THE PAPER YOU SIMPLY CAN'T DO WITHOUT!

"HAVE THIS ONE WITH ME!"

The above incident is but one of the many treats readers will find in the feast of fun and fiction served up in FRANK RICHARDS' fine story of school life and adventure—inside.

Come Into the Office, Boys!

Always glad to hear from you, chums, so drop me a line to the following address: The Editor, The "Magnet" Library, The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4

NOTE.—All Jokes and Limericks should be sent to c/o "Magnet," 5, Carmelite Street, London, E.C. 4 (Comp.).

STARTING off with my post-bag this morning, I find that one of my readers (J. Dunn, of Preston) wants to know who invented surnames, and how they came to be used. I think the credit of inventing surnames goes to the Irish who first used "Mac" and "O'" to denote the son and grandson of any particular person. At one time people had only one name—the name which we would now call their Christian name. But, bit by bit, people had to have a second name by which to distinguish them, and so surnames came into general use.

Some surnames explain themselves, and show how the ancestors of the boys who now bear them got their names. For instance, I came across a fellow the other day called "Strong-i't'arm," which is obviously the same name as "Armstrong." The ancestors of a boy called "Smith" were originally smiths—a trade of great repute in the olden days. "Carpenter," "Tailor," "Tinker," and so on, are good examples of names which came from the trade of the ancestors of the people who now have those names.

Other surnames came from the towns in which our ancestors lived, while others were descriptive of the man to whom they were originally given. "Cherry," for example, undoubtedly means that one of his ancestors was a "cheery" individual. But don't ask me where the Bunters got their name! Only William George himself could answer that, and I don't think many people would agree with his account of it!

F. E. Wheeler, of 36, Felix Road, Ipswich, Suffolk, sends in the following clever limerick and carries off a useful leather pocket wallet.

There's a chap in the Remove named Bull
O'er whose peepers you'll never pull wool.
He's a lad of the breed,
As his name shows, indeed,
That brings credit to Greyfriars School.

Turning to the next letter in the pile before me, I find Jim Carlyle, of Caister, wanting to know

HOW TO TELL CHARACTERS.

Is any special training necessary, he asks? No, Jim! Anyone can read people's characters quite easily if they will only take a little trouble to observe points. Everyone unconsciously betrays their true character in practically their every word and action. Certain characteristics are shown by a person's bearing, and even by his or her appearance. You can always tell a conceited person by the way in which he walks, talks, and does every little action. Some people are as easy to read as an open book, but beware of the person who gives no inclination of his character! Character reading is an interesting and instructive hobby, but if you want to get the best results, don't let anyone know you are studying their characteristics!

Here's a question that will interest those of you who like reading about highwaymen, pirates, and such-like people! Harry Furness, of Wickham, asks me:

WHO WAS THE IRON BUSHRANGER?

This is the name by which Ned Kelly, an infamous Australian bushranger, was known. Kelly was as notorious in Australia as Dick Turpin is here, and he used to wear iron armour of his own design to protect him against bullets. Kelly flourished for a great number of years, but he was eventually run to earth, and paid the penalty for his crimes. He does not seem to have had many saving graces, and with his passing the heyday of the bushrangers of Australia seems also to have come to an end.

A SUPERSTITIOUS READER

asks me if I believe in such superstitions as the one which says that the breaking of a mirror means bad luck. I don't—and any of my girl readers will tell him the same thing. Doubtless in the old days, when mirrors were rarities and very expensive, it meant bad luck to break one because it cost a lot of money to replace! But nowadays I suppose nearly all my girl readers carry pocket mirrors, and they know how easily they are to break! If bad luck was to follow the breaking of every mirror, I am afraid few people would escape a general catastrophe! The old idea of causing bad luck by spilling salt comes from the fact that salt was once an expensive commodity, and you will find that if you go far enough back into all these "unlucky" things the reason for them being regarded as unlucky is always the same—viz: that it was expensive to waste them!

WHO SAYS A FREE GIFT?

Why, all of you, of course! Then look out for our special representative at the seaside this summer. At all the principal seaside resorts he will be scanning the beach, on the look-out for boy and girl readers of the MAGNET. To every boy and girl he sees displaying a copy of the MAGNET he will present FREE a novel gift from the following selection: Kites, windmills, large balloons, mystery packets, and flags. So carry your MAGNET with you, chums, wherever you go, and show it as prominently as you can in order to catch the eagle eye of our representative. He will be looking out for you, so don't disappoint him.

THE FIRST ADHESIVE POSTAGE STAMPS

were issued in this country in the reign of Queen Victoria, and were the first to be issued by any nation. This reply is to Ben Fielding, of Epsom. They were the old black stamps which are familiar to stamp collectors all over the world. It may also interest Ben—and other readers—to know that since the year 1840 no less than 150,000 different varieties of stamps have been issued. So you can see the task which lies before some of you philatelists if you want to make a complete collection of all available postage stamps!

HOW OLD IS INK?

is the question which Paul Davis, of Whitfield, wants to know. The reply will probably surprise him! Ink has been in everyday use for at least 4,000 years! In fact, some of the ink which was used in those days was actually superior in quality to that used to-day. One famous old book was actually written throughout in silver ink. Red ink was the colour favoured by both the Emperors of Constantinople and the Roman Emperors, while green ink was used by Regents who signed on behalf of an emperor who was under age. Now-a-days, of course, there is nothing to prevent anyone using ink of any conceivable colour!

By the ways, chums, let me put you wise to the fact that there are two new numbers of the "Schoolboys' Own Library" on sale this week. And they're both corking good yarns, too. Here are the titles: No. 103—"The Tyrant Head!" and No. 104—"Dropped From the Team!" Trot round to your newsagent right now and order one, or both, of these ripping book-length stories.

And now as space is getting scarce, let me pick out a joke from one of the many which I consider worthy of winning MAGNET pocket-knives. This one comes from Leslie Sharp, of 3, Catherine Terrace, Sheerness, Kent.

"It seems to me," said a customer to his barber, "that in these hard times you ought to lower your prices for shaving."

"Can't do it," replied the barber. "You see, everybody wears such a long face nowadays that we have a great deal more surface to shave!"

Now that you have finished laughing, we'll get on to the next item, which is our programme for next week's issue. I expect you are all looking forward eagerly to the next long, complete Greyfriars yarn, which is entitled:

"BOB CHERRY'S BIG BARGAIN!"

By Frank Richards.

You will find that this is well up to Mr. Richards' usual standard, and there is drama as well as humour in it.

Following this there will be another gripping instalment of "The Masked Death!" our thrilling 'tec serial, together with the third amusing yarn in Master Dicky Nugent's "Trezzure" series, entitled: "A Traytor on Board," to round off a fine programme of fiction, while the next "Giants of Cricket" article is about, A. P. F. Chapman, who captained the victorious England side in the last series of Test matches in Australia. To conclude, of course, there will be the usual invitation to "Come into the Office, Boys!" when I hope to deal with more interesting queries and items of information.

Good luck to you all!

YOUR EDITOR.

HERE'S A SPARKLING STORY OF SCHOOL LIFE AT GREYFRIARS!

Under Suspicion!

Dealing with the adventures, humorous and otherwise, of Harry Wharton & Co., the Chums of Greyfriars.

BY FRANK RICHARDS.

For a scholarship boy like Mark Linley to be in possession of £10 is sufficient to start all the gossiping tongues wagging at Greyfriars. But in the end, the said gossipers almost wish that they had bitten off their tongues!

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

A Merely Temporary Loan!

BILLY BUNTER opened the door of Study No. 12 in the Greyfriars Remove and blinked into that apartment.

He smiled with satisfaction as he discerned the elegant form of Lord Mauleverer, stretched in a more or less graceful attitude on the study sofa.

It was a warm afternoon.

Fortunately, it was a half-holiday at Greyfriars. Bunter, at least, felt that he could not have stood class and Quelchy, in a stuffy Form-room, in that almost tropical heat. Many of the fellows declared that it was too hot for cricket, though Harry Wharton & Co. had gone down to Little Side, defying the blaze of the sun. Lord Mauleverer, never much disposed to exertion, preferred the cool shade of his study and his comfortable and expensive sofa.

Bunter, seeing him there, smiled with satisfaction, but the satisfaction was wholly on Bunter's side. Mauly's countenance registered dismay.

Almost would his lazy lordship have preferred the cricket field and the glare of the sun to a heart-to-heart talk with William George Bunter of the Remove.

But there was no help for it now. Mauly was cornered, and Billy Bunter's ample form almost filled the doorway.

"I say, Mauly, old chap!" said Bunter, affably and affectionately.

Groan!

Bunter blinked at him through his big spectacles, quite startled by that sound of anguish.

"I say, Mauly, are you ill?"

"Yaas!"

"What's the matter?"

"You!"

"Oh, really, Mauly——"

"Go away!" said Lord Mauleverer faintly. "Go away, and shut the door after you, Bunter! Be a good chap! I can stand you in the winter——"

"Look here——"

"But on a hot day like this! Oh gad! Go away!"

"He, he, he!" Bunter decided to take that injunction as a joke. "He, he, he! All alone here, Mauly?"

"Yaas, till you came!" groaned his lordship. "Why ain't you at the cricket, Bunter?"

"Too jolly hot."

"Why not go and see Stewart of the Shell?" asked Mauly.

"Blow Stewart of the Shell!"

"But he won a money prize the other day," urged Mauleverer. "He's got a tenner."

"The silly ass lost it!" said Bunter.

"Well, the howlin' chump!" ejaculated Lord Mauleverer. "Of all the silly owls! Chap oughtn't to be so careless with money! If Stewart hadn't lost his tenner, you'd be botherin' him instead of me!"

"Oh, really, Mauly! I say, as you're all alone, I'll come in and keep you company for a bit."

"Just what I was afraid of," murmured Lord Mauleverer. "I say, Bunter, I've heard you say that you're an awf'ly popular chap, with more friends than you can count on your fingers."

"That's so, old fellow."

"Well, don't neglect your friends on a half-holiday," urged Mauleverer. "Go and see some of them! Go and see all of them!"

Instead of going to see his numerous friends—who might, perhaps, have been difficult to find—Billy Bunter insinuated himself into Study No. 12.

Bunter had come there with a purpose, and he was not to be denied. The objections of the owner of the study made no difference to Bunter. Such trifles as that he passed by, like the idle wind which he regarded not.

Lord Mauleverer made an effort and sat up on the sofa. But it really was too hot for exertion. Leaving the study meant walking down a long passage and a staircase, and very likely Bunter would follow. Kicking Bunter out meant still more vigorous exertion. So his lordship sat where he was, and gazed dismally at the Owl of the Remove.

Bunter sat on a corner of the study table and fixed his little, round eyes and big, round glasses on Mauly.

"I say, Mauly——"

"Don't!"

"Er—don't what?"

"Don't say anything! Speech is silver, but silence is golden!" urged his lordship. "And silence is never so golden as when you are wagging your chin, old fat bean!"

"Oh, really, Mauly, I've got something rather important to say to you, and——"

"Be a good chap, and go and say it to somebody else!"

"Nobody else would do, Mauly, as you're the only chap in the Remove who's got ten-pound notes!"

"Eh?"

Mauleverer almost jumped. He would have quite jumped had it not been so hot.

"I haven't come here to borrow a tenner, Mauly," said Billy Bunter.

"Go hon!"

"Except in a sort of way," added Bunter.

Lord Mauleverer grinned.

"I'll tell you how the matter stands," said the fat junior persuasively. "You know Stewart of the Shell got a tenner as the prize for the Popper exam when he beat Linley of the Remove and the other fellows. Well, he let it blow away that windy day, you remember, and it's never been found. Of course, it's somewhere."

"It would be," agreed Mauleverer. "I say, Bunter, why not go and look for it? Stewart would stand you somethin' if you found it for him."

"I've looked, and so has nearly every other fellow at Greyfriars," answered Bunter. "It's blown away somewhere—on a roof, most likely—and can't be found. Never mind that. But Stewart's had a notice on the board about it for weeks, and now he's offering a pound out of it to any fellow who can find it."

"Chance for you, old fat man."

Bunter shook his head. He was not disposed to take on the difficult task of hunting for a banknote that had blown away to parts unknown. Still, his fat intellect had evidently been at work on the subject.

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"That banknote never will be found now," said Bunter. "I'm not hunting for it any more, anyhow. Besides, I've thought of a better dodge than that. You lend me a tenner——"

"I jolly well don't!" said Mauleverer positively.

"Not to spend!" hooted Bunter. "I'm not asking you for a tenner to spend. I only want it for ten minutes, and you can keep your eye on me all the time, if you like."

Lord Mauleverer blinked at him.

"What the thump do you want a tenner for if not to spend?" he demanded.

Bunter bestowed a fat wink on his lordship.

"To show to Stewart," he explained. "See?"

Perhaps Lord Mauleverer's aristocratic brain was not quick on the uptake. Certainly he did not "see." He only stared in perplexity at the fat and fatuous countenance of the Owl of the Remove.

"See?" repeated Bunter. "Stewart's lost a tenner. I go to him with a tenner. He thinks it's his tenner, of course. He hands me a pound. That's where I come in."

"Great gad! And where do I come in?" ejaculated his lordship. "You imagine I'm goin' to give away a tenner so that you can stick Stewart of the Shell for a pound note?"

"Oh, don't be an ass, Mauly!" said Bunter peevishly. "Your tenner will be all right. Tenners are numbered. You simply tell Stewart it's your tenner, that you dropped in the Remove passage, say, and he will hand it over to you. By that time, of course, I shall have bagged the pound Stewart's offering as a reward, and it will be all right."

"Oh, holy smoke!" gasped Lord Mauleverer, as Bunter's masterly scheme dawned at last upon him. "It will be all right, will it?"

"Right as rain!" said Bunter cheerfully.

"You—you—you fat villain! You want me to help you swindle a man out of a pound!" stuttered Mauleverer.

"Oh, really, Mauly! I hope I'm not capable of swindling anybody!" said Bunter warmly.

"What do you call it, then?" shrieked Lord Mauleverer.

"Of course, I shall pay Stewart back his pound. That's understood," said Bunter. "I'm expecting a postal-order to-morrow——"

"Oh, my hat!"

"It will be for a pound," said Bunter. "That will make it all right! I hand Stewart back his pound, naturally. I hope I'm honest."

"You hope you're honest!" babbled Lord Mauleverer. "By gad! They say that hope springs eternal in the human breast!"

"Well, is it a go?" asked Bunter. "Stewart will get his pound back all right. I shall hand him my postal-order immediately it comes. See?"

"And suppose it doesn't come?"

"Oh, that's rot! It's from one of my titled relations, you know. A peer of the realm is not likely to let a fellow down."

Lord Mauleverer gazed at the happy Owl of the Remove. Apparently William George Bunter was fully satisfied as to the honesty of his proceedings. Edward Stewart's pound was simply to tide him over a lean period, till his celebrated postal-order arrived! Bunter had a conscience; but it seemed to be rather of an elastic nature, and capable of stretching as far as required.

"Well, we're wasting time, old chap," said Bunter. "Lend me the tenner—only for ten minutes. It will be safe as houses. Stewart will hand it back when you explain and give the number. Stewart's honest—as honest as I am myself, in fact."

"A little more so, I hope!" gasped Mauleverer.

"Oh, really, Mauly! I say, where's the tenner?"

Lord Mauleverer rose from the sofa.

Disinclined as he was for exertion, he felt that exertion was essential now. When duty called even the slacker of the Remove could make an effort.

"That's right, old chap," said Bunter, mistaking Mauleverer's intention. "Just hand it over——"

"I was thinkin'," said Mauleverer, "that it was too hot to kick you out of this study, Bunter."

"Eh?"

"But it isn't! If it was twice as hot I think I could manage it, in the giddy circumstances."

"I say, Mauly—— Oh, my hat—yarooooh!" roared Bunter in astonishment and alarm, as Mauleverer seized him and jerked him off the study table. "I say, old fellow—beast!—I say, what are you stuffy about? Yarooooh! Whoop! Oh crikey!"

Lord Mauleverer, having driven himself to make an effort, seemed to be disposed to have his money's worth, as it were.

He whirled the fat junior to the door, and there was a loud crack as a bullet head and an oak door came into violent contact.

"Yoooop!" roared Bunter.

Then the Owl of the Remove was swung round in the doorway. Lord Mauleverer lifted his elegant boot. Elegant as that boot was, it felt heavy enough to Bunter when it landed.

Crash!

Bunter shot through the doorway like a pip from an orange.

Bump!

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!"

Lord Mauleverer closed the study door. He returned to his sofa and fanned himself with a Latin exercise after his unprecedented exertions. And he was left to repose. Why Mauly had cut up so rusty was a mystery to Billy Bunter's powerful intellect. He could see no reason for it. But the fact itself was clear, even to Bunter. Lord Mauleverer, for some inexplicable reason, had cut up uncommonly rusty; and Bunter would as soon have intruded into a lion's den as into Study No. 12. Bunter did not dare to be a Daniel. He drifted dismally away, and Mauly was left to fan himself in peace.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Startling!

MARK LINLEY blotted the letter he had written, and rose from the study table in No. 13 in the Remove. He stepped to the study window, and looked out across the green, sunny quadrangle. In the distance he had a view of the cricket field, and a glimpse of the Remove fellows who were playing cricket in defiance of torrid sunshine. He stood for long minutes at the window, watching the distant cricketers. He would gladly have joined them, but Mark had other work to do that bright half-holiday. The scholarship which had brought Mark to Greyfriars School had been a stroke of good fortune; but he had a harder row to hoe than most of the Removites.

A fat grunt in the study doorway made him turn from the window.

Billy Bunter blinked into the study through his big spectacles.

"Oh! You're here!" ejaculated Bunter.

Bunter looked very warm, very pink, and rather dusty. He bore the signs of his hasty departure from Lord Mauleverer's study.

He was not in a good temper. Bunter, as a rule, was fairly good-tempered and placable. But the manner in which he had left Mauleverer's study might have ruffled any fellow's temper.

"Yes, I'm here," said Mark.

"I thought you were gone out as usual," grunted Bunter. "I mean, I never thought about you at all."

Mark smiled, and made no answer.

"Ain't you going out?" demanded Bunter. "You generally clear off for every half-holiday. You always cut out of gates immediately after class. You've got something on, outside the school, and you make a secret of it. All the fellows are talking about it. Skinner thinks it's pub-haunting——"

"I don't want to know what Skinner thinks!" said Mark quietly.

"Snoop thinks you're mixed up with some racing lot——"

"Cheese it," said Mark.

"Bolsover major thinks——"

"Dry up!" exclaimed Mark impatiently. "Do you want anything in this study, Bunter? If not, clear off."

"If you think I've come here looking for anything, Linley, it only shows you've got a low, suspicious mind," retorted Bunter. "I never saw Bob Cherry getting that cake at the tuckshop, and it never occurred to me that he might have left it in the study cupboard."

Mark laughed.

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at," grunted Bunter. "You might pinch a fellow's cake! I'm not that sort, I hope. Still, I don't see what you're sticking indoors for, when you always hike out of gates on a half-holiday. I say, Linley." Bunter blinked inquisitively at the Lancashire junior. "You can tell a pal, you know. What's your game out of gates?"

"Find out!" said Mark curtly.

"Well, that's why I'm asking you," said Bunter. "Lots of the fellows wonder what you get up to out of the school."

"Lots of fellows had better mind their own business, then."

"Not that I care!" added Bunter disdainfully. "I'm not interested in the doings of a fellow of your class, Linley. Something shady, I've no doubt."

Mark knitted his brows in thought. For a moment Bunter was in danger of leaving Study No. 13 as he had left Study No. 12. But it really was not worth while being angry with the fat and fatuous Owl of the Remove. Mark, giving him no further heed, proceeded to stick a stamp on an envelope. Bunter's inquisitive glance went to the letter lying folded on the blotting-pad.

"Oh, you've stayed in to write a letter!" he remarked.

No reply.

"Posting it as you go out, I suppose?"

"Yes," said Mark impatiently, as he slipped the letter into the envelope and sealed it.

"Right-ho!" said Bunter. "Of course, I'm not waiting for you to clear, Linley. Nothing of that sort."

Mark smiled, and left the study. Bunter remained in the doorway watching him till he disappeared from the Remove passage.

Then he rolled into Study No. 13.

A moment later the door of the study cupboard was open, and Billy Bunter was blinking into the recesses within.

But the cupboard, like that of Mrs. Hubbard, was bare. Bob Cherry's cake, wherever it was, was not there.

Bunter gave a grunt of disgust.

"Beast!"

He turned dismally from the cupboard. Really, Bunter's luck seemed to be out that afternoon.

Being in the study, however, he took a further look round. Inquisitiveness was Bunter's besetting sin. And on the subject of Mark Linley Bunter was not the only fellow in the Remove who was curious. Mark gave little or no thought to what the other fellows might think of his proceedings, which were his own concern and nobody else's. Most of the fellows, in fact, did not trouble their heads about the matter.

But there were some who wondered and surmised. Certainly, Linley had some occupation outside the school, which drew him outside the gates on all occasions when it was possible to go. Skinner & Co..—judging others by themselves—surmised that it was something shady. Billy Bunter was intensely curious to know what it was—chiefly because it did not concern him in the very least. That Mark had found some work to do outside the school did not occur to Bunter's fat brain. He could not imagine a fellow looking for work. Bunter's own principle occupation was dodging work

"Oh crumbs!" ejaculated Bunter suddenly.

His eyes fell on the blotter on which Mark had written his letter. It was a new, clean blotter, and it bore the impression of part of the letter that Linley had written. Mark had turned over the letter with the ink still fresh, and many words had been quite clearly transferred to the blotting-paper. Bunter's inquisitive eyes fell on a whole sentence, backwards, of course.

"01£ uoy dnes ot elbr. ma I won."

It was puzzling enough as he looked at it; but Bunter picked up the blotting-pad, and held it to the study looking-glass. Then he was able to read the letters in correct order, reflected in the glass.

"Now I am able to send you £10."

"Oh, crikey!" stuttered Bunter.

He blinked at that sentence

It was well known in the Remove that Mark Linley was 'up against it" financially. Bunter's inquisitive eyes had seen a letter from Linley's home, which Bunter had retailed in the Rag. Mark's father was unemployed and the wolf was at the door in the little home in the North. All the Remove knew that it had been a blow to Linley to fail for the Popper Prize, which Stewart of the Shell had carried off.

Mark, who was careful with money—as a fellow had to be to whom a half-crown was a serious consideration—kept up very good appearances in the Form, on the allowance that went with his scholarship; and certainly he was a better-dressed fellow than Bunter, for example, though probably five or six times as much was spent on Bunter's clothes as on Mark's. Nobody, looking at Mark, would have supposed that he was much worse off than the other fellows. Still, the facts were known.

Had Mark won the Popper Prize, he would have had a ten-pound note—the banknote that Stewart of the Shell had won, and lost on a windy day in the quad. But unless he won a money prize, Mark had no more chance of possessing a tenner, than of possessing ten thousand pounds, so far as Bunter could see. Yet he had written—evidently to his father—that he was now able to send him £10.

Where on earth had Linley got ten pounds from?

"Crikey!" repeated Bunter.

There was only one source, so far as Bunter could imagine, whence Mark Linley, who never had more than five shillings in his pocket, could have obtained the sum of ten pounds.

He had found the lost tenner!

Bunter gasped with excitement.

That was the only possible explanation—to Bunter, at least. Linley had picked up the tenner that had been blowing about the school for a couple of weeks—happened on it somewhere and bagged it. Or hunted for it and found it, more likely, Bunter considered. Anyhow, the tenner he was sending home was the lost tenner. It couldn't be any other.

Bunter's little round eyes gleamed behind his spectacles.

He had made a discovery!

Carefully Bunter tore off the top sheet of blotting-paper, folded it, and put it in his pocket. Then he rolled out of the study.

Bunter might have been a selfish fellow in some respects. But he did not believe in keeping a good thing to himself, when it came in the shape of an interesting and exciting item of news. What Bunter knew in the afternoon all the Remove was likely to know by evening. It might have been supposed that Bunter would have been shocked by the discovery he had made. But he had no time to be shocked. He was only thinking of the thrilling news that would make the fellows jump when they heard it. The Owl of the Remove was quite elated as he rolled away from Study No. 13.

Billy Bunter's eyes fell on the blotter which bore the impression of part of the letter Mark Linley had written. It was puzzling enough as he looked at it, but when he held it up to the study looking-glass he was able to read the letters in correct order, reflected in the glass. "Oh, crikey!" ejaculated the Owl of the Remove, blinking at the sentence in amazement. *(See Chapter 2.)*

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Beastly for Bunter!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. came in from cricket with ruddy faces. Even Hurree Jamset Ram Singh admitted that it was warm, and was satisfied with a sunshine that reminded him of his native land of Bhanipur.

The other fellows thought that the summer was rather overdoing it. But there was a smile of cheery contentment on Hurree Singh's dusky features.

The Famous Five came up the Remove staircase in a ruddy, cheery crowd. Tea in the study was the next item on the programme, and all of them were ready for it—especially for the large and handsome cake, that Bob Cherry was contributing to the feast.

Skinner and Snoop were lounging by the banisters, and they were grinning and chuckling, as though over some excellent joke.

"Heard about it, you men?" called out Skinner, as Harry Wharton & Co. came tramping by.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" boomed Bob Cherry. "Heard about what or which?"

"About Linley!" giggled Snoop.

The Famous Five came to a halt.

"What about Linley?" asked Frank Nugent.

"Oh! You haven't heard?"

"We've been at the cricket," said Johnny Bull, "where you ought to have

been, if you weren't such lazy slackers. Anything happened to Linley?"

"Not yet, that I know of!" grinned Skinner.

"Oh, cough it up!" exclaimed Harry Wharton impatiently. "You fellows have always got something up against Linley. What's the latest?"

Skinner shook his head

"If you don't know, I'm not going to tell you. No bizney of mine."

"You'll hear it from Bunter," said Snoop, with another giggle.

"Oh, rats!" said the captain of the Remove.

And he walked on across the Remove landing, and his friends followed him. Hazeldene met them in the Remove passage.

"You fellows heard?" he asked.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "Some jolly old tragedy happened while we've been playing cricket? What is it?"

"If you haven't heard——"

"Well, we haven't," said Nugent; "give it a name."

"I'd rather not say anything," said Hazel, shaking his head. "It's too jolly serious a matter. I don't want anybody to say it came from me."

"Fathead!" said Bob, as he passed on.

The Famous Five were rather puzzled by that time. Evidently something had happened while they had been on the cricket field—something that concerned Mark Linley, with whom the whole Co. were on the friendliest terms. Bob looked a little worried

"I suppose Marky's out, as usual," he said. "I'll cut along to the study and see whether he's there."

Study No. 13 was vacant when Bob looked in. He returned along the passage, and rejoined his chums.

"Mark's out," he said. "What the thump is it that those silly owls are cackling over? Let's go and bang Skinner's head on the banisters, and make him cough it up!"

"Not worth the trouble," said Harry. "Let's go in to tea."

The Famous Five went into Study No. 1.

A fat junior turned hastily away from the study cupboard, which was locked. He blinked at the Famous Five.

"I say, you fellows——"

"You fat burglar!"

"Oh, really, Wharton! I couldn't get the cupboard door open—I mean, I wasn't thinking of opening it, of course. I—I was just—just looking at it."

"Buzz off!"

"I suppose Bob's cake is in there?" said Bunter. "Rather mean to lock up a cake, as if you think a fellow might be after it. You fellows are a suspicious lot. It's rather no-class, if you ask me."

"Which way do you prefer to leave the study, Bunter?" asked Frank Nugent politely. "On your feet, or on your neck?"

"Oh, really, Nugent——"

"Buzz off!" roared all the Famous Five together.

"I say, you fellows, if you're going to have tea, I don't mind stopping," said Bunter, blinking at them. "Toddy's teaing out to-day, and when he's teaing out, he never thinks of another fellow. I've had nothing since dinner, except tea in Hall, because——"

"Because my cake was locked up?" chuckled Bob Cherry.

"No!" hooted Bunter. "Because I've been disappointed about a postal-order. Did I mention to you fellows that I was expecting a postal-order?"

"Did you?" gasped Bob. "Yes; I rather fancy I've heard something of the sort."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! I shall be short of money till my postal-order comes!" said Bunter warmly. "Mauley's let me down—he could have helped me over this—this crisis without costing him anything, and he refused. You fellows may not believe it, but at the present moment I'm absolutely stony!"

And the Owl of the Remove blinked sorrowfully at the Famous Five.

"All your titled relations let you down at one fell swoop?" asked Bob sympathetically.

"Why not ring some of 'em up?" said Johnny Bull. "You've only got to remind the Duke de Bunter that he forgot to send you that sixpenny postal-order."

"It will be for a pound when it comes," said Bunter, with dignity.

"It will have had time to grow when it comes," agreed Johnny.

"Beast! I say, you fellows, while we're having tea I'll tell you the news," said Bunter. "Shocking about Linley, ain't it?"

"What about Linley, fathead?"

"Haven't you heard? It's all over the Remove," said Bunter. "Of course, I'm not surprised myself. I never did approve of these low fellows being let into the school on those rotten scholarships. I've said so. You can't deny that."

"Has anything happened while we've been at the cricket?" asked the captain of the Remove.

"He, he, he!"

"You fat chump——"

"Oh, really, Wharton! Of course, I'm sorry for the fellow," said Bunter. "He will be sacked."

"Linley sacked!" yelled Bob.

"Of course—the Head couldn't possibly let him stay. After all, the poor brute mayn't know any better," said Bunter charitably. "Brought up among the poor—and you know what the poor are like!"

"Some of 'em!" said Johnny Bull. "The kind that butt into a fellow's study to pinch a cake——"

"Beast! I'm putting you fellows on your guard!" said Bunter. "You're friendly with Linley. Well, drop it!"

"And why?" demanded Wharton.

"Well, a man's judged by the company he keeps," said Bunter. "You wouldn't like to be tarred with the same brush, would you? Besides, he may begin on you next. I can tell you, I shall be jolly careful of my gold watch when Linley's about."

The juniors jumped.

"Are you dotty?" roared Bob Cherry.

Harry Wharton's brow darkened.

"You fat idiot, tell us at once what you mean! If somebody has started a rotten yarn about Linley——"

"That somebody is going to get hurt!" said Bob Cherry, breathing hard. "Now get it off your chest, you idiotic porpoise!"

"Oh, really, Cherry! No good glaring at me," said Bunter. "I never asked the fellow to pinch Stewart's banknote, I suppose!"

"Pip-pip-pinch Stewart's banknote!" articulated Bob.

Bunter nodded.

"Yes! Beastly, ain't it? Of course, he's hard up—I dare say they've got the bailiffs in at home. Still, that's no excuse for stealing. You fellows may think it is, but I don't agree."

Wharton caught Bob by the arm as he was about to hurl himself at William George Bunter.

"Let's have this clear!" said the captain of the Remove. "You can slaughter that fat idiot afterwards. Stewart's banknote was blown away in the quad a couple of weeks ago, Bunter. It's never been found. Is some unspeakable cad saying that Linley has found it and kept it?"

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"Is that it?" roared Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"Scrag him!"

"I say, you fellows, don't go off at the deep end, you know! I'm warning you, in time, to have nothing more to do with Linley. It's been found out that he pinched Stewart's banknote."

"Who found it out?" breathed Bob.

Bunter grinned complacently.

A New Fashion in Bathing

A typically lively incident from the stirring yarns of St. Frank's which appear every week in the NELSON LEE LIBRARY. Nipper, Handforth, and Travers are gleefully contemplating Archie Glenthorne's unfortunate plight. The chums of St. Frank's are as cheery a set of young sportsmen as ever you could wish to meet. Follow their amazing adventures regularly.

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"Little me!" he answered. "Precious little goes on without my knowing it, I can tell you. I found it out, and of course I've warned the fellows about Linley—a fellow was bound to, you know. And—— Yaroooooop!"

Bunter got no further.

Shaking off Wharton's detaining hand, Bob Cherry made a jump at the fat junior. The next moment Billy Bunter was having the time of his life.

Wild yells from Study No. 1 rang along the Remove passage.

It seemed to Billy Bunter that two or three earthquakes were happening to him all at once.

"Hold on!" gasped Wharton.

"I'll smash him!"

"The smashfulness is too terrific, my esteemed Bob. It is not the proper caper to burst the esteemed and fat-headed Bunter."

"I'll slaughter him!"

"Yarooh! Help! Murder! Fire! Whoooooooooop!"

"I'll spiflicate him!"

"Yooop! Help! Wow!"

Bob Cherry's chums dragged him away from Bunter. They thought that Bunter had had enough. Bunter's own impression was that he had had too much. Bob, on the other hand, did not consider that he had had enough yet, and was prepared to give him more.

"Hook it, Bunter!" gasped Nugent.

"Grooogh! Ooooh! Yooop!"

"Hook it, you idiot!"

Bunter hooked it.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

No Reward!

"HOBBY, you fathead!"

"Look here, Stewart——"

"You ass!"

"But look here——"

"You unmitigated idiot!"

James Hobson sighed.

He had wondered whether he was ever going to hear the end of it.

Now he knew!

He wasn't!

Unless Stewart of the Shell found the lost tenner—which now seemed highly improbable—it was not likely that Hobby ever would hear the end of it.

"It wasn't my fault, you know!" said Hobson feebly.

He had always been pally with Stewart of the Shell. He liked Stewart, and had always thought him a very decent chap. But, really, Hobby was now being driven to reconsider that opinion. Stewart had developed into a man with a single topic. Such a man was a bore.

"Not your fault!" echoed Stewart. "Listen to him, Hosky! He says it wasn't his fault!"

Hoskins of the Shell did not answer.

He was seated at the study table, with a pencil in his hand, a sheet of music paper before him, and a far-away look in his eyes. Hoskins was by way of being musical, and he had the artistic temperament. Inspirations would suddenly seize upon Claude Hoskins, and he would seize pencil and paper to get them down before they vanished. At such moments Hoskins was deaf and dumb and blind. He would cover sheets of paper with indecipherable hieroglyphics. Nobody understood what they meant, except Hoskins—if, indeed, Hoskins was an exception.

"He says it wasn't his fault!" said Stewart bitterly. "I hand him a tenner to look at, on a windy day—the windiest day we've had this summer, mind you—and he chucks it back to me and says 'Catch.' He doesn't expect the wind to blow it away! Oh, no!"

"Well, you see——" murmured Hobson.

"Such a lot of tenners about, in the Shell—one doesn't matter!" said Stewart satirically. "Not to you, Hobby, anyhow!"

"Of course, I didn't know it was going to blow away!" said Hobson.

"You wouldn't!" agreed Stewart. "With a brain like yours, old chap, you wouldn't!"

"Besides, I said 'catch,'" said Hobson. "Why didn't you catch it?"

Stewart breathed hard and deep.

In reply to that question, he felt that there was nothing to be done, unless he took a cricket stump to James Hobson.

"Idiot!" was his final reply.

"Besides, it may turn up!" suggested Hobson.

Another MAGNET pocket-knife goes to N. Chapman, 43, Springfield Road, Homewood, near Chesterfield, who sent in the following amusing joke.

A City gentleman was driving along a country road in his car when he caught up with an old farmer who was walking in the same direction. Pulling up his car, he asked the farmer if he would like a lift, and the old man replied that he would. The farmer then explained to the motorist that it was the first motor-car he had ever seen. As they were descending a hill the steering-gear went wrong, with the result that they crashed into a tree. Neither of the occupants was hurt, however. Turning to the old farmer the motorist asked:

"Well, and how did you like your first ride in a motor-car?"

"Well," said the farmer, scratching his head, "it be all right, but how do you stop her when there be no trees?"

Have you had a shot at winning one of these useful prizes yet, chums? If not, get busy right away!

"It hasn't turned up yet!"

"While there's life, there's hope!" said Hobby encouragingly. "The blessed thing may turn up some day. After all, it must be somewhere. I knew a chap who lost a penknife, and found it years afterwards in the lining of his jacket."

Stewart breathed harder.

"Do you think I'm likely to find that tenner in the lining of a jacket, after it blew away in the quad a couple of weeks ago?" he asked.

"Of course not. I was only putting a case," said Hobson. "Things do turn up, you know. It's wonderful how things turn up sometimes. I shouldn't wonder if you found that tenner, after all."

"Fathead!"

"Look here, Stewart——"

"Ass!"

Hoskins looked up.

"What do you think, Hosky?" asked Hobson, appealing to his study-mate for support.

The far-away look was still in Hoskins' eyes.

"I think they don't make enough use of minor ninths," he said, with conviction.

"Eh?"

"Without boasting," said Hoskins, "I think I can say that I'm the first musician to understand really what can be done with the minor ninth."

Hobson looked apprehensive.

He did not know what a minor ninth was, and he was rather afraid that Hoskins would explain it to him.

"Stewart's talking about his tenner," said Hobson soothingly. "Don't you think it may turn up yet, Hosky?"

"Eh, what? No. Oh, yes," answered Hoskins vaguely.

And with that reply, which was as intelligent as could be expected from a fellow with an artistic temperament, Claude Hoskins returned to his hieroglyphics.

Stewart gave a sniff. He was deeply interested in his lost tenner, and minor ninths did not appeal to him. Ever since that tenner had taken unto itself wings and flown away, Stewart of the Shell had been like a bear with a sore head. Like Rachel, he mourned for that which was lost, and could not be comforted.

He pointed out to Hobson, many times, that if he was going to lose the tenner he needn't have taken the trouble to sap Greek for the Popper exam. That sapping was now a sheer waste. For days and days before that exam. Stewart had lived, and moved, and had his being in Greek. He had worked specially hard, knowing that Linley of the Remove was a dark horse. He had beaten Linley of the Remove and walked off with the prize. And what was the good? he asked Hobson bitterly, not once, but a hundred times. The tenner was gone from his gaze like a beautiful dream.

Hobson admitted that it was all true, and he sympathised. But there was no doubt that he was growing fed-up.

But Stewart simply couldn't let him off. When Stewart thought of the enormous amount of Greek he had sapped, and all for nothing, as it turned out, he could have kicked himself; and still more could he have kicked Hobson.

"Ten pounds!" said Stewart. "Ten quid! And a fellow's hard up! Still, I suppose that wouldn't worry you, Hobby. I dare say you can afford to chuck tenners about and play catch with them."

"I can't," said Hobson. "If I jolly well had a tenner I'd jolly well give it to you, Stewart, if only to shut you up."

"To shut me up?" repeated Stewart, breathless with indignation. "You ain't satisfied with chucking my tenner away. You think I ought to let it go as if it were a threepenny-bit."

"Well, I'm sick of it," confessed Hobson.

Stewart rose to his feet. So far, Stewart had confined himself to telling his friend what he thought of him. Now he looked as if he intended proceeding to more drastic action.

Fortunately, at that moment there came an interruption. There was a tap at the study door, and it opened.

A fat junior blinked in through a pair of large spectacles.

"I say, you fellows, is Stewart here?" asked Billy Bunter. "Chowne told me he was in this study."

"He's here—jawing, as usual," said Hobson.

Bunter blinked round at Stewart of the Shell.

"You're the man I want to see," he remarked.

"The want's all on your side, then," answered Stewart. No Shell fellow had

a lot of politeness to waste on the Lower Fourth.

"Oh, really, Stewart——"

"Beat it!" grunted Stewart.

"If you don't want to find your tenner——"

"Oh!" said the Shell fellow. "If you know anything about that——"

His manner was suddenly polite. As for Hobson, he gazed at Bunter with kind cordiality, almost with affection. If Bunter had found that tenner, or had news of it, James Hobson was prepared to take him to his heart. Anything or anybody was welcome to Hobby that offered a prospect of cutting short the flow of Edward Stewart's unending eloquence on that painful topic.

"I know rather a lot about it, I fancy," smirked Bunter. "I hear that you've offered a pound note to the finder, Stewart."

"That's so."

"Well, I haven't exactly found it," said Bunter cautiously. "But I know who has. See?"

Stewart stared at him.

"Mean to say it's been found, and the man hasn't handed it over to me?" he exclaimed incredulously.

"I mean to say exactly that."

"Rot!" said Stewart.

"Oh, really, you know——"

"That sounds rather thick," said Hobson.

He longed and yearned for news of that late lamented tenner, but he could not believe that any Greyfriars man had found it and kept it. That was unthinkable.

"Well, there it is," said Bunter, "and I want to have the thing clear. Of course, I don't care much about the pound. I'm not the fellow to do anything for a reward. Disinterestedness has often caused me trouble. Still, it happens that I'm rather short of money, temporarily, and the pound would come in useful. I could do with it."

"I dare say you could!" jeered Stewart. "But you won't touch any pound of mine till you cough up the tenner."

"Oh, really, Stewart! I know who's got it."

"Rubbish!"

"A fellow in my Form."

"Well, if it was anybody it would be somebody in the Remove," remarked Hobson. "They're a scraggy lot."

"Bosh!" said Stewart. "Might be Bunter himself, perhaps. He's the only man at Greyfriars who would keep money if he found it——"

"Look here—" roared Bunter.

"Mean to say you've seen my tenner in the hands of a Remove man?" demanded Stewart categorically.

"He wouldn't be likely to let me see it. But I know he's got it. Look here, you've offered a pound for finding it. If I tell you who's got it and you get it back from him, does that come to the same thing?"

"Of course it does! But I don't believe anybody's got it. It's all rot!"

"Suppose a fellow in our Form, who's never got any money—a poor beast, who lives on a scholarship, and whose pater is out of work—suppose he suddenly has ten pounds?" said Bunter. "What about that?"

"That would look suspicious," said Hobson slowly, after thinking it out. James Hobson's brain did not move rapidly.

Stewart knitted his brows.

"You're speaking of Linley, I suppose?" he said. "You're a slandering little fat beast, Bunter. Linley would cut off his hand rather than steal."

"That's all you know," grinned Bunter. "Mean to say he's got ten pounds all of a sudden from somewhere else?"

"He's not got ten pounds at all," said Stewart shortly.

"Well, he says he has. He's written home to his father this very afternoon that he's now able to send him ten pounds," sand Bunter contemptuously. "Look at that!"

Bunter took a crumpled sheet of blotting-paper from his pocket and held it up to the inspection of the Shell fellows. They stared blankly at:

01£ uoy dnes ot elba ma I won

"What the thump does that mean?" asked Hobson, perplexed.

"Look at it in the glass."

"Easy enough to read it backwards," grunted Stewart. And he read out: "'Now I am able to send you £10.' Who wrote that, Bunter?"

"Linley of the Remove this afternoon. I happened to go into his study to see a pal of mine, and saw it there."

Stewart looked at the tell-tale blotting-sheet and looked at Bunter. He was a little staggered.

"Who's going to prove that that's Linley's writing?" asked James Hobson, after a pause.

Hobby's brain worked slowly, but it worked.

WHAT NAME?

The following letters have been jumbled together purposely. Put in their proper order, they spell the name of a well-known character at Greyfriars.

LYRROSCEVOBEP

Who is it? The answer will appear in next week's MAGNET.

Last week's solution was—
Mark Linley.

Bunter chuckled.

"I've got one of his exercises here to prove it. Look! You can see that it's the same fist."

The Shell men looked at the neat, clear hand in which Mark Linley's exercise was written.

His name was in the top corner of the sheet, in the same hand, so there was no doubt about that.

And the handwriting was evidently the same as that of the letter that had been blotted.

Mark Linley, of the Remove, had written to someone—doubtless his father—that he was now able to send him £10. That was assured.

"My only hat!" said Stewart.

"By gum!" said Hobson.

"What about it?" grinned Bunter. "Where do you think Linley got ten quid from all of a sudden, since your tenner was lost? What?"

"My hat! It looks——" muttered Hobson doubtingly.

Stewart shook his head.

"Linley's straight," he said. "I don't know the fellow much, but I know he's straight. He's got ten pounds from somewhere else. Might have bagged some prize or other——"

"He hasn't been in for any prize since the Popper," said Bunter.

"He earns money sometimes," said Stewart uneasily. "I've heard that he's done translations for some people in Courtfield, and they paid him."

"Not to that tune," said Hobson, shaking his head.

Stewart was silent. Indeed, it was clear that whatever Mark Linley might have earned by translating it was not likely to amount to anything like ten pounds.

"He's got it," said Bunter. "You jolly well know he's got it! I suppose you're not going to let him keep it."

"You can't let him keep it," said Hobson.

"Not if he's got it," said Stewart tartly. "But he hasn't! I'm not going to believe a decent fellow a thief without any better evidence than this! Bunter had no right to be spying in his study."

"Anybody has a right to show up a thief," said Bunter virtuously. "In fact, it's a duty."

"You're a whale on duty, ain't you?" said Stewart sarcastically. "I've heard jaw in the Remove about some letter of Linley's that you pinched and read. You've let all the Lower School know that the chap's people are up against it, at home."

"Spying little beast!" said Hobson.

Bunter glared.

"Look here, you owe me a pound, Stewart!" he hooted. "I've told you where your tenner is. If you don't choose to go and get it, that's your business. But you jolly well know that Linley's got it! You owe me a pound!"

"Get out!"

"Look here!" bawled Bunter.

"I don't believe Linley's got it, and I won't insult a decent chap by asking him! Get out!"

"I tell you——"

Stewart picked up the inkpot.

William George Bunter retired from the study just in time. He retired in a state of breathless wrath and indignation—without the pound. In Hobson's study Stewart got back to his topic.

"You ass, Hobson! If you hadn't chucked that tenner to me that day——"

"Look here, Stewart——"

"You fathead!"

"But I say——"

"You chump!"

And so on, ad lib. and ad infinitum.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.
Trouble Ahead!

"SIXTY pounds!" said Uncle Clegg.

Mark Linley smiled.

Mr. Clegg, in the dusky little parlour behind the village tuckshop, in the old High Street of Friardale, gazed at the slip of paper in his hand as if he could hardly believe his ancient eyes.

Indeed, he hardly could.

Sixty pounds was an enormous sum to Uncle Clegg. Mr. Clegg was a rather crusty old gentleman, and not of a particularly grateful nature; but his glance as he transferred it from the cheque to Mark Linley was distinctly grateful.

"You done this for me, Master Linley," said Uncle Clegg. "All these years I been thinking that they was sneaking my money, sir, and now they jest 'ands it out in a lump! My word!"

Mark smiled and nodded.

For long weeks every leisure hour of the scholarship junior of Greyfriars had been spent in that dusky parlour behind the little shop. Mark had worked hard—very hard. Uncle Clegg had been what he described variously as "flummoxed" and "flabbergasted" by a demand from the Inland Revenue authorities for income tax. Uncle Clegg was convinced

Hazeldene met Mark Linley on the staircase, with a curious stare. "Is there any truth in what the fellows are saying about you?" he sked "You seem so jolly mysterious about something." "I don't call it mysterious to mind my own business," answered Mark. "And fellows are welcome to talk all they like. I'm sure I don't mind." (*See Chapter 5.*)

that he was not liable to that disagreeable tax—more, he was convinced that the Inland Revenue authorities owed him quite a large sum which, according to his touching belief, they had been "sneaking" from the interest of his investment in War Loan. In order to make his position clear Uncle Clegg's accounts had to be got in order—and that was a task that might have made Hercules himself consider that his twelve Herculean tasks were rather easy. But Mark had taken on the job and done it to the satisfaction of Uncle Clegg, and what was still more important, to the satisfaction of the Income Tax inspector at Courtfield.

And it having been made clear that Uncle Clegg's "income from all sources." did not render him liable to tax, that nightmare was lifted from Mr. Clegg's troubled mind.

Further, Mr. Clegg had claimed repayment of the "deduction at source" from the interest on his investment, never really believing that he would get it; for to Uncle Clegg the ways of the Inland Revenue Department were dark and mysterious.

And now he had got it!

The cheque was in his gnarled hand, and it was for sixty pounds. Uncle Clegg had not yet cashed the cheque. He carried it about with him, and every now and then took it out of his pocket to gloat over it.

"I got it!" said Uncle Clegg. "I actually got it! Sixty quids! All they've took off me for six years! Seems too good to be true, don't it, Master Linley?"

"I'm glad," said Mark.

"And I owe it all to you, sir," said Uncle Clegg. "If you and your friends hadn't come into my shop that day, and I told you about it, this wouldn't have 'appened."

He paused.

"Seems to me you ought to have more'n the ten quids out of this, Master Linley," he said doubtfully.

Mark shook his head.

"Not at all, Mr. Clegg. I wish I could afford to do the work for nothing," he answered. "But it's taken up all my time for weeks, and I couldn't. But ten pounds is all I want."

"You've earned it, sir," said Mr. Clegg.

There was no doubt on that point. Certainly, had Mr. Clegg placed his weird accounts in professional hands he could not have got off so cheaply.

"And after this——" said Mr. Clegg.

"Yes?" said Mark.

"Ain't they going to take any more off me?" asked Mr. Clegg. "Next time I get the interest on my War Loan——"

"Yes; the tax will be deducted as usual," said Mark. "But you will make a claim and it will be returned. That will be quite easy."

"Will it?" said Mr. Clegg doubtfully —"easy for you, I dessay, sir; but that sort of thing, it sort of mazes me."

"So long as I'm at Greyfriars I can help you with the paper," said Mark, smiling. "You will soon get used to it."

"P'raps!" said Mr. Clegg, still doubtful but hopeful. "I'll treat you fair, sir, if you 'elp me out."

"No, no," said Mark hastily. "It will be only a few minutes' work, now your accounts are in order, and I shall be very glad to help you for nothing when the time comes. If I could afford it, I would not let you pay me for the work I have done. But that cannot be helped—my time is not my own."

"You've earned it fair and square, and more," said Mr. Clegg.

When Mark left the village shop he left a happy man behind him. Uncle Clegg still gloated over the cheque, keeping it about him for that purpose. In Mark's pocket were ten rather crumpled and greasy pound-notes—his fee for services rendered.

The junior's face was thoughtful and tired as he walked back to the school.

The help he was now able to give to his people at home was a sheer delight to him Mark was not in the position

of other fellows in the Remove—his time, as he had said, was not his own. It was not an easy mattter for a boy at school to earn money; but Mark had found many ways of solving that problem; and he had never shrunk from hard work. But the hardest work he had ever done was getting Uncle Clegg's mixed and mysterious accounts in order.

Before taking on that task Mark had consulted his Form master, and he had found Mr. Quelch very kind and sympathetic. Mr. Quelch had given his permission, making the reasonable stipulation that school work should not be neglected.

But Mark, who took school work seriously, had found it hard to keep on as usual, in addition to his work with Uncle Clegg. For some time past, he had been in a state of perpetual fatigue, and he was glad that the task was over at last. There were few fellows of his age who could have done the work at all, probably not another at Greyfriars, who could have done it while keeping a good place in class. But from a very early age, Mark had been accustomed to putting his beef into what he had to do.

Now it was done, and his reward was in his pocket, the whole of it to be sent home by registered post, to keep the wolf from the door in the little home in the North. That was a happy prospect, and more than repaid him for long and wearying exertion.

His failure for the Popper Prize had been a blow, but to the sturdy Lancashire lad, defeat was only a spur to fresh effort. The "northern punch" was strongly developed in Mark's character.

Tired as he was, he was feeling satisfied and cheerful as he walked in at the school gates.

When he came into the House, he passed a couple of Shell fellows, who were talking together. Hobson gave him a very curious look, which Mark could not help noticing. Stewart left Hobson, and came over to the Removite, with a slight flush in his face. Remove and Shell, as a rule, had little to do with one another, and Stewart rather surprised Mark with a friendly greeting.

"Hallo, old bean! Had your tea?"

"Yes," said Mark. He had had his tea with Uncle Clegg in the dusky little parlour.

"I was going to ask you to tea with me."

Mark could not help staring. He had never tea'd with Stewart of the Shell, or probably exchanged more than a dozen words with him.

"Another time, what?" said Stewart.

"Certainly, if you like," said Mark.

"You gave me a jolly close run for the Popper," remarked Stewart. "I really thought you were going to bag it, believe me."

"The best man bagged it," said Mark, smiling.

"Oh, rot!" answered Stewart. "There's a lot of luck in these things." And with a friendly nod to the Removite he went back to Hobson.

Mark Linley went up to the Remove passage, considerably astonished. Why Stewart had gone out of his way to make that friendly demonstration, was a mystery to him.

On the Remove landing, he came on a group of Remove men—Skinner, Snoop, Bolsover major, and Billy Bunter.

"Here he is!" called out Snoop, as Mark appeared on the stairs.

And there was a laugh.

"Mind your pockets, you fellows!" squeaked Billy Bunter.

The juniors laughed again.

Mark stared at them, and passed on, with a heightened colour. Hazeldene met him in the passage, with a curious stare.

"Oh, you've got back?" he said.

"Yes," answered Mark. A feeling of uneasiness was creeping over him. Hazel had the same curious expression on his face that he had noticed on the rugged countenance of Hobson of the Shell. And what did Billy Bunter's fatuous words mean?

"Anything in it?" asked Hazel.

"In what?"

"What the fellows are saying, I mean."

"I don't know what they're saying," answered Mark. "I've been out of gates most of the afternoon."

"You generally are, on a half-holiday," remarked Hazel, with a slight sneer, "and jolly mysterious about it."

"I don't call it mysterious, to mind my own business, and to expect other fellows to mind theirs," said Mark quietly.

"Oh, I'm not asking any questions," said Hazel "No bizney of mine. But a fellow who carries on in a mysterious sort of way, can't wonder at getting talked about."

Mark smiled faintly.

"Fellows are welcome to talk all they like," he answered. "I'm sure I don't mind."

"You will!" said Hazel, significantly, and with that he walked on, leaving Mark staring after him.

Mark went into his study with a vague feeling of trouble on his mind. He could see that something had happened during his absence that afternoon, though he could not guess what it was. But whatever it was, it boded trouble, he could guess that, at least.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Accused!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"Shut up, you fat frog!"

Mark Linley glanced about him as he came into the Rag.

Prep was over, and Mark was one of the last of the Remove to finish work. Most of the Removites were in the Rag when he came down, as well as some of the Fourth.

Almost every eye in the crowded room was turned on Linley as he entered.

He could not help observing it, and it brought a flush to his cheeks.

So far, Mark had heard nothing of the topic that was now discussed up and down the Remove. His friends had felt a natural delicacy about referring to it, and those who were not his friends had not ventured to speak out plainly. Most of the fellows were neither his friends nor his foes, but all were keenly interested in the latest topic. If it turned out that there was a fellow in the Remove who was a thief, it was a disgrace for the form—and it meant a great deal of chipping and "rotting" from fellows in other Forms.

Skinner was of opinion that Linley ought to be called on to explain, but he had not ventured to call on him personally. There was a variety of the "northern punch" that might have landed on Skinner's sharp nose, and he preferred some other fellow to take the risk.

Billy Bunter, of course, was the fellow to rush in, on the principle that fools rush in where angels fear to tread. Mark could see that the Owl of the Remove had been about to voice what was in the general mind, when Bob Cherry shut him up.

In a state of wonder and uneasiness, Mark glanced round from face to face. Many of them were grinning, some derisive, some scornful. The junior's colour deepened.

"Is anything up, Cherry?" he asked.

Bob hesitated.

"Only some of Bunter's bunkum," he said. "Nothing to worry about."

"Oh, really, you know——"

"Shut up!"

"Shan't!" roared Billy Bunter. "I say, you fellows—yaroooooh!" Bunter roared again, as Bob took a fat ear between a finger and thumb.

"It's all right, Linley," said Harry Wharton. "Only that fat idiot has been prying and cackling——"

"Leggo my ear!" yelled Billy Bunter.

"Look here, let Bunter alone!" exclaimed Bolsover major in his most bullying tone. "I don't see why Linley shouldn't be told."

Bob gave him a glare.

"Shut up, Bolsover!" he snapped.

"Are you going to pull my ear, like Bunter's? You'll find that you've got your hands full if you try it on."

"The esteemed ears of the ridiculous Bolsover are truly extensive," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly idiot, I didn't mean that!" howled Bolsover. "I mean——"

"Any absurd fellow pulling the ridiculous ears of the esteemed Bolsover would have his hands full," agreed the nabob.

"I mean——"

"Ha ha, ha!"

"Never mind what you mean—shut up!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Who's going to make me shut up?" roared Bolsover major.

"I am," said Bob Cherry, his eyes gleaming. "I'll mop up the Rag with you, with pleasure."

"Come on, then, do it."

"Hold on, you fellows," exclaimed Mark, interposing hastily. "Hold on, Bob! If Bolsover's got something to say to me, let him get on with it. I've no objection."

Bob dropped his hands unwillingly. The latest topic had irritated him intensely, and he was in a mood to "mop up" the Rag with anybody who asked for trouble.

"It's only rot!" he said.

"The rotfulness is terrific."

"Well, if it's rot, Linley can prove that it's rot," said Bolsover major. "I'm not saying that he did it. What I say is, that it's got to be cleared up. It will come to the prefects sooner or later, and then he will have to explain."

Mark breathed hard.

"I don't think I've done anything for the prefects to bother about," he said, "If I have, I'll be glad to hear of it."

"Who pinched the tenner?" asked a voice from somewhere, and there was a laugh.

Mark started.

"I say, you fellows, he ought to own up, and take it back to Stewart," exclaimed Billy Bunter. "Stewart's promised a pound to the fellow who finds it, and I told him Linley had it——"

"Are you mad?" exclaimed Mark, the flush in his face dying away to a sudden paleness. "Do you think I know anything about Stewart's banknote?"

"Don't you?" grinned Skinner.

"That question is an insult," said Mark. "If I knew anything about it I should have told Stewart, of course. I've helped to look for it along with the other fellows."

(*Continued on page* 12.)

Giants of Cricket

In this novel article "Sportsman" gives you some fascinating peeps into the amazing cricketing career of Philip Mead, who rose from Ground-boy to Champion by sheer grit and love of the great summer game.

No. 2. PHIL MEAD, the England and Hampshire Batsman.

IF ever a boy commenced his career as a cricketer under adverse conditions he was Phil Mead of Hampshire. I didn't know him when he first made up his mind to become a great cricketer, but he has since told me that this was his ambition long before he left school and his headmaster has acquainted me with much which makes me marvel at the boy's perseverance.

He wasn't a brilliant scholar as a youngster—far from it—but he was always fond of games and sought every opportunity to participate in them, no matter whether the venue was a public street, a piece of waste land, or a public park. If Phil Mead saw a boy with a bat and ball in his possession he claimed acquaintance and insisted upon playing with him.

There is not much doubt that the man who has scored over a hundred centuries in first-class cricket and who has been at the top of the averages on more than one occasion, learned the chief essentials of the game in those days when he was often chased by perspiring policemen for playing in the public highway to the danger of the public. In other words, when a lamp post did duty for a wicket and a half volley was driven through somebody's sitting-room window.

But while Phil Mead was by no means a favourite with the masters at Shillington Street School, Battersea, they soon realised the fact that he was a wonderful schoolboy cricketer, and it was young Phil who used to win the matches for his side when playing in the Schools' League Competition. He was only eleven years of age when he scored a century in one of these contests and the masters gave him a silver medal to keep and a shilling to spend.

THAT century pointed the way to young Mead's career, for he then made up his mind that he would do great things; to play for his county and then for England. But when he left school at the age of thirteen, he was sent to work, as a result of which he got less playtime—but only for one season. When fourteen—not having kept his job—he was to be seen, once more, playing anywhere and everywhere—mostly in Battersea Park—and doing wonderful things for one so young. About this time there were certain retail business men in South London who used to run private teams to play in mid-week matches and, as they often ran short of players, Phil Mead was always in great demand, his fee being anything from half-a-crown to five shillings a day. He earned his money.

But during this time he was anxious to become a real professional, and was so enthusiastic about his county (Surrey) that he would walk to the Oval and wait outside the gates until play was finished for the day in order to learn the state of the game. Sometimes he would get somebody's "pass-out check" and actually see a portion of a first-class match. To read, or hear, about such men as Tom Hayward, Ernie Hayes, or Richardson was a joy to him, but to see them in the flesh was the greatest treat Phil could experience.

When fifteen years old, Phil Mead was out of work, and one of his schoolmasters, realising the danger of unemployment at such a critical age, used his influence and got him a job as ground-boy at the Oval. Young Phil was in his glory. To be near to the real giants of the game was almost beyond his wildest dreams, and he was often lectured for neglecting his work because he couldn't resist the temptation to stand still and gaze at any of the professionals who happened to cross the ground.

I have spent much of my life on the principal cricket grounds of England and am a member of more than one county club. It was at the Oval where I first saw Phil Mead, and he was in a gang of youngsters who did odd jobs, such as picking weeds out of the turf, running errands, sweeping up grass and, when the professionals and members practised, running after any ball which was hit out of the net. In their spare time these boys used to indulge in cricket of a sort, but they were mostly poor hands at the game.

ONE day at about noon, I went out to have some practice and I stayed there batting and bowling until one o'clock, when the bowling staff went away to get their mid-day meal. The youngsters were always the last to go, and on this occasion they were just about to walk off when three flannelled figures emerged from the pavilion and walked towards the nets. They were three of the Surrey eleven, Hayward being one of them. But the ground bowlers had gone and as the newcomers realised this, Tom Hayward looked at the gang of boys and cried: "Can any of you boys bowl?"

Phil Mead, the England and Hampshire batsman, who can usually be relied upon to knock up a thousand runs or more in a season.

I shall never forget young Mead's face when he heard the question. His cheeks flushed, and he looked excited as he replied: "Yes, sir! I can!" He bowled to Tom Hayward; he bowled to the others, and at the conclusion Tom Hayward took the boy across to the pavilion, tipped him, and spoke to the secretary about him. Two days later Phil Mead was playing in a "Club and Ground" match, and the following year he was engaged as a ground bowler and a real professional cricketer. At the end of his first season he headed the batting averages.

But Mead was not destined to play for Surrey, the county of his birth. After one season as a ground bowler, he was sacked, but on his performances in small matches, the Hampshire club invited him to take up his abode near Southampton and qualify by residence for that county. For those two years he acted as groundsman to the club attached to the training ship Mercury, of which the famous C. B. Fry became commander.

Immediately the qualifying period was over Phil Mead went in the Hampshire team and it was a coincidence that the first match he played in was against Surrey at the Oval, where he had always hoped he would make his initial appearance as a county player. He failed to do himself justice, but in the next match, against Yorkshire, he scored 60 and 100. Since then Mead has never failed to score over a thousand runs in a season, and more often his total has been nearer three thousand.

"Give me a message for THE MAGNET readers?" I asked.

"Oh, what can I tell them?" he queried. "I suppose they already know that they cannot hope to become batsmen unless they watch every ball right on to the bat. Anyhow, tell them to persevere and never to give up hope. In regard to their bowling they must always remember that brute strength is the last thing they should rely on. Length and spin get more wickets than do those extra fast deliveries."

(Next week's article by "Sportsman" deals with some interesting facts concerning A. P. F. Chapman, who captained the victorious England team in the last series of Test matches in Australia.)

"UNDER SUSPICION!"

(*Continued from page* 10.)

"And you had better luck than the other fellows?" sniggered Snoop.

"Certainly not."

"You didn't find it?" demanded Bolsover major.

"If I had found it I should have taken it to Stewart, of the Shell. You are a rotter to ask such a question."

"Oh, am I?" roared Bolsover major. "Not such a rotter as a man who finds a lost banknote and sticks to it."

"Findings keepings!" giggled Snoop.

"I say, you fellows——"

The truth dawned on Mark now. For some reason—a reason that he could not even begin to guess at—it was supposed that he had found Stewart's lost banknote and kept it.

The look that came over his face as that dawned on his mind made some of the fellows back away a little.

"So that's it?" said Mark, with a deep breath.

"That's it," said Harry Wharton uncomfortably; "not worth taking any notice of, old scout."

"I've got to take notice of it," said Mark. "I can't believe there's any fellow here who really thinks such a thing of me. Some miserable worm has started this——"

"Oh, really, Linley——"

"Some unspeakable cad," said Mark, his eyes flashing. "It seems to have been you, Bolsover. Put up your hands."

"It wasn't Bolsover," said Bob; "it came from Bunter in the beginning."

"Oh!" said Mark.

He dropped his hands. Bunter was not a fellow whom he could deal with as he would have dealt with the bully of the Remove. A fight with Bunter would have been too ridiculous.

"Kick him round the Rag!" suggested Nugent.

"Oh, really, Nugent——"

"The kickfulness is the proper caper, my esteemed Marky——"

"Oh, really, Inky——"

"I suppose Bunter is too big a fool to understand the harm he does by his silly prattle," said Mark quietly, "but you fellows might have waited to hear what I had to say."

"No need for you to deny it," said Wharton; "we know that you don't know anything about that rotten banknote."

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"Let Bunter speak out," said Mark quietly. "He's making one of his blunders, as usual. What put this idea into your head, Bunter?"

"You see, it's true," said Bunter, blinking at him through his big spectacles. "Being true, you know——"

"Bunter's a whale on truth," remarked Peter Todd.

"Oh, really, Toddy——"

"Let him get on with it," said Mark. "I can't imagine why even such a born idiot as Bunter should suspect me of such a thing."

"Oh, really, Linley! Having found you out I was bound to tell the fellows to put them on their guard," said Bunter. "I'm not a fellow for tattling, as you know——"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Besides, I was bound to tell Stewart—he's offered a pound reward—I—I mean it was only decent to tell him where his banknote was," said Bunter; "he's anxious about it, of course. I think you ought to give it back to him, Linley. I must say that. Honesty is the best policy."

"You fat idiot!"

"No good calling a fellow names, just because he's found you out," said Bunter.

"You needn't deny it, you know—I've got the proof."

"The proof!" said Mark contemptuously. "I shall be glad to see the proof, you fat duffer."

Bunter fumbled in his pocket.

Then he blinked suspiciously at Linley.

"No snatching, you know," he said.

"Fathead!"

"Well, you're jolly well not going to destroy the evidence," said Bunter. "Once that's gone you can make out you never had the banknote—unless the Head searches you and finds it on you, of course."

"You benighted chump!" growled Bob Cherry. "The fat idiot found some blotting-paper in the study, Marky, and makes out you wrote a letter this afternoon about sending somebody ten pounds."

"It's Linley's fist!" roared Bunter. "You all know that."

And Bunter jerked the sheet of blotting-paper from his pocket, with a bullseye and several aniseed balls sticking to it. Mark stared at the line—known to all the Remove by this time——

".01£ uoy dnes ot elba ma I woN."

The backward impression on the blotting was quite easily recognisable as Mark's handwriting. Mark stared at it, and gave a contemptuous laugh.

"Is that the evidence?" he asked.

"Jolly good evidence, I call it," said Bunter. "Where did you get ten pounds from all of a sudden?"

"All serene, old bean," said Peter Todd; "we know you never wrote that."

"But I did," said Mark.

"Oh!"

"I—I thought it was your fist, when I saw it," said Harry Wharton. "Bunter couldn't wangle that."

"It's my fist. I wrote that line in a letter this afternoon," said Mark steadily. "I didn't expect it to be spied on, in the blotting-pad, and made the talk of the form. I don't see that my private letters are the concern of any fellow here."

"Well, you know what it looks like," said Bolsover major. "Every man in the Remove knows that you haven't ten pounds, or even ten shillings, for that matter. I'm not pitching it up against you, but it's a fact, and everybody knows it. If you've got ten pounds all of a sudden, you can tell the fellows where you got it."

"Certainly I could, if I liked," answered Mark, "but I intend to do nothing of the sort. I don't intend to shout my personal affairs all over Greyfriars, because a spying worm has spied into my letters. Bunter can take that paper to Quelch if he chooses."

"Oh, really, you know! I wouldn't give you away to Quelch!" protested Billy Bunter.

"You can give me away, as you call it, as soon as you like," said Mark contemptuously. "I'm ready to explain to Quelch, or to the Head. It concerns nobody else."

And with that Mark turned on his heel and walked out of the Rag.

The juniors stared after him.

"Oh, my hat!" said Bob Cherry.

"Does he think he can carry it off with a high hand, like that?" jeered Skinner. "Why, that's as good as a confession."

"Take the paper to Quelch!" suggested Snoop. "He's bluffing, of course—but take him at his word."

"I say, you fellows, I'll go to Quelch if you'll come with me," said Bunter, blinking round.

"Fathead!" growled Bob.

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"He's got it!" said Bolsover major. "It's plain that he's got it! I hardly thought it of him, but it's plain enough now."

"Rubbish!" snapped Wharton.

"The rubbishfulness is terrific."

"Where did he get a tenner, then?" sneered Skinner. "And why can't he say where he got it?"

"No bizney of yours."

"I say, you fellows, we all know where he got it! I don't think he ought to be allowed to keep Stewart's tenner," said Bunter, shaking his head solemnly. "'Tain't honest, you know!"

Mark Linley did not return to the Rag. Until bed-time there was scarcely any other topic spoken of in the Remove; and it was easily to be seen that the current of opinion had set against Mark.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Bend Over!

WINGATE of the Sixth glanced round the Remove dormitory. That there was something "on" in the Remove no prefect could have failed to observe. The whole Form was obviously in a state of suppressed excitement.

To most of the Remove, Mark Linley's sudden and unexplained possession of such a sum as ten pounds, when a ten-pound note was missing, admitted of only one explanation. If there was another that Linley could have given, why did he not give it? That clinched the matter for most of the fellows. Even his best friends were dismayed, though their faith in him held good.

Some fellows were strongly of opinion that the matter ought to be taken to the Form master. But Peter Todd pointed out that that was Stewart's business, if anybody's; and Stewart had been told, and had refused to take any action. Stewart, therefore, did not believe that his tenner was in Linley's hands; that was clear. Skinner opined that that only showed that Stewart was a fool. Peter pointed out again that Stewart was a Scotchman, so, whatever he was, he was not likely to be a fool. As Stewart was the aggrieved party, and was known to be much put out by the loss of his tenner, his faith in Linley could not fail to have some effect on the Remove men. Still, as Skinner said, facts were facts.

When Wingate came in to put lights out, conversation in the Remove dormitory, which had been going strong, suddenly ceased. The captain of Greyfriars looked round with a rather grim brow.

"Well," he said, "what's on?"

No answer.

"What are you young sweeps up to?" continued Wingate.

"Snuff!" said Bob Cherry.

"What?"

"Only my little joke, Wingate," said Bob. "We're up to snuff."

"I'm not asking you for any little jokes, Cherry! Something's up here, and I'm asking what it is. You speak, Wharton."

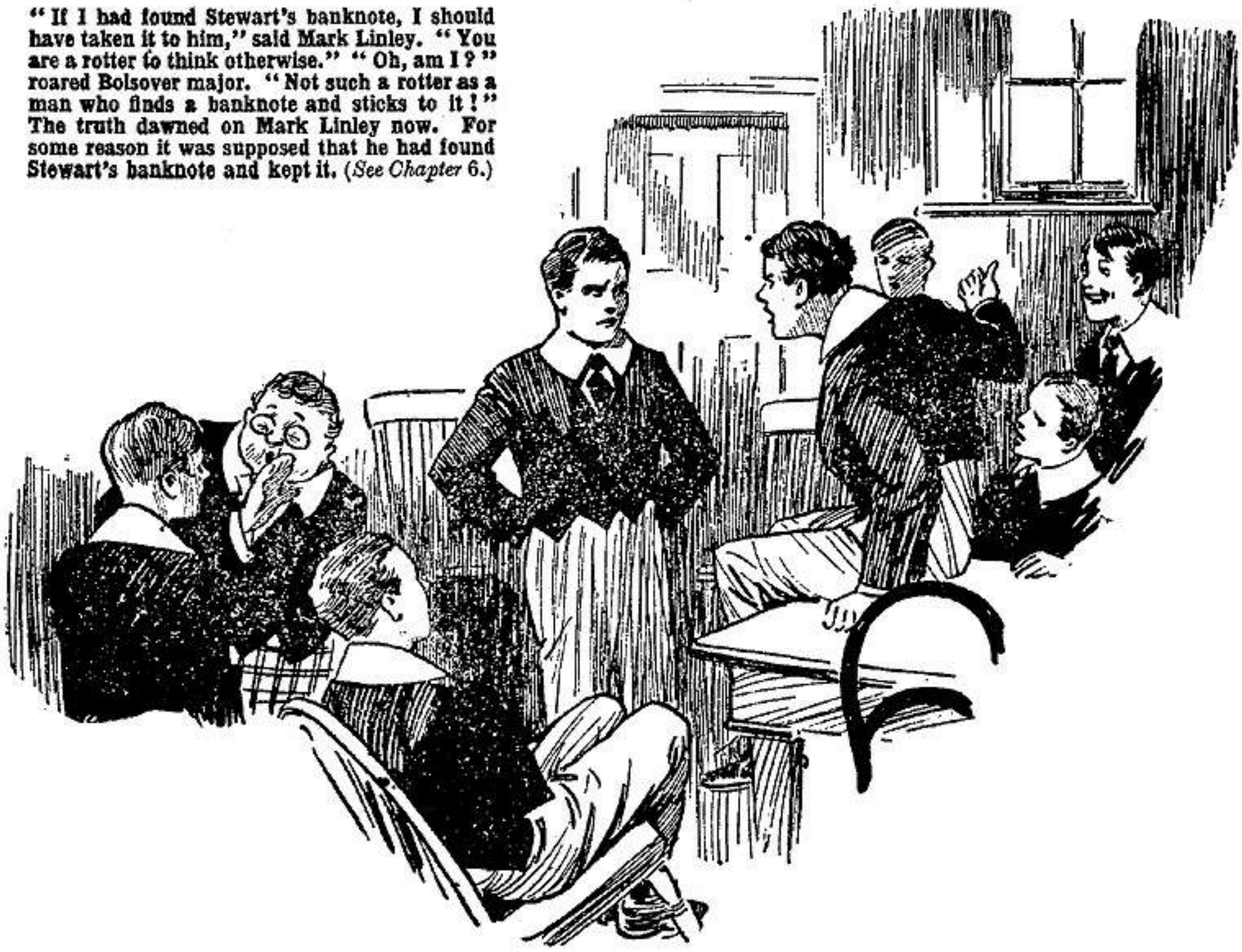
"There's nothing up, Wingate," said Harry. "Only some cackle going on. Bunter's chin doing sixty, as usual."

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

Wingate looked suspicious. Probably he suspected some "jape" planned for "after lights out." A raid on another dormitory was not an uncommon occurrence, and a prefect's view of such proceedings was quite different from a junior's.

Bolsover major gave a grunt. His opinion was that the matter ought to be put before a prefect or a master; but he did not care to be the fellow to put it.

"I say, you fellows——"



"If I had found Stewart's banknote, I should have taken it to him," said Mark Linley. "You are a rotter to think otherwise." "Oh, am I?" roared Bolsover major. "Not such a rotter as a man who finds a banknote and sticks to it!" The truth dawned on Mark Linley now. For some reason it was supposed that he had found Stewart's banknote and kept it. (*See Chapter* 6.)

"Shut up, Bunter!" hissed Johnny Bull.

"I'm not going to say anything about Linley," said Bunter. "I'm not the fellow to give a man away, I hope. I was only going to warn you fellows to keep your mouths shut."

"That's torn it!" grinned Skinner.

It had!

"So there is something on, after all," said Wingate, frowning. "You'd better tell me, Bunter, as you seem to know."

"Oh, no, I don't know anything about it, Wingate," said Billy Bunter, in a great hurry. "Besides, I'm no sneak. I can't say I like Linley, or approve of him, but I'm not going to get him sacked."

"Sacked!" said Wingate blankly.

"Well, a chap would be sacked for stealing," said Bunter. "That stands to reason."

"You young idiot!"

"Oh, really, Wingate——"

Mark Linley looked quietly at the captain of Greyfriars.

"Some of the fellows think that I've found Stewart's lost banknote and kept it, Wingate," he said calmly.

Wingate stared at him. So did all the Remove. Whether it was "bluff" or not, Mark evidently did not fear to have the matter brought to the cognizance of a prefect.

"What utter rot!" said Wingate. "If you've started any tale of that kind, Bunter, I shall give you six."

"I haven't!" exclaimed Bunter. "I—I don't really believe Linley's got it. Besides, very likely he doesn't know any better."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"This isn't a laughing matter," said Wingate angrily. "How dare you say such rotten things about one of the straightest kids in the Form? I shall not even ask Linley whether there is anything in it. I know there isn't."

"Thank you, Wingate," said Mark. "But, without your asking me, I give you my word that I've never seen Stewart's banknote."

"I'm sure of that. You young sweeps ought to be jolly well ashamed of yourselves!" exclaimed Wingate. "If you must cackle, you'd better find something better to cackle about. If there's any more of this, there will be lickings handed out."

"Hear, hear!" said Bob Cherry.

"As for you, Bunter, you seem to have started it; you can turn out and take a licking now," added Wingate.

"Oh, crikey! I—I say, Wingate, I never started it, you know," ejaculated Bunter, in great dismay. "I only found out by accident that Linley had the banknote——"

"How dare you say he has the banknote?"

"Well, he has, you know," gasped Bunter. "'Tain't my fault that he pinches banknotes, is it? If you want to lick somebody, lick Linley. He's got the banknote."

Wingate, ashplant in hand, stared at the fat junior.

"You crass duffer!" he said. "You seem to believe what you're saying. What's put it into your silly head?"

"I—I happened to see Linley's blotting-pad."

"What on earth has Linley's blotting-pad to do with it?"

"He—he—he'd been writing a letter, and—and——"

Wingate's brow grew grimmer.

"And you found something on the blotting-pad and read it? Is that it?"

"You see, it—it's a fellow's duty——" began Bunter feebly.

"You've been spying in another fellow's study and found out a mare's-nest," said Wingate. "Turn out!"

"Oh, really, you know——"

"Turn out!" roared Wingate.

"Oh dear!"

Bunter turned out of bed. He groaned in anticipation.

"Now bend over!"

Whack!

"Yarooooh!"

Whack, whack!

"Wow, wow!"

"Now leave other fellows' letters alone, you young rascal," said Wingate, tucking the ashplant under his arm. "Get into bed and shut up."

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!"

"Do you want some more?" snapped Wingate.

"Yow-ow! No. Wow!"

"Then stop that unearthly row and turn in."

Bunter stopped the unearthly row and turned in. Wingate put the lights out and left the dormitory.

As soon as the door had closed on him the unearthly row recommenced. Bunter was hurt, and he was not the fellow to suffer in silence.

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

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"Yow-ow-ow! I'm hurt! Wow!"

"Serve you jolly well right!" said Johnny Bull.

"Beast! Wow!"

"The servefulness right is terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "The sparefulness of the esteemed ashplant would mean the spoilfulness of the ridiculous Bunter."

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

"It's a shame," said Skinner. "Wingate ought to have been told all about it."

(*Continued on page* 16.)

(*Continued from page* 13.)

"You had a chance to tell him!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "You didn't jump at it, Skinner."

"Wingate's too jolly handy with his ashplant," growled Bolsover major. "I had a jolly good mind to tell him so."

"And a jolly better mind not to," chuckled Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yow-ow-ow! I say, you fellows, I've been licked——" groaned Billy Bunter.

"Good!" said several voices.

"And Linley's got the banknote all the time. It's a rotten shame!"

"Bunter!" came Linley's quiet voice in the darkness.

"Yah, you beast; don't talk to me!"

"I must speak to you, Bunter, to tell you to hold your silly tongue," said Mark. "A fellow makes allowances for a born fool; but there's a limit. If you say again that I have Stewart's banknote, I shall get out of bed and thrash you!"

"Beast!"

Bunter's further remarks were confined to "Ow!" and "Wow!" and "Yow!" The rest of the Remove were asleep before he had finished.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Nerve!

"MY only hat!"

"Great pip!"

"Look!"

"Did you ever?"

It was morning break, the following day, at Greyfriars.

Mark Linley had gone into the Rag.

Several fellows were there, one or two of them writing letters at the big table. Mark went to the table, and drew a pen and inkstand towards him, and sat down to write.

Every fellow glanced at him curiously.

The Famous Five and a few others had made it a point to treat Linley exactly as usual, to show that they had no belief in the suspicion that was so strong against him. But most of the Form carefully kept him at a distance. Many fellows firmly believed that he had Stewart's missing banknote in his pocket; and Skinner declared—though not in Mark's hearing—that he ought to be searched for it before he had time to send it away by post.

Mark wrote his letter calmly, apparently unaware of the eyes that were upon him. Then he took from his pocket an envelope—a registered envelope. There was a start as that envelope was seen.

He folded the letter and placed it in the envelope. Then he took from his pocket a little bundle of currency notes.

Quietly, sedately, still apparently unconscious that his actions excited any interest, Mark counted the notes.

There were ten. He proceeded to pack them carefully inside the registered envelope.

The startled ejaculations of the other fellows did not disturb him. He seemed deaf to them.

He was in no hurry to complete his task. He took his time about it, as if willing to give the other fellows plenty of opportunity to observe him.

Skinner, who was present, waved his hand from the window of the Rag, as a signal to fellows in the quad that something was on. Six or seven juniors came in to see what it was; and others gathered at the window and looked in.

"What's up?" asked Peter Todd.

"Look!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"I say, you fellows, he changed the banknote when he went out of gates yesterday afternoon. He's got it in currency notes now!" squeaked Billy Bunter.

Still Mark seemed deaf and oblivious.

He sealed the envelope containing the ten pounds, addressed it, and affixed the sealing-wax. Then he slipped it into his pocket and walked coolly out of the Rag.

Every fellow followed him. The excitement was intense. Under the eyes of a score of fellows Linley was walking off with the plunder. Bunter hastily suggested calling Mr. Quelch to intervene. The Remove master was standing outside the doorway in the shade of an ancient Greyfriars oak, looking into the sunshine in the quad. Nothing would have been easier than to have drawn his attention to the transaction.

To the amazement of the juniors, Mark went directly up to the Remove master. Mr. Quelch gave him a kind smile. Within hearing, breathless, a crowd of fellows hung on Linley's words.

"If you please, sir, may I have leave to go down to the post-office in break?" asked Mark in a clear voice.

"You will hardly be able to return in time for third school, Linley," said Mr. Quelch.

"Wharton will lend me his bicycle, sir."

"If it is important, Linley——"

"It's rather important, sir. I should like very much to catch this post, if you will give me leave."

"Very well, Linley, you may go," said Mr. Quelch kindly.

"Thank you, sir."

Linley walked away, and the Remove master went into the House. The juniors looked at one another blankly.

"Nerve, if you like!" gasped Skinner.

"Well, this beats me," said Bolsover major. "Asking Quelchy's permission to go and post Stewart's ten pounds!"

"Phew!"

"If Quelchy knew——"

"If!"

"Somebody ought to tell him," said Snoop.

"I say, you fellows, let's all go to Quelch——"

"There must be some mistake about it," said Russell. "If that was Stewart's tenner, he wouldn't have the nerve."

"Whose tenner is it, then, fathead?"

"Well, it wasn't a tenner—it was pound notes," said Russell, shaking his head. "Stewart lost a tenner, you know."

"Linley's changed it, of course."

"Why should he, if he was going to send it away by post?" asked Ogilvy.

"I don't know why he should, but he has," said Skinner. "He ought to be stopped. Quelch ought to know."

"I wouldn't like to be the fellow to tell him, and risk getting a licking," grinned Russell. "You tell him, Skinner."

But Skinner did not seem keen. He refused to admit that there might be a mistake in the matter; but the possibility was alarming, nevertheless.

"Quelch thinks such a lot of that chap," he said. "Linley might be able to stuff him. Then where should I be?"

"Least said soonest mended, so far as the beaks are concerned," decided Bolsover major. "Bunter had no luck with Wingate last night. But we can tell Stewart that his money's going out of the school."

"Good!" exclaimed Skinner. "Let's find Stewart and warn him."

And there was a rush in search of Stewart of the Shell.

Meanwhile, Mark had asked the captain of the Remove for the loan of his bicycle, a request immediately acceded to. He wheeled the machine out, and mounted in the road, and pedalled away for Friardale.

He was gone before Skinner & Co. succeeded in finding Stewart of the Shell. But when they found him they had no luck.

"Rubbish!" said Stewart. "I know a decent chap when I see one. Linley never found my banknote. It's still lost."

"We saw him put ten quids into a letter——" exclaimed Skinner.

"They were his own, I suppose."

"Where would he get ten quids?" said Snoop derisively. "He never got as much as ten shillings."

Stewart seemed staggered for a moment. But he shook his head.

"You say he packed the money into a registered envelope under your eyes?" he asked.

"Yes, rather! We all watched him."

"Well, if he had pinched it he wouldn't be ass enough to do that," said the Scottish junior shrewdly. "I fancy he did that just because you were watching him, to give you something to gabble about. He could have kept it dark if he'd liked, and he didn't choose to."

"It was sheer impudence!" said Skinner. "Just cheek!"

"A thief couldn't afford to be as cheeky as that. It's all rot! Run away and play!" said Stewart.

"I say, it looks jolly fishy, you know," said Hobson of the Shell slowly, as the disappointed Removites departed.

"It doesn't," said Stewart.

"Well, I think——"

"Don't start thinking, old bean," advised Stewart. "You haven't the gadget to do it with."

"I think it's fishy!" persisted Hobson. "Everybody knows the man's got no money. Now he shows ten quids about——"

"Fathead! He wouldn't show them if they weren't his own! It might look fishy if somebody had spotted him posting a registered letter on the quiet. Now it doesn't."

"Well, I think you're rather an ass, Stewart," said Hobson, shaking his head.

"My dear chap," said Stewart, "don't I keep on telling you that you can't think? If you could think, would you chuck a banknote about on a windy day for a fellow to catch. If you start thinking, Hobby, you'll crack that turnip you call a brain-box. Not that that would matter much, of course. There's nothing in it to damage."

"Oh, rats!" said Hobson crossly.

Mark Linley was back just in time for third school. He came into the Remove room a little breathless, with a cool unconsciousness of the curious stares of the other fellows. By that time all the Form knew of the registered letter and what it contained, and it had made quite a sensation.

After morning school Harry Wharton joined the scholarship junior, as the Remove were going down the corridor. Wharton's face was grave.

"I don't want to butt into your affairs, Linley——" he began.

"Fire away!" said Mark, with a smile.

"Well, I've heard now what you went out for in break. In the circumstances, old chap, wasn't it rather fatheaded to pack up that money in a registered envelope in the Rag, under a dozen fellows' eyes?"

"Why?" asked Mark calmly. "Fellows generally write their letters in the Rag. And the sealing-wax is there, which is needed for a registered letter."

"I know. But in the circumstances you——"

Mark's face set.

"In the circumstances, I acted exactly as I should have acted in any other circumstances," he answered. "Nobody had a right to take any interest in what I was doing, or to look at it."

"Yes, that's so. But——"

"But you think I'd have done better to be secretive, and keep things out of sight?" asked Mark.

"No, not exactly that. But——" Wharton hesitated. "But, really, it was asking for trouble——"

"Perhaps. Some fellows in the Remove believe that I am a thief," said Mark unmoved. "Let them believe so, if they choose. I shall not go an inch out of my way to alter their belief. I intend to carry on just the same as usual. If Stewart's banknote is ever found, that will settle the matter. If it isn't found, they can think what they like, and go and eat coke."

Harry Wharton smiled.

"I suppose that's pride," he said. "I dare say I should feel just the same in your place. But remember that pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall. Still, I suppose you know your own business best."

And the matter dropped, though in the Remove it was not likely to drop. That day it was the sole topic in the Lower Fourth, and it was not likely to be forgotten.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Mum's the Word!

"CRICKET!" said Bob Cherry, in surprise.

"Why not?"

"Echo answers, why not?" agreed Bob amicably. "But——"

Mark Linley coloured.

It was Friday, and Mark Linley had come along to Study No. 1 in the Remove, after tea, to speak to Wharton. The captain of the Remove was not there; but Bob was seated on the study table, swinging his legs, and whistling in his usual way, with great vigour and considerably out of tune. He left off whistling, and grinned a cheery welcome to the Lancashire junior. But when Mark mentioned that he had come along to speak to Wharton about the cricket, Bob could not help being surprised.

For weeks past Mark had cut cricket, only turning up on Little Side on occasions when games practice was compulsory. Even on those occasions he had several times had special leave to stay out. His work in Uncle Clegg's dusky little parlour at Friardale had taken up all his leisure, and cricket had had to go, as well as many other things. Mark had earned his ten pounds, but he had earned it hard. His mysterious occupation out of gates was known to the Famous Five; but other fellows in the Remove still wondered and surmised about it. Now, apparently, it had come to an end.

"What do you mean exactly by 'but,' Cherry?" asked Mark, very quietly. "Is there any reason why I shouldn't play cricket to-morrow—that is, if Wharton thinks me good enough to put into the team?"

"None at all. Only——"

"I'm not expected to stand out of the Form games, I suppose, because some fellows think I pinched Stewart's banknote?" asked Mark, his lip curling.

Bob Cherry jumped.

"If that's it——" said Mark, his face crimson.

"Don't be an ass!" said Bob unceremoniously.

"Look here——"

"Don't be a silly ass!" Bob's face was angry. "You know jolly well I never meant anything of the kind! If you don't know, you ought to know. Don't be a howling chump!"

"Then why——"

"You're getting touchy, old bean," said Bob, his face clearing. "That won't buy you anything, as Fishy would put it. No good ragging your old pals, because some duffers have a down on you."

"Sorry," said Mark impulsively. "Perhaps I'm getting a bit touchy. I know it's fatheaded."

"That's the right word," agreed Bob. "Right on the jolly old wicket."

"But why?" repeated Mark.

"Well, you've dropped cricket for a jolly long time," said Bob. "I know you've been putting in a job as an amateur income-tax expert, going over old Clegg's books for him. You told us. I thought you were done with cricket."

Mark nodded slowly.

"Yes, I suppose I'm getting touchy," he said. "I ought to have understood at once. You see, that job's done."

"Oh, I see!" said Bob. "That accounts for the milk in the coconut. Jolly glad it's over, old bean. You were rather an ass to take it on, and cut cricket for weeks and weeks."

"I had to earn some money," said Mark, in a low voice. "I'm not here on quite the same terms as other fellows."

"I know, old chap. I'm glad you had the chance, really, though I didn't like to see you standing out of games. Did Uncle Clegg square?"

Mark laughed.

"Of course. We agreed on a figure, and he paid up."

"My only hat!"

Bob Cherry jumped again and slid from the table. He stared at the Lancashire junior.

"Why, that's it!" he ejaculated.

"That's what?"

"That's the ten quid!"

Mark said nothing.

"You told us you were getting ten quids for the job," said Bob. "If old Clegg has squared, you've got it. Isn't that it?"

"That's it," said Mark.

"It was the ten quids you collected from Clegg that you sent off in that registered letter."

"Of course it was."

"Well, I might have guessed it, if I'd known you'd finished the job at Friardale," said Bob Cherry. "Look here, I'll jolly well tell all the fellows——"

"You won't!" said Mark.

"And why not?" demanded Bob, in surprise.

"I told you and your friends in confidence," said Mark. "I shouldn't have mentioned it even to you, only you met me at Uncle Clegg's one day, and I didn't want to seem to be keeping secrets. I don't want it cackled all over the school. There's been enough talk about my affairs already. I get jeers enough from some of the men over the translations and copying I do for some people in Courtfield. I don't want all the fellows to get hold of the job I've done for the village grocer. I'd rather it wasn't talked about."

"Well, that's all right, of course," agreed Bob. "It's nobody's business but your own. But in the circumstances I——"

"Hang the circumstances!" exclaimed Mark, anger showing for once in his quiet face. "Am I to shout my private affairs out to the school, because of what some silly duffers are tattling in the Rag? Would you?"

"Well, no," admitted Bob. "But perhaps——"

"That isn't all. It would be no use you telling the fellows. They would say I'd stuffed you. It would be no use my telling them. They would say I was romancing. There's not another man in the Remove could do the work I've done for Mr. Clegg. And they wouldn't believe that I had done it—not in the circumstances. It would be taken as a lame story to account for the ten pounds."

"It—it might," said Bob. "But Uncle Clegg would bear you out——"

Mark gave a bitter laugh.

"Am I to ask the village tuckshop keeper to come up to the school to speak to fellows who think me a thief?" he asked.

"Um! No, I suppose not. Still——"

Bob Cherry blinked dubiously at his chum.

"But you want to get it all cleared up?" he said. "There must be something that could be done——"

"I don't care to do anything. Let them rip!" said Mark indifferently. "No decent fellow would think a man a thief on such evidence, and for the other fellows I don't care two straws. If I could clear the matter up, even to Skinner's satisfaction, by speaking two words, I wouldn't speak one! Nobody has a right to ask me to chatter my personal affairs all over the school, and nothing would make me do it!"

Bob made a hopeless grimace. He quite understood how deeply Mark's pride had been wounded by an unworthy suspicion, and he could understand that he would not deign to clear himself by an explanation that involved general discussion of his personal affairs, of the hapless position of his family at home, and the help he was giving them. Details of that kind the sensitive junior

(*Continued on next page.*)

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did not like discussing even with his best friends, and to make them a common topic up and down the Form was intolerable to him.

"Then there's nothing doing?" said Bob at last.

"There's no need for anything to be done that I can see," answered Mark quietly. "I've been up against it before, and now I'm up against it again. That's all! I've got grit enough to keep a stiff upper lip!"

"The northern punch!" said Bob, with a faint grin.

"Yes," said Mark, laughing; "I hope I've got something of the northern punch in me! Hallo, here's Wharton!"

The captain of the Remove came into the study with Nugent.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Waiting for you, old bean!" boomed Bob.

"Well, here I am!" said Wharton, with a smile. "Take it in turns!"

"Oh, I only came in for cricket jaw!" said Bob. "Marky's got something more important to cough up."

"Get on with it, Linley!"

"About the cricket to-morrow," said Mark. "My job in Friardale is over, and it's been over some time, as a matter of fact. I've lost a lot of practice lately, but if you want a man to-morrow, and you think me good enough, I'll be glad to play."

"Good man! You'll be a bit rusty, though," said Harry. "You've given the game the go-by for a long time."

"All serene! Wait till you've seen me at games practice a few times, then!" said Mark, cheerily enough though he was disappointed.

He was longing for a game of cricket again.

Harry Wharton smiled.

"Lots of time to-day before dark," he said. "If you'd like to come down to Little Side now, I'll get Inky to send you down a few, and we'll see."

"Ready and willing!"

"Come on, then!"

With a light heart Mark Linley followed the junior cricket captain down to Little Side, prepared to give of his best.

The sight of the Removite walking down to Little Side with the Famous Five in flannels evoked a good many remarks from other Remove fellows. Skinner was of opinion that this open and public backing-up of a suspected thief was one more sample of Wharton's high-and-mightiness, and Snoop agreed that it was. Bolsover major declared that what was really wanted was a new captain of the Form, and hinted that he would not be unwilling to accept that onerous post if other fellows were willing to put him in it.

Billy Bunter remarked that you could judge fellows by the company they kept, and expressed a charitable hope that the Famous Five were not themselves falling into the ways of petty larceny. Regardless and heedless of such remarks, the chums of the Remove proceeded to cricket, when Mark amply demonstrated that his long rest had not impaired his skill. Indeed, he seemed in better form than ever, and Bob Cherry thumped him enthusiastically on the back when the practice was over.

"You'll do!" said Wharton.

And when the list of the Remove cricketers was put up in the Rag that evening, one name in the list was M. Linley. Skinner & Co. saw it there with virtuous indignation, and there were a good many murmurs in the Form. And other fellows as well as Skinner made remarks on the "high-and-mightiness" of the captain of the Remove, but he passed those murmurs by like the idle wind which he regarded not.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Skinner is Too Funny!

"HA, ha, ha!"

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

There was a buzz of voices and laughter in the Rag when Mark Linley came in after prep with Lord Mauleverer.

Mauleverer had taken the trouble—a thing he had never done before—to wait in the Remove passage till Linley came down, in order to walk into the Rag with him. He had actually exerted himself to the extent of slipping his arm through Mark's, though Mauly hated demonstrativeness of any sort, and was never known to link arms with anybody.

That was his lordship's way of expressing his noble opinion of the suspicion that was current in the Remove, as Mark understood quite well.

Mark's appearance checked the chatter and laughter in the Rag, but many grinning faces were turned towards him.

On the wall a paper was pinned, which a group of Removites were looking at. Most of them seemed amused, though several faces expressed disapproval.

Skinner gave a sudden start as he saw Linley, and stepped towards the pinned paper to snatch it down. But Bolsover major promptly intervened and pushed him back.

"Let it alone!" he said.

Skinner looked very uneasy.

"Look here I'll take it down," he mumbled. "I—I don't want the chap to see it."

"Afraid of him?" sneered Bolsover major.

"Oh, rats!" said Skinner sullenly. "Look here, that's my limerick, and I'm going to take it down!"

"You're jolly well not!" said Bolsover major in his most bullying tone. "Let him see it, as well as other fellows. It will do him good!"

Skinner rather prided himself upon being the jester of the Form. At the present moment he looked exceedingly uncomfortable. Never had a jester presented a less jesting appearance.

"I say, you fellows, tell Linley to come and look at it!" squeaked Billy Bunter. "I say, Linley!"

Mark did not heed, and he did not approach the group.

"Here, Linley!" shouted two or three voices. "Here's a limerick you'd like to see!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mark did not turn his head. It was his way to avoid trouble if he could, and he could guess that the limerick pinned on the wall for all the fellows to read contained some unpleasant reference to himself. But, as often happens, his peaceable desire to avoid a row was taken for pusillanimity, and even Skinner drew encouragement from it and looked less uneasy. If Linley was afraid to take the matter up, Harold Skinner was only too willing to pose as a fellow who was ready to tell him what he thought of him.

"I don't mind if Linley sees it," he said, loud enough for Mark to hear. "It will show him what the whole Form thinks of him, anyhow!"

"Not the whole Form, Skinney," said Tom Brown; "only you and your set. And nobody cares what you think!"

"You shut up, Browney!" said Bolsover major. "Linley, come and read this! It's about you!"

"Skinner's latest!" chuckled Snoop. "Really hits it off nicely! You're missing a good thing!"

"I say, you fellows, he's funky!" said Billy Bunter.

Still Mark kept his back to the group, though his ears were burning. Lord Mauleverer gave him a rather curious look.

"Chess, Mauly?" asked Mark casually.

"Draughts, old man," said Lord Mauleverer. "My poor brain ain't equal to chess. Make it draughts."

"Funk!" shouted Bolsover major. "You needn't be funky, Skinner; he's afraid to come over here!"

"Who's funky?" said Skinner, quite courageous now. "The fellow's welcome to read it, and if he doesn't like it, he can do the other thing! Lot I care whether he likes it or not!"

Mark closed his lips, turned, and walked over to the group. It was obvious that it was going to be a ragging until he was "drawn," so he gave in to the inevitable. There was a hush on the group as Mark came up, and Skinner's uneasiness revived. He did not like the look on the Lancashire lad's face at all, and he wished from the bottom of his heart that he had taken down the paper.

Mark fixed his eyes on it and read, with all other eyes fixed on him. It was a limerick in Skinner's best style, and written in Skinner's hand:

"There was a young fellow named Mark,
As poor as a tramp in the Park;
But he picked up a note,
Which quite made him gloat,
And he kept it most awfully dark."

Mark read it through carefully, the crimson coming into his face, and then fading away and leaving him very pale.

For a few moments he stood where he was, silent; and the fellows wondered whether he was going to take it quietly. Once more Skinner felt his courage revive. In these minutes Skinner's courage, such as it was, was experiencing a good many ups and downs.

Mark stirred at last. He reached out to the paper, jerked it down from the wall, and tore it into pieces, which he threw to the floor.

Then he turned towards Skinner, still quietly.

"That your work?" he said.

Skinner nodded.

"You put it there?"

"What about it?" sneered Skinner.

"So far you've only hinted," said Mark, in the same quiet tone. "Now you've come out with an open accusation. You've accused me in that limerick of picking up a banknote and keeping it dark."

Skinner shrugged his shoulders.

"No fellow will be allowed to accuse me of such a thing while I can hit out," said Mark. "I've let Bunter pass, because he's a born fool and not worth thrashing——"

"Oh, really, Linley——"

"But you're a fellow who can put up his hands, Skinner," said Mark. "You've chosen to take this on yourself, and now you will have to answer for it."

"Do you think I'm afraid of you?" sneered Skinner, though with a very uneasy inward qualm.

"That doesn't matter one way or the other. You've called me a thief—and that's my answer!"

Mark stepped towards Skinner, and with his open hand struck him across the face.

Skinner gave a sort of yelp and jumped back.

"Now put up your hands!" said Mark Linley.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

A Fight in the Rag!

"GO it, Skinner!" roared Bolsover major.

"Back up, old man," said Snoop.

Skinner stood rooted to the floor, his face pale, save where the red mark of the blow glowed.

His heart failed him.

Skinner was a fellow who made himself more thoroughly disliked than any other fellow at Greyfriars. But he was wily and wary, and he contrived to be very seldom brought to account for his unpleasant ways. Now he was landed at last, and he either had to put up his hands to face the quiet, sturdy Lancashire lad in combat, or to "funk" before the eyes of a swarm of fellows.

That he could not do. He had given the provocation, and brought about the trouble, and to back out, with his face burning from Linley's blow, was impossible. Yet he stood where he was, unable to act, his heart failing him as for once his wary cunning had failed him.

Mark stood waiting.

Round the two the crowd of fellows had fallen back a little to leave them room. Skinner and Linley stood in the centre of a ring with eager faces pressing round.

"I'll be your second, Skinner," said Bolsover major encouragingly.

Skinner did not speak. His tongue seemed to be cleaving to the dry roof of his mouth.

"You'll want a second, old bean," said Bolsover.

Skinner nodded dully.

"He wants a second," remarked Peter Todd. "What he doesn't want is a principal."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Skinner crimsoned. He cast a furtive, almost haggard look round at the ring of faces. Most of them were derisive.

"For goodness' sake have a little pluck!" said Bolsover. "You've asked for this, you know. What the thump did you ask for it for, if you don't want it?"

Skinner gave him a look of hatred. Had the bully of the Remove allowed him to take down the limerick in time this would not have happened. Skinner hated Bolsover major at that moment more than he hated the quiet lad who was standing before him.

Snoop gave him a push.

"You can't back out now," he muttered.

In Skinner's place Snoop would have felt as Skinner was feeling, only more so. But as matters stood, he was feeling ashamed of the hesitation of his friend.

"He, he, he!" cackled Billy Bunter. "Cold feet, you know! He, he, he!"

"Shut up, Bunter!" snapped Bob Cherry. The sight of a fellow showing the white feather was not agreeable to Bob.

Skinner made an effort to pull himself together. He knew that he was for it; there was no help for it now. To back out was impossible. He had persecuted a fellow who had given him no offence from sheer idle malice, and now he had to answer for it.

Vernon-Smith gave a deep yawn.

"Is it going to be a fight or a display of living pictures?" he asked. "Are you playing at tableaux vivants, Skinner?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Buck up, Skinner!"

"I—I don't see that a fellow is called upon to fight with a thief," said Skinner in halting tones. "A thief isn't fit for a decent fellow to touch."

"You won't get off on that," said Bob Cherry in deep disgust. "In the first place, there's no thief present; in the second, you're not a decent fellow. Screw up your courage, you worm!"

Skinner licked his pale lips.

"I won't fight the fellow," he said. "I'm not going to soil my hands on him."

Bob Cherry glared.

"You'll fight me, then," he said savagely. "If that's more to your taste, you worm, you can tackle me instead of Linley."

Skinner almost groaned. Certainly, had he taken on the champion fighting man of the Remove, in the place of Mark Linley, his last state would have been worse than his first.

"I'll fight the rotter," he said huskily.

"Go it!" growled Bolsover major. "Here, give me your jacket. Who's going to keep time?"

"Mauleverer!" called out Wharton.

"Yaas!" said his lordship.

"We've got no gloves here!" muttered Skinner.

"Must have gloves," said the Bounder. "It's rather important for Skinner not to get hurt."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Here you are," called out Peter Todd cheerily. Toddy had produced two pairs of boxing-gloves from a locker.

It was impossible for Skinner to delay longer. He removed his jacket—slowly—and donned his gloves, still more slowly.

Lord Mauleverer took out his watch to keep time.

"Ready?" he asked.

"Yes," said Mark quietly; and Skinner nodded without speaking.

"Shakin' hands?" asked his lordship.

"I'm not shaking hands with a thief!" said Skinner, in a tone of concentrated bitterness. He could hurt with his tongue if not with his hands.

"Time!" said his lordship hastily.

"Play up, Skinner, old bean!" said Bolsover major, giving Skinner an encouraging push towards his adversary.

The fight began.

Something of Skinner's cowardice left him as his rage began to rise. He was booked for it now, booked for a licking, and he had a fierce desire to do as much damage as he could before he went

Skinner and Linley stood in the centre of the ring, with eager faces pressing round. "Go it, Skinner!" cried Bolsover. "For goodness' sake have a little pluck. You asked for it, you know." Skinner hesitated, and Snoop gave him a push. (*See Chapter* 11.)

down. But in spite of that desire he hesitated and faltered, and dodged the Lancashire lad in a way that brought a shout of laughter from the onlookers. The mockery of the juniors stung Skinner at last, and he threw himself into the fight with something like determination.

He was knocked right and left in the first round, and when Lord Mauleverer called time, Bolsover major drew him to a chair, where Skinner sat down, or rather collapsed, in a gasping state.

"You've got to do better than that," said Bolsover major, as he fanned his principal with a cap. "You're licked already if you play that game. Go for him, you silly ass, and hit. Keep on hitting."

Skinner panted.

"You're for it, anyhow," said his second. "You've got to face it. Why not make him sorry for himself, too?"

"Buck up, you know," said Snoop. "You'll have all the fellows laughing, at this rate."

"You asked for it, you know," said Stott.

"Time!" said Lord Mauleverer.

Skinner showed up better in the second round. He was savagely enraged, and he was hurt, and he fought hard.

His friends shouted encouragement. Mark had the better of the round, but it was not a walk-over like the first.

In the third round Skinner proved that he had, after all, some beef in his composition.

For the first time, Mark found his hands full with his opponent; and Skinner's friends even indulged a hope that he might pull it off.

But that hope was delusive.

Still, there was no doubt that Skinner, now that he had fairly come up to the scratch, put up an unexpectedly good fight.

There was another round, and another, and Skinner went all out, taking punishment with a savage determination, and doing his best.

It was not till the sixth round that Skinner, breathless and beaten, crumpled up under a vigorous attack.

He stood against it for a full minute, fighting like a wild cat; and then he went down in a heap, beaten to the wide.

Skinner lay gasping. Mark, cool and calm as ever, waited for him to rise, giving him every chance.

Lord Mauleverer began to count. But he might have counted to a hundred; there was nothing left in Skinner. He lay gasping stertorously, evidently unable to get on his feet.

"Out!" said Mauleverer.

Mark Linley stepped back quietly, peeled off the gloves; and Bob helped him on with his jacket. Bolsover major lifted the exhausted Skinner to a chair, where he sat panting and gasping.

"Better than I expected," said Bolsover. "If you'd started with a bit more beef you might have licked him."

Skinner groaned.

"Try him again next week," suggested Bolsover. "I'll put you through it in the gym every day if you like, and get you in form."

Skinner gave no sign of accepting that kind offer.

"You'll have a strawberry nose," said Snoop, surveying him. "Linley's hardly marked at all."

Skinner set his lips.

"I'll make him pay for it!" he muttered thickly. "I'll make that thief pay for this!"

"Oh, that's piffle!" said Bolsover major. "You don't want to bear malice for being licked in a fair fight."

"Linley!" called out Skinner, as Mark was moving away.

Mark stopped and looked round.

"Yes, Skinner?" he said quietly. "I'm sorry this has happened, but you gave me no choice."

Skinner's eyes gleamed at him.

"I'll make you sorrier, you thief!" he said. "I'll show you up to all the school, and get you kicked out of Greyfriars!"

Mark clenched his hands; but he turned away without a word and left the Rag. Skinner was in no state to be punished any further.

"Shut up, you cad!" growled Bob Cherry.

The crowd broke up, leaving Skinner to be helped away by his friends.

Skinner spent the rest of that evening in his study, nursing his damages, which were considerable, and brooding over his wrongs and his vengeance. If he had doubted before that Mark Linley was a thief, he doubted no longer—with his whole body aching from the Lancashire lad's hefty blows. It was not logical, but it was natural, that that thrashing should have banished any doubts that Skinner might have had. The fellow was a thief, and he had thrashed Skinner before all the Form for speaking out the truth—that was Skinner's view. And as he ached and groaned, his thoughts concentrated on one thing, and one thing only—vengeance. Somehow or other he was going to find proof that Mark Linley was a thief, and get him expelled from the school as one. And surely it would not be difficult to get the proof of what Skinner now firmly believed to be the truth.

BIRMINGHAM CALLING!

This clever Limerick wins a Useful Leather Pocket Wallet!

Billy Bunter, the Greyfriars Owl,
Was hungry, so went "on the prowl."
His object was chicken,
His gain was a licking,
And now he does nothing but growl.

Sent in by: Frederick W. Jones, 55, Mole Street, Sparkbrook, Birmingham.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

A Startling Discovery!

"FEELING fit, old bean?"

Bob Cherry asked that question in morning break the next day.

Mark Linley smiled.

"Fit as a fiddle!" he answered.

"Not feeling laid out by that terrific combat yesterday?" grinned Bob.

"No!" said Mark, laughing.

"Good egg! We want to give Redclyffe a run for their money this afternoon," said Bob. "Feel like a good game?"

"You bet!"

"Rather lucky that Skinner's not in the team!" chuckled Bob. "I fancy he wouldn't give the Redclyffe men much trouble."

He glanced at Skinner, who was lounging by with Snoop and Stott.

Skinner had, as Snoop had predicted, a strawberry nose; but otherwise he did not show much sign of damage. But his face, usually pasty, was paler than usual, and he had a tired and venomous look. He was still feeling severely the effects of the fight in the Rag; he never was in good condition, and the many secret cigarettes he smoked in his study took their toll when he had to undergo a severe test. He was tired, depressed, downcast, and as venomous as a snake.

The remarks of his friends did not afford him much comfort. Stott told him more than once—in fact, many times—that he had asked for what he had got, and deserved it all—and some more. Snoop sympathised, but with an undercurrent of derision that was very perceptible. Had Skinner been a less keen fellow than he was, he would have guessed that his licking was not wholly displeasing to his friend Sidney James Snoop.

Skinner gave Linley a glance as he passed him, the bitterness of which startled Mark a little.

He glanced after the wretched fellow compassionately.

"I—I rather wish I hadn't lost my temper, Bob," he said uneasily. "After all, a fellow ought to keep his temper."

"Rot!" said Bob emphatically. "I suppose you couldn't let that worm call you a thief, could you?"

"I—I suppose not. But—but I suppose he believes what he says," said Mark. "That's his nature, I'm afraid; he likes believing evil of fellows. It's rotten for him!"

"What he wanted was a licking—and now he's got it," answered Bob cheerfully. "He will keep his mouth shut now, and so will some other fellows."

Bob was right on that point. Snoop, at least, was extremely careful not to utter any more gibes in Mark's hearing; and Billy Bunter avoided him with a care that was comical to see. Many fellows took more heed of their words since the fight in the Rag.

Immediately after dinner that day the Remove cricketers started for Redclyffe. Quite a crowd of Remove men followed on bicycles or on foot. Mark Linley sat in the brake with the Famous Five, with a cheery face. From the gates Skinner watched them go.

Envy and hatred and all uncharitableness ran riot in his breast as he watched them.

The fellow whom he believed to be a thief, whom he was determined to believe a thief, was going off to play cricket, happy amid a crowd of happy fellows; and Skinner stayed disregarded behind.

True, Skinner was no cricketer, and had not the slightest desire to play in the match; he would have walked miles to avoid playing in the match, for that matter. But it was gall and wormwood to him to see his enemy going off cheerily with the eleven—as if nothing had happened.

Not a fellow in the crowded brake, so far as Skinner could see, was showing any sign of avoiding the Lancashire lad; he was with them, and one of them.

Stewart of the Shell—generally loftily indifferent, like all Shell fellows, to Remove proceedings—took the trouble to see the brake off and to wave his hand to Linley. Skinner wondered why. The fellow must be a fool not to know that Linley had his tenner. And yet Skinner knew Stewart was no fool. Why the thump, then, couldn't he see what was so perfectly clear to Skinner?

Skinner might have deduced from that puzzling circumstance that it was his own evil and suspicious nature that made him so certain of Linley's guilt.

But Skinner did not think of deducing that.

Skinner turned away, when the brake had disappeared down the road with its merry crowd, and lounged back into the quad.

He was alone that afternoon; he was more than fed-up with Snoop and Stott at present. The kind of sympathy he received from his friends was neither grateful nor comforting.

He loafed about for a time, and then thought of comforting himself with a cigarette in the study. But Snoop and Stott would be there, and he did not want their company. It was a glorious summer's afternoon, and any fellow might have enjoyed a ramble along leafy lanes and shady woods; but Skinner disliked walking, and most other forms of exercise.

In sheer loneliness and boredom, he bore down on Lord Mauleverer when he spotted that elegant youth ambling lazily under the elms.

Mauly glanced at him, turned away, and walked more quickly. Evidently he did not want to speak to Skinner.

Skinner paused, with deep bitterness in his breast. Had Linley come along, Mauly would have stopped to speak to him, with a cheery smile. He avoided Skinner as if he had the plague. And Linley was a thief—and he—Skinner—whatever his faults might be, at all events, was no thief.

With a black brow, Skinner lounged away to the Cloisters, a lonely and secluded spot, where a fellow might generally smoke a surreptitious cigarette without detection. A crowd of Third Form fags, however, were playing leap-frog along the Cloisters, and Skinner went farther.

He stopped at the old, dismantled tower that was one of the sights of Greyfriars, and often drew enthusiastic bald-headed gentlemen of an archæological turn to the spot. The old tower, which was exceedingly unsafe inside, was out of bounds, and the ancient door in the deep stone porch was padlocked for that reason. The deep, loop-holed windows were boarded up where they were within reach. But Skinner knew all about that. There was a loose board that could be shifted, giving admittance to the place, and Skinner and his friends had often retired to that secluded spot for a secret smoke.

In a few minutes Skinner was inside the old tower.

He mounted the old, winding stone steps, and stopped at an old window, almost hidden by ivy, when he had a wide view of the surrounding country and the sea in the distance. Far away, a speck on the Redclyffe road, he discerned a crowded brake, and scowled at the speck.

But Skinner had not come there for the view. He took a packet of cigarettes from his pocket, and began to smoke. In his fatigued, run-down state, it was the very worst thing he could have done; but he had never given much attention to the laws of health.

He sat and smoked cigarette after cigarette, with a sullen, lowering brow, all the time thinking of his fancied wrongs, and brooding over them, and over his schemes of vengeance

Linley was a thief. Linley was going to be shown up, and sacked from the school. So ran his thoughts. How? was the question. The impression on the blotting-paper, taken by Bunter from his study, was as good as proof, to Skinner, at least. The money he had been seen to place in the registered envelope was proof as clear as the sun at noon—to Skinner. But he knew that something more than that would be wanted, if the matter went before the Head.

Linley sometimes earned money. He might pretend that he had earned that ten pounds and saved it. A fellow who would steal, would lie.

But if he had changed the tenner into pound notes—to avoid sending the actual stolen money home—he must have changed it locally. At some shop—somewhere in the neighbourhood!

Skinner's mind ran on that. People did not take ten-pound notes unquestioningly from strangers. A shopkeeper would change it if he knew the fellow belonged to Greyfriars, of course; but even then he was likely to ask his name, most likely to ask him to write it on the back of the note. Skinner thought that over, and his eyes gleamed through the haze of his cigarette smoke. There was the clue!

He had to find the shopkeeper who had changed that stolen tenner for Linley. The rest was easy. And surely that shopkeeper would not be difficult to find—to a patient and determined fellow.

Skinner grinned

He felt that he had come to something at last. It needed only patience, and he would have his enemy on the hip!

For some time, as he sat at the ancient casement smoking, Skinner had noticed, without particularly heeding, a flimsy white slip of paper that was lodged in the thick ivy only a few feet from him.

Obviously it was some slip of paper that had been blown about on a windy day, and had lodged in the ivy, and remained there. It did not interest Skinner in the least.

But after a time he stretched out his hand to pick it from the ivy, with an idle curiosity to see what it was.

As his fingers closed on it he started; as he held it up to look at it, he jumped. He held the slip in his hand, gazing at it with unbelieving eyes, his mouth open in his astonishment.

It was a bank note for ten pounds!

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Skinner's Secret!

SKINNER stared dazedly at the banknote.

It was difficult for him to believe his eyes, as he stared at it. A banknote for ten pounds—lodged in the ivy of the old tower! The banknote that Stewart of the Shell had lost that windy day in the quad!

It could be no other!

Nobody else was likely to have lost a ten-pound note—and without mentioning the loss! Only one tenner had been lost at Greyfriars—and Harold Skinner had found it.

"My—my hat!" stuttered Skinner.

It was unbelievable!

He had made so certain that Mark Linley had found that banknote, and kept it—that Linley had changed it into pound notes to send home—his plans had been cut and dried for discovering the shopkeeper who had changed the note for Linley!

And it had not been changed at all!

Evidently it had not, for here it was—in Skinner's thin fingers!

"My hat!" repeated Skinner.

For some minutes he could do nothing but stare and ejaculate.

The discovery was utterly disconcerting

What became of his planning and scheming now, which were to prove Mark Linley a thief, and to bring about his expulsion?

(*Continued on next page.*)

A Book-Length Adventure Yarn for 4D.

Here's a rousing adventure yarn that will keep you breathless with excitement. Two British lads in quest of a sacred city in the wilds of the Amazon go to the rescue of an explorer held captive by a sect of sun worshippers! When the city is reached at last our heroes disguise themselves and then follow thrills galore as they enter the sacred temple and rescue the lost explorer.

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Mark, evidently, was no thief, for here was the banknote that Skinner had accused him of finding and stealing.

Any other fellow might have rejoiced at a discovery that saved a schoolmate from a heavy loss, and cleared an innocent fellow's name of an unjust suspicion.

Skinner did not rejoice.

His feeling, as he recovered from his first blank astonishment, was one of rage and bitter chagrin.

All his cut-and-dried plans were blown to pieces now. Nothing could fasten on his enemy the guilt of a theft that had never been committed. Mark was innocent, and Skinner knew that he was innocent, and nothing could alter that. It was a staggering blow to the bitter, sulky, resentful fellow.

"Stewart's banknote!" muttered Skinner at last, savagely "No wonder it was never found, if the wind blew it here! Hang it—and hang Stewart! A precious fool I've made of myself."

That was a bitter reflection. Skinner prided himself on his keenness, his wariness, his sharpness—he did not like to call it cunning, though that was the right name. Keen wary, sharp, as he was, he had made a mistake. Prompted by his willingness to believe evil of anyone, he had made a shameful accusation that he now knew to be utterly false, and he had been thrashed for making it—a well-deserved thrashing, as now he could hardly deny. All his cunning had not saved him from playing the fool as fatuously as Billy Bunter.

He crumpled the banknote in his hand.

To do him justice, he had no thought, at first, but to take it to its owner. But that thought passed

Taking the banknote to Stewart, meant clearing Mark Linley and showing himself up as a slanderer. He set his lips at that thought. He could have kicked himself for having come to the old tower that afternoon, and for finding the banknote. A gleam came into his eyes, and he struck a match and held it, burning, in a hand that trembled.

The temptation was strong upon him to set the flame to the banknote and destroy it, and along with it all positive evidence that Mark Linley was innocent. For some moments his decision trembled in the balance. The match burned down to his fingers, but he could not do it. He let the match fall among a dozen other burnt match-sticks with which the floor was already littered the banknote still intact. As if frightened by the wicked intention that had been in his mind, he glanced nervously round him, and wiped the perspiration from his forehead.

He could not destroy the banknote. That was theft. It was a crime, and he was not capable of crime, though he was capable of much, in his bitterness and malice. But what was he to do?

Take it to the owner—never! Admit to all the school that he had been impelled by an evil nature to make a mistake, that he had slandered a better fellow than himself. Never! But to keep the banknote—that was impossible! To do what he had accused Mark of doing, was unthinkable! What was he to do with it, if he was not to let his unexpected discovery work to the advantage of the fellow he hated?

"It mayn't be Stewart's note, after all," he whispered to himself He drew hope from that possibility, faint as it was. "Some other fool may have lost one—it's quite likely! If I knew the number——" The number of Stewart's lost note was known, and was posted on the board with Stewart's fortnight-old notice, but Skinner had not heeded it.

He examined the banknote in his hand. 0001112468. He scribbled the number on his shirt-cuff.

He would soon find out whether this really was Stewart's note or not. If it was not, Skinner was only too willing, only too eager, to restore it to the owner. But if it was——

If it was, he did not know what he would do; but he vowed savagely that Linley should draw no benefit from his discovery.

He placed the note, at last, on the old floor, in a corner, and covered it with a loose stone. It was safe enough there—nobody was likely to shift that stone and look underneath, even if anybody came to the old tower at all. He dared not keep it about him. It could remain there—in safety—till he knew!

Skinner's face was pale, harassed, as he left the old tower, and walked back to the quad. He lounged into the House, and went to the notice-board, floor was already littered, the banknote was still to be seen.

The idea was growing in his mind—the wish being father to the thought—that the banknote he had found was not Stewart's note. If that was so, the relief would be immense—he would not have been mistaken, he would not have played the fool, he would not be a slanderer; he could go ahead with his scheme for fastening the guilt on Linley. This idea had so taken possession of his mind that it was a shock to him when he read the number of the banknote on Stewart's paper—0001112468.

It was the same ten-pound note!

Skinner gritted his teeth.

He knew now, beyond the possibility of doubt, that the banknote he had found, and left hidden in the old tower, was the note that Stewart of the Shell had lost a fortnight ago. And all he could do was to resolve that no one else should ever know.

———

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Skinner is Not Satisfied!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! Here we are again!"

The cheery, stentorian tones of Bob Cherry awoke the echoes far and wide. A cricket match on a hot summer's day had not tired the energetic Bob, so far as his vocal powers were concerned, at any rate.

In the dusk of the summer evening the cricketers had returned. They swarmed into the House in a rude, cheery crowd.

Bob, seeing Skinner loafing about with his hands in his pockets, greeted him with a smack on the shoulder that made him stagger.

"You silly ass!" snarled Skinner.

"Trot out your gratters, old bean!" roared Bob. "We've beaten Redclyffe."

"I don't care a rap whether you've beaten them or not!" growled Skinner. "Let my shoulder alone, you ruffian!"

"I say, you fellows——"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Missed us while we've been away, old fat man?" boomed Bob. "Whom did you stick for a tea?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"Look at Skinner rejoicing over our jolly old victory!" chuckled Bob. "Don't he look happy?"

"The happifulness does not seem preposterously terrific!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Marky took three wickets in each innings, Skinner!" chortled Bob. "Don't that make you rejoice?"

It was on Skinner's sneering lips to ask whether Linley had "taken" anything else. But he could not utter the gibe. Now that he know Mark was innocent, he hated him none the less; but he could not "carry on" as if he still did not know the truth. There was some element of decency in his warped nature that prevented it.

The cheery cricketers had little heed to give to Skinner, a slacker and a "rotter" at games. But some of them glanced rather curiously at his face as they passed him. Skinner never looked the picture of health; but his face was more pasty than usual now, and he had a harassed look. Harry Wharton wondered, for a moment, whether Skinner was ill; then he decided that it was a case of too many cigarettes in the study, and dismissed Skinner from his mind.

The juniors had more interesting things than Skinner to think about. They had beaten Redclyffe after a stiff fight; Mark Linley had shown up as well as any man in the team—better than some. Mark had returned a little tired, but very happy and satisfied. That evening there was a celebration in Study No. 1, which was crowded by the cricketers with an overflow meeting in the passage outside.

Through that overflow meeting a fat junior wedged his way, and arrived panting at the study doorway, where he blinked in through his big spectacles.

"I say, you fellows——"

"Scat!"

"Gratters, you know, and all that!" said Bunter. "I say, I'm jolly glad you beat Redclyffe. I never expected it, as you left your best man out of the team, Wharton. Still, I'm glad you were able to beat them without me."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'll come in!" said Bunter. "Move some of your feet, Cherry, and make room for a chap! You might shift, Bull—you're in the way. Who's going to hand me his chair?"

"The whofulness is terrific."

"Buzz off, Bunter!"

"Oh, really, you fellows! I say, is that Linley there?" asked Bunter, blinking at Mark. "Well, I don't mind. I'll stay all the same."

"What's that?" roared Bob Cherry.

"I don't mind sitting down to table with Linley—really, old chap! If you fellows are going to overlook his pinching that banknote, why, dash it all, I'll overlook it, too!" said Bunter generously. "I'd rather not sit next to him—I don't want him pinching my gold watch. But——"

Squisssssh!

Bob Cherry had a soda-siphon in his hand. He had been about to squirt it into a glass of lemonade. Now he turned it on Bunter.

There was a roar from the Owl of the Remove.

"Ow! Grooogh! Stoppit! I say, you fellows—— Yoooooch!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gug-gug-gug-gug-gug!"

Billy Bunter gurgled and fled. There was nothing for him in Study No. 1 but soda-water, taken externally; and he had had enough of that. A drenched and gurgling Bunter departed hastily.

After the celebration was over, Mark Linley went along to his own study. That evening there was Milton to prepare, and many of the cricketers were either giving the great poet a miss, or at best very desultory attention. But Mark had a way of doing well anything he did; and he went to his study to

work. Skinner was loafing in the passage—lonely, harassed, unquiet—and he gave the Lancashire lad a bitter look as he passed.

Mark slowed down and turned back. There was something in Skinner's face that troubled him a little.

Skinner started back as he turned. Evidently he was looking for hostility.

"Hands off, you rotter!" he said, between his teeth.

"I was not going to touch you, Skinner," said Mark quietly. "I'm sorry, as I told you that there was that trouble yesterday."

"Yes, I know how sorry you are, as you got the best of it!" sneered Skinner. "What are you gammoning for, now?"

"I mean what I say," answered Mark, his eyes on the pallid, furtive face. "If you're a reasonable chap, Skinner, you must own up that a fellow couldn't stand what you said. All the same, I'm sorry I lost my temper, and I wish it had never happened."

Skinner stared at him.

"You look ill!" said Mark compassionately. "I ought to have remembered that you're not as strong as I am."

"I wasn't brought up to work in a factory!" sneered Skinner. "I don't claim to be as hefty as a brewer's drayman!"

"I dare say the hard work I've done while you were at your prep school toughened me a lot," said Mark, "and I've put in a lot of practice at boxing, and you haven't. I'm sorry if you were hurt. I wish it had never happened."

It was hardly possible for even Skinner to doubt his sincerity. But Skinner clung to his bitterness as to a pearl of price.

"You mean that you think you can't shut me up with hammering, and you're trying soft sawder for a change!" he jeered.

Mark coloured.

"Well, if you take it like that it's no use a fellow speaking," he said. "I wish you'd try to be a little more reasonable. I've never harmed you, that I know of, and I don't see why you should have such a down on me for nothing."

"I don't like stuck-up prigs!" said Skinner.

Mark smiled.

"If I'm that, I suppose I can't help it," he said. "Other fellows don't seem to think so. I'm sorry you should think about me as you do. But have it your own way."

He turned again.

"You needn't flatter yourself that I'm knocked out by that bit of a scrap yesterday," said Skinner venomously. "I'm not so soft as all that. I've been smoking this afternoon—and there was something else, a bit of a worry on my mind. That's why I'm looking seedy—if I am looking seedy. I suppose I am, as a dozen fellows have told me so. You needn't flatter yourself that it was your doing."

"If that's so, I'm glad," said Mark simply. "Anyhow, I shall never touch you again. You can say what you like, and still be sure of that."

With that, Mark went into his study, and the door closed. Skinner stared at the door. In spite of himself, he had been moved a little by the quiet kindness of the fellow he hated; and though he told himself that it was all gammon and soft sawder and humbug, he could not quite believe it. He turned away and loafed dismally along the passage.

After all, what had the fellow done? He worked, while Skinner slacked; he played games, while Skinner dodged the playing-fields; he helped his people at home, while Skinner thought of home chiefly as a place whence he could draw supplies; he lived a clean, straight life, while Skinner smoked and loafed and frowsted, and dabbled surreptitiously in betting. Why had he jumped so greedily at the chance of blackening a fellow who had never offended him? Because the fellow was better than himself. Because a mean nature resented the mere existence of a noble one! Somehow or other, that galling thought forced itself into Skinner's mind, little as he was used to such reflections.

"Hallo, Skinney!" Snoop called from the doorway of Study No. 12. "Still skulking?"

"Oh, go and eat coke!" snapped Skinner.

"Come into the study, old bean," said Snoop amicably. "Look here, I've got a wheeze for making that cad Linley sit up!"

Skinner made no reply.

"I'm not going to get landed with a scrap, like you did," grinned Snoop. "The brute's too hefty for me. I've got an idea of chalking something on the blackboard in the Form-room, for all the fellows to see."

"Oh, chuck it!" muttered Skinner.

"It's a good wheeze—he can't know who did it—and Quelchy will see it, and all the fat will be in the fire," said Snoop eagerly. "He will be shown up as a thief——"

"He isn't a thief."

Skinner hardly knew what impelled him to utter those words. They seemed to come out of their own volition.

Snoop stared at him blankly.

"What? What do you mean, Skinner?"

"Oh, rats!"

"If he isn't a thief, you've done your level best to make him out one," said Snoop. "The whole thing would have died out by this time if you hadn't kept it going. You know that."

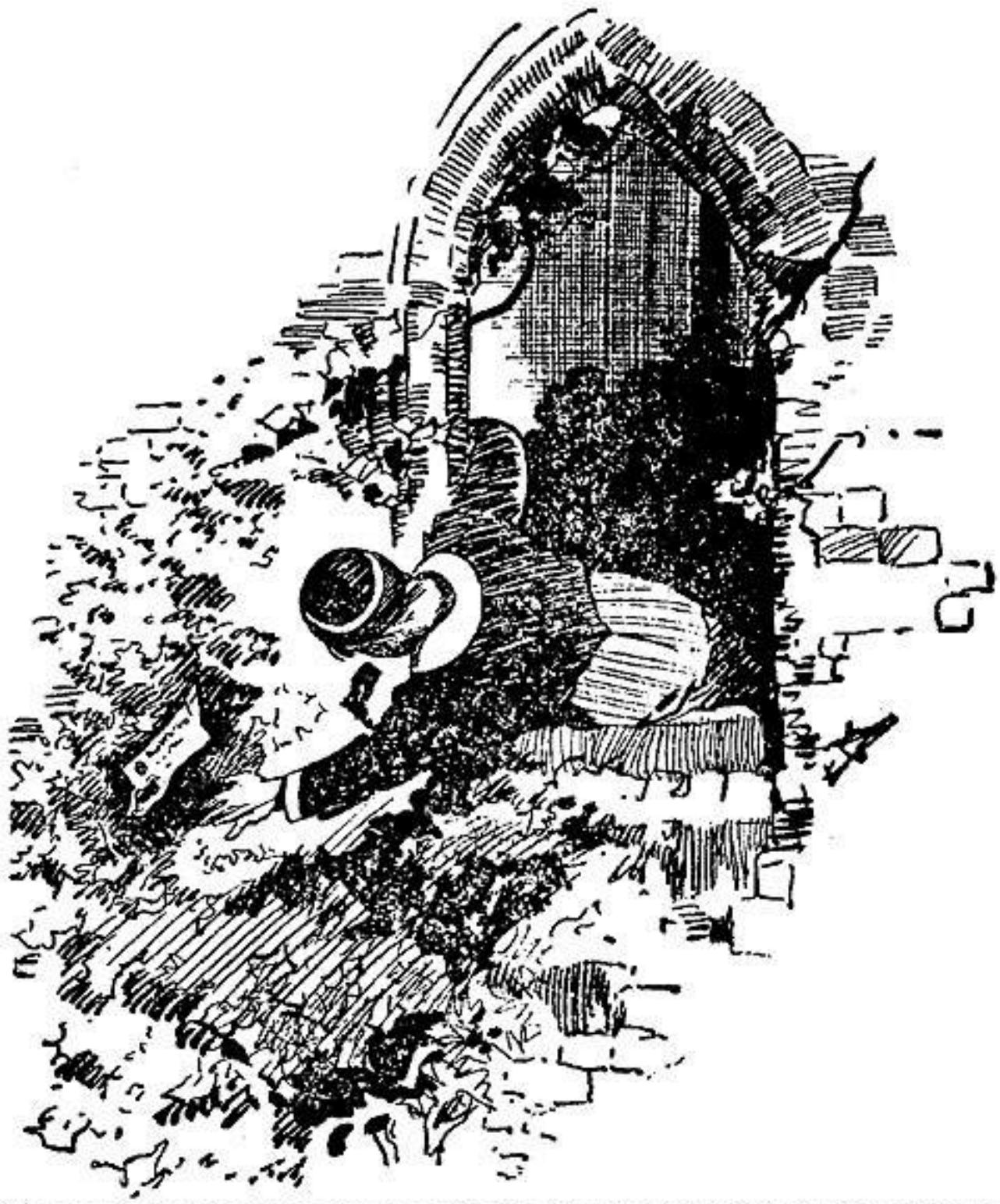
"Oh, shut up!"

"Well, you know it," said Snoop tartly. "What the thump's the matter with you? You seem to have changed all of a sudden. Do you like being licked?"

"Shut up!" snarled Skinner.

"You say he isn't a thief. Yesterday you said he was. What's happened since yesterday, I'd like to know?"

Skinner was not likely to tell him that. He tramped away down the passage, leaving Snoop staring.



Skinner stretched out his hand to pick the flimsy white sheet of paper that was lodged in the thick ivy, with an idle curiosity to see what it was. As he did so, he gave a start, gazing at the slip with unbelieving eyes, his mouth open in astonishment. It was a banknote for ten pounds! *(See Chapter 12.)*

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Clouds Roll By!

MARK LINLEY took a letter from the rack, in break on Monday morning, and walked out into the quad to read it. Several fellows glanced after him, and Billy Bunter gave a fat chuckle.

"I say, you fellows, Linley's got a letter from home," he said.

"How do you know that, porpoise?" asked Bolsover major.

"Post-marked Manchester," explained Bunter. "That's where his people live, I notice things, you know."

Bunter really seemed to think it was rather a creditable performance, to notice things that did not concern him.

"It's from his pater," went on Bunter. "I know his fist—frightfully uneducated, you know. He, he, he! I say, that letter's written to acknowledge getting Stewart's ten pounds. He, he, he!"

"I wonder if the old johnny knows he pinched it," remarked Snoop, with a giggle.

"Oh, he'd guess!" said Bunter. "Wouldn't he, Skinner?"

"You fat fool!"

"Eh?"

"Shut up!"

Bunter blinked at Skinner, his little round eyes almost bulging through his spectacles.

"Oh, really, Skinner! Don't you think they're all tarred with the same brush?" asked the fat junior. "I fancy they're all much of a muchness. The old johnny knows jolly well that Linley never had ten pounds of his own."

"Just know it!" said Snoop.

"Oh, cheese it!" said Skinner. "You're a pair of rotters! If I were a pal of Linley's I'd bang your heads together!"

"Why, you cheeky beast——"

"You cheeky rotter——"

Perhaps Skinner was a little unreasonable. He had knowledge that Snoop and Bunter did not possess. They were making remarks that Skinner himself might have made a couple of days ago. Now, however, those remarks had a peculiarly irritating effect on Skinner. His conscience, instead of settling down to what he had done, had worried him more and more, and for days he had been haunted by the knowledge of his own rascality. More and more the feeling had grown upon him that he could not keep his discovery a secret—that if he did keep it a secret, he would be a villain, worse than he had ever made Mark out to be. In that harassed frame of mind he was not likely to draw comfort from the gibes of Snoop and Bunter.

A wrathful voice chimed in, the powerful tones of Bob Cherry.

"Right on the wicket, Skinner, though it's queer coming from you! Here's a pal of Marky's, and I'm going to take your tip!"

Snoop and Bunter roared simultaneously as their collars were grasped in Bob's powerful hands.

Bang!

Two heads came into violent contact, and two loud yells sounded as one.

Skinner grinned sourly, and walked out into the quad.

He glanced round him.

Mark Linley was leaning against an elm in the distance, reading his letter from home. Stewart of the Shell was near the house, talking to Hobson, and Skinner caught a few words. Stewart was still on his old topic—of a fathead who had chucked him a banknote to catch on a windy day. That was a topic of which Stewart never seemed to tire, though poor Hobson was fed right up to the teeth with it.

Skinner walked away towards the Cloisters. He made his way to the old tower.

Somehow, those gibes of Bunter and Snoop had decided him and made up his wavering mind. He could not keep it up any longer—he could not let a fellow he knew to be perfectly innocent continue to be the butt of such gibes. And now he had at last made up his mind, he was anxious to get it over.

Mark Linley little dreaming of what was coming, was reading his letter from home with a bright face. There was good news in that letter. Old Mr. Linley had found a new job, better than the old job, as he gleefully told his son, and the ten pounds had saved the little home from disaster. Now there were better prospects, and the old gentleman's cheery satisfaction showed through every line of the letter. Mark's face brightened like the sun coming out from the clouds as he put the letter in his pocket at last.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" The Famous Five, sauntering round the quad, came on Mark under the elms. "Enjoying life—what?" bawled Bob Cherry.

Mark laughed happily.

"Well, yes, rather!" he answered. "I've had jolly good news from home. It's all serene there now. I know you'll be glad."

"What-ho!" said Harry Wharton heartily.

"The gladfulness is terrific, my esteemed and absurd Marky!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "As the English proverb remarkably observes, there is a silver lining to every pitcher that goes longest to the well."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Skinner came from the direction of the Cloisters. He hesitated as he approached the cheery group, but finally made up his mind and came on. The looks he received were not cordial.

"Well, what are you butting in for?" growled Johnny Bull.

Skinner flushed.

"Not wanted, I suppose?" he sneered.

"The wantfulness is not terrific, my excellent and execrable Skinner!"

"Hook it!" said Nugent.

Skinner's face darkened, and his hand closed almost convulsively on a crumpled banknote in his pocket. After all, why should he speak out?

"Hold on, you men," said Mark Linley quietly. "Skinner's got something to say, haven't you, Skinner? I believe I can guess what it is, too."

Skinner started.

"You—you can guess?" he stammered.

Mark smiled.

"Yes; I believe you've made up your mind that you were mistaken about me, Skinner, and you're going to say so."

"Oh!" ejaculated Wharton.

Skinner's look was very curious.

"You think I'd own up if I found out I'd made a mistake?" he asked.

"Any decent fellow would!" answered Mark.

Skinner's hard face softened.

"Well that wasn't exactly what I was going to say," he said slowly. "But you're right, Linley. I've made a rotten mistake, and I'm sorry. You give me the credit for being decent enough to own up, and you're not wrong there, I hope. I came up to ask you fellows to come with me to speak to Stewart of the Shell."

"What on earth for?" asked Bob.

"Because you'd like to hear what I've got to say to him, especially Linley."

"Blessed if I catch on!" said Bob. "But lead on, old bean! Follow in your father's footsteps, you men!"

In a state of considerable wonder, the Famous Five and Mark Linley followed Skinner to where Stewart of the Shell stood talking with Hobson outside the House.

They regarded the Removites disparagingly as they came up, as was the way of the Shell. But their looks changed as Skinner drew a crumpled banknote from his pocket.

"What——" ejaculated Stewart.

"What——" exclaimed Hobson.

"I found it," said Skinner. "I've looked at the number on your paper on the board, and it's the same. It's your banknote."

"Great Christopher Columbus!" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

"My hat!" Edward Stewart turned the crumpled note over in his hands and examined it, and fairly grinned at it. He had long given up hope of ever seeing that tenner again. "I say, where did you find it, Skinner?"

"It was stuck in the ivy on the old tower."

"I knew it was somewhere," said Hobson, with conviction. "You remember me saying, Stewart, that I felt certain it was somewhere?"

"You did," agreed Stewart. "With a brain like yours, old bean, it's what you would say!"

"Look here, Stewart——"

"I say I'm awfully obliged, Skinner!" said Stewart. "I offered a pound out of this to the finder, and if you like——"

"Thanks! I'm not Bunter!" said Skinner loftily.

Stewart laughed.

"Well, I'm no end obliged! Queer that you should find it when you're the chap who was making out that a man had found it and kept it! I knew it was all piffle all along. Come on, Hobby! I'm going to change this tenner before you have a chance to chuck it away again!"

"Look here, Stewart——"

The Shell fellows walked away towards the school shop, Stewart smiling gleefully, and Hobson as pleased as his friend, with the knowledge that Stewart's eloquence on that painful topic, which had seemed endless, had come to an end at last.

The Famous Five stared at Skinner. He had quite taken their breath away.

"Well, my hat!" said Wharton at last.

"Thanks, Skinner!" said Mark Linley in his quiet way. "You've done me a jolly good turn as well as Stewart! It was jolly lucky, your finding that banknote!"

"It mightn't have been!" muttered Skinner. "But—but I'm glad I found it—glad it's all come right."

"I say, you fellows——"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! News for you, Bunter!" roared Bob Cherry. "Skinner's found Stewart's banknote——"

"Wha-a-at!"

"And Stewart's gone to the tuckshop with it! After him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter blinked for some moments while his fat brain assimilated this startling intelligence. Then he darted off in the direction of the tuckshop, his fat little legs fairly twinkling as he flew, followed by a roar of laughter from the chums of the Remove. And there was still louder laughter when, a few minutes later, Billy Bunter shot out of the doorway of the school shop like a pip from an orange, with a boot that looked like Stewart's close behind him.

THE END.

("Bob Cherry's Big Bargain!" is the title of next week's fine story of the Chums of Greyfriars. It's the first of a new series, so don't miss it, boys.)

NEXT WEEK'S

GIANTS of CRICKET ARTICLE

deals with A. P. F. CHAPMAN, who captained the victorious England Eleven in the recent series of Test matches in Australia

THE WORLD'S GREATEST TEC—FERRERS LOCKE! MEET HIM BELOW!

THE MASKED DEATH

by — JOHN SYLVESTER

Who killed Silas Morecombe? Who murdered a man in Half Moon Street? These are but two of the knotty problems Ferrers Locke has set out to solve in his latest case, which bristles with perils and set-backs, and shields an unknown enemy.

Outwitted !

"LOOK out!"

It was Ferrers Locke who spoke.

Jack Drake managed to roll himself out of range of the light. He saw that it came from a pocket torch.

For a fraction of a second he marvelled that Ferrers Locke should be so incredibly rash as to expose himself, having deliberately extinguished the ordinary light, by switching on a pocket torch.

From the opposite end of the room an explosion seemed to confirm his view. Although he could not see the Baker Street detective, that disc of light made a perfect target.

"He must be crazy!" Jack groaned to himself.

He kept his eyes glued on the direction from which the shot was fired. He fancied he could detect a slight movement in the shadows.

Then close behind his ear a voice whispered:

"Make for the door at all costs."

Jack Drake nearly gave vent to a cry. Ferrers Locke was right behind him, whereas the electric torch was five or six yards away. In a flash the truth dawned on the youngster. It had been balanced on the edge of the table. It was merely a ruse to draw the enemy's fire.

Carefully Jack Drake began to work his way along the wall on all fours. Any moment he expected the revolver to bark again. But if only he could get through to the passage he could cut off the man's retreat.

Inch by inch Ferrers Locke's boy assistant drew nearer. His arm was smarting painfully, although he realised it was only a flesh wound. Putting out his hand, he felt an inward glow of triumph. It had touched a wooden panel.

To attempt to open it unobserved would be futile. He must make a sudden dash and rely on speed to break out of the room before the other man could fire. Also, there was the chance that Ferrers Locke, who was moving softly through the darkness in another direction, would be able to grapple with the intruder.

There must be no mistake. Their lives depended on it. If they succeeded in capturing this man the Bridgeworthy mystery would be solved.

Jack Drake held his breath, every nerve in his body tensed, and all at once he made a grab for the handle. The door flew open. Like a streak he was on the landing. But there were no shots. Instead, to his amazement, he heard Ferrers Locke's voice.

"He's fooled us! He's got out!"

The Baker Street detective ran out to join his assistant, torch in hand. The look of mortification that had crossed his face was rarely seen.

"But he's still in the house!" Locke exclaimed. "He hasn't had time to get clear. Try the next room."

The next room was a kind of workshop in which the detective used to carry out his scientific experiments. As they entered and switched on the light Jack Drake gave a cry.

"The window's open! But surely he can't get down that way!"

Without even pausing to get his revolver Ferrers Locke followed his assistant to the window, the lower sash of which had been raised. A chute ran down the side of the house, and halfway down, climbing with the agility of a cat, was the man they were after.

"What shall I do, guv'nor?" asked Jack eagerly.

"Rush into the garden," was the instant reply. "If he climbs the wall he is bound to be trapped in the lane. Meanwhile, Drake, I'll go to the front door. He may try and slip around to mingle with the ordinary passers-by. Or he may have a car waiting. But remember he is armed. Make a noise—shout 'Police!' and 'Murder!' You can't play this game single-handed."

"I'll get him!" muttered Jack, rushing back.

He leapt the stairs four at a time. As soon as he reached the garden he saw a black figure silhouetted against a wall.

The youngster darted forward, yelling at the top of his voice. He carried a police whistle, and he whipped it out. The shrill blasts and his own cries brought startled faces to the windows. One thing was certain—if his quarry—who had now dropped into the lane—continued to run, he would pretty quickly be stopped.

But as Jack mounted the wall he experienced a sick disappointment. All he could see were the tail lights and the number of a disappearing car.

In Baker Street itself quite a crowd had gathered. Policemen were running in all directions. Suspicious-looking pedestrians were instantly stopped and challenged.

But it led to nothing. As Jack Drake came running up he saw at a glance that Ferrers Locke had given up hope.

"He's been too clever for us," said the Baker Street detective ruefully.

"Oh, I wouldn't say that, sir!" protested the constable, who was standing beside him. "He may be lying low in some garden or shed. We must go on with the search!"

"It's my belief," said Jack Drake, recovering his breath, "he made off in a car. A powerful two-seater shot up the lane just as I climbed the wall. But I took the number—O.R.7743."

"I'll phone that number through to the Yard," said the constable quickly. "Every traffic man in London will be on the look-out for it. We'll have the Flying Squad on the track in a matter of minutes. But, of course, sir, I needn't tell you how these things are worked."

"It's hardly necessary," replied Ferrers Locke, with a rather forced smile. "You may find the car—but it's the man inside it I want."

"So you think it's a bad case?" queried Jack, as they turned away. "Hang it all, I haven't discovered yet how he got out of the room without our noticing. It's like a dashed conjuring trick."

"It was neat and daring," admitted Locke. "Let it be a warning to us. We know now what to expect."

"But how was it done?" Jack persisted.

"Exactly as every other conjuring trick is done—by distracting our attention. When he fired, the sound deadened the opening of the door. He had to be quick, of course. But he relied on the fact that we wouldn't

anticipate such a move. He was perfectly right. We wasted several precious minutes waiting for him to fire again."

"But what was his idea?" asked Jack Drake. "If he wanted to shoot us surely he could have done so. He knew we weren't armed."

"There's a limit, Jack, to the number of shots you can fire in a London flat without arousing unwelcome attention. Of course, he would have liked very much to have blown my brains out; because although they've been somewhat rusty to-night, in the long run he knows they are to be feared. But there's something he wanted still more."

"Something he wanted?" the boy echoed.

"The leather case you saw me nursing when you came in. If I am not very much mistaken we shall find it missing when we get back."

Jack Drake gave a low whistle.

"Was it important?"

"It contained some charred fragments of letters that had been burnt in that flat in Half Moon Street. Inspector Laubton let me have them to study. I managed to extract some useful information. There were only a few words legible, but fortunately I committed them to memory. It would have been better for our visitor's health if he had fired sooner. It was your arrival that put him off his stroke."

"And your lecture about lepidoptera," grinned Jack. "I bet that started him guessing. I suppose you haven't the faintest idea who he is?"

"At present I'm calling him——"

But suddenly the detective broke off. A policeman was hurrying up to him.

"Excuse me, sir, but there's a gentleman wants to speak to you. He says it's urgent. I found him ringing the bell of your house." The man gave a smile. "I nearly arrested him by mistake."

"Did he give his name?" asked Locke, after exchanging a quick glance with Jack.

"Mr. James Lomax, sir."

An Interesting Visitor!

AN overturned table and the scar of a bullet on the wall was all that remained to remind Ferrers Locke of the narrowest escape he had ever had. But by now he had fully recovered from his chagrin at being outwitted.

As he showed in the visitor Jack Drake was astonished by his excellent spirits.

"I am afraid, Mr. Lomax, you must excuse the disorder," he explained. "You come at a rather unfortunate moment."

"So I heard!" declared Lomax. "Wasn't an attempt made to burgle your house?"

"To murder me," corrected Locke softly.

"Good heavens, you don't mean——"

The big Australian looked aghast. He was a stalwart man, six feet of bone and muscle. His bronzed face was clean cut and resolute. He had faintly reddish hair and frank blue eyes.

"I can't say it is altogether a novel experience," continued Ferrers Locke, as Jack Drake hastily straightened out the furniture. "But I don't mind admitting that the man who did it is one of the most diabolically clever criminals I have ever hunted down."

"Then you know who he is?" asked Lomax, as though that at least was something to be thankful for.

"I have a suspicion, but no proof. Not yet, at any rate." The detective shrugged his shoulders. "There is a great difference between legal and scientific evidence, Mr. Lomax. In science you frame an hypothesis to fit a set of facts; if it doesn't exactly fit, or if another fact turns up to spoil your theory, you set about to build a fresh one. You can't do that in law; you must be absolutely certain before you hang a man. You must not only be sure yourself, but you must convince a jury who are blind to anything but the very obvious. A good many murderers walking about to-day have reason to be grateful for the law which prefers the opinion of the layman to the expert. The idea seems to be that if you multiply one stupid man by twelve you get intelligence."

Lomax looked absolutely bewildered.

"You've got a remarkable set of nerves," he exclaimed, "to discuss calmly the merits of the jury system within a few minutes of an attempt on your life."

"In my profession we can't afford the luxury of nerves. However, if you will sit down perhaps you will tell me why I am indebted to you for this visit. May I offer you a cigarette?"

"Thanks, but I only smoke cheroots. I'll light one if you don't mind. But most people think they are poisonous."

"You didn't pick up that habit in Australia, did you?"

"We smoke them a lot over there," nodded the other. "I was in the tropical north, you know. I was with an opal syndicate for a time. Then I started prospecting on my own. You wouldn't think, living in the wilds as I have, that I'd have any more nerves than you have. Yet, in the past few days—well, frankly, this thing has got me rattled."

Ferrers Locke stuffed his pipe with tobacco, and, after applying a match, waited encouragingly. He had deliberately chosen a roundabout method to put the visitor at his ease.

"It's this affair of my brother," Lomax went on. "It's no use pretending that Silas and I wasted much love on each other. I knew that he was pretty much of a rotter. Although I didn't realise he was bad enough to stoop to actual crime. But the police tell me that under the name of Morecombe he once served a term of imprisonment."

"That's so," Ferrers Locke assented, puffing at his pipe. "He was mixed up with a dangerous gang of crooks headed by a scoundrel called Peter the Pedlar."

"I knew nothing of it," protested Lomax. "We seldom corresponded. In fact, when I came back to England a month ago he refused even to see me. He seemed to be living in rigid seclusion."

"With good reason," murmured Locke. "However, please proceed."

"The first I heard of his murder was when I read it in the newspapers. Naturally I rushed down to Bridgeworthy. I am informed that as he has died intestate I inherit the property."

"Do you intend to settle there?"

"I haven't decided. I shall certainly live at Bridgeworthy until this terrible mystery is cleared up. After the man who murdered him has been brought to justice I may sell the place and go abroad again. But that is why I came to see you. I believe my brother appealed to you to act for him and you refused. I am going to ask you to reconsider your decision and act for me instead."

Ferrers Locke had become more thoughtful.

"Aren't you satisfied with the way the police are conducting the case?"

"Very far from it," said Lomax emphatically. "I've seen Inspector Webster, but the man strikes me as being an utter fool. He would have arrested Soames if I hadn't stopped him."

"This is interesting. How did you stop him?"

"You've asked me a difficult question." Lomax drew himself up in the chair and studied the ash of his cheroot. For a minute he seemed hardly to know how to go on. "I promised Webster I wouldn't breathe a word of this to a soul. However, I don't feel bound to keep that promise so far as you are concerned. It happened last night, at eleven o'clock.

"I was going to bed. It was the first night I had spent at Bridgeworthy. I had partially undressed, and was smoking at the window of my room admiring the moon on the moor, when I saw—I saw something."

He hesitated, shrugged his shoulders; and Jack Drake, who had guessed what was coming, was surprised by the gravity of Locke's expression. The latter was leaning forward, his face tense.

"You saw the ghost?" he asked.

"What they call the ghost." Lomax tried to smile deprecatingly, but he could not hide his uneasiness. "Of course, it was someone dressed to the part. What's behind it is what we've got to find out. That's why I've come to you. But it was cleverly done. I'm not a nervous man, but for a moment I confess—well, frankly, I don't wonder the villagers won't go near the place."

"Will you tell me exactly what you saw?" invited Locke slowly.

INTRODUCTION.

FERRERS LOCKE, the world's famous detective, and his assistant, Jack Drake, receive a visit from Mr. Silas Morecombe, of Bridgeworthy, South Devon, who tells Locke that he has received two notes threatening his life. In consequence of this, Locke and Drake visit the West Country that night and watch the house on the edge of Dartmoor. Suddenly their vigil is broken by an alarm from the house, and rushing in, they discover Silas Morecombe dead in his room, the murderer having vanished without a trace. Inspector Webster, of Scotland Yard, who is in charge of the case, suspects Soames, the dead man's butler. Ferrers Locke, however, has a different theory, for he knows that Morecombe—whose real name was Lomax—was a member of a criminal gang that, years before, had been responsible for the disappearance of half a million pounds worth of bullion. The gold was never recovered, and Locke is convinced that somewhere at the Grange are concealed the stolen ingots that were the cause of Morecombe's death. Later, Locke reads of a shooting tragedy in Half Moon Street, and thinking that this may have some bearing on the Morecombe mystery, he hurries back to London with Drake. A close scrutiny of the room soon convinces the detective that it is not a case of suicide but murder. That same night when the detective and Drake are back in their quarters at Baker Street, the former's quick eye detects a movement behind one of the curtains. A moment later a revolver barks out and a bullet whistles perilously near the detective's head. Jumping to his feet, Locke plunges the room in darkness, realising only too well that crouching somewhere in the background is the master-criminal he has been searching for. Suddenly there is a roar, something red-hot stings Drake's arm, and he is blinded by a sudden dazzle of light.

(Now read on.)

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"My room overlooks the lawn. Behind that, as you know, there is a laurel hedge and a fir plantation. What first attracted my attention was a peculiar sound, like the hoot of an owl, but more prolonged and somehow more suggestive of pain. Honestly, it was a most bloodcurdling sound.

"I looked out in amazement, but I could see nothing. Then right in the middle of the lawn I noticed what looked like a shadow—but there was nothing to cast any shadow. Gradually it began to move and the moonlight revealed a tall, white shape—like a monk with a pointed cowl. I guess my imagination was a bit excited, because although I looked straight at it, the thing didn't seem to have any face.

"It raised one arm, pointed a skinny hand at the house, and uttered another mournful wail."

Even the recollection seemed to move Lomax. He paused and drew his hand across his forehead at the same time forcing an apologetic laugh.

"It's different when you are describing it. I'm not a superstitious man, but just for a minute I've got to admit, I was shaken. However, I told myself not to be a fool. I had a revolver handy, and I dashed downstairs. By the time I had reached the grounds the spectre had vanished. Now what do you make of that, Mr. Locke?"

"I take a very serious view of it," was the reply.

"You mean—for heavens' sake don't keep anything back—my own life is threatened!"

"I certainly think so," answered Locke deliberately. "I should advise you to keep away from Bridgeworthy."

"Well I'm hanged if I'll be scared away," said Lomax, bringing his fist with a thud, down on the arm of the chair. "I was taken by surprise last night. I'm convinced the ghost is solid enough to be stopped by a bullet. And next time I won't be so slow about trying."

"I admire your courage," said Ferrers Locke. "It takes real courage for a man to admit he has been frightened—and still to stick it out. But how does this touch Soames?"

"Oh Soames," said the other, half contemptuously. "A more inoffensive man you couldn't find. I've taken him on myself. Of course, when I told Webster about the ghost he had to agree that Soames couldn't be guilty. He was at the police station when it happened, and he couldn't be in two places at once."

"Webster's reasoning is improving," murmured the detective. "So you want me to take up the case?"

"I do," said Lomax fervently. "I've heard of your reputation. I'm not a rich man, but if it's a question of money——"

"It isn't," interrupted the Baker Street detective almost curtly. "But before I consent, I must acquaint you of my invariable rule. If at any time a clash should arise between the interests of a client and those of justice, I always take the side of justice. I am not suggesting that will happen; but I give everyone a formal warning. I look upon a case purely as a riddle to be solved. I am out to get the truth no matter what the consequences."

He stood up, and Lomax also rose with alacrity.

"That certainly suits me," he declared, taking the proffered hand. "I can't say how grateful I am to you. I haven't much faith in the police, if they are all like this man Webster. When may I expect you down?"

"Sometime to-morrow," was the smiling answer.

"I'll get him!" muttered Jack Drake, mounting the wall. But the youngster experienced a sick disappointment, for all he could see were the tail lights and the number of a fast disappearing car. His quarry had flown. (*See page* 25.)

Mr. Lomax is Mysterious!

"WELL Jack my boy," observed Locke cheerfully as they sat in a motor-car speeding towards the moors, "I've brought that butterfly net. May the hunting be good."

They had passed Yelverton and entered a bleak stretch of moorland. The wild Dartmoor ponies were feeding among the great heaps of granite, their long manes blowing in the wind.

"You don't seem to think much of my own bit of work," complained Jack, who considered he had a grievance.

"On the contrary, you did splendidly. I've passed on that information to the Yard. Lambton hasn't recovered from the news of our last night's adventure yet. Still I was able to give him what he wanted."

"About the burnt letters?"

Ferrers Locke nodded.

"I must read you a lesson one of these days on the Gross process. You may have noticed that if you burn a letter the writing usually stands out quite legibly in grey, against the black background. The difficulty lies in collecting the fragments without breaking them. To do that you introduce them into an atmosphere containing moisture, which reduces their brittleness. Then you fit them after the fashion of a jig saw puzzle under tracing paper, which you finally cover with glass.

"We should probably have had some very valuable clues if some blockhead of a policeman hadn't raked over the ashes. However, I collected some broken sentences which may turn out to be important. The dead man had recently had a violent quarrel with Silas Morecombe, because one of the letters containing a good deal of abuse was signed by Morecombe. There was another letter suggesting he might be sailing on the S.S. Nestoria next Wednesday."

Jack's eyes widened.

"Then why did he take the flat?"

"My theory all along has been that he didn't. It was taken in his name and he was lured there by the man who murdered him. The same man murdered Morecombe, and shot at me last night."

"Do you think he's one of Peter the Pedlar's gang?"

"For the present I'm content to call him Mr. X."

"And it's Mr. X," cried Jack, "who is creating the scare about the house being haunted. He wants to keep the villagers away and drive Lomax out so that he can hunt at his leisure for the bullion. But wouldn't it be a good idea for Lomax to put the house up for sale? If we were right the murderer would be the one to buy it."

"He is too clever to be caught like that. We are up against a man who has a genius for crime. And he is utterly remorseless. He has the courage of his own logic, because it's an odd thing how few people realise in practice that the punishment for one murder is precisely the same as the punishment for a hundred."

"Of course," said Jack reflectively, "Mr. X may be several people. Perhaps it's just the name we've given to a whole gang."

"It's a name we are using to conceal our ignorance," remarked Locke frankly. "We've got a certain amount of data. We know very roughly the build of the man, and fairly accurately the size of his hands. We know the colour of his hair, providing it isn't dyed, and if he follows the statistical average, the colour of his eyes also. I

think we can be confident he has served a term of imprisonment, or else he wouldn't be so careful to leave no fingerprints. He was probably in the same prison as Peter the Pedlar, or it is unlikely he would have heard about Morecombe's treachery.

"So the field of inquiry is narrowing down. And as he is certain to return, even though we may not catch him red-handed, he is bound to leave fresh traces. Meanwhile, from the burnt letters I deciphered we have definite proof that there is a connection between the Half Moon Street mystery, and the murder of Morecombe."

Ferrers Locke had barely finished this resume when the tiny village of Bridgeworthy came in sight. Despite his apparent candour, Jack had an impression that the detective was keeping something back. He knew Ferrers Locke too well, however, not to realise that he would not divulge an iota more than he intended.

"He knows who Mr. X is," thought the boy, "but he won't admit it until he gets more definite proof."

This conviction tantalised him, because he was sure that Locke was only keeping back his deductions; he had shared the whole of the available evidence.

Lomax was on the doorstep, evidently anxiously awaiting their arrival. A shade of relief crossed his bronzed face as they got out of the car.

"Will you come straight into the study?" he asked. "There's been a new development. I've said nothing to Webster. I thought I would get your advice first."

A new development! Jack felt a tingle of excitement. He liked this big, clean-limbed Australian. He admired him for his pluck in staying on in this house, although he knew the danger to which he was exposing himself.

It was difficult to realise that he was the brother of that oily scoundrel, Silas Morecombe. No two more utterly different types could be imagined.

As soon as they entered the study Lomax explained what had happened without preamble.

(Look out for next week's thrilling instalment, and prepare yourself for some startling developments in this great mystery which Ferrers Locke is determined to solve.)

"BOUND FOR THE AMAZON!"

(Continued from page 15.)

The St. Sam's boys glarnsed at it curiously, then they started with surprise as they read the label.

This was how it was addressed:

"Jack Jolly, Esq.,
c/o The Conkerer,
Southampton Harber.

FRAGILE. WITH CARE.

To be opened as soon as the yot gets out to sea."

Jack Jolly & Co. were natcherally keenly interested in the misterious package after that, and grete was their curiosity to find out what it contained. They made up their minds to prize it open as soon a they left England's shores behind them.

Five minnits after the uneggspected packing-case had arrived, the good ship Conkerer moved slowly and majestickally off towards the open sea. Soon the coastline of good old England was receding into the background, and the Conkerer was steaming proudly out to sea.

Jack Jolly & Co. watched their nativ land disappearing from site, with lumps in their throats, cawsed by peaces of toffy which Frank Fearless was jennerously handing round.

Then, when the last bit of England had vannished over the horizon, they turned eagerly to the packing-case.

Jack Jolly borrowed an axe from a member of the crew, then set to work to open it.

Crash! Bang! Wallop!

The lid of the grate box gave way with a rending, splintering sound. And after that, followed another sound—a sound that made the St. Sam's chums farely jump.

"Yarooooo! Woooooop! Ow, my napper!"

"Grate pip!" eggsclaimed Mr. Fearless, who was standing by. "The box contains a hewman being!"

Jack Jolly pulled away the loose boards, then fell back with a yell of astonishment as a bald pate emerged from the straw packing.

"M-m-my hat!" he stuttered.

"The Head!" roared Frank Fearless.

And so it was! That cunning, tricky, navish old fogey had mannidged to join the party after all!

Dr. Birchemall climbed out of the case, grinning all over his dile.

"How do you do, boys? Good-afternoon, Mr. Fearless! Sorry I had to adopt this little ross for getting aboard, but your disrespective young raskal of a son tried to bar me, you see. I am sure that so far as you are conserned, I shall be an honnered guest on your yot."

"You—you——", stuttered Mr. Fearless.

Dr. Birchemall held up his hand.

"Say no more about it, sir. I know you are going to tell me to flog young Fearless for being so dispertinent to his headmaster, but I am too kindhearted to do anything of the kind. Let's have some grub. I'm feeling simply fammished!"

Mr. Fearless, who was a real good sport, swallowed his feelings with an effort and larfed.

"Well, I must say you take the biskit, Dr. Birchemall!" he remarked. "However, now you're here, you'd better make yourself at home. Follow me and we'll see what we can mannidge for you in the tuck line!"

So saying, Mr. Fearless led the way down below. Dr. Birchemall followed. And the St. Sam's boys strolled off towards their quarters, with feelings that were too deep for words!

THE END.

(Whatever you do, chums, don't miss the next amusing yarn in this grand "Amazon" series, entitled: "A TRAITOR ON BOARD!" There's a laugh in every line of it.)

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BOUND FOR THE AMAZON!

By Dicky Nugent

"Hi! All abored for the 'Conkerer' bound for the mity Amazon and trezzure . . . . vast trezzure to be had for the asking (or the looking)." Dicky Nugent's appeal to readers.

I.

BOOM!

Midnite crashed out from the old clock tower at St. Sam's.

A shadowy figger in cap and gown clumped silently along the dark, deserted passidges of the Skool House. The moonlite, shining through a latticed winder, reveeled the fact that a long beard trailed from his sinnister dile; also that he wore a black mask. A specktator would have guessed immejately that he was a bergler. It would have been a bad guess. The misterious midnite prowler was, as a matter of fact, Dr. Birchemall, the revered and majestick headmaster of St. Sam's.

Why was the Head sneaking through the Skool House in this suspishus manner? It mite have been that he was out for the purpuss of konfiscating the tuck-hamper which Stedfast of the Fourth had receeved earlier in the day. It mite have been that he was going to scare Mr. Lickham into a bloo fit by pretending to be a theef in the nite. But it wasn't.

Something more valluable than a meer tuck-hamper had brought the Head out of his nice, comfortable bed. The Head was after bigger game this time. In one of the pockets of Frank Fearless of the Fourth reposed a secret chart that showed the whereabouts of a vast trozzure that lay berried in a far-off forrin land. That was what Dr. Birchemall was after, as a matter of fact.

Crash! Bang! Wallop!

Silently as a cat, the Head mounted the stairs, and sneaked along towards the Fourth Form dormitory. No sound broke the stillness of the nite, save the soft, regular breething of hundreds of boys, and the deep, gutteral snores of the masters.

Crash!

With just the faintest sound, the midnite marauder opened the door of the dormitory where he intended to execute his fowl desine.

"You fellows awake?" he whispered, horsely.

"No, sir!" answered the Fourth.

The Head gave a grunt of satisfaction and entered the room. The Fourth slept on.

Tip-toeing across the room, Dr. Birchemall picked out the bed where Frank Fearless slept the sleep of the just. Like a snake in the grass, he reached out and grabbed the sleeping junior's trowsis. Diving his hand into the pocket, he felt a scrap of paper.

"The chart!" he muttered.

And so it proved to be. Skanning it eagerly in the light of the moon shining through one of the winders, Dr. Birchemall saw that he had found what he had set out for.

It was at that moment that Frank Fearless suddenly woke up. Sitting up in bed, he saw the sinnister figger of the midnite introoder bending over the all-important key to the trezzure his uncle had left him.

To think was to act with Frank Fearless.

"You theeving rotter!" he cried feercely.

So saying, he sprang out of bed, and hit the Head a resounding swipe on the boko.

"Yarcooo!"

The aggernised yell awoke the eccoes in the Fourth dormitory. Immejately the entire dorm. was awake.

"What's up, Feerless?" came the voice of Jack Jolly, from the other side of the room.

"Is it a bergler?" asked Merry.

"Some theeving cad is trying to pinch the trezzure chart!" answered Frank Fearless. "Switch the lights on, somebody!"

Bright turned out of bed and turned on the lights, flooding the room with illewmination, and the astonished juniors saw the sinnister figger of their midnite vizziter cowering against the wall.

"The Head!" cried Jack Jolly, reckernising the scroundrell despite his black mask.

The cowering figger trembled vizzibly.

"You're wrong!" he cried horsely. "If you think I'm Dr. Birchemall you're jolly well mistaken, because I'm not! As a matter of fact, I'm meerly a poor honnest bergler, working at my trade like a good cittizen."

"Tell that to the Maroons!" cried Frank Fearless skornfully. "No ordinary bergler would want to pinch my trezzure chart. Let's see your chivvy, you scoundrell! And gimme back my trezzure chart!"

With a movement like litening, Frank Fearless snatched the chart from the introoder's nerveless fingers, and tore off his black mask. There was a buzz from the Fourth as they saw reveeled to them the dismayed feetchers of their own headmaster.

"I knew it was the Head!" cried Jack Jolly triumfantly. "What is the meening of this, sir?"

Dr. Birchemall licked his dry lipps, and glared round the dormitory like a hunted animal. He was caught at the very moment when suxxess seemed within his grasp, and he patcherally felt fearfully waxy about it. There was nothing for it now, however, but to make the best of a bad job, and do his best to eggsplain away his suspishus behaviour.

The Head did his utmost to twist his feetchers into a grin.

"It's all right, boys!" he said, trying to appear at ease. "No need to be alarmed, I assure you. The fact is I only did it for a jape—honnest injun!"

"Pretty feeble kind of jape then!" snorted Frank Fearless.

"Nevertheless, Fearless, that is the troo eggsplanation of my prezzence in your dormitory at this nocturnal hour. My idea was to pinch the giddy chart and give you a bit of a shock, then restore it to you to-morrow. He, he, he!"

And Dr. Birchemall went off into a fit of unmewsical larfter.

The Fourth stared at him grimly. The Head's glib eggsplanation didn't strike them as konvincing somehow.

"Sure you meant to restore it, sir?" asked Merry, rather sarkastically.

"How dare you, Merry! I trussed you don't think I am capable of keeping anything that duzzent belong to me, boy!"

"I trussed you're not. But I rather fancy you are!" answered Merry tartly. "Anyway, you didn't mannidge to get away with it."

"And I'll take jolly good care he duzzent get another chance!" said Frank Fearless. "It's all very well to talk about japes, but the steaks in this game are too high for japes. I have a shrewd suspishun that my uncle's ennemy, One-eyed Pedro, has a hand in this!"

The Head blanched.

"Don't beleeve it, Fearless! I told One-eyed Pedro that I should refuse to pinch your chart under any circumstances. I—I meen, I didn't even know there was such a person as One-eyed Pedro!" he conclooded despritly.

"Convickted out of his own mouth!" remarked Jack Jolly. "Now we know why you're so anxious to come out to the Amazon with us. You're a paid hireling of the desprit pirate who is trying to do Fearless out of his doe. Shame!"

"Shame!" eccoed the Fourth indignantly.

Dr. Birchemall began to recover his sang-froid again.

"Oh, rats!" he said crossly. "I refuse to bandy words with you after such cheek. Back to your beds immejately, before I am tempted to fetch my birch on the seen!"

The Fourth hopped back into their beds at that. Nobody was particularly anxious to come into kontact with the Head's birch while the Head was in his prezzent mood.

Dr. Birchemall glared savvidgely round the dorm., then, afterswitching off the lights, made his eggsit.

There were no further alarms that nite, for Dr. Birchemall did not feel like vonchering fourth again. So the Fourth were able to sleep on undisturbed, while their shagrined headmaster spent the small hours kicking himself all round his bedroom.

II.

ON the following morning, Frank Fearless and his pals set fourth on their long jerney to the mitey River Amazon. A grate crowd of envious juniors assembulled on the Skool House steps to bid them good-buy and good-luck, and there was much cheering as the yonthful advenchers stepped into the magnifficent limoosine which Mr. Fearless had sent to take them to Southampton.

"See you after the summer hols, chaps," called out Jack Jolly, as he sank back into the lucksurious cushioned seat.

"Yes, rather!"

"Keep your end up against St. Bill's at cricket!"

"We will!"

The car was just about to move off when a bearded figger in cap and gown, carrying a battered old travelling-bag, came tearing across the quad.

"Wait a minnit, boys, I'm coming!" he yelled.

It was the Head!

Dr. Birchemall reached the limoosine and dumped his bag beside the shover.

"Sorry I'm late, boys!" he gasped, wiping the inspiration from his forrid. "We can start now."

"WE can—but not you!" grinned Frank Fearless. "I've told you before, sir, that you can't come."

"Ah, but that was only one of your little joaks!" said the Head calmly. "I have too much regard for your welfare, my boys, to allow you to travel alone into the wilds of Africa——"

"But we're going to the Amazon, not Africa!" larfed Bright.

"Well, isn't the Amazon in Africa?" asked the Head, rather testily. "When I was a skoolboy it used to be, though, of corse, they may have shifted it by now. Anyway, I'm coming!"

"Your mistake!" grinned Jack Jolly. "You're going!"

And Jack Jolly was right, for at that moment the shover hurled the travelling-bag at the Head, biffing him in the bread-basket, and landing him with a bump on the hard, unsimperthetick gravel path.

"Right away, driver!" yelled Fearless, and with a loud roar, the grate car glided silently away from the Skool House, leaving the crowd cheering lustily, and Dr. Birchemall shaking his fist and breething fire and slawter after them.

"Good-buy to St Sam's!" mermered Jack Jolly, with a last fond glarnse at the familiar old buildings. "No more cricket and rags, you chaps!"

"And no more floggings from the Head!" grinned Frank Fearless. "Thank goodness, we shan't see the old buffer till after the summer hols!"

But Fearless was speaking too soon when he said that. He did not realise how deeply mixed up Dr. Birchemall had become in the plot of the villanous One-eyed Pedro. Fearless was soon to learn better.

As soon as the crowd had dispersed, the Head picked up his bag, and hurried down to the gates.

Fossil, the aged skool porter, touched his fourlock as the Head swept on the seen, and Dr. Birchemall pawsed for a minnit.

"Fossil, I want you to go and see Mr. Lickham at once. Tell him that I shall be absent for a cupple of months or so, and that I want him to take charge of the skool while I am gone. Savvy?"

"Which I savvy," said Fossil, respectively.

"I have no small change on me at prezzent, so you had better ask Mr. Lickham to give you a tip, Fossil," added the Head as an afterthought, as he walked away.

Fossil muttered something under his broth as he turned to do the Head's bidding. He knew that the only tip he was likely to get from Mr. Lickham was the tip of that jentleman's boot!

Some distance down the lane, a motor-car was waiting, and a villanous-looking forriner wearing a shade over one eye waved a greeting to the Head. It was One-eyed Pedro!

"You pincha trezzure-chart?" he asked eagerly.

"No luck!" answered the Head broofly.

"Jumpa in, senor!"

A few seconds later the Head was being driven fewriously towards the coast.

Meanwhile, Frank Fearless and his chums, all unaware of the Head's navish trix, were in the gayest of spirrits as they tore through the countryside in the direcktion of Southampton.

The juniors' harts were beating fast now at the thought of the amazing advencher they were just beginning. They larfed and cracked jokes, and felt awfully eggsited. So eggsited were they that they could hardly touch the luncheon Mr. Fearless had provided for them in a Southampton hotel. All they mannidged to eat between the four of them was four chickens, a few dishes of vejetables, half a dozen plum duffs, and some fruit.

After lunch they embarked on Fearless Senior's steam yot, the Conkerer, a bewtiful vessel which was lying in the harbor Mr. Fearless, a bluff, harty, middle-aged jentleman, was waiting on board to greet them, and Frank Fearless made the necessary introduckshuns. After which, Mr. Fearless, in his turn, introdooced the St. Sam's juniors to Kaptin Manesale, who was in charge of the yot.

"Well, what about pushing off, Kaptin?" sujjested Mr. Fearless, after these formallities.

"I'm game, sir," answered Kaptin Manesale obligingly, then he turned to the first mate and yelled: "Is everyone and everything aboard?"

"I—I, sir!"

"Half-a-minnit, Kaptin. Isn't this big packing-case for us?" asked Jack Jolly, pointing to a hevvy wooden box under whose wait a cupple of stevedoors were staggering towards the good ship Conkerer.

"Ahoy, there! Are you lubbers bringing that here?" roared the mate.

"I—I, sir!" replied the stevedoors in corus. With that, they lurched up the gangway and depozzted their burden on the deck.

(Continued on page 28.)