactly the sound of his own voice. He waited to watch the result.

It was soon apparent. Fisher T. Fish came scudding down the passage, and put a beaming face into the study.

Fishy always had something to sell. That day he had been hawking a pen-knife up and down the Remove. It was in his bony hand as he looked into the study.

"Here you are, Smithy!" he exclaimed. "Yours for three-and-six! I'm telling you, big boy, that it's worth double—surest thing you know!"

Evidently Fisher T. Fish believed that it was the Bounder who had called out from the study.

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

The Bounder laughed.

"Say, I guess you can't do better'n this, if you want a penknife, old-timer!" said Fisher T. Fish.

"I don't!" said the Bounder. "Only pulling your leg! Hook it!"

Fisher T. Fish gave him an expressive look, and hooked it, slamming the door after him with a terrific slam.

The Remove ventriloquist grinned at the Bounder.

"How's that?" he inquired.

"O.K.!" Now listen, and I'll tell you what I want you to do."

And the Bounder proceeded to explain his scheme—Billy Bunter listening, with his little round eyes growing bigger and rounder, behind his big round spectacles, with astonishment, as he listened.

SMITHY'S SCHEME!

MR. LAMB smiled. It was quite an amiable smile; but there was a cold, hard look in the eyes which Herbert Vernon-Smith did not fail to detect. He was wise to the Lamb and his ways now.

Prompt at two o'clock Vernon-Smith presented himself at his Form-master's study. Mr. Lamb had a

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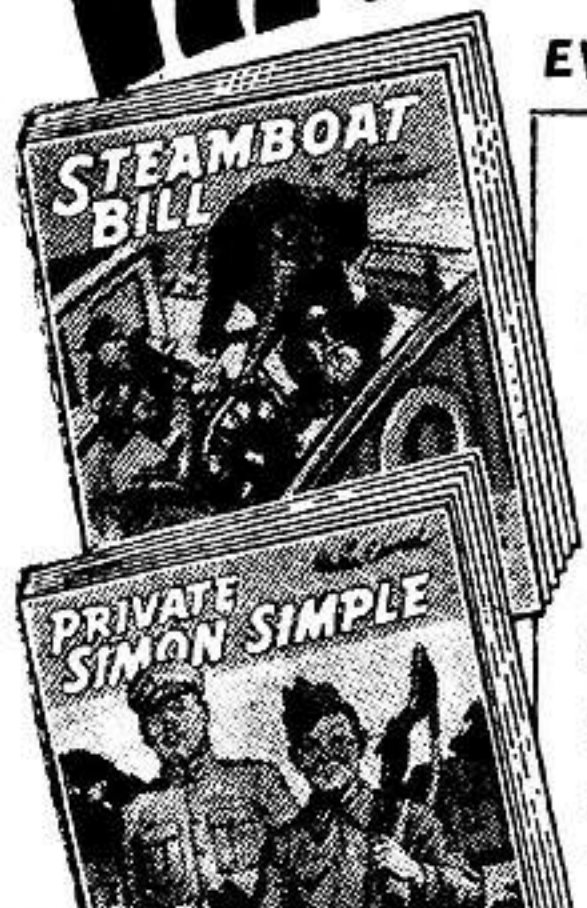
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4¹/₂
EACH



If your Newsagent has not copies in stock ask him to order them for you.

Latin paper ready for him. Art master as he was, the Lamb was well up to Quelch's work; and the Remove knew, by his ways in the Form-room, that he had acted as Form-master before now. Skinner had sneeringly described him as a Jack-of-all-trades; while Fisher T. Fish guessed and reckoned that he was a guy who cinched whatever job he could get. It was, at all events, certain that the Lamb, with all his lamb-like ways, was a very capable man.

He rose from his chair with a paper in his hand, and came over to the junior standing with a sullen face in the doorway.

"Please follow me, Vernon-Smith!" he bleated.

The Bounder followed him—sullen, but not disrespectful. He did not want to rouse Mr. Lamb's suspicions that he had any intention to cut that afternoon. Though it was likely that the Lamb knew Smithy well enough by this time to guess that that would be the first thought to come into his head. Lamb, whatever he was, was no fool.

The art master unlocked the door of the Remove Form room and went in, followed by the detained junior. No other Remove man was under detention—other offenders had been let off lightly, in the Pet Lamb's usual way. But he had no leniency for Smithy, and Smithy could guess why.

"You may sit down at your desk, Vernon-Smith," said the Lamb. "I am sorry I have been driven to detain you—very sorry; but I'm sure you will realise, my boy, that if you persist in making yourself troublesome to a master, you leave him no choice—what?"

Smithy knew perfectly well to what that was an allusion—the bundle of crackers, not the banging of the desk-lid. He sat down in silence, and the Lamb laid the Latin paper on the desk.

"Now, I think that will keep you occupied, and very much to your benefit, for a couple of hours, Vernon-Smith!" he said agreeably. "I shall expect the paper to be completed by four o'clock."

Smithy, who had no intention of touching the paper, said nothing.

"Otherwise," murmured the Lamb softly, "I shall have no alternative but to give you another detention, Vernon-Smith, on the next half-holiday, for you to complete the paper."

No answer from Smithy.

"Do you hear me, Vernon-Smith?"

"Yes, sir!" breathed the Bounder, forced to speak by the direct question.

"Very good," said the Lamb. "You must not be impertinent, Vernon-Smith! I do not know how you fared with Mr. Quelch as I was not here in his time; but I must warn you that I, at all events, have no intention of tolerating impertinence."

He turned to the door as the Bounder muttered something inarticulate in reply. Then he glanced back.

"I shall return at four o'clock, Vernon-Smith! I may possibly look in before then, if I find time, and see how you are progressing with your paper."

His eyes, over the gold-rimmed glasses, were on the Bounder's face, watching him.

Smithy's face expressed nothing. He knew that the man had read his intention, and expected to see his face fall. The man was like a cat—there was a strain of cruelty and mockery in him.

He read nothing in Smithy's face, and finally he left the Form-room, shutting the door after him.

Vernon-Smith sat at his desk, staring angrily at the Latin paper. He did not intend to touch it—but, on

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second thoughts, he dipped his pen in the ink and started on the first question. He had time to zill, while he waited for his scheme to get moving, and it was just as well to put in something to keep up appearances.

Mr. Lamb went back to his study.

If he noticed that Bunter, of his Form, was hanging about he did not naturally take any particular notice of that fat youth.

Billy Bunter, however, took very particular notice of Mr. Lamb. His eyes, and his spectacles, followed the art master till he went into his study and shut the door.

Bunter remained blinking at that door for a few minutes. The fat Owl was very keen to carry on with the scheme the Bounder had concocted with him—the prospect of sitting in the Form-room, scoffing fifteen shillings' worth of sticky things, now packed in his pockets, was very attractive.

Certainly, he would have preferred to roll into the Rag for that purpose, and run no risks; but he could hardly venture to let Smithy down to that extent. The consequences would have been altogether too painful.

But the fat Owl had to be satisfied that Lamb was safe before he carried on. It was easy enough to think of an excuse for looking into his study and ascertaining whether he had settled down. Most likely he was doing some of his pen-and-ink stuff. But Bunter wanted to know for certain whether he was likely to emerge from the study before he rolled away to the Form-room.

He tapped at Lamb's door.

"Come in!" bleated the Lamb.

Bunter opened the door and stepped in.

One blink satisfied him; the Lamb was at his drawing-board, busily engaged. He was not likely to move yet. But the Lamb was looking at him inquiringly.

"What is it, Bunter?" he asked.

The fat Owl had his excuse ready.

"If you please, sir, might I have your newspaper, if you're done with it?" he asked. "I want to read about the burglary, sir."

"The what?"

"There was a burglary in Courtfield last night, sir—that chap they call Slim Jim again!" explained Bunter. "Skinner says it's all in the paper."

"Indeed! I had not heard of it, Bunter!" said Mr. Lamb. "But I do not approve of schoolboys reading about such things. Newspapers are not good reading for the young, Bunter. You may go."

"Oh! Yes, sir!" said Bunter.

And he went—and did not grin till he had shut the door.

Satisfied that the Lamb was safe now, the fat Owl rolled away to the Form-room.

Vernon-Smith had been there a quarter of an hour when he arrived, and had worked out the first question on his Latin paper.

Bunter stepped in cautiously, and shut the Form-room door behind him.

The Bounder gave him a scowl.

"What have you been so long about, you fat freak?" he grunted.

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MAGNET
PEN PALS' COUPON
20-1-40

"I had to be sure the beast wouldn't be hanging about!" grinned the fat Owl. "If he copped me here he might give me six!"

"Where is he now?"

"In his study!"

"Oh, all right! You know what you've got to do!" grunted Vernon-Smith. "I've no time to waste now—kick-off is at half-past."

"Leave it to me!" said the fat Owl. "Mind you lock the door, though—if that beast copped me here—"

"Idiot!"

"Beast!"

After that exchange of compliments, the Bounder left the Form-room. He locked the door on the outside and slipped the key into his pocket. Then he hurried away to the changing-room.

The footballers were already gathered there.

Tom Redwing, who had been assigned Smithy's place in the front line, stared at his chum as he came in.

"Smithy!" he exclaimed. "Aren't you in detention?"

"Do I look like it?"

"But Lamb said—"

"Bother the Lamb! Ready, Wharton?" said the Bounder, with a sarcastic grin at the captain of the Remove. "Shall I change?"

"Not if Lamb is coming after you to hook you off the field!" said Harry, frowning. "Does he know?"

"No—and he won't!" jeered the Bounder. He held up a key. "Lamb will find the Form-room locked when he gets there. He will think I'm inside and that some fellow locked me in."

Harry Wharton stared at him.

"You ass! Of course he won't! He will call to you—"

"I know that! And my voice will answer him!" grinned Smithy. "I've parked Bunter there to do it."

"Oh!" gasped Wharton.

"Got it now?" jeered the Bounder.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "What a lark!"

"The larkfulness is terrific!" grinned Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"It's awfully risky, Smithy," said Tom Redwing uneasily.

"Do you mean that you don't want to stand out?"

"Oh, don't be a rotter!" said Redwing gruffly.

The Bounder was already starting to change.

Harry Wharton had a dubious expression on his face. But he wanted Smithy in the team—he wanted him badly; and he certainly had no objection to Smithy scoring over the man who had caught him like a cat catching a mouse.

"All right!" he said. "Chance it—and come on!"

And the Bounder went down to Little Side with the Remove footballers. And a few minutes later, facing Hobson & Co. of the Shell in the field, he forgot about the Lamb and all his works!

ALL RIGHT FOR BUNTER!

BILLY BUNTER gave a start.

"Gurrrrrggh!"

He choked.

It was an unfortunate moment for Bunter to be startled by the sound of a footstep approaching the Form-room door.

For half an hour the fat Owl had sat in the Remove room, steadily travelling through the cargo of various sticky things parked in his pockets. Without that inducement, Billy Bunter certainly never would have fallen in with the Bounder's scheme. With that irresistible inducement, the fat Owl was happy to oblige.

As a footstep stopped at the Form-room door, and the door-handle was turned, Bunter had a capacious mouth packed to capacity with chocolate-cream! The sound at the door made him start, and some of that consignment went down the wrong way.

The fat Owl choked and gurgled.

The door-handle was sharply rattled from without. Then came the Lamb's voice, in angry tones.

"Vernon-Smith! Have you locked this door? How dare you lock this door, Vernon-Smith? Open it at once!"

"Gurrrrrggh!"

"Do you hear me, Vernon-Smith?"

"Gooooooooogh!"

Billy Bunter, with an effort, cleared his fat neck! It was time—high time—for the fat Owl to weigh in with his ventriloquial effects. He gave a final gurgle, and a fat little cough.

Then he spoke. But Lamb, outside the door, certainly could have had no suspicion that it was the fattest member of his Form who was speaking.

"Vernon-Smith!" came the Lamb's angry voice. "Will you answer me?"

"Yes, sir!" came, at last, the sharp, strident voice of the Bounder, from the Remove ventriloquist. "I'm sorry I can't open the door, sir—I've been locked in."

"Do not talk nonsense, Vernon-Smith! I did not lock you in!"

Billy Bunter grinned. The Lamb's reply showed that he had not the faintest suspicion that his leg was being pulled.

"Oh, no, sir!" he answered. "I heard a fellow lock the door, sir—I couldn't see him, as the door was shut."

There was a grunt from the master outside!

Billy Bunter sat with a grin on a sticky face, his eyes and spectacles fixed on the door! Lamb could not see through solid oak—and it was lucky for Bunter that he couldn't!

"Isn't the key there, sir?" called out Bunter artlessly, and still in his masterly imitation of the Bounder's voice.

"No, it is not!" snapped Mr. Lamb. "Whoever locked you in must have taken it, Vernon-Smith! You do not know who it was?"

"I couldn't see him through the door, sir! I just heard the key turn, that's all."

"You had better tell me, Vernon-Smith, if you know who it was! Otherwise, I may not be able to let you out of the Form-room when your detention is up."

"I couldn't see who it was, sir. You see, the door was shut when he locked me in."

"Very well! If the key is not replaced by four o'clock, Vernon-Smith, you may have to remain longer. It is of no consequence."

The Lamb walked away.

Billy Bunter suppressed a fat chuckle as his footsteps died away down the corridor.

The Lamb, as Smithy anticipated, had come to the Form-room to ascertain whether he had cut. Had he

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discovered the Bounder absent, there was not the slightest doubt that he would have gone direct to the football field and ordered Vernon-Smith off—which would have been rather a catastrophe to the Remove eleven in the middle of a football match.

But he had departed without the slightest doubt that Herbert Vernon-Smith was in the Remove room. The sagacious Bounder had put paid to the Lamb this time—with the assistance of the fat Owl of the Remove.

Billy Bunter, left in peace once more, resumed after the interval, so to speak! From one pocket after another he disinterred sticky things, which followed one another on the downward path.

Bunter grew stickier and shinier, and began to breathe with a little difficulty. But he was enjoying life!

How Smithy could be such an ass as to play football when he might have been sitting in the Form-room, scoffing those delightful things himself, was a mystery to Billy Bunter.

Still, he was glad from the bottom of his fat heart that Smithy was such an ass.

Seldom had Bunter enjoyed a half-holiday so much as he enjoyed this one. This was ideal. This was life. This was a complete answer to the question: Is life worth living? Obviously, it was.

But everything comes to an end. As the poet has remarked: "Happiness too swiftly flies!"

Bunter came to the end of his supplies at last. Searching through pocket after pocket, he failed to discover so much as an aniseed ball.

Bunter still had space to fill. Bunter always had space to fill. He could have done with another bag of bullseyes, a few more bars of chocolate, and a few more whipped-cream walnuts.

Perhaps it was just as well, however, that Bunter had no more. He really had done remarkably well. It was even possible that he had overdone it a little already. He sat and rested after his labours, breathing rather stertorously.

Four o'clock chimed out.

At four the football match should be over, and at four the Lamb was coming to the Form-room to release Vernon-Smith from detention.

Billy Bunter listened for the footsteps of the Lamb.

A few minutes later he heard them. The door-handle was turned.

"Vernon-Smith!"

"Yes, sir?" answered the Bounder's voice.

Bunter, having finished his proven-dor, was ready for action this time.

"The key is not here, Vernon-Smith!" snapped the Lamb.

"Isn't it, sir?" Bunter contrived to make the Bounder's voice register dismay. "It's past four, sir!"

"I cannot let you out without the key, Vernon-Smith!" snapped Mr. Lamb. "I shall have to make some inquiry, I suppose. You must wait until the key is given up. Have you finished your task?"

"Yes, sir—I mean, no, sir—not—not quite!"

"You had better complete it while

you are waiting, Vernon-Smith!" said the Lamb grimly. "If it is not finished to my satisfaction when I open this door you will be detained on Wednesday!"

Billy Bunter grinned. The Bounder evidently did not care if he was detained on Wednesday, so long as he played in the football match on Saturday. Neither did Bunter.

"Oh, yes, sir!" he answered. "It

COME INTO THE OFFICE, BOYS AND GIRLS!

I HAVE received a number of letters this week asking for information regarding the chums of Greyfriars. For instance, Fred Howarth, of Accrington, asks me if Frank Richards was the originator of Harry Wharton & Co.

The answer is "Yes."

Frank Richards wrote his first story of the chums of Greyfriars in February, 1908—nearly thirty-two years ago—and has been going strong ever since!

A Glasgow reader, who signs himself "Jock," asks me if it is possible to obtain a copy of the first issue of the MAGNET.

I am afraid it is not possible to buy one now—unless some old reader still has one in his possession and is willing to part with it. Anyway, if my chum particularly wants to read the first issue of the Old Paper, he can do so if he pays a visit to the British Museum, in London. All that is necessary for him to do is to apply for a reader's ticket. Once that is obtained, he can consult all the back numbers of the MAGNET. Full information as to how to obtain permission to consult back issues for reference purposes can be obtained from the Museum Reading Room authorities.

I AM afraid I must hold over a number of replies to readers' queries until next week, otherwise I shall have no space to tell you about next week's story. Frank Richards has turned in a real top-notch, entitled:

"SIX ON THE WARPATH!"

and it's one of the best tales of the Greyfriars chums I have yet had the pleasure of publishing. As the title suggests, six juniors—the Famous Five and Vernon-Smith—are on the warpath. Gerald Loder, the black-sheep of the Sixth, fairly asks for trouble, and the Removites are only too willing to oblige. Unfortunately, it's not Loder they "bag," but—No, I will not spill the beans! Wait until you read this spanking fine yarn next Saturday. It will hold your interest from first line to last, and, as usual, it is packed full of fun—and thrills!

Don't miss it, or you'll be sorry!

Have you made a standing order with your newsagent to deliver the MAGNET regularly each week? If not, why not?

YOUR EDITOR.

—it's rather hard, sir! I'm doing my best with it!"

"I shall expect it to be completed, Vernon-Smith!"

"Yes, sir!"

There was a grunt from Mr. Lamb and he departed again.

Billy Bunter grinned from one fat ear to the other.

But the grin faded off his fat face. Lamb was going to inquire after that key. He was not, perhaps, much concerned about the junior he disliked; but he obviously could not leave Vernon-Smith locked in the Form-room indefinitely. His inquiries were most likely to be among the Removites. If in the course of them he came on the Bounder—

"Oh crikey!" murmured Billy Bunter, as that dismaying idea came into his fat mind.

The Bounder would not care a straw—after the football match was over. But Billy Bunter cared a great deal. Bunter did not want to be found out, and he did not want six. Very much indeed Bunter did not want six. It had been a happy half-holiday—a really glorious afternoon—but the fat Owl of the Remove sat now in a state of considerable trepidation, waiting for the door to be opened, and in uneasy doubt whether it would be opened by Smithy or by the Lamb.

SMITHY'S NARROW SQUEAK!

"GOOD old Smithy!"

Smack!

"Ow! Ass!" gasped the Bounder.

The crowd in the changing-room were in great spirits. Having beaten the Shell by two goals to one, the heroes of the Remove had cause to feel satisfied with themselves and things generally.

And as the Bounder had kicked the winning goal right at the finish, with only seconds to go, the Bounder was naturally a fellow whom the rest of the team delighted to honour.

Bob Cherry honoured him with a terrific smack on the shoulder, which happened to be bare at the moment—eliciting a howl from the footballer thus honoured.

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"Right on time!" he said. "It was going to be a draw. But was it a draw, you men? Did Smithy pot the pill just in time?"

"The just-in-timefulness was truly terrific!" agreed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "It was a boonful blessing that the esteemed Smithy was on the spot!"

"What-ho!" agreed Harry Wharton. "Thank goodness you got clear, Smithy! Get changed as quick as you can, old man—and get back to the Form-room! If you're spotted now, it will mean a lot of trouble!"

"It will mean a Head's flogging!" said the Bounder coolly. "The Lamb's got it in for me! Well, let it—w-e've licked the Shell!"

"You're not going to bag a flogging, you ass!" said Harry anxiously.

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"If Bunter's played up as you fixed it, it's all right!"

"He's played up, or the Lamb would have butted in while the game was going on!" answered Vernon-Smith. "That was all right! But the Lamb was going to let me out at four—and it's past four now! Goodness knows how it will turn out! Not that I care a boiled bean, so long as the rotter was kept away till the end of the game—and he was!"

Tom Redwing looked in at the door of the changing-room. There was an anxious and startled look on his face.

"Smithy, old man——" he exclaimed. "Look out! The Lamb's coming here!"

"Oh gad!"

Smithy was dressed now—ready to go if the coast had been clear. The Form-room key was in his pocket; he had only to get back and change places with Bunter—if there was still a chance. But the Lamb was coming.

Vernon-Smith cut across to a wash-basin and bent over it, taking up a sponge and applying it to his nose—as if that feature needed bathing, after a knock in the game, as might easily have happened.

He was none too soon. The Lamb, a moment or two later, stood in the doorway, looking on over his gold-rimmed glasses.

All the other Remove fellows faced the doorway, rather breathlessly. It seemed to them cruel luck, if the Bounder was copped now, after kicking the winning goal in the match.

The Lamb, certainly, had no suspicion that Smithy was there—yet! He believed that he was locked in the Form-room. And there was only a back view of Smithy as he bent over the basin.

"Wharton!" bleated the Lamb.

"Oh! Yes, sir!" gasped Harry.

"Someone has locked the door of the Form-room, and taken away the key," said Mr. Lamb. "There is a Remove boy in detention, as you know. I must have the key at once. Who has taken it?"

"We—we—we've been playing football, sir!" stammered the captain of the Remove.

"No doubt," said Mr. Lamb. "But all the boys here have not been playing football—most of the Form seems to be here. The boy who has the key must hand it over to me at once. I will excuse him if he does so immediately!" added the Lamb amiably.

That was a good offer, and had some practical joker, as the Lamb supposed, locked Smithy in the Form-room, no doubt he would have handed over the key at once. But the key was in Herbert Vernon-Smith's pocket—and he certainly could not hand it over to the Lamb.

There was no reply.

"Come, come!" said Mr. Lamb. "I cannot have my time wasted like

this! I must have the key immediately. I——"

The Lamb broke off suddenly. His eyes fixed on the junior bending over the basin, with a sponge to his face. Most of the Remove believed the Lamb to be unobservant and absentminded. Smithy and Wharton, at least, knew different.

That the Lamb was far from unobservant was very plain—at this moment. A glint shot into his eyes as he fixed them on Smithy. He could see only the Bounder's back, but something familiar evidently struck him.

The amiable expression was gone from his face, as if wiped away by a duster. He made a quick stride into the changing-room.

It seemed impossible that Vernon-Smith could be there, out of detention, when Lamb, as he believed, had talked with him through a locked door. But his face was full of sudden suspicion of a trick.

In utter dismay, the footballers watched him. Another moment, and his hand on Smithy's shoulder would have spun him round, so that his face could be seen.

In that moment, Bob Cherry slipped on the floor—which undoubtedly was rather wet from a good deal of splashing—stumbled over, and crashed against the Lamb's legs.

"Oh!" gasped Mr. Lamb.

He staggered and almost fell.

Harry Wharton rushed to his aid—somehow bumping against him as he did so, and causing him to fall right over.

The Lamb rolled on the floor spluttering. Harry Wharton stumbled over him, and for a moment or two sprawled across the Lamb's face.

One moment was enough for the Bounder, who was always quick on the uptake. He dropped the sponge, and shot out of the doorway. Tom Brown grabbed the sponge, and bent over the basin in Smithy's place.

It was quick work—the Remove men playing up automatically, as it were.

"Oh! Oh! Oooh!" came from the Lamb.

Wharton scrambled off him, and he and Bob lent the art master a helping hand each, and Mr. Lamb staggered to his feet.

"Cherry! You clumsy boy! Take a hundred lines!" he spluttered.

"Oh! Yes, sir!"

Mr. Lamb gasped for breath. But as he gasped, he stepped towards the Remove man who was bending over the basin with the sponge, and grabbed his shoulder.

That Remove man spun round and Lamb stared at him. Tom Brown gave him an inquiring look. The New Zealand junior's face was quite innocent.

"Oh!" said Mr. Lamb.

Evidently he had been mistaken! It was not Vernon-Smith!

"Who has the key of the Form-room?" snapped Mr. Lamb. His temper was rising. "Give me the key at once, whoever has it!"

"I'm sure no one here has it, sir!" said Harry Wharton.

Mr. Lamb gave an angry glance round the crowded changing-room. But as no one admitted the possession of the key, he gave it up and went out.

"I hope to goodness Smithy's got through!" breathed Wharton.

"He won't let the grass grow under his feet!" said Bob.

Vernon-Smith certainly was not letting the grass grow under his feet. Once outside the changing-room, he fairly flew.

He reached the Form-room, panting for breath, unlocked the door, and threw it open!

There was a startled squeak as he ran in.

"Oh crikey! Is that—— Oh crumbs! Is that you, Smithy? I thought it might be that beast! He went after the key, and——"

Bunter gasped with relief.

"Get out, quick!" panted the Bounder. "Lock the door after you!"

Bunter jumped out of the Form-room. He locked the door on the outside and scudded.

Vernon-Smith sat down at his desk and his detention-paper. He grinned breathlessly as he started on the second question on the paper. About an hour later, he heard the Lamb at the door.

"Vernon-Smith!"

"Yes, sir!" answered the Bounder.

"I have not been able to obtain the key, and you—— Oh, it is here in the lock! Some young rascal——"

The Lamb unlocked the door, opened it, and came into the Form-room.

Vernon-Smith rose respectfully to his feet.

The Lamb gave him a sour look. But it was clear that he did not know that Vernon-Smith had been outside the Form-room that afternoon.

"You have not finished your Latin paper, Vernon-Smith!" he snapped. "You will be detained on Wednesday afternoon. Now you may go."

"Thank you, sir!" said the Bounder demurely.

And he went.

A few minutes later the Lamb might have heard roars of laughter from the changing-room, where Smithy had rejoined the footballers. But if Lamb heard, he certainly did not guess the cause!

THE END.

(The next yarn in this splendid series is entitled: "SIX ON THE WARPETH!" Don't miss it, whatever you do!)

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"He caught me in his study!" he said. "Quelch would have given me six. Have you ever seen me crumpled up like this, after six from Quelch?"

"No!" said Harry. "That man's got a savage spot in him, Smithy! Did you rag his study, or what?"

"No—I hadn't time! I'd done nothing, only—the Bounder sneered at me. I ducked out of sight, and if he hadn't spotted me, I should have heard what he was just going to speak into the telephone. That was why."

"Why should he care about that?" asked Redwing, staring. "Even if he were going to speak on a private matter, there couldn't be much harm done, if a fellow happened to hear."

"He's got his secrets!" said the Bounder. "He asked me if I were spying in his study! What is there to spy on?"

"Goodness knows!" said Harry blankly. "Bunter might look into a man's letters, like an inquisitive ass—but he couldn't fancy you would."

"Are you sure that was what he said?"

"Yes, that was the word—spying!" said Vernon-Smith. "I'd like to know what he was afraid I might see there—and what he was afraid a fellow might hear on the telephone."

"Afraid, old chap—" said Redwing. "Yes, afraid—as he was afraid of meeting Quelch, as you jolly well know. He slammed a door once when he heard Bunter put up Quelch's voice in the passage—and he's just as afraid of a fellow spotting something in his study! He's got secrets of some kind."

Wharton and Redwing made no answer to that. They could hardly picture an art master at a school having secrets that were of much consequence. The Bounder was keen, but he was suspicious, too; and his beliefs were coloured by his feelings. Vernon-Smith gave a shuddering wriggle. He was in pain, though, with his usual hardness, he kept it under, and would gladly have repressed every sign of it, if he could.

"If the Head knew what a cruel brute that man was, he wouldn't let him take charge of the Remove—or stay at Greyfriars at all!" he said.

"The Head thinks he's soft, as all the boys do. I know the brute—it's a spoof from beginning to end, though why he plays such a game, I don't know. Think the sort of man Lamb's taken to be would give any fellow what I've just said?"

"He's got a rotten temper when he lets it rip!" said Harry. "What the dickens did you go to his study for?"

"Because he was out! I was going to park crackers in his grate, as Price of the Fifth did with his beak last term. But he never knew that—I never knew anything, except that I was there. By gad! He's going to get the crackers, all the same—not in his study, though."

The Bounder's eyes glistened.

"Don't be a mad ass, Smithy!" said Harry unceasingly. "Much better to steer clear of the Lamb!"

"I'll watch it! He won't catch me when he gets the crackers to-night!" said the Bounder.

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"To-night!" repeated Redwing. "Smithy, you ass, if you went to a beak's room at night with crackers, you—"

"Oh, I shan't go to his room!" sneered Smithy. "He keeps his door locked at night—"

"How the dickens do you know?" asked Harry.

"Because I went to his door one night with a squirt, that's how!" sneered Vernon-Smith. "No getting at him by his door. But he's got a window."

"His window's twenty or thirty feet from the ground," said Wharton, staring. "All the bed-room windows are. Do you fancy you could climb to his window and chuck in crackers, you ass?"

"No! I can chuck a stone through a pane, though—"

"Smithy!" gasped Redwing, aghast.

"I think that will rouse him out!" said Smithy.

"And when he shows up at the window, he gets the crackers in a bundle."

"You mad ass!" exclaimed Harry. "You'll be sacked like a shot if anything of the kind comes out!"

"I know that! Are you going out for a pre. when I get out of the dorm to-night?" jeered the Bounder.

"Don't talk rot!" answered Wharton gruffly.

"It's frightfully risky—and look here, it's not the sort of thing a fellow can do—"

"Isn't it?" said Smithy, between his teeth. "You'll see! I shan't sleep a lot to-night—I shall be feeling this all night and all to-morrow, too. I shan't need calling at midnight, I expect. You'll see!"

"For goodness' sake, Smithy—"

"Oh, chuck it! I'll make that vicious little rat jump out of his skin! Wait and see!"

"Well, I think you're an ass!"

"And I think you're a fool!"

The captain of the Remove left the study without replying to that. He was sorry for Smithy, and sympathetic; but he did not want to listen to wild schemes of vengeance.

He rather hoped that when the first effects of that licking had worn off, Smithy would think better of it, and give up that reckless scheme—for there was not the slightest doubt that such an act would cause a terrific commotion, and that it would mean the sack for the perpetrator if he was discovered.

What Harry Wharton hoped, Tom Redwing hoped still more earnestly. He was alarmed for his wayward chum in his present mood. But he knew only too well that argument was wasted on the obstinate Bounder.

At prep that evening in Study No. 4 Vernon-Smith gave little attention

to his work. His black brow showed that he was brooding over his resentment and his scheme of vengeance.

After prep, Tom spoke to his chum before the Remove went down.

"Look here, Smithy, old man—" he began.

The Bounder gave him a dark look. "Are you going to spout pi-jaw?" he asked. "If you are, you can save your breath!"

"I wish you'd chuck it!" "Give us a rest!"

"But look here—" The Bounder slouched out of the study, leaving Tom Redwing to finish his sentence to the desert air.



Crash! Harry Wharton's clenched fist flashed out, catching the pimply man on his chin. Mr. Parker toppled backwards as if he had been shot! "That's the stuff!" squeaked Bessie Bunter. "Give him some more!"

Evidently, Smithy's mind was made up.

CLUE OR NO CLUE?

JOHN ROBINSON, the Head's new chauffeur, stood in his room over the garage—a room of which the window was carefully blacked out, not only for reasons of A.R.P.

John Robinson would not have liked an eye to fall on him. The dark-haired, olive-skinned chauffeur was rather strangely occupied. He was, in fact, taking off his brown underwear.

Which undoubtedly would have astonished any inhabitant of Greyfriars School, except the headmaster, who alone knew that John Robinson

son was Ferrers Locke, the celebrated detective of Baker Street.

Having placed that black hair in a box, John Robinson next proceeded to remove his olive complexion.

His face was thoughtful as he worked.

Ferrers Locke, since he had been at the school in the guise of the Head's chauffeur, had been a busy man. True, in days of rationed petrol, the car was not so much used as of old. It was by night that the Baker Street detective put in most of his work, seeking for a sign of Slim Jim, the cracksmen—known to be working that neighbourhood.

unknown as his looks. Slim Jim was merely a police nickname, applied to him because he was known to be able to wedge his way into a building by small windows, to which he seemed to climb as actively as a cat.

In his daily life he might have been anything—the only certainty was that he kept up respectable appearances or he would have been suspected before this.

What was he? There had never been a clue—till now! Was there a clue now? Ferrers Locke was not sure! But he was going to be sure.

It was Slim Jim's way to centre on some vicinity, cracking crib after crib within a wide radius, then suddenly ceasing after a few weeks or months to be heard of there—or to be known style was detected in another neighbourhood, perhaps a hundred miles away.

Did that mean that he was a man who took up some post of a temporary kind, and remained in it till his term of engagement expired—leading an unspectacular life outwardly while in the dark of the night he donned the black mask of the safe-cracker?

Locke believed that it did. It was to be in the centre of Slim Jim's present hunting-ground, unsuspected, that Locke had taken up his quarters as the Head's chauffeur at Greyfriars School. That Slim Jim, in his outward, respectable character, had visited the school at least once, he suspected—the kidnapping of Quelch seemed to indicate as much. But that the secret cracksmen was to be found at Greyfriars was an idea that had never crossed Locke's mind—till now.

But now— Now he did not think it probable. But it was possible—and the remotest clue was worth following up.

Billy Bunter—all unknowing—had given Locke that clue—if it was a clue. The kidnapped master's voice had been heard in the school—and Dr. Locke had reported it to the Baker Street detective—with the result that the fat ventriloquist had been discovered and warned off.

If that had been all, Locke would have dismissed the matter from his mind. But it was not all. From Bunter, Locke had heard of the Bounder's campaign—and that Lamb, for some inexplicable reason, was alarmed when Quelch was supposed to be in the offing.

There was one man, undoubtedly, who had cause for fear if Mr. Quelch came in sight of him—Slim Jim, whose features the Remove master knew.

And Mr. Lamb had been known to lock his door when Quelch was supposed to be in the offing.

posed, owing to the trickery of Billy Bunter, to have got back to Greyfriars, and on another occasion he had slammed a study door when Quelch's supposed voice was heard in a passage.

Why? Was he, as he looked, a nervous little ass, liable to be startled by anything out of the common? Or was it possible that he had a reason of his own for fearing to meet the gimlet eyes of Henry Samuel Quelch?

Was this the clue Ferrers Locke had so long and so patiently sought? Since that interview with Bunter, Locke had made a few discreet inquiries. Lamb was a new man at Greyfriars—he had arrived on the very day that Quelch had been kidnapped.

Had Slim Jim then seen the man who knew his face, realised that he was a master in the school at which he had just taken up a post, and struck his blow promptly to avert danger?

If so, he must have seen Quelch without Quelch having seen him. That was likely enough. At the first glimpse of the man who knew his face, the cracksmen would be instantly on his guard.

Was it possible? The Lamb looked the part he played—an amiable ass, unmercifully ragged by the juniors. But Ferrers Locke had not forgotten one occasion when he had come on the Lamb whopping Billy Bunter so savagely that he had felt called on to intervene. There was an angry and cruel temper hidden under the docile exterior of the little art master.

And he was a man below the medium size. Slim Jim also was a man below the medium size. He had taken up a post in this district—the district that Slim Jim was working. A crib had been cracked during the Christmas holidays; Mr. Lamb had spent part of the holidays at the school.

Ferrers Locke had been keeping an eye open for Mr. Lamb for some days. That afternoon he had seen Mr. Lamb, leaving the school; and the Head's chauffeur had taken a walk in the same direction.

Harry Wharton & Co., when they stood sheltered from the rain under the veranda at Sea View, had little guessed that John Robinson, when he passed the gate, had been shadowing the art master, who had passed a few minutes earlier.

But that shadowing had told the detective nothing. Mr. Lamb had walked the length of the cliff road. He had walked into Pegg's and stopped for shelter and a cup of coffee at the Anchor Inn there. Then he had walked back to Greyfriars School.

And that was all! Certainly he had met no person of a suspicious kind. He had met no one at all. Certainly, too, he had not been surveying the ground for future operations by Slim Jim. His walk had taken him by the road. If he had gone out with any intention but that of taking a walk, he had changed that intention, he had changed that intention, he had changed that intention.

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