

"CONVICT NINETEEN!"

Extra-Special Story of Harry Wharton & Co. inside.

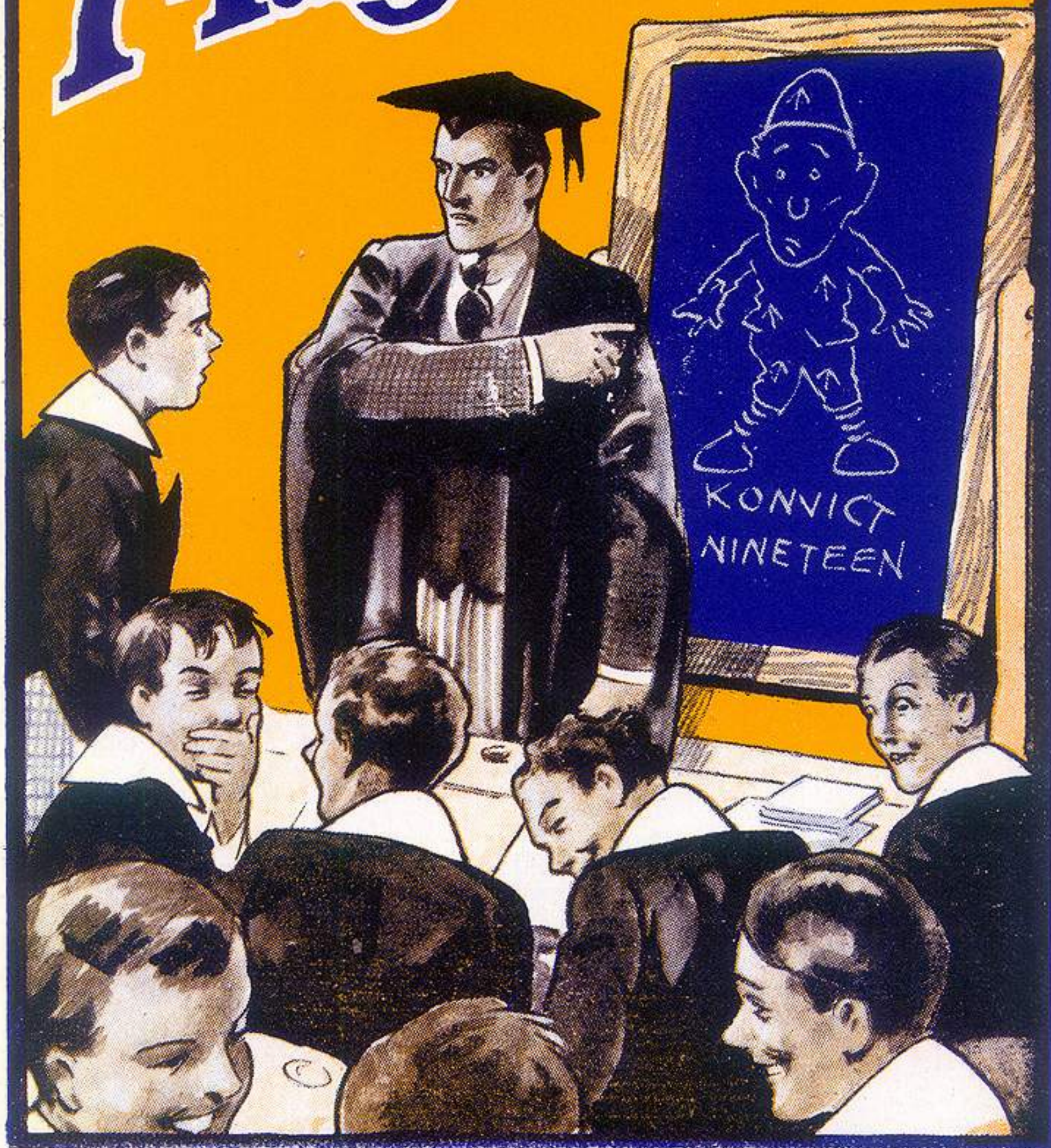
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The Magnet

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EVERY SATURDAY.



"DID YOU DO THIS?"

(A dramatic incident from the grand school yarn of Greyfriars inside.)



Famous Football Clubs!

This Week:

Blackburn Rovers F.C.

the only team to win the coveted English Cup three times in succession.

THERE is one very good reason why the Blackburn Rovers Football Club should always be associated with firework displays.

The club was founded on the fifth of November—over fifty years ago. To be quite frank, I am afraid we shall have to say that from time to time the players associated with the club have given a better impression of damp squibs than very live fireworks. But at the same time there cannot be any denial of the fact that they have often lived up to their Guy Fawkes' Day foundation.

They were certainly a firework eleven in the long ago, and many records stand to the credit of the Blackburn Rovers club. They were the first provincial side to appear in the Cup Final. That was in 1882. They didn't win it then, but this failure was very quickly followed by three Cup wins in succession, and I must tell you right here and now that this is a feat of which no other side has ever proved capable in the whole of the history of the fight for the silver bauble which is called the English Cup.

Another Feather in Their Cap!

That's something of which Blackburn has a right to be proud. It may also be mentioned in passing that by winning the Cup three times it was really theirs outright; but they handed it back to the Association. Just one other notable thing about the Rovers history should be mentioned. They were among the original twelve members who formed the Football League right at the start, and they have never suffered the drop into the Second Division. There are only two other clubs who can boast a similar record—Aston Villa and Everton. It is thirty-seven years since the Rovers won the Cup, and fourteen years since they won the championship of the First Division. So it is high time we heard from them again, and some people believe that they will do great things this season. Anyway, they have been fairly well placed in the League ever since the start of the present campaign, and I believe that they have just now as good a side as any which has worn

their distinctive blue and white quartered shirts for some time past.

Rough Diamonds!

Let us run the tape measure over the players who are "doing things" now. There are many players in the eleven who are really famous; men who have played for the country of their birth. There are also some whom the Rovers officials found as rough diamonds, and brought them on themselves to the highest class. Among these latter is Jack Crawford, who, as you may imagine, is a Scot. He came from Alloa, as a youth who was supposed to know a bit about goalkeeping. He now knows almost everything there is to know about that side of the game. Indeed, he has come on so quickly in recent times that there is a possibility that he will play for Scotland before very long. When he takes a goal-kick he invariably sends the ball beyond the centre-line, and he can punch the ball with his fists almost the same distance.

There is one special reason why Crawford should be considered by the Scottish International team selectors. In front of him in the Rovers side is another "Jock"—surname Hutton—who has been Scotland's right back in practically all their recent games. Aberdeen, where Hutton comes from—and it cost a lot of money for the Rovers to get him from there—is famous for granite. But the granite of

Aberdeen is no harder than Jock Hutton. He is one of the heaviest defenders in football to-day, but there is this to be said of him—he never uses his fourteen stone unfairly. In fact, he is surprisingly gentle for a fellow who is so big. When Hutton first came to Blackburn he was not a great success, and it was thought that the Rovers had made a mistake. However, this was only another illustration of the danger of jumping to conclusions.

Hutton, having cost the Rovers something like four thousand pounds, and that being also the price they paid for the left full-back, Herbert Jones, this department of the Rovers team is probably the most expensive of any club. But Jones, like Hutton, has proved his worth. Two years ago he came from Blackpool, and last April he played for England against Scotland in that memorable match which England won in fine style and against odds.

Good Big Fellows!

This Rovers team, having been collected from far and near at great expense, it is perhaps not altogether surprising that there should be only one Blackburn-born man who is at the moment a regular member of the first team. This is Harry Healless, formerly a centre-half, but now a right-half. He is also skipper of the side, and a popular captain, too. Healless has

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THE BRAWNY BOYS OF BLACKBURN ROVERS.



Reading from left to right, the photo shows: Back row: Hutton, Rankin, Crawford, Puddefoot, Campbell, Jones. Front row: Holland, Mitchell, Healless (Capt.), McLean, Rigby, McIntyre.

BILLY BUNTER KNOWS! *The whereabouts of Convict Nineteen is a mystery to the police, but it's not a mystery to William George Bunter. He knows—or at least, he thinks he knows—where the convict is in hiding; and visions of the £50 reward float constantly before the fat junior's vision!*



A Magnificent Long Complete School Story of Harry Wharton & Co., the World-famous Chums of Greyfriars. By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Fed-up!

“**W**ANTED—”
 “What’s wanted?”
 “Wanted by the police—” went on Billy Bunter.

“You?” asked Bob Cherry genially.
 “Ha, ha, ha!”
 “You silly ass!” roared Bunter. “Can’t you listen to a chap? I’ve got the description here—‘Wanted by the police—’”

“They’ve got on to you at last?” asked Johnny Ball. “What have you been doing this time?”

“It was bound to come to this!” remarked Harry Wharton, shaking his head seriously. “A fellow who begins with grub-raiding, is bound to come to a bad end.”

“The boundfulness is terrific!” concurred Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. “The sympathise is great, my esteemed fat Bunter!”

Billy Bunter glared at the Famous Five with a glare that almost cracked his spectacles.

They were not taking Bunter seriously. It was a serious matter—at all events, William George Bunter was convinced that it was serious. But on that point, as upon so many others, the Famous Five of the Remove did not see eye to eye with William George Bunter.

“You silly chumps!” hooted Bunter. “You haven’t told us yet what you’ve been doing,” said Frank Nugent. “Have you been finding a banknote that wasn’t lost?”

“I’ve been doing nothing, you silly owl!” hooted Bunter.

“I mean, whom have you been doing?”
 “Ha, ha, ha!”

“You can cackle!” snorted Bunter. “But I can tell you that this is a jolly serious thing. I’ve been down to the police station at Courtfield—”

“To give yourself up?”
 “You—you—you—” gasped Bunter.

“Look here, you fellows! They’ve got a description of the missing convict posted up outside Courtfield Police Station. I’ve taken it down.”

“My hat! You’d have got run in if anybody had seen you taking it down,” said Bob.

“I don’t mean that I took the notice down, you ass! I mean that I took it down—”

“Are you always as lucid as that?”

“I took it down in my pocket-book—the description, not the paper!” shrieked Bunter. “The description of Convict Number Nineteen, who escaped from Blackmoor Prison after Christmas. I’ve got it here. Just you listen to it, and you’ll see whether there isn’t a man at Greyfriars jolly well like it!”

To which the Famous Five replied with one voice:

“Cheese it, Bunter!”

On the subject of Bunter’s convict, the chums of the Remove were fed-up.

Bunter, certainly, was never likely to forget his meeting with the escaped convict near Wharton Lodge during the Christmas vacation. The man had bagged Bunter’s overcoat, and the sum of half-a-crown.

Half-a-crown was not, in itself, a large sum. But Bunter could say with truth that the man had robbed him of all he had.

Notwithstanding the immense financial resources of the Bunter tribe, of which the Greyfriars fellows heard so much, two-and-sixpence had been the sum total of Bunter’s pecuniary possessions on that celebrated occasion. And, though lost to sight, it was to memory dear.

The loss of the overcoat did not matter so much. That loss fell upon Bunter’s pater. But the loss of all he possessed in the way of cash was, of course, a matter of the most serious nature.

No doubt that loss had helped to impress the affair on Billy Bunter’s mind.

Other fellows, naturally, were not so interested.

Every man in the Remove had heard the story at least five or six times, and even the dramatic variations which Bunter introduced at every repetition did not sustain the interest.

The Greyfriars Remove were unanimously of opinion that it was time—high time—that Bunter left off telling that story.

As for Bunter’s extraordinary idea that he recognised the escaped convict in Mr. Gilmore, the new master of the Second Form, nobody at Greyfriars was likely to take that seriously.

In fact they did not want to take it at all, seriously or humorously. It was time for Bunter to shut up.

But Bunter, like a pocket-knife made in Germany, never would shut up.

Regardless of the injunction to cheese it, uttered with one voice by the Famous Five, Bunter went on.

“I say, you fellows listen to this—”

“Chuck it!”

“I’ve taken this description down word for word from the notice outside the police station at Courtfield—”

“Run away and play.”

“I wish you fellows wouldn’t talk all at once, and when I’m speaking, too. Now, listen! ‘Wanted by the police George—’”

“Dry up!” roared Harry Wharton. “We’re talking football in this study, not convicts. Blow your convict?”

“Blow your football! Talk about Nebuchadnezzar fiddling while Constantinople was burning—”

“Oh, my hat!”

“Wanted by the police, George Waring, Convict No. 19, escaped from Blackmoor Prison, Surrey—”

“Cheese it!”

“Age twenty-five years, height five feet ten, eyes blue, slim but athletic build, nose straight, rather small mouth, small hands and feet, voice cultivated and pleasant, ears small and well-shaped, features generally handsome, hair—”

Harry Wharton & Co. forbore to interrupt Bunter.

As a matter of fact, they were rather struck by that description.

Certainly, there were many men whom it would have fitted. Still, that did not alter the fact that it fitted very closely to Mr. Eric Gilmore, the young master who had temporarily taken the place of Mr. Twigg, of the Second Form.

Bunter blinked over his pocket-book at the five juniors of Study No. 1.

He saw that he had made an impression.

“Like Gilmore, what?” he grinned.

“Oh, rot!” said Wharton. “It’s like a dozen men, or a hundred, for that matter.”

“Let’s hear the rest,” said Bob Cherry. “Get on with it, Bunter, if

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you're bound to wag your chin in this study."

"Hair dark brown——" went on Bunter.

"You silly chump!" roared Bob. "Gilmore's hair is light, nearly flaxen—nearly as light as mine."

"He's dyed it, of course," explained Bunter.

"You frabjous fathead!" said Harry Wharton indignantly. "Where the description is like Gilmore, it's Gilmore's; and where it isn't like him, we're to suppose that he's in disguise."

"Exactly!" assented Bunter.

"Fathead!"

"Ass!"

"Shut the door after you!"

"I say, you fellows, I'm not finished yet——"

"You jolly well are!" exclaimed the captain of the Remove, jumping up. "You've got to chuck this, Bunter. Quelch has caned you once for spinning this idiotic yarn about Mr. Gilmore."

"Quelch's a silly ass!" said Bunter.

"Listen to me, you duffers. I've told you that there's fifty pounds reward, and I'm willing to whack it out with you chaps——"

"Travel!"

"I haven't finished. I—— Yar-oooooh!" roared Bunter.

Bunter stated that he hadn't finished. But, as a matter of fact, he had.

Five pairs of hands grasped William George Bunter at once, and the pocket-book containing the valuable description was jammed down the back of his neck. Then he was lifted out of Study No. 1 and deposited—not gently—in the Remove passage.

Bump!

"Whooooooh!"

The door of Study No. 1 closed on Bunter.

William George Bunter spluttered with wrath in the Remove passage, while in Study No. 1 the topic of Soccer was resumed—a topic ever so much more interesting to the Famous Five than escaped convicts.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

In the Lion's Den!

RICHARD NUGENT of the Second Form—more familiarly known as Dicky Nugent—came up the Remove staircase whistling shrilly through his teeth. Dicky Nugent

was not under the mistaken impression that the sounds he thus produced were musical, or pleasing to the ear. He whistled just to show any Remove men who might happen to be about that he, Nugent minor of the Second Form, did not, for his part, care two straws for Remove men, and that he would whistle along their passage if he liked.

For a fag to whistle in the Remove passage was equivalent, in cheek, to a Removite talking in a loud voice when he passed a Sixth-Form man in the quad. So it was fortunate for Richard Nugent of the Second Form that the only Removite he encountered on the present occasion was Billy Bunter, who was warranted not dangerous.

Richard Nugent's shrill and piercing whistle came to a sudden stop as he beheld William George Bunter reposing outside Study No. 1 in what a novelist would have called an attitude of unaffected grace.

Nugent minor stared down at him and grinned.

"Taking a rest, old fat bean?" he asked.

"Groooogh."

"My major chucked you out of his study?"

"Blow your major! Groogh!" Bunter gasped for breath. "You wait till I get my wind, you cheeky little beast, and I'll get up and pull your ear!"

"I'm looking for a coon like you," explained the fag. "My Form master wants to see you."

Bunter jumped.

Nugent minor's Form master might want to see him, but most decidedly he did not want to see Nugent minor's Form master.

For Nugent minor's Form master was Eric Gilmore, M.A., whom Billy Bunter persisted in recognising as Convict No. 19, missing from Blackmoor Prison.

William George Bunter preferred to give Mr. Gilmore a wide o'fing.

"I'm not going!" he gasped.

"He's sent me to tell you."

"He can't give orders to the Remove," said Bunter. "Second Form masters can't send for Remove men. Tell him to go and eat coke."

"Yes, I can see myself doing it!" said Nugent minor. "I can tell you the Gilmore man is a Tartar—as sharp as your Form master, old Quelch. You'd better go."

"Shan't!"

Bunter picked himself up, still gasping for breath. Nature and circumstances had made Bunter short in many respects. He was short of stature, short of money, and still shorter of breath. He leaned on the wall and nuffed and blew, while the cheeky fag regarded him with a grinning face.

"Gilmore hasn't ordered you to go to his study," explained Dicky Nugent. "He told me to tell you that he would be glad if you would go, as he wants to speak to you. Jolly polite of him, I think. He doesn't waste much politeness on us in the Second."

"He ain't afraid of you," said Bunter.

"Is he afraid of you?" chuckled Dicky.

"Yes, rather! You see, I know him."

Dicky Nugent chuckled spasmodically. Like all the Lower School, he had heard Bunter's extraordinary statement that he had recognised Convict No. 19 in Eric Gilmore, the master of the Second. The Second Form regarded Mr. Gilmore as every kind of a beast. They had to work under his rule as they had never worked under Mr. Twigg's. But they really did not suspect him of being a convict. That was a little too "thick."

"Well, you'd better go," grinned Dicky. "Form masters don't like to be

kept waiting. Anyhow, I've given you his message."

And Dicky Nugent turned and travelled down the Remove staircase again, bursting forth into a shrill whistle as he went.

Unfortunately for the independent fag, who did not care two straws for Remove men, Peter Todd of the Remove was coming up just then.

"What's that thumping row?" asked Peter. "Don't you know that fags mustn't kick up a shindy in the Remove?"

Dicky Nugent dodged past—not quite quickly enough. A hand grasped his collar as he flew.

Crack!

There was a fiendish yell from Richard Nugent of the Second Form as his head came into contact with the banisters.

Then Peter rolled him gently down to the landing and landed him there in a heap and left him. Richard Nugent was a dusty and breathless fag when he picked himself up and went on his way, with no breath left for whistling.

That duty done, Peter Todd resumed his way up to the Remove passage. Billy Bunter stopped him on the Remove landing.

"I say, Peter, that beast Gilmore has sent for me to his study."

"Well, cut off, then," said Peter.

"Of course, I'm not afraid," said Bunter.

"What is there to be afraid of, fat-head? Form masters don't bite."

"But I'd rather not go alone, considering that he's an escaped convict, you know."

"You frabjous ass!"

"You come along with me, Peter," urged Bunter. "If he's got a revolver we'll——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Peter.

"You can cackle," howled Bunter, "but I can jolly well tell you he's dangerous. A man who's wanted by the police——"

"He may be rather dangerous if you tell him that," chuckled Peter, "though I think he would be more likely to produce a cane than a revolver. Cut along, and don't be a silly ass!"

"You come with a fellow," urged Bunter. "He may mean murder——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked Peter.

"Dead men tell no tales, you know," said Bunter. "He may want to silence me, like that villain on the films at the Courtfield Picture Palace. He knows that I know who he is."

"You priceless idiot!" said Peter Todd. "You'll get a Head's flogging if you keep on this idiotic yarn about a Greyfriars master. But I'll come with you if you like, if only to prevent you making a fool of yourself!"

And Peter Todd good-naturedly accompanied the fat junior to Masters' Passage, for his dreaded interview with Eric Gilmore. On the way thither Bunter showed him the description which he had taken down in his pocket-book. Its resemblance to Eric Gilmore struck Peter at once, and for the first time it occurred to him that Bunter's story was not the fatuous absurdity he had supposed it to be.

There was, at least, some resemblance in some respects between Mr. Gilmore and Convict No. 19. Certainly that general resemblance would not have made Peter suspect him to be the missing man, but it accounted to some extent for Bunter's delusion.

"You see how it fits him, Peter," said Bunter eagerly. "All except the hair, and of course that's dyed."

"It's rather like him," said Peter. "But he isn't and couldn't be the man,



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as you'd know if you had as much brains as a bunny rabbit. Do you think the Head would take a man on his staff without knowing all about him?"

"He's spoofed the Head somehow, of course."

"And you're a bit wider awake than the Head—what?" asked Peter, with deep sarcasm.

"Exactly." Sarcasm was wasted on William George Bunter.

"Now, you watch him when you're in the study," said Bunter. "I'm rather short-sighted, you know—just a trifle."

"A more trifle!" agreed Peter. "You can see a barn if it's not more than a couple of feet away."

"You keep an eye on his hair, and see whether it's dyed," said Bunter. "You see, it must be dyed, because Convict No. 19's hair is dark, and Gilmore has light hair."

"Kathed!" The two Removites reached Mr. Gilmore's study, and Peter knocked.

"Pip-pip-Peter came with me," gasped Bunter. "I—I didn't want to come alone, sir. I—I don't think you've got a revolver. B-b-but—" It was obvious that Billy Bunter was in a state of blue funk, prepared for some hostile move on the part of Mr. Gilmore, and ready to bolt at the first alarm.

(See Chapter 2.)



"Come in!" said the deep, pleasant voice of the Second Form master.

Peter opened the door and signed to Bunter to enter. But the Owl of the Remove hung back.

"You go in first, Peter!" he whispered—a whisper that easily reached the ears of Mr. Eric Gilmore.

"You frabjous chump!" breathed Peter.

And he grasped Bunter by the arm and led him into the study.

Mr. Gilmore was sitting at his table—a tall, handsome young man, with pleasant features, blue eyes, and flaxen hair; as agreeable-looking a young man as had ever been seen at Greyfriars School. Peter could not help grinning at the idea of associating him, for one moment, with the desperate fugitive from Blackmoor Prison.

Mr. Gilmore seemed a little surprised to see two visitors, when he had sent only for one.

"I sent for Bunter," he remarked.

"Pip-pip-pip—" stammered Bunter. "What?"

"Pip-pip-Peter came with me!" gasped Bunter. "I—I didn't want to come alone, sir. I—I don't think you've got a revolver. B-b-but—"

"You utterly absurd boy!" exclaimed Mr. Gilmore.

"Bunter can't help being a fool, sir," said Peter politely.

"Oh, really, Peter—" "I have no objection to your friend coming with you, Bunter," said Mr. Gilmore patiently. "I desire only a few words with you."

"Yes, sir! Thank you, sir! C-c-can I go now?" gasped Bunter.

"Bless my soul! The boy seems to be absolutely stupid!" said Mr. Gilmore. "You may sit down, both of you."

The two juniors sat down—Bunter on

"I—I didn't!" gasped Bunter.

"Eh? You did not what?"

"Oh, nothing!"

Mr. Gilmore breathed hard.

"I desire to speak to you, Bunter, concerning the absurd story you have told about me," he said. "You can surely understand, stupid as you are, that the matter is most unpleasant."

"I—I know!" gasped Bunter. "It's beastly to have a convict in the school."

"What?" thundered Mr. Gilmore.

"I—I mean, it's nice to have a convict in the school!" gasped Bunter. "That's what I really meant to say, sir. I—I don't mind you being a convict, sir. I—I like convicts."

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Peter.

Mr. Gilmore looked fixedly at Bunter.

"Then you still believe this absurd story you have told, Bunter?"

"Yes, sir. I mean no! Not at all,

the very edge of a chair, as near to the door as he could manage. It was obvious that Billy Bunter was in a state of blue funk, prepared for some hostile move on the part of the Form master, and ready to bolt at the first alarm. And the fact that Mr. Gilmore did not box his fat ears was a proof that he was, at least, a very good-tempered young man. Daniel in the lion's den probably felt a good deal like Billy Bunter at the present moment; and only too obviously William George Bunter did not dare to be a Daniel.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Startling!

MR. GILMORE pursed his lips. That he was annoyed was clear. It was scarcely possible, in the odd circumstances, for him to be anything else. But he remained patient and good-tempered. "Now, Bunter—" he began.

sir!" groaned Bunter, with a longing eye on the door. "Never, sir! Nothing of the kind. C-c-can I go now, sir?"

"You can not!" snapped Mr. Gilmore.

"Oh, lor'!"

"You must explain to me why this absurd fancy came into your mind, and perhaps I may be able to clear up the matter. You must know very well that if I laid a complaint before your headmaster you would be flogged for your insolence. But I should much prefer to disabuse your mind of this singular obsession. You understand me?"

"Oh, dear! Yes, sir."

"I am told that during the Christmas holidays you came into contact with an escaped convict."

"Ow! Yes. He bagged my overcoat, sir. I—I really think you ought to let me have it back now, sir. It's no good to you, really!"

"Shut up, you ass!" breathed Peter Todd.

"Oh, really, Peter—"
"You saw this man clearly?" asked Mr. Gilmore.

"Yes sir; you were quite close—"
"I am speaking of the convict you saw in the Christmas holidays, Bunter. You saw him clearly?"

"Yes sir."
"And you fancy that I bear some resemblance to him?"

"Yes, sir. Being the same man—"
"Silence, you stupid boy! Cannot you understand that I am not the same man?" snapped Mr. Gilmore. "I am trying to be patient with you, Bunter. Look at me closely, now, and you will see that I am not the same man."

Bunter blinked at him.
"Well?" said Mr. Gilmore.

"You're just the same, sir, except that you've dyed your hair," said Bunter. "Your hair was dark, and close-cropped that night."

"I have dyed my hair?" repeated Mr. Gilmore dazedly.

"Yes; it's light now."

"Upon my word! This is too much! I am wasting my time in reasoning with you, Bunter," exclaimed Mr. Gilmore. "Knowing you to be the stupidest boy at Greyfriars I should have preferred to convince you rather than to request Dr. Locke to flog you for your impertinence. But if you will not listen to reason—"

"Oh, yes, sir. I—I will, sir!" gasped Bunter. "I—I—I believe every word you say, sir. Every syllable!"

"Then you are convinced?" asked Mr. Gilmore.

"Oh, certainly, sir! Quite!"
Convinced or not, Billy Bunter was quite certain that he did not want a Head's flogging.

"In that case, you may go," said Mr. Gilmore. "and I trust I shall hear no more of this nonsense."

Bunter jumped up.
"Yes, sir! Very well, sir. I—I suppose you won't mind giving me the half-crown, sir?"

"Eh? What half-crown?"
"The two-and-six you took from me when you bagged my overcoat."

"Bless my soul!"
"My pater bought me a new coat, sir, so that's all right. But the two-and-six—"

"Will you shut up, Bunter?" hissed Peter Todd.

"Oh, really, Peter—"
Mr. Gilmore rose to his feet.

"I see it is futile to reason with you, Bunter," he said. "I shall take you to your headmaster and place the matter in Dr. Locke's hands."

"Oh, lor'!"

"Bunter can't help being a fool, sir," said Peter Todd, feeling called upon to put in a word for the hapless Owl of the Remove. "He was frightened out of his wits by that convict in the holidays, sir. And—if you'll excuse me, sir—the published description is a bit like you—I mean it's like enough for a fool like Bunter—"

"What do you mean, Todd?" exclaimed Mr. Gilmore, really angry now. "How can the description of an escaped convict be in any way like me?"

"It is, really, sir," said Peter. "Except that your hair is a different colour, sir, the description is rather like you: Of course, it's only a general resemblance; anybody but Bunter would know that. But, so far as the printed description goes, you are rather like that man Waring—"

"What?"
Mr. Gilmore shot out that ejaculation like a bullet. He stared blankly at Peter Todd.

"What name did you say?" he exclaimed.

"Waring, sir—George Waring," said Peter, in wonder.

"Good heavens!"

Mr. Gilmore stood resting his hand on the table, with every vestige of colour gone from his handsome face. His eyes were dilated as he stared at Peter Todd. Peter stared back at him in blank bewilderment. The mention of the convict's name seemed to have an electrical effect on the new master of the Greyfriars Second.

"Todd, if you are daring to jest with me on this subject—" exclaimed Mr. Gilmore, at last.

"Not at all, sir," said Peter, in wonder.

"You say that the escaped convict's name was George Waring?"

"Yes, sir—it's in the papers—it's posted up outside the police-station at Courtfield—"

"Oh!"
The effort that the Second Form master made to recover his composure was visible to the eye, and almost painful to witness. Peter Todd's eyes were fixed on him, as if fascinated. There was suspicion now mingled with the wonder in Peter's face.

"You may go," said Mr. Gilmore, speaking calmly. "I shall waste no more words on you, Bunter. I warn you, however, that if you couple my name again with that of an escaped convict, I shall complain very seriously to Dr. Locke, and request that you may be expelled from the school."

"Oh, lor'!" gasped Bunter.
"You may go!"

Mr. Gilmore sat down again and picked up some Latin papers on his table. Peter Todd could not help noticing that the papers shook in his hand.

He left the study quite bewildered. Billy Bunter rolled after him down Masters' Passage. At the corner, he clutched Peter by the sleeve.

"I say, Peter—"

"Oh, dry up!" said Peter irritably.

"Did you notice whether his hair was dyed?"

"Bother his hair!"
"Oh, really, Peter—"

Peter Todd jerked his arm away, and hurried off. There was suspicion in his mind now; which he certainly did not intend to confide to Billy Bunter. If Mr. Gilmore was not, as Bunter supposed, the escaped convict himself, he knew something of the man, that was clear to Peter Todd. There was some strange and mysterious connection, at least, between the master of the Greyfriars Second, and the hunted fugitive from Blackmoor Prison. On that point there was no doubt in Peter's mind, and it was a startling and disconcerting discovery.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Very Queer!

"YOUR deal, Snoopey."
Harry Wharton started as he heard Skinner's voice.

The words showed that Harold Skinner, the black sheep of the Remove, was at his old game—in a rather unexpected place.

The early winter dusk was falling, as Wharton strolled through the old Cloisters—silent and deserted at that hour.

The captain of the Remove had been out of gates since class, and had returned a few minutes late for lock-up. Once the school gates were locked,

there was no admittance without a fellow giving his name to Gosling to be reported in due course to his Form-master. The captain of the Remove very naturally did not want Mr. Quelch to be bothered with such a trifling matter. He was not anxious to add fifty lines to those he had already on hand.

So, as there was still ample time before call-over, he entered by way of the Cloisters—where an ancient wall gave easy access to an active climber—a spot well known, as a matter of fact, to most fellows in the Lower School at Greyfriars. Strolling out of the Cloisters into the quad, there would be nothing to indicate that he had been out of gates after lock-up. Skinner's voice came to his ears quite unexpectedly from the shadows that were already deepening among the old stone pillars and arches.

"Last deal, Skinner," came Snoop's voice. "It's getting jolly dark here."

"Light enough till call-over!" said Skinner.

"It's cold, too!"
"You're josing, you mean?" came Skinner's unpleasant voice.

"Oh, rats! I'd rather be in the study."

"So would I, only that rotter Wingate of the Sixth might look in. He looked in yesterday, and I could see in his eye what he expected to find out, blow him."

Harry Wharton came through the stone pillars, and glanced at the two black sheep of the Remove. Sidney James Snoop gave a sudden start.

"Who—what—" he ejaculated.
Harry Wharton laughed.

"Only little me," he said.

"Oh, you ass! You startled me."

"Did you think it was Wingate of the Sixth?" asked Harry, with a curl of the lip. "Serve you right if it had been."

Skinner looked up at him.
"Couldn't mind your own bizney, by way of a change?" he suggested.

"What do you want here?"

"Not your company, at any rate," answered the captain of the Remove contemptuously. "I heard you speaking, as I came along, that's all. Anybody might have heard you."

"I told you it was risky, playing nap here, Skinner," muttered Snoop. "That man Gilmore strolls in the Cloisters sometimes."

"Oh, rot! You've been out of bounds, Wharton," said Skinner. "Nice sort of example for a model youth to set to the Form. Do you mind my mentionin' that I'm shocked at you?"

"Fathead!"

Harry Wharton went on his way, leaving Skinner and Snoop to finish their little game; though he was strongly tempted to take the two sportsmen of the Remove by their necks, and knock their heads together. It was cold and growing very dusky in the Cloisters, and Sidney James Snoop, at least, was not enjoying himself—perhaps because he was losing. Skinner, who was winning, did not seem to mind the cold and the growing gloom. But both of them were careful not to speak again above a whisper, after the start Wharton's sudden appearance had given them. The Cloisters were generally quite deserted at dusk; but there was always a possibility of ears that might hear.

The captain of the Remove had almost reached the end of the dusky Cloisters, when he stopped suddenly and peered round among the shadowy pillars.

"Is that you, Skinner, you fathead?" he exclaimed.

There was no reply. Wharton stared about him, convinced that he had heard a stealthy step quite close at hand. He naturally suspected that Skinner was "stalking" him through the Cloisters, by way of a jest. It was not likely that anyone else was lurking there.

Wharton frowned. In the silence, he caught a sound of hurried breathing, and he made a dash under the shadowy arch from which it came. If a practical joker was dogging him through the Cloisters, intending to startle him, Wharton was prepared to startle that practical joker emphatically.

A shadow flitted before him, and vanished round a stone pillar.

"My hat!" Wharton caught a glimpse of a brown, thick overcoat; and he knew now that it was not Skinner. Skinner was in Etons. And though he had only a momentary glimpse of the figure, he

hurried retreat, covered with confusion, without waiting for the master of the Second to reply.

He hurried on to the quadrangle, and to the House.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" Bob Cherry met him as he came into the lighted House. "You're late. Did Gosling nail you?"

"No; I got in through the Cloisters," answered Harry.

"Anything happened?" asked Bob, scanning his face.

"Well, yes. It's awfully queer!"

"Give it a name!"

"Mr. Gilmore was in the Cloisters."

"Nothing queer about that—he often mooches about the Cloisters," answered Bob. "It's his favourite walk, I believe. I've seen him there lots of times."

"Only he dodged away as if he wanted to avoid being seen."

"Eh?"

Wharton coloured under Bob's astonished stare.

"It's a fact," he said. "I thought it

"Rats!"

Skinner shuffled the cards.

With the cards shuffling in his thin hands, and a cigarette sticking out of the corner of his mouth, Skinner looked the arrant young blackguard that he was. He regarded his comrade with a sneering grin. Sidney James Snoop was a bad loser, and he was angry and sulky. He, too, was smoking, but he was obviously fed-up with the fascinating game of nap.

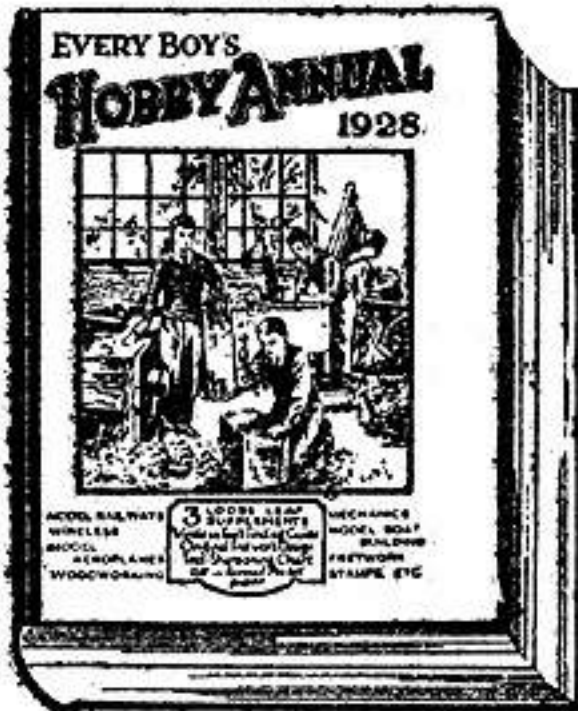
"Oh, one more round, old bean," said Skinner airily "Luck will turn, you know."

"You wouldn't want another round if you thought so," grunted Snoop.

"Be a sport, you know," urged Skinner.

He began to deal the cards, Snoop watching him sulkily, disinclined to play, but tempted by the hope that fortune might change. It was at that moment that a hurried footstep was heard among the shadows of the Cloisters, and a figure came quickly up—so

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could see that it was too tall for Skinner—indeed, he had an impression that it was too tall for even a Sixth-Form man.

Wharton paused a moment, and then pursued the shadowy figure. If some stranger had penetrated into the Cloisters, the man had to give an account of himself. That Mr. Gilmore often strolled in the Cloisters, he knew; but a master, of course, would not have dodged away in this surreptitious manner. He heard hurried breathing, and hurried, though stealthy, footsteps, before him in the dusk; and he smiled as he followed; for the unknown lurker had dodged into an arched way which led nowhere, the outlet having been walled-up long ago.

He came suddenly on the shadowy form as it turned.

"Hold on, whoever you are," said Wharton coolly. "Who are you, and what do you want here?"

Then, as he peered at the face turned towards him in the shadows, he started, and flushed crimson.

"Oh! I beg your pardon, sir! I—I had no idea it was you, Mr. Gilmore."

The captain of the Remove beat a

was some tramp or somebody who had sneaked in, and ran him down. And it was Gilmore."

"My hat! What did he want to dodge a Lower Fourth man for?" ejaculated Bob. "Sure it was Gilmore?"

"Yes, ass. Blessed if I know why he wanted to dodge out of sight, but he did. Isn't it queer?"

"Jolly queer, if you're not dreaming, old chap," grinned Bob.

"Oh, don't be an ass," grunted Wharton. "I suppose I know Gilmore's face when I see it, though he was dressed differently from usual. I can't make it out. Still, it's no biznoy of mine, I suppose. What about tea?"

"Ready in the study, and waiting for you," said Bob cheerily.

And the two juniors went up to the Remove passage, and Wharton dismissed the peculiar incident from his mind.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

"For It!"

"Oh, chuck it!" muttered Snoop.

"Another game!" urged Skinner.

"Rats! It's too dark."

"Lots of light yet."

quickly, that the newcomer almost stumbled over the two juniors.

Snoop gave a gasp of terror.

A tall man in a thick, brown overcoat stopped and stared at the two juniors, and one glimpse of his face was enough for them. They knew the well-marked features of the master of the Second Form, though the man was strangely dressed, muffled up in the thick overcoat, with a cap pulled down over his ears and his forehead.

The cards seemed to freeze to Skinner's palsied hands.

"Mr. Gilmore!" he stuttered.

The next instant the man had passed on, and the shadowy pillars hid him from the terrified eyes of the juniors.

Skinner and Snoop stared at one another in terror.

At that moment they did not feel like sportive young sportsmen, recklessly defying the rules of the school. They felt like what they were—a pair of young rascals fairly caught and in danger of expulsion.

Why Mr. Gilmore did not stop to speak to them they did not know, and did not care. It was enough for them

that he had seen them, and seen how they were occupied.

Snoop threw away his cigarette with a trembling hand.

"We're done for now!" he muttered huskily. "Oh, you fool, Skinner! The study would have been safer than this, Wingate or no Wingate!"

"What's the good of telling me that?" snarled Skinner. "Who was to guess that that rotter would be loafing about here at dark?"

"We're caught now!"

Skinner made no reply to that. It was only too obvious that the black sheep of the Remove were caught.

Skinner was as thoroughly scared as his associate, though he had a little more nerve. He hurriedly concealed the cards and the cigarettes in a crevice of the flagged floor of the Cloisters. At least he did not want to have any incriminating evidence upon him when he was called up before the Head.

Snoop watched him, with a scared sneer.

"Fat lot of good that is!" he muttered. "Do you think Gilmore didn't see the cards, and the smokes, too?"

"He may not report us," said Skinner. "After all, we're not in his Form. He has nothing to do with the Remove."

Snoop laughed harshly.

"Do you think any Greyfriars master would see two fellows smoking and gambling without reporting them?" he snapped. "Don't be a fool! We're for it, now, both of us. It's the sack!"

"If it's a flogging, we can stand it."

"It won't be a flogging. We've been warned before!" groaned Snoop. "It will be the sack this time!"

"Oh, shut up!" snarled Skinner.

Harold Skinner had only too much reason to fear that it would be the "sack" this time. Skinner's record was not good in his Form, and he had received more than one warning from his Form-master, and more than one from the Head. And the present case was

an absolutely flagrant one; there was no excuse and no explanation. The two young rascals had been fairly caught.

In a dismal mood they limped out of the Cloisters and made their way across the dusky quad to the House.

It was near time for calling-over now, but they fully anticipated being called to Mr. Quelch's study before Hall. The Remove master was not likely to delay in such a matter. Mr. Gilmore was not likely to delay in making his report, or the Remove master in acting upon it. It was in a state of sheer terror that Skinner and Snoop entered the House.

"I say, you fellows," Billy Bunter blinked at them, with a fat grin. "I say, what's up? You look awfully sick."

"Shut up, you fat toad!" growled Skinner.

"Oh, really, Skinner—Yaroooh!" roared Bunter, as Skinner gave him a savage shove and he sat down.

Skinner and Snoop went into the Rag. There they waited for the call to Mr. Quelch's study.

But it did not come.

Call-over came, and the two culprits limped rather than walked with the rest of the Lower Fourth into Big Hall.

Mr. Quelch was taking the roll.

Two or three other masters were present, among them Mr. Gilmore, of the Second. He did not glance at the Remove, and Mr. Quelch gave the two shivering young rascals no special attention. It was evident that they had not been reported yet.

After call-over Skinner and Snoop went out with the Remove. They went up to the Remove passage, worried and wondering.

"The beast mayn't be going to report us, after all," said Skinner hopefully. "He mayn't care anything about fellows who ain't in his Form."

"Rot!" said Snoop.

"Well, he hasn't reported us yet."

"Playing with us, like a cat with a

mouse," groaned Snoop. "All the fags of the Second say he's a beast. So he is."

"I believe he's a good-natured man," said Skinner. "The fags loathe him because he won't let them slack as old Twigg used to."

"You think he's good-natured enough to let us off?" sneered Snoop. "Jolly queer schoolmaster, if he did. It's his duty to report us, and you jolly well know it!"

Skinner nodded gloomily, feeling his brief hope fade. Mr. Gilmore might be good-natured—in fact, was known to be good-natured, in spite of the low opinion the Second had of their Form-master. But no man could carry good nature to the extent of passing over what had been seen in the Cloisters. That would not be good nature, but a dereliction of duty.

Snoop went into Study No. 11, not for prep. He was in no mood for prep. What was the use of prep when he was expecting every moment to be called up by his Form-master, to be taken to the Head and expelled from the school? The prospect of it made the wretched Snoop feel quite dizzy. Never had a young rascal repented more deeply than did Sidney James Snoop in those dismal moments; but repentance—as it often does—came too late. In a state of quavering funk Snoop waited for the chopper to come down.

Skinner went along to Study No. 1, where Wharton and Nugent had taken out their books for prep. The black sheep of the Remove was not a welcome visitor in that study; and he would have been told so, in the plain English that was characteristic of the Lower Fourth, had not the juniors there noted the haggard wretchedness in his face, which quite disarmed them.

"What on earth's the matter, Skinner?" exclaimed Wharton, while Frank Nugent stared wonderingly at the crestfallen sportsman.

Skinner shut the door.

"I'm for it!" he muttered.

"What's happened?" asked Nugent.

"I've been spotted."

"Oh!" said Harry. "In the Cloisters, do you mean, where I saw you?"

"Yes," groaned Skinner.

"Well, you asked for it."

Skinner gave the captain of the Remove a savage look.

"Rub it in," he said bitterly.

"I don't want to do that," said Harry quietly. "I'm sorry for you, if you come to that. I'd help you if I could."

"So would I," said Frank Nugent. "When a fellow's down, it's not much good telling him it was his own fault. But I suppose there's nothing we can do, Skinner, if you're caught out?"

"I—I don't know. If you were to speak to Gilmore, Wharton—"

"Gilmore?" repeated Frank.

"It was Gilmore caught you?" asked Harry. "I suppose it would be. I saw him in the Cloisters after I saw you. Has he reported you to Mr. Quelch? He would go to Mr. Quelch, not to the Head, I think."

"Not yet. He can't have, as Quelch has said nothing. I can't understand it," muttered Skinner. "Do—do you think he's likely to say nothing about it, as I'm not in his Form?"

"That's rot! He couldn't keep such a thing dark. You and Snoop were smoking and gambling. He saw that, I suppose?"

"Yes," muttered Skinner.

"He couldn't keep that dark; it's his duty to report you."

"Blow his duty!" snarled Skinner.

"Well, he would be bound to do it. Anyhow, he's jolly sure to. It's odd

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NOW ON SALE.

There was a hurried footstep in the Cloisters, and a figure brushed hurriedly by Snoop and Skinner. One glimpse of the man's face was enough for the two juniors. "Mr. Gilmore!" stammered Skinner. Snoop gave a gasp of horror. (See Chapter 5.)



that he didn't speak to Quelch before call-over."

"Snoop thinks he's playing with us like a cat with a mouse."

"That's rot! Gilmore's not that sort."

"Then why hasn't he acted already?"

"Goodness knows! Are you sure he recognised you?"

Skinner's face brightened for a moment with hope at the suggestion. But it was only for a moment.

"He must have recognised us. He was as near as I am to you, and he stared right at us, and went on without speaking a word. He knows us all right."

"He may be thinking it over. Anyhow, he's bound to report you, if he knows you. Better make up your mind to that."

"If you were to speak to him," muttered Skinner.

"What could I say?"

"Well, you're my Form captain, and you might put in a word. Ask him to go easy, because—because you know I'm not that kind of chap. You know I've never done anything of the kind before, and all that. He's new here, so he may take it in—"

Skinner broke off at the expression on the face of the captain of the Remove.

"I can't go to Mr. Gilmore and tell him a pack of lies, Skinner," said Harry quietly. "It would be no use, either; he would be bound to speak to Mr. Quelch."

"Then it's all up with me," groaned Skinner. "You'll see me sacked from Greyfriars to-morrow. I dare say that's what you want."

"Nothing of the kind," said Harry,

with a compassionate glance at the wretched junior's face. "I'd help you if I could. I hope I'd help any fellow who was down on his luck. What about going to Mr. Gilmore yourself?"

"What good would that do?"

"It's a chance, at least. Tell him the truth, that you've played the fool, that you're sorry, and that you'll never do such a thing again, if he gives you a chance. That might make him keep it to himself, though I warn you that he's the man to keep an eye on you afterwards, and see that you kept your word."

"I don't care about that, so long as I get clear of this," muttered Skinner. "If—if you think there's a chance—"

"It can't make matters worse, anyhow, as he knows what you were up to."

"That's true," muttered Skinner. "I—I think I'll try it on. It can't do any harm, as you say."

And Harold Skinner left Study No. 1 with a faint glimmering of hope in his breast. Wharton and Nugent looked at one another.

"Looks like the long jump for Skinner," said Frank.

"I'm afraid so, but I hope he'll get off. I don't want to see any Remove man sacked from Greyfriars."

"No fear! But—well, Skinner has asked for it a lot of times, and it looks to me as if he's got it now."

The door of Study No. 1 opened, and a fat face and a pair of large spectacles glimmered in.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Oh, hook it, Bunter!"

"I say, Skinner's just been in here," said Bunter, blinking inquisitively at

the chums of the Remove. "What's the matter with him?"

"Find out, fathead!"

"That's why I'm asking you. I say, he looked as if he'd seen a ghost when he came in. He looks now as if he were going to be hanged!"

"Oh, dry up!"

"He shoved me over when I asked him what was up," said Bunter. "Beast, you know. I'd have jolly well licked him, only—well, he's not the sort of fellow a man would care to soil his hands on. Do you fellows know what's up with Skinner. You might tell a chap. Of course, I shan't mention it."

"Sure you won't mention it?" asked Nugent.

"Oh, quite, old chap!" said Bunter eagerly. "You can trust me."

Bunter's fat face fairly blazed with inquisitiveness.

"Strict confidence?" asked Frank.

"Yes, rather! What is it?" breathed Bunter.

"He's the escaped convict!" said Nugent gravely.

"Wha-a-t?"

"Keep it dark."

Billy Bunter stared blankly at Nugent for a moment. Then he spluttered with wrath.

"You silly ass! You footling chump! I didn't ask for any of your idiotic jokes. Look here, tell me what Skinner's done?"

"You've heard of the Great Fire of London?"

"The Great Fire of London! What about that?"

"Skinner was the man who did it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Wharton, quite

entertained by the expression on William George Bunter's speaking countenance.

"You—you—you——" gasped Bunter. Slam!

It was clear to the Owl of the Remove, by this time, that his thirst for information would never be slaked in Study No. 1. He departed from that study in wrath, and closed the door behind him with a slam that rang along the Remove passage from end to end.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Getting at Gilmore!

"GAMMON, of course!" said Gatty of the Second.

"Of course!" said Nugent minor.

"Just Bunter's rot."

"Just!"

"Bunter's major is a gassing chump, just like his minor here," remarked Myers. "Ain't he, Sammy?"

Sammy Bunter grunted. That his major, William George of the Remove, was a gassing chump, Sammy freely admitted. But he declined to see any family resemblance between William George Bunter and himself.

"Still, it will make the Beast sit up," said Gatty.

"Sure to."

"Then it's a go."

"It's a go!" agreed a crowd of the Second Form.

The Second were in their Form-room, ready for prep. Prep was not quite due yet, and Mr. Gilmore had not arrived. Fellows in higher Forms did their prep in their studies, but the fag Forms—the Second and the Third—had to prepare their lessons in the presence of their respective Form masters.

Even under the benign rule of Mr. Twigg, the Greyfriars Second had never loved prep. Under Mr. Gilmore they loathed it.

The Beast—in the Second Eric Gilmore was never called by any other name—either believed, or affected to believe, that the Second Form were at Greyfriars to learn things.

Under this belief, or affected belief, Mr. Gilmore saw to it that they did learn things.

The Second Form were absolutely satisfied with the present state of their knowledge. They did not want to increase it. They would have allowed it to decrease with perfect equanimity. Mr. Gilmore was not satisfied with the state of their knowledge, or want of knowledge, which he appeared to regard as a state of benighted ignorance.

He never told the Second what he thought of the methods of their former master, the late lamented Twigg. But he adopted different methods—very different indeed. He had been hardly a couple of weeks at Greyfriars, as yet; but already the heads of the Second Form ached with the knowledge that Eric Gilmore had crammed into them. Fags who had hardly known the difference between hic, haec, and hoc, now knew these things well, and many more.

No longer was Gatty able to state, with conviction that "Britannia est insula" meant that Britannia was insulted, like an electric wire. He did not want to know better; but he knew better, all the same. No longer was Sammy Bunter able to pass a pleasant morning dozing on a back form and sucking toffee. Both dozing and toffee were barred under the rule of the Beast.

No more could Dicky Nugent find a

harmless and necessary entertainment in shying inkballs at other fellows in class. Inkballs were things of the past in the Second Form-room. No longer did the Second possess a Form master who would say, "Well, well, you must remember another time!" when a delinquent stated that he had "forgotten" his lines. Lines imposed by Mr. Gilmore, and forgotten, were doubled. Memories in the Second Form, on the subject of impots, had sharpened wonderfully. A whole lorry-load of little grey books could not have done it in the time.

In this state of general improvement, the Greyfriars Second were not bursting with gratitude towards the master who had so improved them.

Later in life, no doubt, they would remember Mr. Gilmore with gratitude. Just at present they loathed him.

So Billy Bunter's tale of an escaped convict was received with rejoicing in the Second.

Not, of course, that any man in the Second Form supposed, for a moment, that there was anything in it. They took it for granted that it was only another sample of the well-known idiosyncrasy of the Bunter family.

But it was welcome, all the same. Anything that was up against Eric Gilmore was welcome.

While they waited for Mr. Gilmore to come in and take them in prep, on this particular evening, the Second were debating a great wheeze, propounded by George Gatty. It was agreed on all hands that it was a "go."

The big blackboard had been set up, and Gatty had a chalk in his grubby fingers.

Under the admiring and encouraging eyes of the Second Form, Gatty proceeded to display his abilities as an artist.

He chalked a convict on the blackboard.

Gatty of the Second was not a finished artist. He was rather given to drawing; but sometimes he drew Bonzo, and sometimes Felix. But nobody but Gatty ever knew which was which. And now, as he drew a convict on the blackboard to meet Mr. Gilmore's eyes when he came into the Form-room, the admiring and encouraging glances of Form-fellows grew a little dubious as the sketch grew and grew.

"Look here! Chuck that!" said Dicky Nugent at last. "No time for games now. You were going to draw a convict."

Gatty looked round.

"You priceless dummy!" he replied.

"Look here——"

"I'm drawing a convict."

"Oh!"

Nugent minor had been under the impression that Gatty was drawing a tree. Still, as Gatty was the artist, it had to be supposed that Gatty knew what he was drawing. It appeared a little doubtful, however, whether Mr. Gilmore would know.

Gatty proceeded with the chalk. Perhaps even Gatty realised that the figure on the blackboard did not leap to the eye, as it were, as a convincing convict. Perhaps he had heard of that ancient Greek who, in order that there should be no misapprehension, wrote under his picture, "This is an ox." George Gatty, having completed his figure, wrote under it in large capitals:

"KONVICT NINETEEN."

That inscription put the matter beyond doubt. Even if the picture looked as much like a tree as a convict, and as much like a steam-engine as a tree, the title settled it.

"There! What do you think of that?" inquired Gatty at last.

"Is 'convict' spelt with a 'K'?" asked Nugent minor.

"Yes," said Gatty, in a tone of finality.

"Oh, all right! I say, you ought to have put on some broad arrows, you know. Convicts have broad arrows on their clobber."

"I have put on some broad arrows—lots of them. Where do you keep your eyes?" asked Gatty scornfully.

"He ought to have a cropped head," remarked Sammy Bunter. "Convicts have their head bobbed, you know."

"He's got a cropped head."

"Oh!"

These details, visible only to the artist's eye, had to be taken for granted by the rest of the Second. But it was agreed that whether the picture left Mr. Gilmore in doubt or not, he could not be in doubt about the title that was written underneath.

"I say, the Beast may be here any minute," observed Myers; and at that timely hint there was a rush of the fags to take their places.

Gatty carefully rubbed the chalk from his fingers on his trousers. He did not want Mr. Gilmore to find him with chalky fingers. It was true that his chalky trousers furnished a clue that would not have required the sagacity of a Ferrers Locke to follow. But a fellow could not think of everything at once; at all events, George Gatty couldn't.

There was a step outside the Form-room.

"Here he comes!" breathed Nugent minor.

And there was a breathless hush as Mr. Eric Gilmore came in.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

A Washout!

MR. GILMORE glanced at his Form with his pleasant smile. "The Beast" had a very pleasant smile.

The Second, in fact, could have liked him had he been any other Form's Form master.

The fags wondered whether he would notice, at once, the blackboard standing on its easel out in the middle of the room, where it certainly ought not to have been at that moment.

Mr. Gilmore did not seem to observe it.

He went to his desk, and the fags exchanged excited glances, and there was a murmur of whispering.

Mr. Gilmore looked at his Form again.

A much less keen and observant young man than Eric Gilmore would have divined what it was. His attention was drawn to the blackboard, and he walked round it to look at it, perhaps surmising that some caricature had been depicted there.

There was a hush in the Second.

Mr. Gilmore, standing in front of the blackboard, was standing very still, his eyes fixed on Gatty's high art.

He was between his Form and the blackboard, so they could see only his back; and the back of his head, of course, did not express his feeling in any way.

For some moments he stood examining the picture on the board, and the Second waited with a tenseness that was growing painful.

What was the Beast thinking of? Still more important, what was he going to do? Gatty gave his grubby paws another surreptitious rub on his

trousers. Suppose the Beast found out who had drawn that likeness of Convict Nineteen? Suppose he "took it out" of the whole Form if he didn't find the culprit? In Mr. Gilmore's absence Gatty's wheeze had seemed no end of a wheeze for making the Beast "squirm." But in Mr. Gilmore's presence, it did not seem so much of a wheeze. Gatty began to wish that he had left the chalk and the blackboard alone, as the long seconds extended into minutes, and still Mr. Gilmore stood silent, staring at the chalked figure. Why didn't the Beast move or speak?

He moved and spoke at last. He turned round to his Form, and there was a slight smile on his face.

"Who drew this?"

No answer.

"No doubt it was a member of my Form," said Mr. Gilmore pleasantly. "I should like to know his name."

Silence.

"You are well aware that it is not allowed for boys in this Form to chalk on the blackboard," remarked Mr. Gilmore. "Gatty!"

Gatty jumped.

"Oh! Yes, sir!" he gasped.

"Did you chalk on the blackboard?"

"Oh!" gasped Gatty helplessly.

How did the Beast know? he wondered. He had rubbed the chalk off his fingers, and, moreover, his hands had been behind him. Gatty was not aware, at the moment, that there was a smear of chalk on his nose.

"Answer me, Gatty!" said Mr. Gilmore, with a touch of sternness.

"Oh! Yes, sir!" gasped Gatty.

Gatty did not deny the soft impeachment, for two reasons. In the first place, it was considered bad form to tell a lie direct. In the second place, it was obvious that Mr. Gilmore knew perfectly well that Gatty was the guilty party.

"You chalked this—ahem!—figure?"

"Yes, sir!" murmured Gatty.

"What is it intended to represent?"

"Eh?"

"No doubt it is intended to represent something," said Mr. Gilmore. "I desire to know what."

Some of the Second Form grinned.

"It—it—it's a convict, sir!" stammered Gatty.

"Indeed! I should scarcely have supposed so," said Mr. Gilmore. "But the inscription underneath would seem to bear out your statement. No doubt you wrote that also?"

"Yes, sir!" mumbled Gatty.

"You must not chalk on the blackboard, Gatty. I shall, however, pass that over on this occasion, only warning you that it must not be repeated. But you appear to be under the impression, Gatty, that the word 'convict' is spelt with a 'K.' That is a mistake."

"I told you so, you ass!" breathed Nugent minor.

"Did you speak, Nugent minor?"

"Oh! I—I—"

"Kindly be silent. After preparation this evening, Gatty, you will write out the sentence one hundred times, 'Convict is spelt with a 'C.''"

"Oh!" stammered Gatty.

"We will now proceed," said Mr. Gilmore.

And the Second Form proceeded with prep.

The incident was closed.

The feelings of the Second Form could scarcely have been expressed in words. The gibe had fallen utterly flat. Mr. Gilmore gave no sign whatever of understanding that the drawing of a convict had been intended to refer to himself. Gatty's great wheeze had absolutely missed fire.

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Had Mr. Gilmore flown into a temper and caned the Form all round, it would have been painful; but at least the fags would have known that they had made the Beast "sit up." They would have known that there was a tender spot, as it were, where the Beast could be touched on the raw.

But Mr. Gilmore did nothing of the kind; the affair was closed as a matter of absolutely no importance, and nothing remained of it but an impot for Gatty on account of his bad spelling.

Prep dragged through wearily in the Second Form room. Mr. Gilmore was keen on his work, but he was no sharper than usual; there was no sign whatever that he had been annoyed or angered. Obviously—to the fags—the Beast was not to be drawn by any reference to convicts.

It did not occur to the inexperienced minds of the fags that Eric Gilmore was taking this line intentionally, in order that they might receive the very impression that they were receiving. They did not suspect that he was powerfully inclined to cane the whole Form, and did not do so simply because he did not want the Second to know that he had been touched on the "raw."

Prep over, the Second Form were left to themselves; and immediately the Form master was gone there was a buzz of voices in the Form-room.

"What a sell!" groaned Gatty.

"Rotten!" said Nugent minor.

"The Beast didn't care the least little bit!" grumbled Myers. "He didn't even know we were getting at him at all!"

"It's a wash-out!" said Leggett.

"Like all Gatty's wheezes!" remarked Dicky Nugent. "I never thought there was anything in it, really."

"You jolly well didn't say so before!" hooted Gatty.

"Well, I say so now, fathead!"

"Silly rot!" said Sammy Bunter.

"The Beast didn't care a straw! You'll have to think of something better than that to make him sit up, Gatty!"

Snort from Gatty. Gatty was deeply disappointed and sore at the failure

of his great wheeze to make the Beast sit up.

"Look here, you fellows were in it," he said. "You'll have to help me with the lines."

"Rot!"

"Rubbish!"

"Bosh!"

Gatty was absolutely alone in that opinion.

The unfortunate propounder of wheezes sat down to write a hundred lines, with a glum and gloomy face. The other fags, by way of comforting him, told him what they thought of him and his wheezes.

All the Second had come to the conclusion that it was quite futile to attempt to "get at" the Beast on the topic of Billy Bunter's convict story. And that—had they only known it—was precisely the conclusion to which Mr. Gilmore desired them to come.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Great Luck for Skinner!

HAROLD SKINNER was loitering dismally about Masters' Passage when Mr. Gilmore came back to his study after taking the Second in prep.

Skinner had resolved to act on the advice Wharton had given him; it was not a hopeful chance, but it was the only chance he had. But by the time he made up his mind and came along to see Mr. Gilmore, that young gentleman had gone to the Second Form room.

Skinner waited about dismally for him to return. He could not, of course, speak to Mr. Gilmore during prep with his Form.

It was a dismal wait for Skinner.

Sidney James Snoop had refused to come with him. Snoop was in a state of hopeless funk, bemoaning his fate in his study in the Remove. Skinner, as he hung about waiting for the young master, was more than once tempted to give up the idea. But he continued to wait; and at last he saw Mr. Gilmore

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coming round the corner of the passage.

The young man passed him without a glance, and went to his study.

Skinner noticed that his face was very thoughtful, and that there was a deep line in his brow.

He augured ill from it.

That there had been any unpleasant or distressing episode in the Second Form room at prep, Skinner did not guess, and he took it for granted that Mr. Gilmore's dark, thoughtful look was caused by his own case.

As yet, he knew that nothing had been said, for the simple reason that he had not been called up by Mr. Quelch. Why the Second Form master should take so long to think over the matter before reporting him, Skinner could not guess. He might have drawn hope from the circumstance; but the dark expression on Mr. Gilmore's face as he passed the wretched junior in the passage almost banished hope.

Skinner hesitated for long minutes; but he screwed up his courage and followed Mr. Gilmore to his study at last. If he was going to be reported, and flogged or sacked, an appeal to the Second Form master could make matters no worse, if it did not make them better. But Skinner's hand was shaking as he tapped at Mr. Gilmore's door.

"Come in!"

Harold Skinner entered.

Mr. Gilmore was standing by his fire, staring down into the red embers, the thoughtful expression still darker on his handsome face. He glanced at Skinner, and raised his eyebrows a little, as if surprised by the visit of a fellow who did not belong to his Form.

"Excuse me, sir!" stammered Skinner.

"Certainly! Do you wish to speak to me?"

"Yes, sir, if—if you'll let me."

"Please come in!"

Skinner advanced into the study. He could not understand Mr. Gilmore's manner in the very least.

His look was civil enough, but utterly indifferent. Assuredly he did not look like a man who held the fate of the wretched junior in his hands, impending over his head like the sword of Damocles. Snoop had surmised that the master was playing with the miserable culprits like a cat with a mouse; and Skinner wondered whether Snoop was right. At all events, the line Eric Gilmore was taking was very difficult for him to understand.

"Well?" said Mr. Gilmore, with a touch of impatience, as Skinner did not speak. His manner only indicated that he did not wish to be disturbed.

"I—I wanted to—to ask you, sir——" stammered Skinner.

"You wish to ask me something?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, you may speak," said Mr. Gilmore. "Kindly lose no more time." He looked at Skinner with some attention. "You are a Remove boy, I think?"

"Yes, sir."

"I am not aware of your name."

Skinner breathed quickly. Was that why the man had not reported him yet? Yet he knew that Skinner was a Remove man, and that was sufficient for a report to Mr. Quelch.

"Skinner, sir," mumbled the junior.

"Well, Skinner, what do you wish to ask me?"

"If—if you'd let me off, sir——"

"What?"

"No and Snoop, sir," stammered Skinner. "We—we—we'd be very thankful, sir, if you'd give us a chance."

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When you came on us in the Cloisters, sir, we—we—we——"

Skinner broke off, in sheer astonishment at the expression on Mr. Gilmore's face.

"I do not understand you, my boy," said the Second Form master. "I have no recollection of seeing you and Snoop in the Cloisters."

"Wha-a-at?" gasped Skinner.

"Is this some absurd jest?" snapped Mr. Gilmore. "I have not been in the Cloisters to-day, and certainly have not observed you and Snoop there. What do you mean, Skinner?"

"I—I—I——" gurgled Skinner. He was utterly astounded.

"You have been playing some trick, I suppose, and fancied that you had been observed," said Mr. Gilmore, his handsome face breaking into a smile. "You are quite mistaken, Skinner."

"Oh!" gasped Skinner.

"I trust it was nothing of a serious nature," said Mr. Gilmore, his face growing a little stern.

Skinner could only stare.

"The Cloisters are my favourite walk," said Mr. Gilmore, "and once or twice I have noticed cigarette-ends there lying about, and suspected that some foolish boys smoked there. Is that it?"

"Oh, no—yes——" stuttered Skinner, hardly conscious of what he was saying, in his bewilderment.

With absolute clearness he recalled the face that had looked at him and Snoop in the shadowy Cloisters—the face of the Second Form master. Was the man mad? Had he actually forgotten the incident, or was he telling falsehoods for some reason that Skinner could not even begin to understand? Skinner felt his mind, usually keen and cunning, quite at sea.

Mr. Gilmore's eyes were sharply on his face.

"If you and Snoop were smoking in the Cloisters, Skinner, I recommend you to go to your Form master and confess your folly, and promise amendment," said Mr. Gilmore. "As I am not your Form master, I shall take no heed of what you have told me under a misapprehension. You had better go, I think."

"Yes, sir. Thank you, sir!" stammered the bewildered Skinner.

He went dazedly from the Second Form master's study.

His mind was fairly in a whirl.

That Mr. Gilmore had seen the two young rascals smoking and gambling in that secluded corner of the Cloisters Skinner was as certain as he could be of anything. Yet the master of the Second Form professed to have no knowledge whatever of the matter.

That, so far as it went, was reassuring. If, for some mysterious reason, Mr. Gilmore wanted to pretend that he hadn't seen what he must have seen, Skinner was only too willing to give him his head. It meant that there would be no report to Mr. Quelch, no calling up before the Head, no flogging, and no "sack." Skinner could scarcely believe in his good luck. But what on earth did it all mean?

He hurried to Study No. 11 in the Remove. Sidney James Snoop was there with Stott.

Stott was at prep; but Snoop was rambling miserably about the room, unable to work, unable to sit down, or keep still. Never had Sidney James Snoop been in such a state of miserable funk and apprehension. He gave Skinner a savage and dismal glare as he came in.

"Seen Gilmore?" he muttered.

"Yes."

Snoop felt a throb of hope at the expression on Skinner's face. He could

see that a weight had been lifted from his comrade's mind.

"Ho—he—— Is he going to keep it dark?" he breathed.

"Yes."

"Oh!" Snoop fairly panted with relief. Frederick Stott looked up from his prep.

"You're in luck, then!" he remarked.

Snoop sank into a chair, almost overcome with relief.

"Look here, Snoop," said Skinner, "you saw that man looking at us in the Cloisters. Whom did you take him to be?"

"Eh? It was Gilmore."

"Well, I know it was," said Skinner. "But he says it wasn't! Either he's forgotten all about it or he's pretending that he has. I was fairly knocked out. He said he hasn't been in the Cloisters to-day at all, and that he never saw us."

"Wha-a-at?" stammered Snoop.

"That's what he says. It's jolly good luck for us. But what the thump is Gilmore telling such thumping lies for?"

"Blessed if I know!" said Snoop, staring. "He was there right enough, and he saw us. He's not going to report us?"

"No."

"That's all I care about," said Snoop. "He can tell all the lies he likes so long as he doesn't tell the truth—to Quelchy."

Skinner nodded and left the study. He went along to Study No. 1, where he found Wharton and Nugent, who had finished prep. The look on Skinner's face told the chums of the Remove that he was out of his trouble, and they were glad to see it, little as they liked Skinner.

"All serene, then?" asked Nugent.

"Yes. You mentioned that you saw Gilmore in the Cloisters, Wharton?" said Skinner.

"Yes, I saw him."

"He says he wasn't there."

"What rot!" said Harry.

"That's why he's not reporting Snoop and me. He says he's not been in the Cloisters to-day, and never saw us there. It's ripping luck for us. But what is he telling such lies for? What's his game?"

Wharton looked at Skinner in amazement.

"Mr. Gilmore's not the man to tell lies," he said. "That's rubbish! Besides, why should he?"

"I don't know why he should, but he has. It's jolly queer!" said Skinner. "I saw him as plain as anything there, and so did Snoop. And you say that you saw him——"

"I certainly did!"

"And he says he hasn't been in the Cloisters—knows nothing about Snoop and me with the cards and smokes—didn't seem even to know what I was driving at. Is he mad—or what?"

"Blessed if I can make it out!" said the captain of the Remove. "I know he was there, because I saw him. He's not absent-minded like old Wiggins—he can't have forgotten. You're in luck, anyhow!"

"Yes, that part's all right," said Skinner. "But I'd like to know what it means."

"I give it up," said Harry, completely puzzled. "What do you think, Franky?"

"Same here!" answered Nugent.

Skinner had to give it up, too. It was a stroke of the greatest good luck for him; but it puzzled and mystified him sorely.

Harry Wharton looked at Nugent when Skinner was gone.



Peter Todd rose from the table, went to the study cupboard, and sorted out the fives that he required. Only a minute had elapsed when Peter turned round with the necessary article in his hand. But by that time Bunter had flown!

(See Chapter 9.)

"That man Gilmore seems to be an odd fish, Frank!" he said.

"He does—if Skinner's telling the truth."

"Well, it's plain that he's not going to be reported, and that looks like it. I told you I saw Gilmore in the Cloisters at dusk—got up in a cap and a thick overcoat, dodging and keeping out of sight. I couldn't make it out; and now it seems that he doesn't want to admit that he was in the Cloisters at all. What on earth can it all mean?"

"Goodness knows! It's queer!"

And when the rest of the Co. came along after prep, and were told of the curious incident, Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull admitted that it was very queer indeed; while Hurree Jamset Ram Singh declared that the queerfulness was terrific. And at that the Famous Five had to let it go.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Takes the Plunge!

"FIFTY pounds!"

"Oh, cheese it!"

"Fifty pounds is a lot of money, Peter."

"Fathead!"

"I mean, a lot to a fellow like you," Bunter amended hastily. "Not so much to me! Still, I'd like to handle it!"

"Ass!"

"As I know exactly where to lay my finger on Convict No. 19, Peter, it

would be sheer waste to let that fifty pounds reward go," said Bunter. "You can see that, Peter?"

Peter Todd grunted impatiently.

All the more because he had uneasy suspicions in his mind concerning Mr. Gilmore, he was fed-up with Bunter's convict story.

It was some days since that visit to the Second Form master's study, when Eric Gilmore had been so palpably struck by the mention of the name of George Waring, Convict No. 19, of Blackmoor Prison.

Peter—whose tastes were quite unlike Bunter's—had not sought to learn anything further, but had rather tried to dismiss the matter from his mind.

He saw little of Mr. Gilmore, and had, of course, nothing to do with a Form master not his own; but from what he had seen of Mr. Gilmore he rather liked the man. Certainly he admired the game of Soccer he had seen Mr. Gilmore put up, on Big Side, with the Sixth. If there was some connection between Eric Gilmore and George Waring, of Blackmoor, it was no business of Peter's, and Peter wanted to know nothing about it.

As Peter had plenty of personal concerns to occupy his mind, no doubt he would have forgotten the peculiar incident, but for Bunter's constant harping on the subject of the escaped convict.

The reward of fifty pounds, offered for information leading to the arrest of Convict No. 19, haunted Bunter's thoughts.

As a law-abiding citizen it was his

duty, to help, if he could, in the apprehension of an escaped malefactor. That was how he preferred to look at the matter. But, in point of actual fact, Bunter was on the make, as usual, it was the loaves and fishes that attracted him. He wanted to become the happy possessor of that fifty pounds.

In Study No. 7 and out of it Bunter harped on the subject. And it was not only from Bunter that Peter Todd heard about Mr. Gilmore. The story of Skinner and Snoop was talked of up and down the Remove, and, though Peter could not understand that incident any more than the other fellows could, it added to his feeling that there was something odd and mysterious about the master of the Second.

Peter wanted to dismiss the master of the Second and all his works from his mind; but William George Bunter could not let the topic drop. Fifty pounds reward danced before Bunter's eyes like a dazzling vision of wealth. The fact that his story was laughed at did not alter Bunter's opinion in the least. As he remarked a good many times, he knew what he knew!

"I'm going to make you a generous offer, Peter," continued the Owl of the Remove, blinking seriously at his restive study-mate—"a really generous offer, old chap!"

"Oh, good!" said Peter. "You're going to square the seven-and-six you've owed me for two terms?"

"Oh, really, Peter—"

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(Continued from page 13.)

"Shell out!" Toddy held out his hand.

"At the present moment," said Bunter, with dignity, "I happen to be short of ready money. I've been disappointed about a postal-order."

"Oh, ye gods!" exclaimed Peter. "Give the postal-order a rest, at least. Stick to the convict!"

"I shall be rolling in it soon," said Bunter. "I'm going to share with you, Peter. You help me to nail that scoundrel, and I'll whack out the reward with you! I—I'll let you have a pound."

"A pound?" repeated Toddy.

"Yes, old chap. That will leave only forty-nine pounds for me out of the fifty," said Bunter, blinking at him. "What do you think of that for an offer, Toddy?"

"Aren't you erring on the side of generosity?" asked Peter, with deep sarcasm.

"Well, I was always a generous chap, you know. It's always been my weakness," explained Bunter. "Of course, I shall expect your help. As the matter stands, I can lay my finger on an escaped convict; but it's no good telling the Head so. I've told Quelch, and he caned me!"

"Good old Quelch! Tell him again," suggested Peter.

"Do you think it would be any good telling him again?"

"Yes; he would cane you again!"

"You silly ass!" roared Bunter. "Look here, Peter, the proper person to be told is Inspector Grimes, at Courtfield."

"You fearful, frabjous bandersnatch!" exclaimed Peter, aghast. "If you told such a tale about a Greyfriars master outside the school, you'd be sacked. The Head would kick you right out. Not that it would be any loss!"

"That's what I'm afraid of," admitted Bunter. "Of course, Gilmore is the man right enough. But suppose he pulled the wool over Grimes' eyes! He might. The police are rather duffers, you know. I've often thought that I could manage the whole thing better if I were head of Scotland Yard. Gilmore has fooled the Head, and he might fool old Grimes. And, then, where should I be?"

"Kicked out of Greyfriars!"

"Well, I don't want that," said Bunter. "I'm not taking the risk. That's why I haven't been to Grimes yet. I've thought of telephoning. You see, I could telephone to Inspector Grimes and tell him that the convict is here. He would come over and collar him. Then I should put in for the reward. On the other hand," explained Bunter astutely, "if Gilmore stuffed old Grimes and got off, I shouldn't mention that I was the chap who had telephoned. See?"

"It would be jolly likely to come out, all the same!" said Peter.

"That's why I haven't phoned," admitted Bunter.

"Well, now suppose you chuck up the subject, and don't talk any more for a whole minute?" suggested Toddy.

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"Your jaw needs a rest—it's been going on since rising-bell this morning!"

Bunter did not heed the suggestion. Perhaps his plump jaw did not require a rest, being accustomed to extensive exercise. Or perhaps it was a physical impossibility for William George Bunter to remain silent for a whole minute.

"I've thought of a wheeze," resumed Bunter. "That's where I want your help, Peter; and that's why I'm offering you a share in the reward. Suppose you telephone to Grimey?"

"You can suppose it," assented Peter. "Suppose anything you like, old fat man. Can you do your supposing in silence?"

"Oh, really, Toddy! Look here, it's a fellow's duty to assist in the execution of the law, and all that," said Bunter. "Besides, there's your share of the reward—a whole pound, Toddy. You slip into Quelch's study while he's in Common-room, and ring up Grimey. Safe as houses! Only needs a little nerve. Tell him the Blackmoor convict is here, and he will come over at once—stands to reason!"

"And suppose it came out?" said Peter, glaring at the Owl of the Remove. "Then I should get the licking, or the sack, instead of you?"

"That's it," assented Bunter. "You see, it wouldn't matter so much in your case, Peter. You're nobody in particular, if you don't mind my saying so, and if you were sacked, it isn't like a fellow in my position being sacked. You see that?"

Peter Todd looked round Study No. 7 with a searching eye. Bunter blinked at him impatiently.

"What are you looking for, Toddy?"

"My fives bat."

"What the thump do you want a fives bat for?"

"To lay round a cheeky fat porpoise."

"Oh, really, Peter—"

Peter Todd rose from the table and went to the study cupboard. There he sorted out the fives bat he required.

Only a minute had elapsed when Peter turned round with the necessary article in his hand. But by that time Bunter had elapsed also.

The Owl of the Remove retired hurriedly from Study No. 7.

It was obvious that Peter Todd was not going to play up, even for the munificent share of the reward that Bunter had so generously offered him. Bunter wanted a helping hand from Toddy, but not with a fives bat in the helping hand. He stood not upon the order of his going, but went at once.

"Beast!" grunted Bunter, as he rolled hurriedly along the Remove passage. "Fifty pounds going begging! I—I wonder—"

It was clear to William George Bunter that if anyone was going to telephone to Inspector Grimes at Courtfield, the interesting news that Convict No. 19 was at Greyfriars, that telephoning would have to be done by W. G. Bunter himself.

It was not an attractive idea.

Bunter was extremely keen on the arrest of Convict No. 19, but he had a lurking doubt whether Eric Gilmore might not succeed in "stuffing" Inspector Grimes, as he had "stuffed" all Greyfriars, with the single, solitary exception of W. G. Bunter.

If Mr. Grimes came over and clapped the handcuffs on Convict No. 19, and Mr. Gilmore was marched away like Eugene Aram, with gyves upon his wrist, no doubt Bunter would be the

hero of the hour, as well as the recipient of the substantial sum of fifty pounds.

But if Mr. Grimes took the information as a schoolboy's attempt to pull his official leg—as was very probable—and reported it to the Head, the outcome was likely to be much less agreeable.

Between his desire to do his duty as a law-abiding citizen, for the consideration of fifty pounds, and his fear of the possible consequences, Bunter was in a very uncertain frame of mind.

He drifted along to Masters' Passage, where it was possible to use a telephone in the absence of the owner. There he hesitated.

It is well said that he who hesitates is lost.

The door of Mr. Quelch's study had been left open, and Bunter was able to observe that Mr. Quelch was not in his quarters. No doubt the Remove master was at tea in Masters' Common-room, in which case it was likely to be some time before he returned to his study.

Bunter blinked at the telephone.

He rolled into the study at last, and closed the door, in fear and trembling. He placed his fat hand on the instrument, and still he hesitated. But he jerked off the receiver at last, and gave a number to the exchange. A voice came through.

"Courtfield Police Station?" gasped Bunter.

"Yes."

"Oh dear!" gasped Bunter.

"What?"

"Ask Inspector Grimes to come to the telephone."

"Inspector Grimes speaking!" came the curt, incisive voice. "What is wanted?"

Billy Bunter drew a deep, deep breath. The die was cast now.

"Do you want Convict No. 19, who escaped from Blackmoor Prison in the Christmas holidays?" he asked.

"Eh? What? In the what? Is that a schoolboy speaking?"

"Oh, no, not at all!" gasped Bunter.

"Who is speaking?"

"A—a man—a man named Jones." Bunter did not intend to give away the fact that he was a schoolboy until all was safe, and was blissfully unconscious that he had already given it away.

"Have you anything to tell me?" snapped the inspector.

"Convict No. 19 is at Greyfriars School."

"Wh-a-t!" stuttered Mr. Grimes. "Are you speaking from Greyfriars?"

"Oh, no, not at all! I—I'm speaking from—from Harrow."

"Good gad!"

"Don't get the idea into your head that I'm a Greyfriars man," said Bunter hurriedly. "I'm at Eton. See?"

"Who are you?"

"My name's Smith. I say, that man Waring—Convict No. 19—is here now—I mean, he's at Greyfriars. He calls himself Eric Gilmore, and is master of the Second Form. He's stuffed the Head and all the fellows. When you've got him I shall claim the reward. See?"

"Give me your name at once!"

"Robinson."

"You young rascal!"

"Eh?"

"How dare you play such tricks on a police-inspector? I shall come and see your headmaster at once!"

"It ain't the headmaster, it's the master of the Second Form."

"It is your headmaster whom I shall see, you young rascal, and I shall see

that you are caned for this foolish trick."

"Oh lor'!"

"Tell me your name immediately!"

"Jackson."

"I shall see whether your name is Jackson when I call," said Mr. Grimes grimly.

"I—I say, don't forget I'm speaking from Harrow—I mean, Eton—that is to say, Winchester!" gasped Bunter. "No good coming to Greyfriars, you know, if you're going to see the Head. You'll waste your time coming here."

There was no reply to that last masterly sample of Bunter's astuteness. Inspector Grimes had rung off.

"Oh dear!" groaned Bunter, as he put up the receiver.

He could not help realising that Mr. Grimes had not taken his important information seriously. It was set down as a schoolboy jape, and Mr. Grimes seemed annoyed. Bunter's only consolation was that he had concealed his identity in such a masterly manner.

He rolled to the door of the study and opened it, and very nearly rolled into the arms of Mr. Quelch, who was not at tea in Masters' Common-room, after all. Bunter jumped back.

"Bunter! What are you doing in my study?" demanded Mr. Quelch, frowning.

"Oh, nothing, sir!" gasped Bunter. "I—I haven't been using the telephone, sir."

"Bless my soul! Take two hundred lines, Bunter!"

"Oh dear!"

Billy Bunter rolled away dismally. Matters altogether seemed to be going very unfortunately for a law-abiding citizen, who was only keen on doing his law-abiding duty—for a consideration of fifty pounds.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

The Arrest!

"Bless my soul!"

Dr. Locke, the Head of Greyfriars, stared at Inspector Grimes over his glasses in great astonishment.

When the Courtfield inspector had been announced the Head had wondered what he could possibly want at Greyfriars. He was in a still greater state of wonderment when Mr. Grimes explained.

"It is really incredible!" exclaimed the Head. "You tell me that a Greyfriars boy actually telephoned to you, making the utterly absurd statement that an escaped convict was hiding at Greyfriars? I can scarcely believe my ears."

And indeed Dr. Locke hardly could. It was the most startling thing he had ever heard in his long career as a schoolmaster.

"That is the case, sir," said Inspector Grimes. "The boy who telephoned gave me a false name—in fact, several false names. He appears to be an unusually stupid and obtuse boy. But he made the definite statement that an escaped convict, who is still at large, was at the present moment at Greyfriars School."

"I need not tell you, Mr. Grimes, that the absurd statement is utterly without foundation."

"Quite so, sir," assented the inspector. "My view is that a schoolboy who attempts to play such foolish tricks upon police-officers should be punished as a warning."

"I fully agree," said the Head. "The boy shall certainly be discovered and severely punished. I am sorry you

should have been given such trouble by any Greyfriars boy. You are assured that the call came from Greyfriars?"

"Quite," said Mr. Grimes.

"The matter shall be investigated at once, and you may take my assurance that this practical joker will be adequately punished," said the Head, with emphasis.

That point being settled to the mutual satisfaction of the two gentlemen, Dr. Locke expected Mr. Grimes to take his leave. But Mr. Grimes was in no hurry to take his leave.

"I have no doubt, sir, that the affair is a foolish and reckless practical joke," he said. "Nevertheless, as an officer of the police, I have no choice but to take some notice of the matter. The boy referred to a Mr. Gilmore. I suppose there is no objection to my seeing Mr. Gilmore?"

Dr. Locke raised his eyebrows.

"None!" he answered. "But it is surely unnecessary to acquaint Mr. Gilmore with the fact that a foolish boy has so insulted him."

"If the matter is to be investigated, sir, it can hardly remain unknown to Mr. Gilmore," suggested the inspector.

"That is true. I can only surmise that it is some foolish boy in Mr. Gilmore's own Form who has done this—perhaps in thoughtless revenge for some punishment," said the Head. "Still—"

"The fact is, sir, that although the matter appears to be a foolish practical joke, it is a very singular one," said Mr. Grimes. "Something must have put the idea into the boy's head. It is not an idea that would occur to any boy without something to suggest it. The boy who telephoned has obviously heard of the escaped Blackmoor convict, and such matters do not, as a rule, come within the knowledge of schoolboys. Another circumstance is, that, although it is some weeks since Waring escaped from Blackmoor, he is still at large, and the police of this county have been warned to look out for him."

"I hardly see why," said Dr. Locke. "Blackmoor Prison is in Surrey, I believe."

"The man has been traced into Kent," explained Mr. Grimes. "He has been seen on several occasions, once near Maidstone, and once or twice nearer in this direction. It is known that he has been able to discard his convict clothing, and to obtain other garments. The fact that he is in all probability in this part of Kent is a very curious coincidence."

The Head looked slightly impatient.

No coincidence, or anything else justified a police officer in supposing that an escaped convict might possibly have taken refuge within the precincts of Greyfriars, in Dr. Locke's opinion.

"The gentleman who was mentioned, this Mr. Gilmore, has been with you a long time, doubtless?" asked Mr. Grimes.

"No; he commenced his duties here this term," said Dr. Locke. "He has taken the place, temporarily, of a Form master who is away ill."

"He is doubtless well known to you?"

"Not personally," said the Head. "But by reputation, of course. As you may easily imagine, the strictest credentials are required from anyone applying for a post at Greyfriars."

"Naturally," assented Mr. Grimes; but there was a gleam in his eye now. It was, at least, another coincidence that the accused man was new at the school, and personally unknown to the headmaster. Mr. Grimes was beginning to think that perhaps that communication on the telephone was not, after all, wholly a schoolboy prank.

That Dr. Locke had to be satisfied with the credentials of any man applying for a post on the Greyfriars staff, was, of course, obvious. But it was equally obvious to the keen police-inspector, that Dr. Locke was the kind of gentleman to be deceived by a cunning and designing rogue. Mr. Grimes was quite determined not to leave the school without having had an interview with the new master.

"If you desire to see Mr. Gilmore I will request him to step here," said the Head politely, but somewhat coldly.

"In view of the peculiar circumstances, sir, it would be more satisfactory to all parties."

"Very well."

Dr. Locke touched the bell, and when Trotter appeared, he directed him to request Mr. Gilmore to come to the study.

The Head's manner was a little chilly
(Continued overleaf.)



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"CONVICT NINETEEN!"*(Continued from previous page.)*

when the door closed behind the House page. He could not help feeling that Mr. Grimes was rather over-doing his official duty.

"No doubt this gentleman, Mr. Gilmore, is a man of a certain age, sir," the inspector remarked casually.

"I believe he is about twenty-five, Mr. Grimes," answered the head, without the remotest suspicion in his scholarly mind that he was being drawn into giving a description of the new master.

Inspector Grimes' eyes snapped. "Twenty-five!" he murmured. "By an odd coincidence the precise age of the man missing from Blackmoor."

"He may be a year or two younger or older," said the Head. "I really cannot undertake to say. He is certainly a very estimable young man, and has given every satisfaction here."

"A rather tall young man, sir?" "Oh, yes, quite tall; somewhere near six feet, I should say!" The Head's manner was growing curt.

"Probably you have never noticed the colour of his eyes," the inspector remarked blandly.

"I cannot say that I have," said Dr. Locke.

"Naturally, sir," said Mr. Grimes, very heartily. "I should notice such a detail as a matter of course; every man to his profession. You might not notice in weeks whether his eyes were blue or not."

The Head started a little. "Now I recall it, Mr. Grimes, Mr. Gilmore's eyes are blue," he said. "I had not specially noted it, but I recall it now. It signifies nothing."

"It signifies this, sir," said Mr. Grimes deliberately, "that Mr. Gilmore appears to bear a very remarkable resemblance to the man missing from Blackmoor, and the boy who telephoned to me must have noticed that resemblance. He has seen the published description of the escaped convict, and has applied it to Mr. Gilmore—very foolishly, no doubt."

"Very foolishly indeed," said the Head. "I should condemn him more for such a wicked suspicion than for a mere foolish practical joke."

"No doubt, sir—no doubt!" assented Mr. Grimes.

His hand ran into his pocket, and something jingled there.

Mr. Grimes was exceedingly anxious to lay hands on the escaped convict, who had baffled the police for long weeks since his escape from Blackmoor Prison. He was willing to take any amount of trouble to follow up the slightest clue. And he was glad now that he had called at Greyfriars.

A gentleman who so closely resembled an escaped convict was required to give an account of himself, in Mr. Grimes' opinion.

There was a sound of footsteps in the passage, and Mr. Grimes stepped back quickly, so as to be behind the door when the newcomer entered. A tap came at the door.

"Come in!" said the Head quietly.

Unsuspecting old gentleman as he was, he could not misunderstand Inspector Grimes' movement, and his face flushed.

The door opened, and Mr. Gilmore entered.

"You wished to see me, sir?" he asked, in his pleasant voice.

"Yes; pray come in, Mr. Gilmore."

The young man closed the door and advanced into the study, not for the moment observing Mr. Grimes, his eyes being fixed on Dr. Locke. He became suddenly aware of Mr. Grimes' presence

as the portly Courtfield inspector stepped forward and laid a heavy hand on his shoulder.

"George Waring, you are my prisoner!" said Inspector Grimes. Click!

It came like a flash, and Dr. Locke, with his eyes almost starting from his head, saw the handcuffs on the wrists of Eric Gilmore, the master of the Greyfriars Second Form.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.**The Wrong Man!**

ERIC GILMORE stood for some moments like a statue, as if turned to stone. He stared at the handcuffs locked on his wrists, hardly knowing how they had got there. Inspector Grimes' plump face was full of a grim satisfaction. He had not the slightest doubt that he had snared his "bird." The amazement and growing anger in the young man's face did not affect him at all.

"You are my prisoner, George Waring," he repeated.

Dr. Locke started to his feet. His face was scarlet; his silvery hair fairly bristled with indignation.

"Mr. Grimes, what does this mean? Are you out of your senses?" he exclaimed.

"No, sir!" said Mr. Grimes quietly. "I have arrested a man who has been wanted for weeks, whose description is posted up outside every police-station in the county."

Mr. Gilmore found his voice. Amazement, or rather stupefaction, had held him silent for long moments.

"Sir, how dare you place these manacles upon me? Remove them at once!"

The inspector smiled grimly. "Hardly, Mr. Waring—or Convict No. 19, whichever you prefer to be called. Dr. Locke, I am sorry to give you this shock; but this man is wanted, and I am bound to arrest him. He has deceived you as to his identity, of course—"

"He has done nothing of the kind, sir!" exclaimed the Head.

"You were surely not aware that he was George Waring, who escaped from Blackmoor just after Christmas?"

"I am aware that he is Eric Gilmore, Master of Arts of Oxford, and a man of impeccable character and reputation!"

The inspector snorted. He did not like the Head's tone, and he did not like the angry scorn that gleamed in Mr. Gilmore's eyes. But he had his prisoner, and he had not the slightest doubt that the Form master was the man he wanted.

"Will you remove these handcuffs, sir?" said Mr. Gilmore, in a low, concentrated voice of anger.

"Silence, you!" said Mr. Grimes gruffly. "If you deny your identity, you will have every chance to speak for yourself later! At present my duty is to get you to the station! Dr. Locke, may I use your telephone to summon a taxicab?"

"Bless my soul!" gasped the Head. "You—you intend to take this member of my staff to the station?"

"Certainly!"

"Before doing so, sir, let me speak," said Mr. Gilmore, more quietly. "You are making a terrible mistake!"

"I shall take the risk of that!" said Mr. Grimes derisively. "If you are not George Waring, you are his twin, at least—and I have still to learn that Convict No. 19 has a twin brother!"

"George Waring has no twin brother," answered Mr. Gilmore steadily. "But he has a half-brother two years younger than himself, and I am that half-brother."

"Mr. Gilmore!" exclaimed the Head. The master of the Second turned to him.

"I was unaware, sir, when I accepted a position here that my half-brother, George Waring, was a convicted prisoner at all. I had not seen him for years, and had lost all touch with him. It is only since I have been at Greyfriars that I have made the discovery. A foolish boy in the Remove, who by some chance encountered Waring in the Christmas vacation, supposed that I was the man when he saw me here, and told his Form master so. The likeness is so great that it excuses this officer's present mistake."

Inspector Grimes compressed his lips. He could not help being impressed by the young master's manner, but he was far from willing to admit that he had made a mistake.

"Since the circumstances came to my knowledge, Dr. Locke," went on Mr. Gilmore, "I have been debating in my mind whether it was my duty to acquaint you with them. I had not yet decided; but now, of course, I have no choice in the matter. My half-brother was at school with me years ago. I have not seen him since I left school, but I had reason to believe that he had gone to the bad, though I was not aware that he had been sent to prison. At school we were nicknamed the 'Siamese Twins,' on account of our likeness to one another."

"And that school?" rapped out the inspector. "If the matter is as you state, there must be many witnesses, and—"

"Wodehouse School," said Mr. Gilmore. "My old headmaster is still headmaster there, and will answer any questions on the subject."

"Oh!" muttered Mr. Grimes.

"As for my own identity," resumed Mr. Gilmore, with a faint smile, "that is easily proved. I can call a score of men belonging to my college at Oxford to identify me, if necessary. Dr. Locke has seen my credentials, and is not likely to be deceived in such a matter, but it is easily put to the test. Moreover, if you examine me a little more attentively, sir, you will see that, although I am my half-brother's double in many respects, there are certain differences which would make it impossible for anyone acquainted with both of us to mistake one for the other."

"Indeed!" said Mr. Grimes curtly. "And what are those differences?"

"My hair is light in colour, and George Waring's hair is dark."

Mr. Grimes set his lips again. He took a paper from his pocket, and ran his eye quickly over it.

"Quite so!" he assented reluctantly. "But the colour of the hair is easily altered for the purposes of disguise."

"You are welcome to ascertain whether my hair is dyed, sir!" said Mr. Gilmore, smiling.

The inspector looked at him grimly, with an expression very like that of a bulldog who sees his bone taken away. It was being forced into his mind that he had indeed made a mistake. The likeness between Mr. Gilmore and George Waring was undoubtedly striking and unusual, though if they were, as the young master stated, half-brothers, it was fully accounted for. Mr. Gilmore was wearing cap and gown; but when his mortar-board was removed, revealing a rather thick mop



“George Waring, you are my prisoner!” said Inspector Grimes. Click! It came like a flash; and Dr. Locke, with his eyes almost starting from his head, saw the handcuffs on the wrists of Eric Gilmore, the master of the Second Form. (See Chapter 10.)

of flaxen hair, even the disappointed inspector could not doubt that it was naturally light hair; he could not have been deceived by the most skilful dye.

Mr. Grimes was not feeling happy then.

He had been absolutely certain of his man, and now he knew that he had handcuffed a man who was no more George Waring than he was himself. In silence, with a very red and a very grim face, he removed the handcuffs from Eric Gilmore's wrists.

“Bless my soul!” said Dr. Locke. “You understand now, Mr. Grimes, that you have made a mistake?”

“It would appear so, sir,” said Mr. Grimes reluctantly. “I cannot blame myself or the Greyfriars boy who supposed that he was giving me valuable information. Mr. Gilmore answers to the description of George Waring in every respect but one, which escaped my notice for the moment.”

“A most unfortunate resemblance,” said the Head.

“Very!” grunted the inspector.

His eyes were still upon Mr. Gilmore with lingering suspicion. But the handcuffs had disappeared into his pocket.

“I—I beg your pardon, Mr. Gilmore!” he said, with a visible effort.

“Pray say no more, sir,” said the young man courteously. “The mistake was a natural one, though very disagreeable for me. If you are satisfied now I have no complaint to make.”

“I—I am satisfied!” muttered the inspector.

Yet some vague suspicion still lingered in his eyes.

Mr. Grimes rather hurriedly took his leave, deeply disappointed and

chagrined. He felt that he had made a fool of himself, and yet he had not been to blame; the keenest police-officer might have made the same mistake in the same circumstances.

There was silence for some minutes in Dr. Locke's study after the Court-field inspector had gone.

The headmaster broke it.

“This is most unfortunate, Mr. Gilmore!” he said at last.

“I agree with you, sir,” said Mr. Gilmore, in a low voice, “and I think I catch your meaning, sir. A man whose half-brother has sunk into the criminal classes is not suitable for a post at this school. This unhappy resemblance may lead to further mistakes and misapprehensions of a very disagreeable nature. I place my resignation in your hands, sir!”

“Nothing of the kind, Mr. Gilmore!” answered the Head. “You are not to blame in any way for your relative's faults; your own name and reputation are unassailable. It is extremely unfortunate, and I need not say that your connection with this man Waring should not be spoken of or made known at Greyfriars. You have, of course, no communication whatever with him?”

“None, sir,” said Mr. Gilmore, colouring. “It was almost a stunning blow to me when I heard his name mentioned as that of the convict who had escaped from Blackmoor. It is many years since I have seen him or heard from him, and I have no intention of seeing him or hearing from him again in any circumstances whatever.”

“Then this unfortunate relationship need make no difference to your position here. I shall not accept your resignation Mr. Gilmore! You are a

valued member of my staff; and will remain so!”

“You are very kind, sir!” said Mr. Gilmore, in a voice full of emotion. “I shall try to prove that I am not ungrateful!”

“Let the matter fall into oblivion as soon as possible,” said Dr. Locke. “No doubt the man Waring will soon be recaptured, which will demonstrate to anyone who has observed the likeness that it is merely a likeness and nothing more. We will say no more about the matter, Mr. Gilmore.”

“Thank you, sir!” said the master of the Second.

And he took his leave of the Head, his handsome face darkly clouded as he went.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Bad for Bunter!

“I SAY, you fellows!” Billy Bunter burst into the Rag, with excitement in his fat face. His very spectacles gleamed with it.

“I say—” he gasped. “He's after him.”

“Hallo, hallo, hallo! Who's after whom?” asked Bob Cherry.

“He!” gasped Bunter. “He's after him! I've seen him—I mean he—that is, him—and him—I mean he's after he—him!” The fat junior seemed to be getting a little tangled. “That convict, you know—”

“Oh, my hat! Shut up, Bunter!” roared a dozen voices. Nobody in the Rag wanted to hear anything about Bunter's convict.

“He's after him!” shrieked Bunter. THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,040.

"He's come here to collar him! You'll see him taken away handcuffed!"

"Who?" yelled Peter Todd.

"Him!" gasped Bunter.

"And who's going to take him away?" demanded Nugent.

"Him—he— Old Grimes—"

"Inspector Grimes?" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"Yes; from Courtfield."

"Mean to say that old Grimey has come over to Greyfriars?" exclaimed Johnny Bull.

"Yes!" gasped Bunter. "He's just been shown in to the Head! I was keeping my eyes open. He's here. He's after the convict."

Peter Todd stared at the fat junior. "You frabjous owl! Did you have the neck to telephone to Grimes?" he ejaculated.

"Oh! No! Certainly not!" said Bunter hastily. "Don't you think I know anything about it—I don't. Nothing at all. I—I just happened to see Grimes come in. That's all. Besides, it was a fellow's duty to let him know the convict was here. There's the reward, too!"

"Then you telephoned to the police station?" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"No, I didn't—I mean, not unless he arrests that convict," said Bunter cautiously. "If the fellow stuffs him, and gets off, I'm keeping it dark. Not that I telephoned anyhow. I haven't the faintest idea who telephoned to old Grimes."

"Did anybody?" asked Squiff.

"Oh, yes, that's why he's here. Not me, you know," said Bunter anxiously. "I was careful not to mention my name."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, Grimey hasn't come over on the war-path," said Peter Todd. "He's come over to tell the Head that a silly owl has been trying to pull his leg on one of the school telephones. You'll be wanted soon, Bunter. Put some exercise books in your bags."

"Oh, really, Toddy—"

"Has even Bunter been such a priceless idiot as to spin that yarn to a police officer?" said Bob Cherry, in wonder.

"Oh, really, Cherry! It's true, you know—the man's an escaped convict. Look here, you come along and see him taken away—in irons, you know."

"I don't think!" chuckled Bob.

But there was a general exodus from the Rag. If the Owl of the Remove had really brought a police-inspector to Greyfriars on a fool's errand, the Remove fellows were interested to see what would come of it. They had no doubt that the outcome would be a flogging for Bunter.

Quite a little army of fellows gathered near the end of Head's corridor, and when Trotter was summoned by the Head's bell, several fellows asked him whether Inspector Grimes really was there—and learned that that much, at least, was correct. The Courtfield inspector was there—and when Trotter came back along the passage, they learned that he was sent to fetch Mr. Gilmore. This caused great excitement; and Billy Bunter's fat face beamed with triumph. Bunter had not the slightest doubt now that Eric Gilmore had been sent for to be arrested; and he was prepared now to own up that he was the fellow who had phoned to Mr. Grimes.

A sea of eyes were turned on Mr. Gilmore when he came along the corridor. The young master glanced at the juniors, apparently surprised to see so many of the Lower School

gathered there; but he passed on his way without a remark and disappeared into the Head's study.

Bunter gave a breathless chuckle.

"Now he's for it!" he gasped.

"Did you mention Gilmore's name to Grimey on the phone?" asked Peter.

"Eh! Yes, of course!"

"You frabjous dummy! Got those exercise books in your bags?"

"Oh, really, Peter—"

"You'll need 'em, soon."

"Yah!"

Excitement was keen, and growing keener. More and more fellows came along to join the crowd at the corner of Head's corridor—among them, some of the Second Form. It was time for prep in the Second Form room; and Mr. Gilmore had not turned up there punctually as usual. The talk among the Remove fellows caused Dicky Nugent & Co. of the Second, to exchange blissful glances. If the "Beast" really was in trouble with the police, there would be no prep in the Second Form-room that evening. But this was too good to be true, all the fags felt that.

Minute followed minute, and the door of the Head's study did not reopen. The watching army of juniors would have given a great deal to know what was going on behind that closed door. Even fellows who were not usually inquisitive in the least, were very curious indeed now.

"He's arresting him, you fellows," said Billy Bunter, with conviction.

"He's taking his time about it, then," grinned Bob Cherry.

"The timefulness is terrific," said Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"I daresay the villain's trying to stuff him—but he'll have him all right," declared Bunter. "You'll see what you'll see."

"And what we shall see is a fat idiot called on the carpet for a flogging," said Frank Nugent.

"It's too good to be true!" sighed Nugent minor. "No such luck."

"You young rascal," said Frank.

"Do you want your Form-master to be taken up by the police?"

"Yes, rather," said Dicky promptly. "I shouldn't wonder if he's a bad hat, just as Bunter says. Look at the way he makes a fellow work."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Here they come!" breathed Bunter.

The Head's door opened at last. But it was not "they" who came. It was the portly figure of Inspector Grimes, of Courtfield, that emerged; and he came alone. He came down the passage with his ponderous tread, and with a frowning brow; and only too evidently without a prisoner. Billy Bunter stared at him, his little, round eyes growing wide behind his glasses.

The inspector gave the crowd of juniors a frowning look, and passed on. But Bunter, in his excitement and eagerness, caught at his sleeve as he passed.

"Haven't you got him?" he demanded.

"What?" snapped the inspector.

"Him! Haven't you got him—the convict?" stammered Bunter.

Mr. Grimes gave the fat junior a grim look. No doubt there was a familiar ring in Bunter's voice, that reminded him of his unknown interlocutor on the telephone.

"So it was you who rang me up!" he grunted.

Bunter jumped.

Had Inspector Grimes come along the passage with a handcuffed prisoner, Bunter would have been only too eager to claim the distinction of having called

him in. But he realised that there was, after all, to be no arrest at Greyfriars.

"Oh!" he gasped. "Oh! No! I—I haven't been near Mr. Quelch's telephone. I—I don't know your number at Courtfield, and I never thought of looking in the directory. Nothing of the kind."

Mr. Grimes eyed him surlily. But perhaps he realised that the Owl of the Remove had only made the same mistake that he, himself, had made, deceived by the resemblance of Mr. Gilmore to the missing convict. He said no more, and went on his way. Bunter was glad enough to see him go. Something, evidently, had gone wrong; and Bunter was not now anxious to claim the distinction of having called in the police.

"I say, you fellows, that convict has stuffed that silly idiot somehow," groaned Bunter.

"You fat duffer!" said Harry Wharton. "It must have been easy enough for him to prove that he was not the man, if Mr. Grimes suspected for one moment that he was."

"But he is the man, you know."

"Fathead!"

"Here comes Gilmore," said Hazeldene.

There was silence, as the master of the Second Form came back from the Head's study. All the juniors could see that he was looking disturbed and harassed. He walked with his eyes on the floor, and did not observe the crowd of fellows till he was quite close on them. Then he started a little, halted, and fixed a frowning look on them.

"Bunter!"

The Owl of the Remove wriggled behind the other fellows. Bolsover major and Skinner gave him a shove together, and he tottered towards Mr. Gilmore.

"Oh! Yes, sir!" he gasped. "It wasn't me."

"You telephoned to Courtfield Police Station, I think, Bunter, repeating to Mr. Grimes the absurd statement you had already made in the school."

Mr. Gilmore's voice was very quiet, but there was a glint in his eyes. The juniors stood silent. They were not surprised that the Second Form master was angry. The best-tempered of masters might have been angered by what the Owl of the Remove had done.

The denial died on Bunter's lips under the stern gaze of the young master. He mumbled helplessly, palpitating with terror.

"You have acted very foolishly and very disrespectfully, Bunter," said Mr. Gilmore. "You have given Inspector Grimes a journey here for nothing, and wasted your headmaster's time—and my time. I have hitherto treated your folly with leniency; but I feel bound now to report your conduct to your Form master."

"Ow!" gasped Bunter.

Mr. Gilmore's eyes fell upon the Second Form fags in the crowd.

"What are you boys doing here?" he asked. "It is past the time for preparation in your Form-room."

Dicky Nugent and his comrades fairly flew.

Mr. Gilmore walked on.

"I—I—I say, you fellows," groaned Bunter. "I—I say, I—I shall get an awful licking from Quelchy."

"What did you expect?" asked Peter Todd.

"Beast!"

"You can't say you didn't ask for it," grinned Skinner. "But perhaps Gilmore will forget to report you. He forgot Snoop and me the other day."

"I—I say, Toddy, old chap, Quelch will believe that I phoned," groaned Bunter. "He won't take a fellow's word about it. I—I say, it's really your fault, you know. You—you ought to own up that you did it."

"I?" yelled Peter.

"Well, I asked you to phone—you can't deny that," said Bunter. "If you'd not been such a beast, I shouldn't be in the scrape. Look here, you go to Quelch and own up—Yarooogh! Leggo my ear, you beast!"

Ten minutes later William George Bunter was called into Mr. Quelch's study. Remembering the story of Skinner and Snoop in the Cloisters, Bunter had had a faint hope that Mr. Gilmore might forget to report him. That hope proved ill-founded.

When Billy Bunter emerged from his Form master's study, he wriggled his way to the Remove passage with many groans. The episode had ended, with nothing but a severe caning for Bunter as the outcome—and the fifty pounds reward seemed farther off than ever.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Dicky Nugent Makes a Discovery!

DICKY NUGENT jumped. He was alarmed; and he had reason to be alarmed.

Only ten minutes before, Richard Nugent of the Second Form had watched his Form master walk away to Masters' Common-room with Mr. Quelch to take tea there. It was the day following the visit of Inspector Grimes to Greyfriars; and that day Mr. Gilmore had been much less good-tempered than usual in the Second Form-room. No doubt the extraordinary conduct of Bunter of the Remove and the Courtfield inspector's visit to the school had irritated him. That was natural enough and it was very probable that the Second Form had an irritating effect upon nerves already irritated.

Mr. Gilmore had been quite cross several times, and Richard Nugent had actually been caned—a caning that was quite different from the gentle flicks Dicky had sometimes received from Mr. Twigg. That he had been idle, careless, and impertinent did not count: he had been all these things in Mr. Twigg's time without getting such a licking. Richard Nugent of the Second Form was bent upon vengeance.

That was why he had watched Mr. Gilmore walk away to tea with Mr. Quelch, and slipped into his study after he was gone. The "beast" was safe for half an hour; more than time for Richard Nugent to fill his slippers with gum, and his inkpot with bicycle oil, and pour cinders into his clock.

And now—

With such a beast as the Beast, a fellow never could tell! It was with amazement, and more alarm than amazement, that Dicky Nugent heard his Form master's voice in the passage as he stood by his Form master's table in the study. For some reason, or no reason, Mr. Gilmore was coming back to the study without having had his tea with the others masters!

Dicky jumped as he heard the well-known voice. The inkpot on the table was already full of oil: one slipper reeked with gum—the other was in Dicky's hand, ready to be operated on. It dropped from the terrified fag's hand to the floor.

He was fairly caught.

He gave one wild glance at the window—it was a casement window,

Still at large, Convict Nineteen, with a price on his head, lurks in hiding awaiting a chance to flee the country.

His amazing resemblance to Mr. Gilmore, the temporary master of the Second Form at Greyfriars, suggests a daring plan to the "wanted" man that will, with luck, bring him his freedom.

But heaps of difficulties have to be overcome before Convict Nineteen can show his face in public. With amazing coolness however, the scoundrel proceeds to overcome them. What luck attends his efforts you will learn when you read

"THE FORM MASTER'S FOE!"

By Frank Richards.

Next week's Greyfriars story.

Order your MAGNET early, boys—saves disappointment!

A BID FOR LIBERTY!



and had it been open, Dicky would have taken the risk of a leap into the quad. But it was shut—and there was no time to open it and jump—he knew that. The voice he heard was almost at the door—the Beast was coming to his study with somebody else.

Richard Nugent shivered with dread. Caught there, with the oily inkpot and the gummy slipper as incontrovertible evidence against him—he shuddered at the prospect. And the Beast was already in a bad temper!

A hand was on the door handle, when Dicky Nugent woke to sudden action. Hardly thinking of what he was going to do, he dived under the table. There was, fortunately, a cover on the table which reached half-way to the floor. Dicky was thinking of nothing but of getting out of sight—with a vague hope that the Beast might not discover him—if he was discovered hiding in the study it would not make the evidence against him much more complete. He was already booked for a licking if he was found.

Palpitating, Nugent minor crouched under the big table as the study door opened.

He had a view of two pairs of boots in the doorway.

"Please enter, Mr. Grimes," said the voice of Eric Gilmore, pleasant as ever, but extremely cold this time.

Dicky Nugent almost ceased to breathe as the ponderous tread of Inspector Grimes, of Courtfield, came into the study.

Mr. Gilmore followed him in, and closed the door.

"Pray be seated, sir," he said formally.

The portly inspector sat down.

Richard Nugent suppressed a groan. It was just his luck, he reflected bitterly, for these two beasts to come to the study to jaw when he happened to be there. Why couldn't they talk in Masters' Common-room, or somewhere?

"You must excuse this—ahem—intrusion, Mr. Gilmore," the inspector said, with a cough. "Duty, sir—duty."

"If your official duty has called you here, sir, I have no objection to make," said Mr. Gilmore. "But you will very easily understand that any reference to the matter discussed yesterday in Dr. Locke's study is very disagreeable to me."

"Quite so, sir, quite so," said the inspector.

Mr. Gilmore looked at him hard. "I presume you are satisfied, Mr. Grimes, that I am not the man whom that absurd boy Bunter took me to be: If you require further proof, every facility will be given you to investigate my antecedents."

"I am satisfied that you are not George Waring, sir," answered Mr. Grimes. "I was staggered, sir—fairly staggered by your resemblance to the convict missing from Blackmoor, and I scarcely think that the boy Bunter is to be blamed for his mistake, if he has seen your half-brother. He does not, of course, know that you have a half-brother who so closely resembles you, and that this half-brother is a convict?"

"Certainly not; and you surely do not intend to make known the circumstance, Mr. Grimes?"

There was a shade of anxiety in the young master's tone.

Mr. Grimes waved a plump hand. "Certainly not, Mr. Gilmore. On such a subject, the least said is soonest mended, in my opinion."

"I am glad to hear you say so. It would be extremely disagreeable for me if the circumstances became known at this school."

"I quite understand that."

Dicky Nugent was feeling his brain in a whirl. He hardly dared to breathe as he crouched under the table.

Not for an instant had the hapless fag supposed that he would be forced to

listen to anything of any consequence, when he concealed himself under Mr. Gilmore's table. He had not thought anything about that aspect of the matter at all. Now he almost wished that he had remained where he was, and allowed his Form master to catch him ragging the study. Almost—but not quite. He had had an experience that day of how Mr. Gilmore could lay on the cane when he was angry, and he did not want to repeat that experience if he could help it.

"With regard to you, personally, Mr. Gilmore, I am bound to be satisfied," the inspector went on slowly. "I have—hem—already made a few inquiries. I have no doubt whatever that you are, as your headmaster states, an honourable young gentleman, in spite of your unfortunate connection with a member of the criminal classes. I believe your statement that you had not seen your half-brother, Waring, for many years when you came to take up a position here, and that you did not even know that he had been sent to a convict prison."

"I was absolutely ignorant of it, Mr. Grimes."

"Perfectly so. But—"

"If there is any doubt in your mind, sir, kindly put it into plain English!" said Mr. Gilmore sharply. "I repeat that I am prepared to satisfy you in every way. Your mistake was a natural one, and I do not resent it, in the circumstances. But the whole subject is inexpressibly painful to me. I may add that my colleagues here are expecting me to tea in Common-room."

"I shall not delay you long, sir," said the inspector calmly. "I regret having to refer to a painful subject; but I have my duty to do, and it is my duty to ask you whether you know anything of the present whereabouts of George Waring, convict Number Nineteen, of Blackmoor Prison?"

"Nothing!"

The inspector's keen eyes were searching the young man's face.

"I have a reason for asking, of course," he said. "Waring has been missing for several weeks now. The probability is that he has received help in making good his evasion of the police. Some of his relatives are known, and there exists the possibility, at least, that the fugitive has received help from them."

"He has received none from me, if that is your meaning!"

Mr. Gilmore's voice was very sharp.

"Am I to take it that you suspect me of helping an escaped convict to elude the police?" he demanded.

"Hem!" The inspector coughed. "The claims of blood might lead even an upright man to disregard the law of the land to that extent, Mr. Gilmore. Such instances have been known. It is a very common error for a convict's relatives to regard him as more sinned against than sinning."

"No doubt," assented Mr. Gilmore. "But such is not the case with me. My half-brother George was always what we called at school a bad hat, and, though I know nothing of his crime or his conviction, I have no doubt whatever that he received no more than justice—probably rather less."

Mr. Grimes smiled faintly.

"I take it that you are not deeply attached to him, then?"

"Certainly not. I should not have lost sight of him for nearly a decade had I been attached to him."

"And if he applied to you for help in his present circumstances—"

"I should refuse it."

"That is your duty, of course; but it

has been my experience that such a painful duty is sometimes left undone," said Mr. Grimes. "To be plain, Mr. Gilmore, have you seen or heard anything of George Waring since you came to Greyfriars School as a Form master?"

"Nothing whatever, except the news of his escape from prison, as I have already told you."

"You have had no communication with him?"

"None."

"Then he can scarcely be aware that you are here at all?"

"I do not see how he can be aware of it. I have not the slightest reason to suppose that he is aware of it."

Inspector Grimes bent forward a little in his chair, his eyes glued on the handsome, troubled face of the young master.

"Then how," he said quietly, "do you account for the fact that his flight led him in this direction?"

Mr. Gilmore started.

"In this direction?" he repeated.

"Certainly. He has been seen several times, and on each occasion, nearer and nearer to this part of Kent."

"I was unaware of the circumstance, and I do not undertake to account for it, Mr. Grimes."

"It would appear, at least, that your half-brother is aware that you are here, and that he entertains some hope of getting into touch with you to obtain help."

"That does not follow," said Mr. Gilmore. "His flight was bound to take him in some direction, I presume—and this was as likely as any other. I conclude that it is sheer chance."

"Possibly—possibly." Inspector Grimes rose to his feet. "I need detain you no longer, Mr. Gilmore. I am sorry that I have had to trouble you at all. In the event of Waring making himself known to you, I trust you can be depended upon to hand him over to the authorities."

There was a long pause.

"I can hardly reply to that question off-hand, sir," said Mr. Gilmore at last. "Most decidedly I shall never, in any circumstances, break the law by helping a convicted criminal to escape. Help from me he assuredly never will receive so long as he is wanted by the police. But if it should be a question of taking active measures against him, I cannot forget that he is my mother's son, though he and I have never been friends. I cannot say that I should act against him, though I can say, without hesitation, that I should refuse absolutely to help him in evading the law."

"You are frank, at least, Mr. Gilmore," said the inspector, with a smile. "I repeat that I am sorry to have troubled you in the matter at all. Good-afternoon, sir."

Mr. Gilmore stood by his table after the door had closed on the Courtfield inspector, in deep thought.

Under the table, Dicky Nugent suppressed his terrified breathing.

Not for worlds would he have allowed Eric Gilmore to discover him then. What Mr. Gilmore would have said, and done, had he learned that a Greyfriars fag was in possession of his miserable secret, Dicky could not imagine. But he knew that it behoved him not to let Mr. Gilmore learn that much, if he could help it.

He heard a deep sigh suddenly. It was a sigh that came from the very depths of the young man's troubled heart. It touched the thoughtless fag strangely as he heard it.

Then Mr. Gilmore's steps crossed the room to the door. The door opened and shut, and he was gone.

Not till six or seven minutes had

elapsed did Nugent minor venture to crawl out from under the table. With a white, frightened face, he tiptoed to the door, and listened there, with beating heart, before opening it. But he quitted the study at last, and hurried away.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's up, kid?"

At the end of the passage Dicky Nugent broke into a run, and almost ran into a group of Removites as he rounded the corner. Bob Cherry caught him by the shoulder.

The fag's face was as white as chalk.

"Dicky, what's the matter?" exclaimed Frank Nugent.

"Nothing!" muttered Dicky.

"Look here, kid, something's the matter!" said Harry Wharton, with a curious look at the fag's colourless face. "Better tell your major."

"Rats! It's nothing, I tell you!" panted Nugent minor.

He jerked himself away from Bob Cherry, and ran on, leaving the Famous Five staring after him.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Face to Face!

MIDNIGHT!

Greyfriars was silent and still.

From only one window a light still burned, streaming out into the wintry mists of the quadrangle, glimmering on the frosty trunks of leafless trees.

Mr. Gilmore was up late that night.

The master of the Second was generally early to bed and early to rise. But he was not in his usual mood that night.

He was pacing in his study, and he had been pacing tirelessly for a long time, thinking black and troubled thoughts.

His position at Greyfriars was becoming painful, and he felt that it was growing intolerable.

Bunter's absurd story had been disconcerting. No one had credited it, but it had led to much discussion that was unpleasant enough. It had led to Inspector Grimes' visit, and the mistake the inspector had made—a mistake for which Mr. Gilmore could scarcely blame the portly inspector, but which was bitterly galling to him. It seemed to him that he could still feel the chilling contact of the handcuffs on his wrists. For some minutes, at least, he had been handcuffed like a criminal, and the recollection was bitter and humiliating.

But that was not all—it was little enough, in comparison with what he had learned at the inspector's second visit.

He was under suspicion.

Mr. Grimes was satisfied that he was not the man the police wanted. That had been made clear. But the Courtfield inspector suspected him of aiding and abetting the escaped convict.

Indeed, it would have been surprising had not the inspector felt such a suspicion. The fugitive, for some mysterious reason, was making in the direction of Greyfriars, where his half-brother was a master. It was natural for Mr. Grimes to think that the hunted man, in desperate need of help, should be seeking to get into touch with his relative. And now that Eric Gilmore had thought the matter over carefully, he realised that Mr. Grimes was probably right to that extent.

He knew nothing of Waring's movements, but other relatives might have seen or heard from the man. From them Waring might have learned that



Bunter caught at Inspector Grimes' sleeve. "Haven't you got him?" he demanded. "What?" snapped the inspector. "Him! Haven't you got him—the convict?" stuttered Bunter. Mr. Grimes gave the fat junior a grim look, as the familiar ring in Bunter's voice reminded him of his unknown interlocutor on the telephone. (See Chapter 12.)

Eric Gilmore was at Greyfriars. He might have learned it from some other source. Greyfriars was on the coast, and no doubt Waring's object was to get out of the country. It was more than likely that he was seeking to get into touch with the Greyfriars master, who, had he chosen, could have helped him to escape across the sea.

The more Eric Gilmore pondered upon it, the more likely it seemed. He knew that suspicion was in Mr. Grimes' mind, and he felt that Mr. Grimes was right.

It followed that, in all probability, a watch would be kept on the vicinity of the school. If Waring came, he would be seen and seized—perhaps within the precincts of the school itself.

The possibility made the young master shiver.

To remain at the school after such a disgrace would be impossible. Even if the Head allowed him to remain, he could never hold up his head there again when all was known.

It was no wonder that Eric Gilmore did not think of sleep with such troubled thoughts stirring in his mind.

Long after the rest of Greyfriars had gone to bed, his light still streamed out into the misty night, and the young man restlessly paced the study, his shadow incessantly crossing and re-crossing the lighted window.

It was a sound at the window that made him stop at last, suddenly. The casement was partly open, letting in the cold air. Outside all was dark and misty. At the opening of the casement Eric Gilmore's startled eyes fixed on a human face, looking in from the night. He stood transfixed.

Every vestige of colour drained from his face as he looked at that sudden, startling apparition.

The face—a face that was strangely

like his own, apart from its hard, gaunt look—remained immovable for some moments, staring in. Then a hand drew the casement wider open, and the man outside clambered in at the window.

Still Eric Gilmore stood motionless, as if rooted to the floor.

The worst had happened. What he had feared might come to pass had come to pass—suddenly, like a stunning blow. George Waring, Convict No. 19, of Blackmoor Prison, dropped into the room and closed the casement after him. Under the fixed, haggard stare of the Second Form master, he drew the dark hangings across the window, shutting off the study from any eye that might have been watching without. Then, panting, the convict faced Eric Gilmore.

Still the Form master did not speak. He stood like a man in a trance, his face white, his gaze fixed.

The convict looked at him keenly, searchingly, and then, with a stealthy tread, crossed to the door and turned the key in the lock.

Then he faced Mr. Gilmore again.

"Well?" he said quietly.

"George Waring!" muttered Mr. Gilmore at last.

"Your brother," smiled Waring.

"Good heavens!"

"I did not expect you to be glad to see me," said Convict No. 19, of Blackmoor. "But blood is thicker than water, Brother Eric. I have come to you for help. You know I need it."

He glanced round the study.

"Have you any food here? I am famished."

The young master made a gesture to the sideboard. Apart from that gesture he did not stir.

The convict crossed to the sideboard with the same soft, stealthy tread, strangely reminiscent of a wild animal hunted for its life. His manner was

that of the convict, but other signs of Convict No. 19, of Blackmoor, were gone. Long since he had got rid of the convict garb. He was dressed in a thick brown overcoat, with a thick, large cap pulled down low over his forehead and his ears. There was a box of biscuits in the sideboard, and the convict found them and began to eat—hungrily, savagely, like a famished animal. As he munched he watched the Second Form master stealthily.

"You know what happened to me?"

"I have learned—lately."

"Three years—and I have served one," said Waring. "Then my chance came, and I took it. I've had a harder time outside Blackmoor than inside. A dog's life!" He shivered. "Friends—relatives—turned down by all! Even my uncle, who always favoured me—our uncle, Eric—turned me out. He gave me clothes and money, I admit, but out it short at that."

"It was more than you had a right to ask."

"Very likely."

The convict shrugged his shoulders, and devoured the biscuits greedily. It was clear that he was famished with hunger.

"It's been a dog's life. I thought of you. I thought you might help: We were at school together."

"Where you were a thorn in my side, as you are now," said Mr. Gilmore bitterly. "You disgraced me there. You were expelled, and rightly expelled. I had hoped never to see you again!"

"Brotherly!" jeered the convict.

"You were never a brother to me. More than once you took advantage of the likeness between us to place your faults on my shoulders."

"You have a good memory."

(Continued on page 28.)

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YOU CAN START THIS WONDERFUL STORY OF THE GREAT WAR TO-DAY, BOYS!

THE SECOND MEETING! In Peace time, young Eric Milvain fell foul of a certain gentleman and kicked him out of his house. Now, a prisoner of war in the hands of the Germans, Eric comes face to face with that man—a very powerful person, who goes by the name of Dr. Kauterfauld!



(Introduction on page 25.)

The Barracks of Hagenot!

JAWOHL, I knew it!" snarled the German sergeant. "Ach, the treacherous dog!" And he turned and aimed a savage kick at the body of Birchington.

The callous brutality of the man whipped Eric into action. He wrenched himself free from the soldiers who were holding him, and, springing forward, swung his clenched fist. It took the sergeant on the point of the jaw. The man reeled backwards, tripped, and fell heavily.

The German soldiers, recovering from their momentary surprise, hurled themselves on the boy. The sergeant lumbered to his feet, his face livid.

"Donner und blitzern," he roared, "but you will pay for that, you Schweinhund Engländer!"

He rushed at Eric, and struck him flush on the mouth. Then, wheeling on the soldiers, he shouted:

"To the battery with him! Donnerwetter, but we will see how he likes the whipping-posts of Cassel!"

Leaving two soldiers on guard by the D.H. 4, the sergeant and his men marched Eric three miles across the stretch of moorland till they came to a long, grey hut near which stood two anti-aircraft guns and a tarpaulin-covered searchlight.

Eric was taken into the hut and ordered to seat himself at the long trestle-table which ran nearly the full length of the interior. Around the walls were ranged tiers of iron bunks, each of which was furnished with a scantily-stuffed palliasso and a thin grey blanket. Half a dozen men were lying smoking on the bunks, their tunics unbuttoned, their knee-high black marching boots lying on the floor near-by.

Four crude wooden chairs and two pictures completed the furnishings of the room. One picture was a print of Field-Marshal von Hindenburg, Commander-in-Chief of the German Army in the Field, and the other was of William Hohenzollern, the German Kaiser, who had set the world ablaze with war.

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The sergeant crossed to a telephone attached to the wall, and held a few minutes' rapid conversation with some unknown. Then, hanging up the receiver, he returned to the table.

"My orders are to convey you to the military barracks at Hagenot," he said harshly to Eric. "First, I will search you. Give me your flying clothes and tunic."

The manner in which the sergeant examined the flying kit and tunic intrigued Eric. The man was thorough and painstaking. He investigated every pocket, then slit all the linings and turned them inside out. He concluded by obtaining a hammer and flattening every brass button and badge of rank.

"You are clever, you Englanders!" he snarled. "I know you have compasses so small that they can be fitted in those buttons. Yes, and maps, also! That is to help you if you are captured to escape. Pah!"

He threw the kit from him with an impatient gesture; then, placing his hands on the table, he leaned forward and fixed his eyes on Eric's.

"But you will not escape, my Engländer," he said gratingly. "Once you are behind the barbed wire, then that blow you struck me will be repaid."

He laughed mirthlessly.

"Wait till you have eaten the flesh of the dog at Lanshut—have tasted the salt of the mines behind Cambrai and known the thirst—wait till you have stood on the dawn parade at Cassel, where the commandante himself picks out the one to be flogged that day on the whipping-post!"

Into Eric's mind there came again the vague rumours which he had heard in France, whispers which hinted at the disease, death, and horror which stalked

in certain prison camps in Germany. But it could not be true.

"You think I lie," the voice of the sergeant cut in on his thoughts. "You ask, 'Where are the ambassadors of the neutral countries that they do not know these things?'" He laughed again. "Ach himmel, do they not visit only the show camps of Karlsruhe, of Brandenburg, and Mecklenburg? You ask how do I know these things? I know them for I have seen service there, and was an unteroffizier with the Commandante von Kruske of Cassel!"

He broke off and drew himself up. "But that is enough. In an hour you leave here under escort for Hagenot."

During the next hour, whilst the sergeant and his men lapped up thick vegetable soup with both noise and gusto, Eric gave himself up to a review of the position. He must escape at the very earliest opportunity, make his way to the clump of bushes, retrieve the plans and get out of Germany.

It was fortunate that the sergeant had, so far, accepted Birchington for what he appeared to be—a peasant of Alsace, whose sympathies were with the allies. Birchington's papers must have been wonderful forgeries. But the sergeant was still in possession of them, and no doubt they would be forwarded to the proper quarter for verification. And if no verification was forthcoming, then a thorough investigation would be ordered. Eric knew he must, if possible, get those plans before that happened.

The meal over, he was taken by the sergeant and an armed escort of four soldiers to the small wayside station of Mulden. And when a black, decrepit-looking engine wheezed its way into the station, trailing behind it four carriages resembling horse-boxes more than anything else, the sergeant commandeered a compartment for himself, his prisoner, and escort.

The journey to Hagenot was painfully slow. More than once the train was shunted into a siding to allow a troop train to go thundering past, en route for the concentration camps behind the

Additional interest is attached to this wonderful story in that the author was a British pilot himself during the Great War, and was taken prisoner by the Germans.

—EDITOR.

At other times they were shunted to give passage to heavily-laden trucks and wagons conveying guns, ammunition, and all the appurtenances of war.

It was dusk when they reached Hagenot. There was a ten minutes' wait at the platform barrier whilst the sergeant's papers were examined by a German non-commissioned officer and his civilian assistant. These two were seated at a table near the barrier, and Eric noted that everyone who had alighted from the train was obliged to produce identification papers. This was just a cog in the great war machine, but an important one, for no man could travel in Germany without being called upon to produce evidence as to his identity, occupation, etc. Eric there and then made a mental note that, if and when he escaped, he would avoid all railroads.

As he emerged from the station Eric looked about him with a certain curiosity. He was seeing, for the first time, a German town under war conditions. The streets were poorly lighted in the deepening dusk. Three shops out of four were shuttered and deserted. The pavements were thronged with grey-clad soldiers, some of them mere boys, others bearded veterans of the Landsturm. At the provision shops women, drawn and haggard of face, were queued up, whilst little children drilled and played at soldiers in the gutters.

Over all hung a curious air of tension. There seemed to be something forced, something artificial, in the snatches of conversation which came to Eric as he plodded along with his guards, single file, in the gutter. Even the shrill laughter of the children held a note that was false, a note which told that the care-free joyousness of childhood was lacking—wiped out by the heavy hand of war.

"Yes, yes; they say Verdun has fallen and—"

"No, not yet. It is but a matter of hours, however."

"We fall back near Cambrai. The papers say it is a tactical movement. I do not know—"

"Ah, but it will be soon over now. They lose courage, those Englanders."

Thus came disjointed, unfinished sentences to Eric's ears from the crowded pavements. It was the war—always the war. Sometimes feverish, often pathetic, when they spoke of that line of British bayonets, which would bend, but would not break.

It was a group of ragged children who first drew attention to Eric.

"The Englander!" they yelled. "See! An Englander!"

One picked up a handful of filth and threw it. The sergeant barked out an order and the escort closed up around Eric. But they followed, those German children, and were not lacking for adult companions. They screeched epithets, they jeered, and they hurled insults. Ah, it was great sport, that! The escort grinned, but kept a shifting, furtive eye on the alert for missiles. It was easy to hit one of the guards and miss the cursed prisoner. And they answered questions.

"Yes, a flyer. Captured near Mulden!"

"A bomber. Jawohl, yes."

"Struck the sergeant! Yes, he did that!"

Eric walked on, his head erect. He knew that he was not the first who had trodden the streets of a German town as a prisoner of war, and he cared nothing for the vile things which were shouted at him, and which he knew were engendered by the hatred of England.

Dusk had deepened into night when they reached the big iron gates of Hagenot barracks. Two German sentries stood on guard, and near them, erect and motionless, was a German sergeant, clad in dark blue uniform, with red braiding, and wearing a helmet, the brass spoke on the crown of which glinted in the light of the gas-lamp above the barrack gate.

He came forward as the escort halted. "Is this the prisoner from Mulden?" he asked harshly.

"Jawohl! It is," replied the sergeant in charge of the escort.

"Gut! You will follow me!" said the other, and, turning on his heel, led the way through the gates.

Eric was taken across the barrack yard, silent and deserted at that hour. Then through an iron doorway into a stone-flagged passage, which smelt strongly of carbolic, or some kindred disinfectant.

Here he waited with his escort whilst the sergeant who had met them at the gate departed to announce their arrival. A wait of fully half an hour ensued, and then the man returned.

"Captain Von Zimmerman will interrogate the prisoner now," he said, and Eric was marched up a flight of bare stone stairs, along endless corridors, till the sergeant halted at a door and knocked discreetly.

"Enter!" called a voice, and Eric was ushered into a large, brilliantly-lighted room.

The escort withdrew, leaving him facing a German officer, seated at a table littered with papers. At one end of the room a tall, spare man, dressed in civilian clothes, was standing, engaged in earnest conversation with a grey-haired German officer. Eric barely glanced in their direction, then turned his attention to the officer at the table in front of him.

"Your name and squadron?" demanded the latter sharply, his pen poised in his hand.

"I refuse to answer any questions," retorted Eric.

The German officer threw down his pen and leant forward across the table. He spoke in perfect English.

"That attitude will get you nowhere," he said. "I am asking you for a perfectly harmless piece of information. What is your name and squadron?"

"I refuse to tell you anything!"

"Listen to me. If you are amenable to reason you may be sent to a good prison camp. If you persist in this stubbornness there are other camps, not so good. Do you understand?"

INTRODUCTION.

As the result of a thrilling scrap with four Fokker planes Captain Eric Milcaine, M.C. one of Britain's most distinguished pilots, is compelled to make a forced landing in German territory.

His machine has hardly touched ground when he is approached by an Englishman named Birchington who is a secret service agent. Birchington, disguised as a peasant, has secured the plans of a huge aircraft factory to be built at Frankfort, and he is anxious to deliver them to the British authorities. Then suddenly a party of German soldiers come into view. A shot rings out and Birchington collapses, mortally wounded. He begs Eric to carry him to the shelter of a clump of bushes. Once there Birchington gives the plans to Eric and asks him to bury them. This the young pilot quickly does, and he promises Birchington that he will return at some favourable opportunity, recover them, and get them through to headquarters.

Birchington is dead by the time the German soldiers arrive. The sergeant in charge, having examined Birchington's forged papers, reckons that he was endeavouring to assist Eric to escape. The young Britisher taking his cue, remained silent. In that silence the German sergeant read an affirmative.

(Now read on.)

"Quite. You can save your breath and your time. I'm not talking."

The officer rose to his feet. "Very well," he said stiffly. "There is someone else who will question you. We have not yet learnt the details of your landing, but we strongly suspect you were endeavouring to pick up a British spy who was known to be somewhere in the neighbourhood of Mulden."

Eric kept his features under perfect control. But the statement had startled him. He knew that special aeroplanes were working in conjunction with the Secret Service, and it was quite possible that Birchington had been expecting a machine to pick him up. But it wasn't Eric's machine. Birchington had known that, but the Germans obviously were not so sure.

The officer stepped smartly across the room and, standing stiffly in front of the civilian, said:

"The prisoner refuses to answer any questions, sir!"

"I will question him, Zimmerman," replied the man, and slowly he crossed to the table and sank into the chair which Zimmerman had vacated.

"I understand that you refuse—" he began, then stopped short.

The blood drained from his sallow face and his great, hooked nose seemed somehow to become more prominent. His deep-set eyes were fixed on Eric's face, a look of triumph crept into their glittering depths. Slowly he pushed back the chair, and slowly rose to his feet, his hands gripping the table in front of him.

"You!" he whispered. "You, of all men!"

Doctor Kauterfauld!

"YOU know this man, sir?" Captain Von Zimmerman spoke softly, a world of curiosity and interest in his tone.

"Know him?" repeated the civilian harshly. "Yes, I know him, and he knows me."

"Yes, I know you now," replied Eric sharply. "You're the man Rosen!"

The civilian laughed mirthlessly.

"You hear that, Zimmerman?" he said. "The man Rosen!" He leant forward, peering at Eric with malevolent eyes. "I am Dr. Kauterfauld, chief of the German Secret Service," he went on harshly. "You knew me as Rosen. You fool! Oh, you fool!"

"I don't know about being a fool!" retorted Eric. "You were the fool at our last meeting!"

Dr. Kauterfauld flushed and sank slowly back into his chair.

"I have not forgotten our last meeting," he said icily. "That much you will soon learn!"

He turned to Von Zimmerman.

"Some years ago," he said, "it came to our knowledge that in a certain laboratory in England a distinguished English scientist, Professor Milvain, the father of this boy, was engaged on experiments with a new high explosive of his own invention. Acting on the instructions of the German Reichsrat, I approached Professor Milvain, with a view to purchasing, on behalf of Germany, his explosive!"

He paused and wiped his thin, bloodless lips with a small cambric handkerchief.

"My efforts were unsuccessful," he resumed, "as were various attempts we made to obtain the explosive formulae by other means—"

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"In other words, you tried to steal it and couldn't!" cut in Eric.

"Silence!" thundered Dr. Kauterfauld, and Von Zimmerman took a threatening step forward towards the boy.

"On the eve of war," continued the doctor, "Professor Milvain lay dying. I was in England under an assumed name. Time was precious, as I knew the ports would soon be closed should that cursed country decide to throw in her lot with Belgium. I motored from London to the house of Professor Milvain. I was safe, you understand, for England had not yet declared war. Professor Milvain was dead when I arrived. I met this boy. I offered him the sum of two hundred and fifty thousand pounds for his father's formulae. He refused."

"I kicked you through the front door, you moan!" snapped Eric. "I jolly well wish I had known you were a Boche. You would not have got off so lightly!"

"Yes, you and your cursed father thought I was acting on behalf of a small South American power!" snarled Dr. Kauterfauld. "Neither of you suspected that I was working for the Fatherland, that I was a German! But I was, and now you know it. Do you remember my last words to you?"

"No, I'm not acquainted with swearing!" retorted Eric.

Dr. Kauterfauld leant forward across the table. His deep-set eyes were blazing.

"My last words to you," he said slowly, harshly, "were that some day you should pay with your life for that night's work! And now I have you—have you like that!"

He stretched out a long, tapering hand, palm upwards, and slowly curled his fingers till his fist was clenched.

"I tell you now that you shall never leave Germany alive. You shall pay for what you did to me."

Again the doctor paused, his eyes on Eric's face. Von Zimmerman's cold eyes were losing nothing of the scene.

"Eric Milvain," said the doctor sharply, "I ask you to tell me why, after the fight over Trier, you landed your machine near Mulden?"

"I will tell you nothing!" replied Eric doggedly.

With an oath Dr. Kauterfauld launched himself to his feet.

"Shall I tell you why you landed that machine?" he shouted. "It was to pick up a spy, a cursed spy, who has stolen plans worth millions of pounds to the Government of this country. He was traced from Frankfurt to Cologne, and from there to Coblenz. We know he was making eventually towards the Vosges Mountains, and we know he must be hiding somewhere in Alsace. Dare you deny that you were intending to pick up that spy?"

Eric's brain was working rapidly. It was imperative that he was in no way associated with Birchington, otherwise he could never hope for an opportunity to escape and retrieve the plans.

"You talk like a fool," he snapped, "as a few minutes' investigation will prove! I was riddled over Trier, and my observer was killed. I landed near Mulden because I knew there was an isolated stretch of moorland there, and I wanted to fix up my engine. I found my petrol tank almost empty, and a take-off was impossible. A peasant of

Alsace who got into conversation with me was shot by your men, and the sergeant who was responsible for my capture will verify that."

Dr. Kauterfauld resumed his seat. "We have already had the sergeant's report!" he said coldly. "What were you doing over Trier?"

"As you'll find an aerial camera in the rear cockpit, I'm telling you nothing which you can't guess when I say I was photographing!" replied Eric.

Dr. Kauterfauld nodded.

"Very good!" he said harshly. "I am inclined to accept your story as correct. This peasant to whom you spoke may be the man for whom we are looking. That will be investigated. If we discover that he is, then you will be taken out and shot. In the meantime, you will go to the punishment camp at Landshut. But understand this—and he tapped on the table with a lean forefinger—"you will never see England again. You will die quickly if we discover you have knowledge of this spy. We do not kill our prisoners unless we have good cause, but some die slowly in the prison camps."

He smiled mirthlessly, then rose to his feet with a gesture to Von Zimmerman. The latter stepped to the door and, opening it, allowed the escort to file in.

"Lodge this prisoner in the cells here to-night!" said Dr. Kauterfauld. "He will be transferred to Landshut by way of Karlsrhue to-morrow."

The Hotel!

ERIC was taken down to the ground floor. Opening off the stone entrance lobby was a long corridor of cells, their iron doors painted a dull red and fitted with sliding shutters about nine inches square.

Into one of these cells Eric was thrust by his guards, the door slammed shut on him, and he was left alone with the darkness of his thoughts. Groping his way forward on a tour of investigation, he barked his shins against a low plank bed. Further investigation proved that its sole covering was a thin blanket. There was neither mattress nor palliasso.

Throwing himself full length on the planks, he clasped his hands behind his head and considered the position. He was hungry—hungrier than he had ever been before. Thirsty also. But as his thoughts ran on he found temporary forgetfulness of the physical discomfort.

It was bad luck, rotten bad luck, meeting Dr. Kauterfauld. It was perfectly obvious that the man was powerful. The attitude of the two German officers in the room had shown that. It might be only a matter of hours before Kauterfauld satisfied himself that the peasant and Birchington were one and the same man. If that happened, then Eric could expect extremely short shrift. And he was the one man in Europe who knew the hiding-place of the plans. He must get them back to headquarters in France—must escape at the earliest possible moment.

A sudden thought caused him to tense. The Escape Committee—what had Birchington meant by that? Birchington had told him to get in touch with the Escape Committee, and they would get him out of the prison camps. Who were

they? How was he to get in touch with them? How could they get him out of the prison camps? Birchington was raving, maybe. But, no; because the words of Birchington on the matter of the plans had showed that he was in full command of his senses.

Dawn was creeping in through the small, barred window set high in the wall of the cell when Eric dropped into a troubled sleep. In less than an hour he was awakened by the opening of the creaking iron door of the cell. Two German soldiers entered, with rifles and fixed bayonets. A third carried a small bowl of acorn coffee and a chunk of brown bread made from potatoes and sawdust.

And let it here be said that this bread was the same as eaten by the populace of Germany in those dark years of war when no food-carrying vessel could penetrate the rigorous blockade carried out by the ships of the British Navy.

Eric drank the bitter coffee and ate the bread thankfully enough. He asked for water with which to wash, but the reply came with surly emphasis:

"Nix wasser!"

So he did without water, and accompanied his guards from the cell. In the entrance lobby were two more guards and a sergeant.

"I am to take you to Karlsrhue," said the latter gutturally. "Any attempt at escape on the journey will result in your being shot! My men have orders to fire on suspicion!"

"I understand!" replied Eric.

The guards closed in about him, and he was marched through the door on to the parade ground. Drawn up on parade in the cold light of the early morning stood a battalion of the Bavarian Rifle Brigade. They were being inspected by a grim-faced German officer, whose silver epaulets gave token of the rank of field officer.

And as he passed those ranks of grey-clad men, standing erect and utterly motionless, with their grey haversacks and full marching kit on their backs, there came to Eric some realisation of the formula upon which the German war machine had been built. Blood and iron!

For they stood so still that they might have lacked the spark of life. Not one pair of those eyes which stared straight ahead so much as flickered in his direction. Yet he was an Englishman—an object of interest, one might think. And to him those eyes seemed vaguely reminiscent of the eyes of dumb animals—animals lacking soul and individuality.

As he passed he visualised what the next few days might hold in store for these grey-clad men. Broken and bleeding, carnage strewing the shell-pocked hell of No Man's Land. Cannon fodder—a German phrase, but cannon fodder in very truth!

Hagenot streets were almost deserted at that hour of the morning, save for a few prowling loafers, ragged, elderly, and emaciated. The journey to Karlsrhue was uneventful. No chance of escape presented itself, for Eric's guards sat with him between them, and the sergeant took the precaution of locking both doors of the compartment and keeping the key in his pocket.

At Karlsrhue, instead of being taken to the prison camp, Eric was marched down a broad street, the pavements of which were flanked by noble trees, and halted in front of a large building. The



Eric wrenched himself free from the soldiers, and springing forward, swung his clenched fist. It took the sergeant full on the point of the jaw. The man reeled backwards, tripped, and fell heavily. (See page 24.)

place had the appearance of newness, and the windows on each floor were thickly whitewashed.

This, as he was soon to learn, was the Gasthof, an hotel which, unfinished when war commenced, had been taken over by the German Government for the temporary housing of prisoners-of-war before they were transferred to the clearing camp in another part of the city.

He remained outside with his guards whilst the sergeant entered, and during the ten minutes which ensued before the man returned he took a careful note of the outside of the building. For he was determined to attempt an escape that night if humanly possible.

Inside the bare entrance hall of the hotel, he was marched to a table, where a German unteroffizier took down a careful description of him. He was then taken up an uncarpeted flight of stairs and locked in a small room on the first floor. The room was furnished with a hospital bed and a chair. The window, whitewashed on the outside, faced on to the avenue along which his escort had brought him. There was no chance of opening the window, as it was either nailed or screwed on the outside.

Sitting on the bed, Eric thought out the problem of escape. It would be fatal to attempt to force the door and traverse the corridors of the place. He must therefore go out through the window.

It would be ticklish, as the alarm would be raised the moment the tinkle of glass was heard, and he knew that armed guards would be patrolling the building after nightfall.

Still, it was a chance, and he must take it. He must keep faith with Birchington, and do everything in his power to win through to France with the plans.

Slowly the day wore to a close. A key grated in the lock, and the door

opened to emit a stout, flabby-faced man clad in a dirty shirt and trousers and carrying a bowl of vegetable soup.

Down each side of his trousers ran a broad yellow stripe—token that he was a prisoner-of-war.

Locking the door behind him, he placed the bowl of soup near Eric, and grunted the one word:

"Eat!"

Eric fell to with gusto; and, leaning against the door, the man watched him with interest. There was something disturbing in the unblinking stare of those pale eyes, and it stung Eric into speech.

"Where are you from, my friend?" he demanded; for it was obvious that the man was neither British nor French.

The man stared blankly; and Eric repeated the question in German. He got an answer then, in sullen tones.

"I am from the army of Prince Djinsky on the Eastern Front."

"Oh, a Russian?"

"Yes, I am from Russia. And you—you are an officer in the air army of England?"

"You are well informed."

The man grinned, showing broken and blackened teeth.

"Yes, I am," he replied. "We who work in the kitchens of the Gasthof of Karlsrue know many things. Kauterfauld sent you here, and you go to Landshut. Many I have seen come, many I have seen go. But none have I ever seen return. There was one—"

He broke off, with a shrug of his shoulders.

"Yes, there was one—" prompted Eric.

"Get off the bed and I will show you!" was the reply; and wonderingly Eric rose to his feet.

With a quick movement the Russian pulled the bed away from the wall. Kneeling down, he produced a box of cheap matches, and, striking a light,

held the flame close to the skirting board.

"Look!" he said; and, crouching down, Eric saw words in English scratched on the white paintwork.

Laboriously he read what was written:

"I have been here two months in solitary confinement. I have never crossed the threshold of this room. For sixty days I have been alone, with nothing to break the awful monotony. I think I am going mad. It is that whitewashed window. If only I could see outside—it is summer there! I was crawling about the floor to-day—"

The words ceased abruptly, and underneath was scrawled a signature:

"R. Beverley, Capt.,
Northld. Fus."

"I cannot read those words," mumbled the Russian; "but they say he speaks of the window. He went through it one night—"

"Yes!"

The Russian nodded.

"Yes, but the German sentries below got him on their bayonets. Ah, he died quickly, that one! None can escape from here!"

"It is well guarded?" asked Eric casually.

In a flash the Russian became suspicious.

"I tell you nothing!" he said roughly. "You try anything and you will see!"

He picked up the almost empty bowl of soup and retreated, slamming the door behind him and shooting home the bolts on the outside.

(Isn't this yarn the real goods, chums? Wouldn't it just suit your chums down to the ground? Why, of course it would! Well, next week's instalment is better than ever. To make sure of reading it, all "Magnetites" should order their copy well in advance!)

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CONVICT NINETEEN!*(Continued from page 23.)*

"You came here to see me," muttered the Second Form master. "You found out that I had an appointment here?"

"I found it out," assented Convict No. 19. "Other relatives who wanted only to get shut of an escaped convict thought that you might help. You are well placed here to help me—a fine night and a boat, and a lent passport, and I can get to France from here. Your photograph on your passport will pass for mine. I'm willing to take risks. You'll be glad to see me clear of the country. Once the sea is between me and England you will never see me again—as is your brotherly wish."

"I cannot help you!"

"You must!"

"Listen to me," said Mr. Gilmore quietly. "You have come here for safety, and you have stepped into your greatest danger. Your presence is known. It is suspected that you will come here, and the school is undoubtedly watched for you. I cannot help you if I would, and I would not if I could. You have broken the law, and you must pay the penalty."

"Not if I can help it," said Convict No. 19.

"I understand now," went on Mr. Gilmore. "You have been hanging about the school in hiding. I understand now why some juniors, the other day, fancied that they had seen me in the Cloisters. It was you."

"No doubt."

"You have been seen, and yet you lingered here?"

"Where should I go? I tell you this is my last chance. I'm at the end of my tether. You must help me!"

"I cannot!"

"A suit of your clothes—your passport—some money! I will take my chance of getting hold of a boat."

"I cannot!"

The convict's eyes burned at him.

"You are afraid of the risk. But there is risk in refusing. What is your position here worth, if I am arrested in the school where you are a master?"

"Nothing!" said Mr. Gilmore in a low voice. "I should have to go. My appointment here, which means everything to me, would have to be sacrificed."

"Help me, then!"

"I cannot help you," said Mr. Gilmore. "It is my duty to detain you now and hand you over to the police. That I cannot do; but to help a convicted felon to escape his just punishment is what an honest man cannot and will not do. You have nothing to expect from me!"

"So that is your answer?" said Convict No. 19 between his teeth.

"That is my answer."

Eric Gilmore stepped to the window and threw back the hangings which the convict had so carefully drawn.

"Go!" he said quietly.

"You will not help me?"

"I will not!"

"Then I stay here, and when I go back to Blackmoor, at least I will leave you a ruined man!" said George Waring between his teeth.

Mr. Gilmore's face set hard.

"As you choose," he said, and he picked up the receiver of the telephone.

The convict watched him breathlessly. In a quiet, steady voice Mr. Gilmore gave a number to the exchange.

The convict panted.

"What is that number?"

"Courtfield Police Station," answered Eric Gilmore coldly.

"You—you—" Waring made a fierce stride towards him, his eyes blazing. "You will dare—"

"You have a few moments before my call is answered," said the master of the Greyfriars Second. "Take your choice."

"Put up the receiver!" said the convict in a choking voice.

"You are not gone."

"I am going! A thousand curses—" He broke off as he heard, from the telephone, the murmur of the answering voice from the police station.

The convict made a spring to the window. The casement was torn open, there was a light thud as the man from Blackmoor dropped to the earth outside. With a deep, deep breath Eric Gilmore replaced the receiver on the telephone.

He stepped to the window and closed it, and drew the hangings. Outside the wild winter night had swallowed Convict No. 19.

THE END.

(Now look out for the sequel to this splendid yarn, entitled: "The Form Master's Foe," which will appear in next week's bumper, number of the MAGNET. You will vote it a good 'un, chums.)

FAMOUS FOOTBALL CLUBS.*(Continued from page 2.)*

played for England once, and also in other representative games, while for many years past he has been on the fringe of honours.

Evidently the Blackburn Rovers officials believe that good big fellows are better than good little ones. That may be the idea of Bob Crompton, the former full-back of the side, who is now a director, and the honorary manager of the team. Crompton weighed fourteen stone in his playing days for the Rovers. Willie Rankin, the present centre-half, is the same weight. His native place is Dundee, and he is another player who "cost a bit."

This very strong half-back line of the Rovers is completed by Austin Campbell, a product of the North-east of England.

Puddefoot, the Great!

Now we come to the attack, the star artist of which is Sydney Puddefoot, the inside-right. You know all about Puddefoot, of course; how he was brought out by West Ham United as a centre-forward, later transferred to Falkirk for a five thousand fee.

His wing partner is Peter Holland, a fellow who tempts us to suggest that the Rovers management can see virtues in little players as well as in big ones.

Not long ago there was a surprise move from Blackburn when Eddie Harper, the centre-forward, was allowed to go to Sheffield Wednesday. Harper had scored a lot of goals for the Blackburn club, but they believe that in Tom Mitchell they have a man who will be an even greater success as leader of the attack. He went to the club from Stockport County as an outside-left, so you will see that the officials never hesitate to make experiments. Another example of this is provided by Arthur Rigby, who has played both at inside and outside-left. He was also in the England team in the former position when they beat Scotland last April, and was also England's inside-left against Wales this season, although at the time he was figuring at outside-left for the Rovers.

Johnny McIntyre is the club's real utility man, and the fellow who played for Fulham and Sheffield Wednesday are going to Ewood, where the Rovers play. That's the Rovers team.

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NOTICES!

DOCTOR BIRCHEMALL is taking forty winks, after the arduous duties of the day. He is on no account to be disturbed—not even if the school is on fire!

"On reading this notice, kindly hold your breath, and tip-toe silently away, so as not to awaken the Sleeping Beauty."

MR. JUSTISS, the master of the Fifth at St. Sam's, came along Head's corridor in a tearing hurry. He was about to burst into the Head's study like a cyclone, when that notice, pinned to the door, gave him pause.

Mr. Justiss devoured the notice—though he had only just had his supper. Then he stooped down and peeped through the keyhole.

Doctor Birchermall was sprawling in his arm-chair, in the cheerful rays of the fire. He appeared to be asleep, for not a muscle of his face moved, and he was as mute as an oyster. There was something very fishy about him, which would have started some observers. Doctor Birchermall's legs were stuck out in front of him, as stiff as a wooden soldier's; and his arms hung down straight, like poles. His face was like the face of a graven image—wooden and expressionless.

Mr. Justiss peeped at the motionless figure for a moment, then, acting upon instructions, he held his breath, and tipped silently away.

But Mr. Lickham, who came along a little later, had no such scruples. He glanced at the notice on the door, and beat a tattoo on it.

"May I come in, sir?" he shouted.

"It's me—Lickie!"

There was no response from within.

Mr. Lickham applied a hefty boot to the door, kicking and pounding upon it at the same time.

"Crash! Crash! Crash!"

Even the heaviest of sleepers could not have slept through such a racket. But still no sound came from within the study.

"My hat!" ejaculated Mr. Lickham. "The Head seems dead to the world! I'd better step inside."

So saying, Mr. Lickham flung open the door of the study and stamped in.

"Sorry to disturb your beauty sleep, sir," he said, "but it's an urgent matter. I want a late pass, to go to the pictures in Muggleton."

There was no response from the strangely inert figure in the armchair. Doctor Birchermall might have been a marble statue, so still was he. His face might have been the work of a sculptor—a man who chips a chap's chaps.

"Do you here me, sir?" cried Mr. Lickham. "I want a late pass for the pictures! And if you don't mind, I should be glad of your company. I hate the thought of going alone, on such a dark and creepy sort of night. That skoundrel Deadshot Dick, the Terror of the Highway, is still prowling around, and terrorizing the public. There is a price on his head—fifty pounds for his capture, dead or alive—but he is still at large. I could not face the ruffian alone, sir, but with a doughy fighting-man like you at my side, I should fear no foe in shining armor! We should be able to ward off any attacks, and we might even have the grate good fortune to capture the greasy skoundrel. What do you say, sir?"

Doctor Birchermall said nothing. He remained sprawling in his chair, and he gave no sign that he heard a single word Mr. Lickham had been saying. His eyes were open, so that he seemed awake; but they were fixed with a glassy stare in the direction of the fire, instead of being turned towards Mr. Lickham.

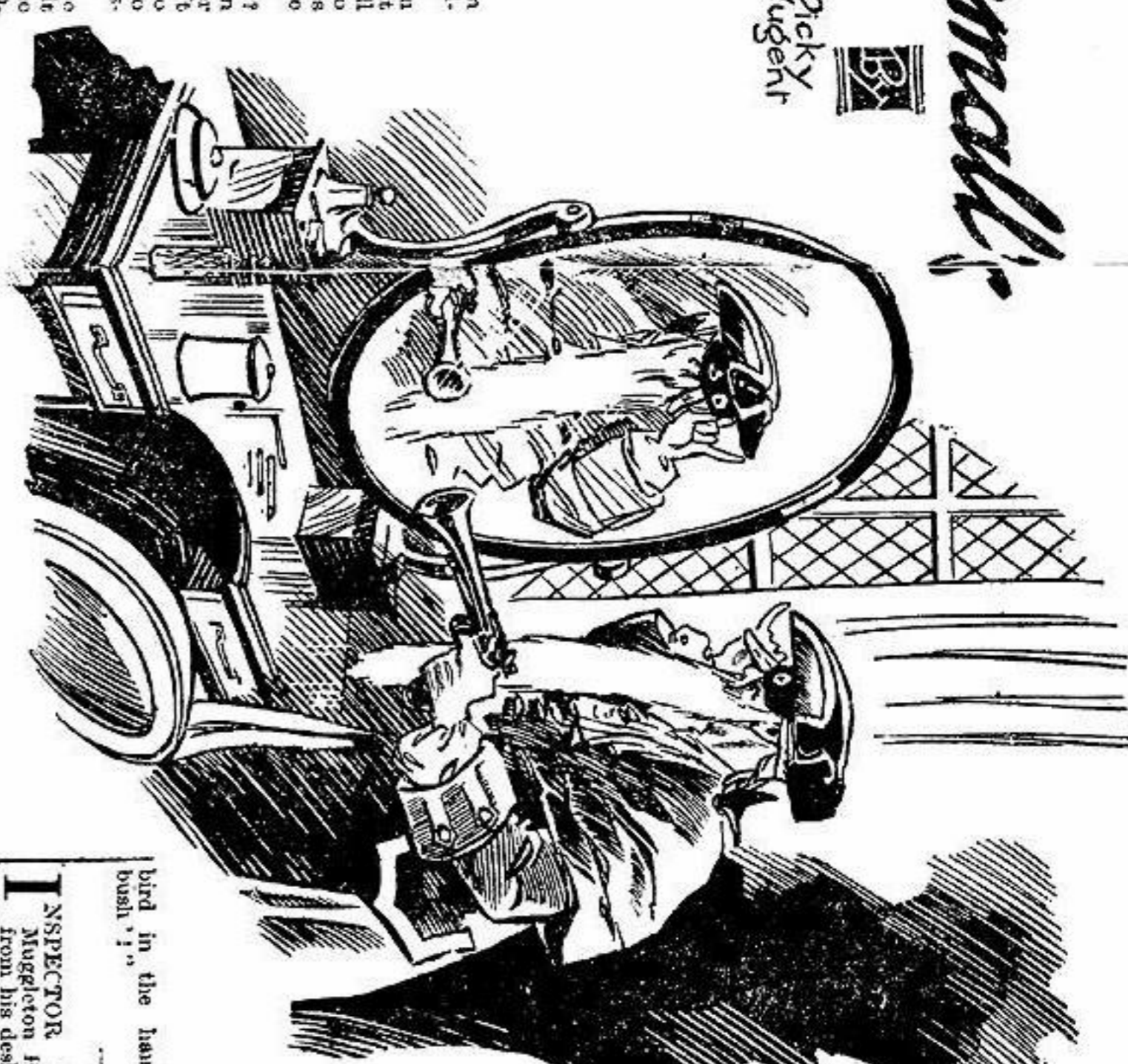
The master of the Fourth began to get

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Doctor Birchermall's Strategy!

Dicky Nugent

There are thousands of ways of making money, but certainly none more startling or unique than the method Dr. Birchermall of St. Sam's employs to rake in the shekels!



quite waxy. He was not used to being ignored and snubbed like this, even by a privileged person like the Head.

"Am I waiting my breath, sir?" hooted Mr. Lickham. "Am I talking to a deaf-mute?"

It really seemed that Mr. Lickham was, for no sound came from the motionless figure in the armchair.

Mr. Lickham fairly fumed.

"You are awake, Doctor Birchermall, yet you will not answer me! I have asked you for a late pass; I have also asked you if you will accompany me to Muggleton, because of that skoundrelly highwayman Deadshot Dick. Can it be possible, sir, that you are suffering from 'cold feet'?"

It did not seem possible, for Doctor Birchermall's feet were resting on the fender, in the scorching heat of the fire.

"Fink!" cried Mr. Lickham, scornfully. "Craven coward! Afraid to venture forth upon the highway at night! Yab!"

That taunt ought to have stung Doctor Birchermall into speech and action, but it didn't. Without even turning his head, he continued to gaze into the fire with a glassy stare.

Mr. Lickham gave a feeble snort. He was at the end of his patience. Striding forward, he seized the Head by the shoulders and shook him—like a terror shaking a lean rat.

"Now, sir," roared Mr. Lickham, "perhaps you will be good enuff to give me a hearing!"

Still getting no reply, Mr. Lickham shook the Head more vigorously than ever. And then he received the shock of his life, for he shook Doctor Birchermall so violently that he actually shook him all to pieces!

Doctor Birchermall's garments fell away, revealing a dummy figure, with a pair of broomsticks for his legs. The head, which Mr. Lickham snatched at in his rage, came away in his hand. It was a trifle!

The master of the Fourth stood rooted to the floor in blank astonishment.

"Well, I'm jiggered!" he gasped. "It isn't Doctor Birchermall at all—it's a dummy! No wonder I couldn't get a word out of it!"

Mr. Lickham was fairly flabbergasted. Why had Doctor Birchermall played such an eggstrange trick? Why had he planted a dummy figure in his armchair and put that notice on the door, saying he was not to be disturbed?

There was something very disturbing about it all. It was the sort of despatch you might have eggpected from a sly-

hacking junior, but not from a grave and scholarly Head-master!

Mr. Lickham set down and started to think it out. He had forgotten all about his proposed trip to the pictures. His thoughts were full of this strange discovery.

What did it all mean? Was the Head engaged upon some shindy and sinister business; and had he left the dummy figure behind, so that he would be able to prove an alibi, if necessary?

For some time past the Head had been in the habit of going out at night alone on some mysterious mission. What was he up to? What was his little game?

Mr. Lickham pondered the problem for a long, long time. And a dark suspicion came into his mind—a suspicion which grew and grew till it became almost a conviction.

Whenever the Head had a night out it was a strange coincidence that somebody should be held up and robbed on the King's highway.

Surely, surely there could be no connection between Deadshot Dick, the Terror of the Highway, and Doctor Birchermall, the respected and respectable Headmaster of St. Sam's?

Was the Head leading a double life—a sort of Jekyll and Hyde eggstrange? Was he a man of high and noble character by day, and a skoundrel of the deepest dye by night? Was he combining the duel rolls of Headmaster and highwayman?

It really began to look like it!

Mr. Lickham had not forgotten the time when Doctor Birchermall had turned pirate and sailed the seas in search of adventure. If a person was really enuff to turn pirate, he would have no scruples in turning highwayman, if it suited his purposes. That was only logical.

Startled by this train of thought, Mr. Lickham sprang to his feet and paced up and down the study. Presently he caught sight of a pile of papers on the Head's desk—papers with culled covers, depicting highwayman scenes.

"Grate pip!" ejaculated Mr. Lickham. "The 'Dick Turpin Library'! So this is the sort of literature the Head reads in his spare time! I see it all now. He has been reading the eggplots of Dick Turpin, and they played on his mind to such an eggstare that he decided to

turn highwayman himself. Deadshot Dick, the man for whose capture, dead or alive, a reward of fifty pounds is offered, is Doctor Birchermall!

Mr. Lickham was almost overcome by his staggering discovery.

To think that it was the Head who was terrorizing the countryside, and holding people up at the cross roads, and making them stand and deliver! To think that it was Doctor Birchermall who had held up a party of St. Sam's masters, one dark and stormy night, and made them turn out their pockets!

On that occasion Mr. Lickham himself had forgotten half-a-crown to the highwayman at the point of the blunderbuss.

"I'll get my munny back—with interest!" he cried. "I'll claim this fifty pounds reward and show the Head up in his true colors! Before many hours he will be collapsed, Doctor Birchermall will be who he ought to have been long ago—behind prison bars—and I shall be a rich man!"

Mr. Lickham rubbed his hands and laughed a gleaming laugh. In his eggstare and glee he did not notice a sinister figure standing in the doorway—the dagger of a masked and bearded highwayman!

"This very night," eggstammered Mr. Lickham, "the Head will be unmasked! He will be cast into chokery, and I shall receive the fifty pounds reward for eggposing him. Being the senior master, I shall be appointed Headmaster of St. Sam's in his place. Oh, how ripping!"

And Mr. Lickham fairly danced out of the study, without having noticed the sinister figure that stood scowling at him from the other doorway.

When Mr. Lickham had gone the masked

highwayman stepped into the study. Hastily he pulled off his highwayman's attire, and in a few minutes he had effected a transformation. His cloak and three-cornered hat were replaced by a gown and mortar-board; his mask was off, and his features were the familiar features of Doctor Birchermall.

Mr. Hide had become Dr. Jekyll again!

"So, my dear Lickham," he muttered to himself, "you think you are going to do what? You fondly imagine that you will bag the fifty pounds reward and step into my shoes as Headmaster, while I am jarrishing in a prison cell? Well, I'm afraid you'll be sadly disappointed. You should have remembered the wisdom of the old proverb—'Never count your chickens until a bird in the hand becomes two in the bush.'"

INSPECTOR HAWKEYE, of the Muggleton Perlice Force, looked up from his desk.

"Birchemall?" he said, in reply to the sergeant. "What has the old scamp been up to now? Handcuff him and march him in!"

"Ahem!" coughed the sergeant. "Doctor Birchermall isn't a prisoner, sir. He has not been arrested; he walked into the station of his own accord. He wants to see you on a very important matter."

"Oh! Ask him in," said Inspector Hawkeye.

Doctor Birchermall was ushered in, smiling and serene. The Head was always at ease in the presence of perlice officers.

"Good-evening, Inspector!" said the Head, dismissing the sergeant with a jerk of his thumb. "I have called to see you with reverence to Deadshot Dick, the highwayman."

At the mention of that name, Inspector Hawkeye was on his feet, his eyes glinting like points of fire.

"Deadshot Dick!" he cried. "What do you know of him, Doctor Birchermall? Have you any information which may serve as a clue to the skoundrel's identity?"

The Head nodded.

"More than that," he said. "I am in a position to deliver up Deadshot Dick in person."

"Dead or alive?"

"Very much alive!" said the Head. Inspector Hawkeye became very eggstated.

"Doctor Birchermall!" he cried. "Tell me at once who this ruffian is, so that the law may deal with him as he richly deserves! Tell me his name! Tell me where he may be found!"

"Not so fast, Inspector," said the Head calmly. "I have one or two conditions to make, before I can divulge any information."

"Conditions? Name them, sir!"

"First of all," said the Head, "you will realize how necessary it is that I should have perlice protection, after laying information against so despic and dubble-died skoundrel as Deadshot Dick."

"Of course!" said Inspector Hawkeye. "You will give me perlice protection?"

"You will give the Head eegerty?"

"You will solemnly swear that nobody shall lay a finger on me—that not a hair of my head shall be harmed?"

"Yes, yes!" said the inspector impatiently.

"Thank you!" said Doctor Birchermall, smiling. "I shall now be able to divulge my information without any fears or fournothings. But there is one other condition. If I deliver up to you this man Deadshot Dick, I take it I shall be entitled to the reward of fifty pounds?"

Inspector Hawkeye wavered for a moment, then he gave in. Crossing to the safe, he unlocked it, and drew out a bundle of banknotes, which the Head eyed hungrily.

The notes were counted out, and the Head snatched at them eagerly, tucking them away in his wallet.

"And now," said the inspector, fixing his eyes keenly on his visitor, "where is Deadshot Dick?"

"Here!" said the Head, coolly making a sweeping bow. "Deadshot Dick, at your services!"

For a moment the inspector stood transfixed. All sorts of expressions chased themselves over his face as he stood blinking at Doctor Birchermall. It took him quite a long time to grasp he'd been tricked.

"You—you—The inspector was almost speechless with rage. So it's you who has been playing the part of a highwayman, and terrorizing the countryside?"

"Little me!" said the Head modestly. "You'll get ten years for this!" cried the inspector savvidgely. "I'll have you put in ions and clapped up at a sell! I'll have you brought up at the Assize—"

"Cut it out!" said the Head calmly. "You have promist me perlice protection—you have given me your solemn assurance that not a finger shall be laid on me—and you will keep your word like a man of honner. I wish you a good-evening, inspector!"

And the Head walked jauntily out of the perlice-station, leaving Inspector Hawkeye tearing his hair and mashing his teeth, with feelings too deep for words.

Just as the Head was leaving the perlice-station he bumped into Mr. Lickham, who was in the act of entering.

"Hallo, Lickham!" said the Head affably. "Have you come after the fifty pounds reward? If so, you're just too late. The dubs are reposing in my pocket!"

Mr. Lickham gasped.

"You—you skoundrel, Doctor Birchermall! I am about to eggstare you—"

"Too late! I have already eggstared myself!"

"And you are not under arrest?"

"Duzant look like it, does it?" said the Head cheerily. "Fact is, I have cheated the merry old gallow, and Deadshot Dick is still at large, though he is going out of business as a highwayman. Here, Lickham! Take back the half-crown I robbed you of the other night, and say no more about it."

And the Head tossed a silver coin to the astonished Mr. Lickham, and trotted cheerfully back to St. Sam's.

Thus ended the amazing eggplots and eggspades of Deadshot Dick, the Terror of the Highway!

THE END.

(Whatever you do, chums, don't miss reading 'DOCTOR BIRCHEMALL'—VENETRILOQUIST, next week's laugh-creating yarn of St. Sam's. It's one long laugh from beginning to end.)

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