

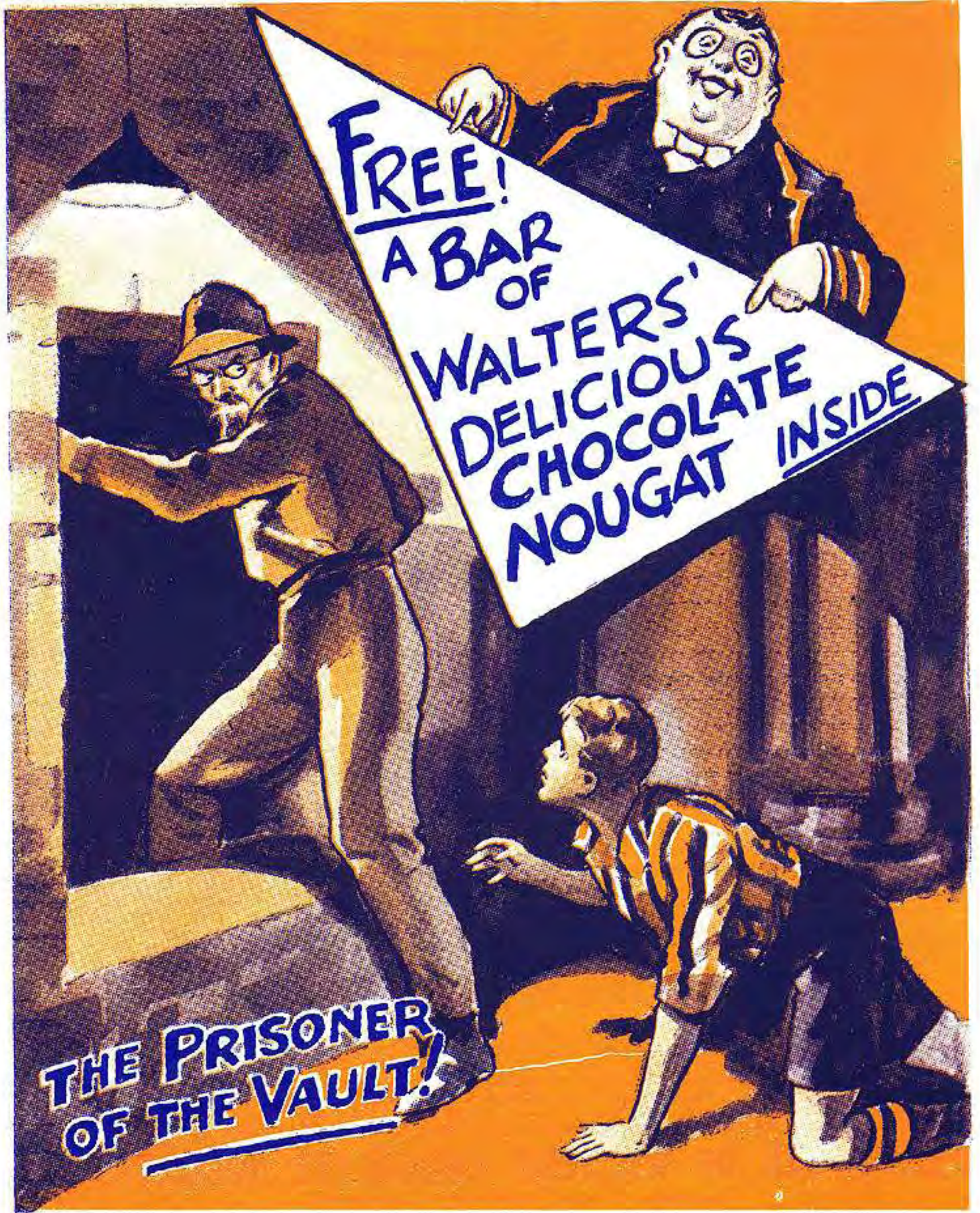
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The **MAGNET** 2^D

No. 1,355. Vol. XLV.

EVERY SATURDAY.

Week Ending February 3rd, 1934.





BY FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Kidnapped!

BOB CHERRY of the Greyfriars Remove, almost wondered whether he was dreaming.

It seemed like a dream—or, rather, a nightmare!

Less than an hour ago he had been playing football on Little Side at Greyfriars. But for what had happened he would have been playing football now—for the match would not have been over yet. But now—where was he, and where was Greyfriars School?

Dizzily he stared about.

Round him the steely clear winter sky, the sharp sunshine of a frosty January day. Below him the rolling clouds! In his ears the hum of the aeroplane's engine!

Long ago the playing fields of Greyfriars, the grey old buildings of the school, had vanished from his sight. The plane had climbed and climbed—how high, he did not know, but he knew that it must be thousands of feet. Misty clouds below him shut off the view of the earth. For all he knew, the earth was no longer below him—he might be soaring over the sea!

Almost an hour had passed since he had been torn away from his school, from his friends, and carried off in the mysterious plane. Kidnapped under the very eyes of his friends—by whom—and why? He did not know—he could not guess. The pilot sat like a statue, intent on his job, oblivious, apparently, of his passengers in the rear cockpit. Like another statue, sat the man beside Bob Cherry—his grip still on the schoolboy's arm—a grip that Bob, strong and sturdy as he was, could never have unloosed. Given a chance, Bob was ready to fight for his freedom; but he had no chance.

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The thick-set, stocky man in the leather coat beside him was twice as strong as he. And there was no escape from the plane. Until the machine landed, there was nothing doing.

Bob could only wait.

Again and again he glanced at the man beside him—the kidnapper, who had tricked him into the plane with a false story that his father had been injured in a flying accident and had sent for him. That story he knew to be false, for, as the plane rose from the football ground at Greyfriars he had seen his father's face staring up after the aeroplane. But why had the unknown man tricked him—why had he carried him off? The Greyfriars junior could not begin to guess.

The plane buzzed on at a breathless speed. Bob had been in a plane before, and he had no fear. Indeed, but for the strange circumstances, he would have enjoyed that breathless rush through space. He had always been keen for his father, Major Cherry, to take him up for a trip, in the holidays.

Several times he had spoken to the man beside him without receiving an answer—though at a movement, the vice-like grip tightened on his arm, as if the kidnapper feared that he might desperately throw himself out! Bob was not likely to do that. Amazed as he was, dizzy with amazement, he was cool enough. He spoke again at last.

"Where are you taking me?"

This time the man answered:

"You will soon see!"

"Who are you?"

Bob was staring at him—but he could see little but a reddish beard, a jutting nose, of the man in flying kit. So far as Bob knew, he had never seen the man before. And yet it came into his mind that there was something familiar about the stocky figure, if not about the face.

The man laughed slightly.

"Your father asked me the same question," he said, "and I answered that he could call me Nemo, if he wished to call me by a name."

Bob gave a violent start.

"You're the man who attacked my father in the train? He told me about it on the phone this morning."

"Exactly!"

"You rotter!" said Bob Cherry, between his teeth, and his hands clenched hard. "If I had a chance at you—"

Bob sat silent. He shivered a little—it was bitterly cold. He was still in his football outfit, and he was glad of the thick coat and muffler that Harry Wharton had forced on him before he started. Long before this, Wharton and the rest must know that he had been kidnapped—his father had arrived at the school just after he had stepped into the plane—a few minutes earlier would have saved him! As soon as they saw Major Cherry, the Greyfriars fellows would know that there had been treachery—that their chum had been kidnapped! Too late to help him!

"But why have you done this?" broke out Bob at last. "If this is a new sort of motor-bandit stunt, you're wasting your time! My father's not rich—it's not worth your while!"

"That's not the game, boy."

"Then what is it?"

"A secret!" said the man in leathers coolly.

"You rotter!" muttered Bob.

Through the purring of the engine another sound came to his ears. It came from below, and he realised that the plane was descending. For a minute or two the sound puzzled him—and then he knew that it was the sound of the sea.

They were not yet, then, over the

sea—but they were approaching it. Bob felt his heart sink. Was he to be carried away beyond the wide waters—far from help, far from hope of rescue? But why?

Down—down—down!

Misty clouds were round him; then came a burst of sunshine. The earth, long hidden, flashed into view. Trees—fields—and in the distance a grey, rolling sea on a deserted shore. Where? Somewhere on the north-east coast, was all that the Greyfriars junior could guess. Miles—many a long mile from Greyfriars School.

But they were not, apparently, to fly over the sea. For the plane was going down. It seemed to Bob that the earth was rushing up to meet him, and almost before he realised that they were landing, the plane was taxiing along a level stretch of sand.

It stopped.

"Get out!"

The grip was still on Bob's arm as he got out of the cockpit. Not for a second did that iron grasp relax.

Not a building was in sight. Wide-stretching sands, and the endless sea—and inland, scattered trees. That was all that met his eyes. Evidently the kidnapper had picked out a solitary spot for his landing. But at a distance Bob spotted a waiting motor-car!

"Come!"

Bob Cherry drew a long breath. But the grip on his arm was like steel. He had to go. The man with the jutting nose headed for the car, his eyes snapping watchfully in every direction as he went. A man was in the driving-seat of the car, and the engine began to buzz in readiness. Another buzz reached Bob's ears, and he knew that the plane was flying again—and, with a quick glance over his shoulder, he spotted it sweeping away over the sea. But a savage jerk on his arm dragged him on.

"Get in!" The chauffeur had the door open.

At the door of the car, Bob braced himself for a struggle. It was now or never! He made a movement as if to step obediently into the car, and spun round suddenly, and drove his clenched fist full at the kidnapper's face.

The sudden, desperate action took the man by surprise. Bob's knuckles crashed in his face like a lump of iron, his grasp on the junior's arm relaxed, and he staggered backwards. With a wrench, Bob tore his arm loose, and leaped away.

In a second more he would have been running. But the chauffeur standing by the door of the car grasped him as he leaped, and dragged him back. Bob turned on him, struggling savagely, hitting out. Then there came a crash on his head from behind, and a thousand lights danced before his eyes.

What happened next Bob Cherry never knew. It was an insensible school-boy that lay hidden under a rug, as the powerful car ate up the miles.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Helping Bunter Out!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

Nobody answered Billy Bunter. Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent, Johnny Bull, and Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh, were in Study No. 1 in the Remove.

They wore worried looks.

It was three or four days since their chum, Bob Cherry, had vanished so suddenly from their eyes on the football field.

During those days there had been no news.

Not a word had been heard—not a sign had been seen—of the kidnapped junior. Planes from Wapshot Camp, near the school, had searched the skies for the kidnapping aeroplane—without finding a trace of it. The mystery was as deep as ever—Bob had simply vanished into space, leaving an empty place in the school and in the hearts of his friends.

There was only one comfort—they did not believe that he had come to actual harm. Had the mysterious flying-man meant him injury, there was no reason why he should have carried him off.

Obviously, he was a prisoner.

Why, was a perplexing problem. Where, was another problem! The use of a plane for the kidnapping seemed to imply that he had been taken to a great distance—and the fact that the plane could not be traced, hinted that it probably crossed the sea.

As likely as not—more likely than not, it seemed to the juniors—their chum was a captive in a foreign land.

When would they see him again? Would they ever see him again? What did it all mean? They could find no answers to those questions.

MYSTERY!

Where is Bob Cherry—the Remove junior who has been whisked away by kidnappers? Who is the mysterious prowler of the age-old vaults beneath Greyfriars?

These are the main topics at Greyfriars—but the double mystery remains unexplained!

THRILLS!

They had been discussing the matter for the umpteenth time, over tea—and fallen into silence! There was nothing new to say—nothing fresh to suggest! They were hopelessly at a loss.

Then Bunter barged in.

Bunter blinked at them through his big spectacles, seemingly puzzled. Bunter had not exactly forgotten that a Greyfriars man had been kidnapped. But he had relegated that comparatively trifling circumstance to the back of his fat mind. He had more important matters to think of. Bunter's horizon was generally filled up by the fat figure of William George Bunter.

"I say, you fellows!" he repeated.

No answer—but Harry Wharton made a gesture towards the door. With a worry on their minds, the chums of the Remove were hardly in a mood for the fat Owl.

"Deaf?" asked Bunter.

Silence.

"Dumb?" hooted Bunter.

"Oh, scat, you fat blister!" snapped Johnny Bull testily.

"Oh, really, Bull——"

"Buzz off, Bunter!" said the captain of the Remove.

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"Hook it!" grunted Frank Nugent.

"Don't bother!"

"The botherfulness of the esteemed Bunter is too terrific at the present idiotic moment!" said Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh.

"Oh!" said Bunter. "Is anything the matter?"

The four juniors gazed at Bunter. They were thinking of their missing chum, wondering dismally what had become of him. Bunter, evidently, wasn't!

"Well, if there's anything the matter, you can tell a pal!" said Bunter cheerfully. "If it's money, I may be able to help you."

"Idiot!" said Harry Wharton briefly.

"That's not very civil, Wharton, when a chap's offering to help you. I don't mean at the present moment," added Bunter hastily. "But I'm expecting a postal order shortly——"

"Shut up, for goodness' sake!"

"Well, if it isn't money, what's the trouble?" asked Bunter. "Quelch? It was rather rotten for the beak to turn up, after all, when he was kept away by a cold, and we hoped that he would stay away the whole term. Still, we can stand Quelch—we stood him last term."

"Fathead!"

"Is it lines?" asked Bunter, still more puzzled. "That's rotten I know. I've got lines to do for Quelch—he's got a down on me this term. He whopped me the day after he came back—he's always making out that I've done something. And he made out that I dropped on his visitor's head when I was getting out of his study window——"

"So you did, you fat duffer!"

"Well, that man Kranz shouldn't have been standing under the study window, and I shouldn't have fallen on his head," said Bunter. "I had to get out of the study, with Quelch raging at the door. Besides, that man's a rotter, whether he's an Old Boy of Greyfriars or not—I saw him rooting about Quelch's study at night——"

"Oh, dry up!"

"The fact is, I thought you fellows might help me with my lines," said Bunter. "Quelch has given me two hundred. Not satisfied with whopping a chap, you know, he gives a man lines as well. And what do you think it was for?"

Harry Wharton & Co. did not offer an opinion. They were not in the least interested in the reason why Mr. Quelch had given Billy Bunter lines.

"I'll tell you," said Bunter. "The cook said that there was a pie missing downstairs! Trotter said he'd seen me on the kitchen stairs. I told Quelch that I was in my study at the time Trotter saw me on the stairs—and you'd hardly believe that he'd refused to take my word! The fact is, you fellows, that Quelch is no gentleman!"

"Is he wound up?" asked Frank Nugent.

"Oh, really, Nugent! I think you might help a fellow with his lines, after all I've done for you! It's only fifty each, if you whack them out!" said Bunter encouragingly. "And I'll tell you what—I'll stand a spread when my postal order comes!"

"Buzz off!"

"Well, you look a pretty set of moulting owls!" said Bunter, in disgust. "If there's anything the matter, can't you tell a chap? Has anything happened?"

"You blithering, blethering, bloated bandersnatch!" roared Johnny Bull. "We're thinking about Bob—lost——"

"Oh!" said Bunter. "I'll help!"

"What?"

"I'll help you with pleasure," said the Owl of the Remove. "I'll leave my
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lines for a bit, and chance it with Quelch! Where did you lose it?"

"Wha-a-at!"

"I'll help you look! Mind, I'm not thinking of bagging it; I find it. You might lend it to me, and have it back out of my postal order! Anyhow, tell me where you lost it—"

"Is he mad?" Johnny Bull inquired of space.

"The madfulness is terrific."

Bunter blinked at them.

"Look here, wharrer you mean?" he demanded. "Didn't you say there was a bob lost?"

"Oh!" gasped Johnny Bull. Evidently there was a misunderstanding. "You benighted bletherer, I was speaking of Bob Cherry!"

"Bob Cherry?" repeated Bunter blankly. "Well, you silly ass! I thought you meant a bob! Blow Bob Cherry!"

"What?" roared Bob Cherry's chums, with one roar.

"Bother him!" said Bunter crossly. "Just like you chaps to bother about a thing that happened days ago, when a fellow's worried about his lines. I say, you fellows, Quelch said I was to take them in at six, and it's half-past five now. Are you going to help me out, or not?"

Harry Wharton rose to his feet.

"We're going to help you out!" he said.

"Yes, rather!" agreed Johnny Bull, rising also.

"The ratherfulness is terrific!"

"Good!" said Bunter. "It's only fifty each, you know—I'll sit in the arm-chair while you get through. Make your fist a bit like mine. Quelch is a suspicious beast—just like him to make out that I hadn't done the impot myself, if he noticed that the writing was different. I say—Yaroooop! Wharrer you up to?" roared Bunter, as the four juniors grasped him.

"Helping you out!" said the captain of the Remove.

"I say—Yaroooooooh!"

Bump!

Bunter was helped out—though not in the way he wanted. He landed in the Remove passage with a mighty concussion. His roar rang from the stairs at one end to the box-room at the other.

"Yoooooop!"

The door of Study No. 1 slammed on him.

"Ow! Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter. He struggled to his feet. "Beasts! What the thump ar they getting their rag out like that for, I'd like to know? Ow!" He bent to the keyhole of Study No. 1, and yelled through it: "Yah! Cads! Beasts! Funks! You come out of that study, and I'll mop up the passage with you!"

There was a movement within. Bunter did not wait for the door to reopen. On seconds thoughts—proverbially the best—he decided not to mop up the passage with those beasts! By the time the study door opened, Billy Bunter had imitated the Hunter of the Snark who beheld the Boojum—he had "suddenly, silently, vanished away!"

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Deep!

HERBERT VERNON-SMITH gave a grunt of relief, and laid down his pen on the table in Study No. 4 in the Remove.

"That's done!" he grunted.

"Good!" said Tom Redwing. "Now let's get out!"

Redwing had sat in his study while his chum got through lines. Probably

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his presence had helped to keep the Bounder to his task. The scapegrace of Greyfriars was turning over a new leaf that term—but Smithy's good resolutions were always a little unreliable. He looked in far from a good temper now.

"Two hundred rotten lines of rotten Latin!" he growled. "I'd a jolly good mind to tell Wingate to go and eat coke!"

Redwing smiled.

"Better to do the lines, old bean," he said. "After all, you asked for them."

"Two hundred lines for getting a silly ass with a snowball—"

"Well, the silly ass was in the Sixth—and a fellow's not allowed to snowball the Sixth, you know."

"Well, I've done the rotten thing, anyhow!" growled Vernon-Smith. "Let's get out, for goodness' sake, I'm fed-up! I'll drop these lines in on Wingate as we go down."

The two juniors left Study No. 4, and went down the passage to the stairs. On the Remove staircase a fat figure was lurking. Billy Bunter blinked at them as they came down and at the sheaf of impot-paper in Smithy's hand.

"I say, you fellows—"

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"Oh scat!" growled the Bounder, and he tramped on down the stairs.

"Beast!"

Bunter followed them down. It was getting towards six o'clock, and the fat Owl of the Remove had not done his lines for Mr. Quelch yet. It worried him. Harry Wharton & Co., with the usual selfishness that Bunter expected from such fellows, had refused to do the lines—so had Peter Todd, equally selfish, though he had the pleasure and honour of being Bunter's study-mate in Study No. 7.

Bunter was driven to the dismal conclusion that he would have to do those lines himself, but by the time he came to that conclusion it was too late! So he was worried!

"I say, you fellows, I'm in a scrap!" said Bunter plaintively, "I've been let down by some fellows I've done a lot for. I've got a lot of lines to do for Quelch, and I haven't touched them!"

"Go and touch them!" suggested Redwing, laughing.

"Well, it's too late, as they've got to be shown up at six!" said Bunter. "It's nearly six now! I say, you fellows, if I tell Quelch that I did the lines and that you shoved them in the study fire for a joke will you stand by a chap?"

"Oh, my hat!" said Redwing.

"He would believe you if you told him, Smithy," said Bunter eagerly.

"Of course he knows you're untruthful, and wouldn't take your word, as a rule; but then he knows it's just like one of your rotten tricks! See?"

The Bounder stared round at him. Billy Bunter had his own inimitable way of asking favours! Really, the way he put it was not tactful.

"Sit down!" said Vernon-Smith.

And he gave a fat chest a shove, and Bunter sat down on the stairs with a roar!

The Bounder grinned and went on his way. Bunter scrambled up, gasping.

"Hold on a tick, Reddy, while I cut off to Wingate's study!" said the Bounder, and Redwing waited for him at the foot of the stairs.

Smithy cut away to the Sixth Form passage. He was back under a minute, and rejoined his chum, and they went out into the quad together.

"Beasts!" mumbled Bunter, blinking after them through his big spectacles.

Then a thoughtful look came over his fat face. Blinking out into the quad-rangle after Smithy and Redwing he sighter two tall Sixth Formers walking and talking—Wingate and Gwynne.

Smithy, evidently, had not found the captain of Greyfriars in his study, and must have left the lines on the table there for Wingate to find when he came in.

Bunter's eyes gleamed behind his big spectacles.

This was a chance for Bunter!

Either he had to show up lines to Mr. Quelch by six, or take a whopping. And there were lines going begging, as it were, on Wingate's table in the Sixth Form passage.

It did not take Bunter long to make up his fat mind.

He rolled away to the Sixth.

He blinked into Wingate's study! There lay the Bounder's impot on the table! Billy Bunter whipped into the study, grabbed the impot, and whipped out again.

Then he rolled off to Masters' Passage.

At the corner of that passage he paused to do a little thinking! A glance at the impot showed him that it was two hundred lines—the number he had to do for Quelch! That was all right! The drawback was that the lines were written in Smithy's handwriting, which was rather strongly marked, and about as like Bunter's scrawl as chalk was like cheese!

That was a difficulty! It was easy to nip off the corner of the paper where Smithy had written his name. But it was not easy—it was impossible—to make Smithy's fist look anything like Bunter's own!

A difficulty like that might have baffled many fellows.

But not Bunter!

Certainly it needed thinking out—and Bunter thought it out! He was still thinking it out when six o'clock struck. There was no more time for thinking—he had to chance it. But Billy Bunter had great faith in his own diplomatic powers.

He rolled on to Quelch's study door and tapped.

"Come in!" barked the sharp voice of the Remove master.

Bunter entered. Mr. Quelch, sitting at his table, fixed his eyes on the fat junior grimly. He was expecting Bunter at six! Knowing his Bunter, he had little doubt that that happy youth would turn up with some excuse for not having written his impot, instead of bringing the impot itself. And a cane lay on the table ready!

But the grim expression on Mr. Quelch's face relaxed when he saw the sheaf of paper in Bunter's fat hand.

"Oh!" said the Remove master. "You have written your lines, Bunter?"

"Yes, sir!" said the Owl of the Remove, with an inward quake.

"You may hand them to me, Bunter!" said Mr. Quelch, quite genially.

Bunter came across the study. In Mr. Quelch's grate a bright fire was glowing and blazing. It was a cold winter's day. Mr. Quelch sat between the fire and the table. Bunter could have handed him the lines across the table. Instead of which he came round that article of furniture.

He caught his foot in the rug, and stumbled.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

He plumped over on his fat knees.

He had not counted on that prompt action of Quelch's.

Quelch had seen the written lines in his hand. That was enough—if they had disappeared into the fire before he saw them closely!

Really, it was a great scheme—quite a deep-laid plot! But, as was usual with Bunter's fatuous scheming, something was bound to go wrong! That half-sheet of paper remaining in Mr. Quelch's hand was sufficient to give him away!

Like a scientific gentleman reconstructing a prehistoric animal from a single bone, so Mr. Quelch would be able to reconstruct that imposition from a single specimen of the hand in which it had been written!

"It is not your hand, Bunter! It is nothing like the sprawling, slovenly hand for which I have many times reproved you."

"I—I've been improving it, sir!" gasped Bunter. "I—I've been trying to—to make it better, sir, because—because I—I wanted to please you, sir."

"I trust," said Mr. Quelch grimly, "that this is the truth, Bunter! Did Vernon-Smith help you with this imposition?"

"Oh, no, sir!"

"This handwriting looks very like Vernon-Smith's, Bunter."

"The—the fact is, sir, I—I've been trying to write like Smithy! I heard you tell him, in the Form-room, that his writing was good, sir, so—so I borrowed



"Get in!" said the chauffeur. Bob Cherry made a movement as if to step obediently into the car; then he spun round suddenly, and drove his clenched fist full at the kidnapper's face. Crash!

The sheaf of paper flew from his hand—right into the fire!

"Bunter! You utterly clumsy boy!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch angrily.

"Oh lor'!" gasped Bunter.

There was a flare of flame. Sheets of paper landing on a blazing fire were bound to catch alight and flare.

Mr. Quelch jumped up.

He did not know that this was diplomacy on Bunter's part. He thought that the clumsy Owl of the Remove was being unusually clumsy. He made a jump at the grate to rescue the impot. He succeeded in snatching away one half-burned sheet!

Billy Bunter scrambled up. His eyes and his spectacles fixed in alarm on that half-sheet in Mr. Quelch's hand!

"M-m-mind you don't burn your fingers, sir!" he gasped.

"You utterly foolish and clumsy boy!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch angrily. "You must be more careful, Bunter."

"Oh! Yes, sir! M-m-may I go now?" gasped Bunter, in dismay.

"I have a great mind to give you the imposition over again, Bunter!" said Mr. Quelch crossly. "However, as it has been destroyed by accident, I will not do so."

"Oh, thank you, sir!" gasped Bunter, watching the fragment in Mr. Quelch's hand in anguish.

"Such clumsiness—" snapped the Remove master.

"My—my foot slipped, sir—"

"You should not be so clumsy! You —" Mr. Quelch broke off, as he glanced at the paper in his hand. His look became fixed.

Bunter suppressed a groan! He could see that all his diplomacy had gone for nothing! There were a dozen lines of Latin on the fragment. One line would have been enough for Quelch!

"Bunter!" rapped the Remove master.

"Oh lor'! I mean, yes, sir!"

"You did not write this?"

"Oh, yes, sir! Every line!" said Bunter. "The—the fact is, sir—"

some from him, and—and copied it, to—to improve my hand, sir—"

The gimlet-eyes fixed on Bunter, as if they would bore a hole in him.

"If that is the case, Bunter, you have succeeded remarkably well!" said Mr. Quelch, with grim dryness.

"Yes, sir! Thank you, sir! I—I'm so glad you're pleased!" stammered Bunter, "c-a-a-an I go now, sir?"

"But it appears to me much more probable, Bunter, that Vernon-Smith himself wrote these lines, and that you have attempted to deceive me!"

"I, sir!" gasped Bunter. "Oh, no, sir!"

"It is strictly forbidden for one boy to help another with an imposition," said Mr. Quelch, "but it appears to me—"

"Smithy isn't the fellow to do it, sir!" gasped Bunter. "More likely to bung a grammar at me, if I asked him."

"Oh!" said Mr. Quelch.

Bunter had him there, so to speak!

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He knew every boy in his Form—better than the fellow knew himself in some cases! Herbert Vernon-Smith was not in the least likely to have helped Bunter with lines! Not in the very least! And if Smithy helped a fellow with lines, he was wary enough to make his "fist" like that fellow's, and not so distinctively his own.

Mr. Quelch was quite puzzled!

"Well, well, if you have told me the truth, Bunter—" he said.

"Oh, yes, sir! Quite."

"If you are really trying to improve your hand, I am very glad! But you must not do so by imitating another boy's hand. That is absurd, and indeed, very wrong. Do nothing of the kind again."

"Oh! Very well, sir! Certainly! I mean, certainly not! M-m-may I go now, sir?" stammered Bunter.

"You may go!"

Bunter, hardly able to believe in his good luck, went. He blinked back as he left the study, and saw Mr. Quelch throw the half-sheet of paper into the wastepaper basket under his table. Bunter would have preferred to see him throw it into the fire. However, he hoped that it was done with noise, and he left the study, in a state of considerable satisfaction.

As for what might happen to the Bounder, when Wingate of the Sixth failed to receive his lines, Bunter did not think of that. A fellow really couldn't think of everything.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

The Prisoner!

BOB CHERRY struggled feebly. But it was useless to struggle. His hands and feet were tied, and rough sacking was rolled round him, covering him from head to

foot. And two pairs of strong hands were holding him, as he was carried.

Of what had happened since he had landed from the aeroplane somewhere far up on the north-east coast, Bob had only a very hazy idea.

He had a faint recollection of something soft being pressed over his face, and the odour of chloroform; but whether that had happened more than once, he was not clear. Neither could he have guessed how long he had been in the hands of the kidnappers—whether it was hours, or days. It was a blank to him.

But his mind was clear enough now. He was tied up like a turkey, rolled in thick sacking, unable to see, unable to hear—and he was being carried along by two men—and the journey he was making seemed interminable.

No sound of voices reached him, but occasionally he caught a shuffling footstep; and through the sacking over his face there was, every now and then, the glimmer of a light.

Someone was carrying a light! Was it night? He could not tell! The dank chill of the atmosphere struck him, and he wondered whether he was below ground. If it was some subterranean passage that they were following, it seemed endless.

But there was sound at last—a jarring sound, and he wondered if it was the opening of a door.

He was set down.

There was a mutter of voices; a sound of footsteps! He fancied that they were going. Were they leaving him alone, bound as he was, helpless, in some remote and unknown spot?

He felt hands touch him. The sacking was unrolled, and fell aside. He blinked with dazed eyes in sudden light.

A man was stooping over him—the man with the beard and the jutting

nose; the kidnapper who had sat beside him in the rear cockpit of the mysterious plane. He was unfastening the knots of the cords—releasing the kidnapped schoolboy.

"You can get up!"

Bob staggered to his feet.

Instinctively his hands clenched, and his eyes gleamed, as he looked at the man who called himself "Nemo."

"Better not!" said the sharp, acid voice. "It would be easy to leave you bound, my boy—and that will be done, if you give trouble."

"I'd give you trouble enough, if I had a dog's chance!" said Bob, between his teeth. "What have you done this for, you villain?"

"That is not for you to ask! Have you any idea where you are?"

Bob looked round him.

He was, as he had half-guessed, underground. The floor beneath him was of ancient stone flags. Over him was a vaulted roof. He was in a large vault, enclosed by walls of solid stone! There was no sign of door or doorway. Obviously, there must be a door, or they could not have entered. But nothing of it was to be seen.

The air seemed fresh enough. Some hidden pipe, or outlet, communicated with the open air, that seemed certain.

The light was electric! A single shaded bulb hung from the vaulted roof. There was plenty of light in the middle of the vault, where he stood. The walls were in shadow.

The vault had been prepared for his occupation. One glance told him that much. A camp-bed, with plenty of bed-clothes, was near him. There was a washstand, a table, a chair. There were two or three boxes—a small paraffin stove—other things necessary for camping!

In sheer wonder, he stared about him.

Preparations seemed to have been made for a long stay. All this would not have been done for an imprisonment of a few hours. It seemed that he was intended to remain there indefinitely.

His glance returned at last to the man with the jutting nose. Two keen eyes, behind a pair of goggles under the peak of a cap, watched him, curiously. The man repeated his question.

Bob shook his head.

"Not the foggiest!" he answered, "Where am I, then?"

"In the very last place where your friends will think of looking for you, Master Cherry!" answered Nemo. "That is all I intend to tell you."

"I could have guessed that one!" said Bob, with a faint grin. Strange and alarming as his position was, he had not lost his courage. "I suppose I'm a good step from Greyfriars, at any rate."

A smile flickered over the bearded face for a second; a smile that Bob did not understand, but which he remembered afterwards.

"Wherever you are, you are safe from discovery!" said the man with the jutting nose. "You may, if you please, attempt to escape! When you are tired of that game, there are books"—he waved his hand towards the table, on which was a pile of books—"school-books, if you desire to study—other books, if you desire to read for amusement. In that box there are clothes, if you wish to change—as no doubt you do. You will be fed—cold viands, I am afraid—but in the circumstances, you can hardly complain. I shall visit you occasionally—not so much for the pleasure of your company as to ascertain that you are safe. Have you anything to say before I leave you?"

"Only that I'd like to knock your features through the back of your head!"

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answered Bob, "and I'd jolly well try, if you weren't too strong for me."

Nemo laughed. "You tried once—I do not recommend you to try again," he said. "I am a man to take stern measures if I am given trouble."

"How long am I to stop here?" demanded Bob.

"That depends."

"On what?"

Nemo did not answer that question. "I've seen you before somewhere," muttered Bob. "I can't recognise you, but I've seen you; there's something about—"

"I advise you not to follow that line of thought," said Nemo coldly. "If you should, by any chance, discover my identity you are not likely to see daylight again, Master Cherry. I am a man of position in the world, and could not afford to be prosecuted for kidnapping."

"Then it's not money you're after?" said Bob in perplexity.

"No."

"Then what?"

Again Nemo did not answer.

He moved away from the Greyfriars junior to the stone wall that closed the end of the vault. Bob's eyes glinted as he watched him.

"You're going?" he asked.

"I am going."

Bob breathed quickly. It was evident that there was a hidden door—that one of the great blocks of stone in the wall would move. He watched the man like a cat.

Nemo reached the wall. He touched it, and there was a low, whirring sound as a great block rolled away, disclosing a cavity four or five feet high in the wall. Nemo stepped into it, stooping his head.

Bob sprang after him.

There was another whir, and the great block closed in his face. His hands grasped and groped at it, and he pushed with all his strength.

But the block remained immovable. It had opened at a touch from Nemo. Now it was as firm and solid as the rest of the ancient stone wall.

For a full minute Bob Cherry exerted his strength on it. But there was not the slightest movement, and he gave it up at last, red with exertion, panting for breath. Evidently it was secured on the other side.

Not a sound of departing footsteps reached him. The thick, solid stone shut off all sound. He was alone—as if buried alive.

Where was he? What building was it, under which he was shut up, a prisoner, in this deep vault? He could not begin to guess. In the very last place where his friends would think of looking for him, the kidnapper had said. But where was that?

Wherever he was, he was not going to stay there! Stone walls do not a prison make, nor iron bars a cage. Somehow or other he was going to escape.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Smithy Loses His Temper!

"WHARTON!"
"Yes, Wingate?"
"Send Vernon-Smith to my study."

"Yes."

Harry Wharton went up the stairs. He had been punting an old footer with his chums in the quad till the winter darkness fell. The mysterious fate of Bob Cherry hung heavy on the minds of all his friends. But the routine of

the school had to go on just the same. Many of the Removites were getting used to Bob's absence, and even as a topic the dramatic kidnapping on the football field no longer had its first keen interest. Not that Bob's own chums were likely to get used to his absence, or to forget him. He was always in their thoughts. But, as Johnny Bull had remarked in his practical way, it

RHYMES OF THE REMOVE.

WHO WOULD BE A CAPTAIN?



Following an overwhelming demand from new readers for a Greyfriars "WHO'S WHO?" our special Rhymester has been engaged to write a series of snappy poems dealing with the characteristics of celebrities at Greyfriars. As a fitting start to this novel series, he selects Harry Wharton, the captain of the Remove.

Some fellows think my job all milk and honey;
Some think I'm "sitting pretty," as they say!
A captain's place is anything but sunny,
It often makes me feel I'm going grey!
I'm a compound made of father and of mother,
Of scapegoat, valet, messenger and son!
Ah, take one consideration with another,
A captain's lot is not a happy one.

When bowlers are not telling me with vigour
To let them have more chance to do their
stuff,

The critics say I cut a sorry figure
Because I don't remove them soon enough;
And batsmen, first and last, are all a bother,
It's my fault if they do not bag a run!
Ah, take one consideration with another,
A captain's lot is not a happy one.

I pick my team, and then there's trouble
brewing!
They say it proves that I am up the pole!
A dozen fellows join in angry booing,
Because I have not picked them all for goal!
And thirty-seven half-backs cannot smother
Their fury at the thing that I have done!
Ah, take one consideration with another,
A captain's lot is not a happy one.

On practice days I'm always in hot water
With slackers who contrive to dodge the game,
When Wingate looks for somebody to slaughter,
It's usually the captain gets the blame!
It's my fault, too, if somebody or other
Gets crooked before the practice has begun!
Ah, take one consideration with another,
A captain's lot is not a happy one!

And when a weedy rascal such as Skinner
Gets caught with a forbidden cigarette,
Should all the blame be given to the sinner?
No, that's the captain's duty, don't forget!
And if I try to stop an erring brother,
I'm poking in my nose and spoiling fun!
Ah, take one consideration with another,
A captain's lot is not a happy one.

When Bunter does a little study-raiding,
Of course; it's me the fellows want to boil!
I wonder that I am not charged with aiding
The rat rascal, and dividing up the spoil!
I'm blamed and kicked for this and that and
'other
And nothing's ever right that I have done.
Ah, take one consideration with another,
A captain's lot is not a happy one.

was no use sitting round and moping. Certainly that was not what Bob himself would have recommended.

Wharton went slowly up to the Remove passage. What would he not have given to hear Bob's cheery "Hallo, hallo, hallo!" ringing along by the Remove studies! But it was useless to think of it.

He tapped at the door of Study No. 4 and looked in. Vernon-Smith and Redwing were finishing a rather late tea there.

"Wingate wants you, Smithy," said the captain of the Remove.

The Bounder gave a grunt.

"Blow Wingate! My lines were all right! I suppose the silly ass found them—sticking right under his nose!"

"Well, he wants you in his study."

"Jolly good mind not to go!" growled the Bounder. But he went.

When the head prefect and captain of the school required the presence of a junior in the Lower Fourth it was not much use that junior having a "jolly good mind" not to go. That junior had to go!

But Herbert Vernon-Smith was looking far from amiable as he presented himself at Wingate's study in the Sixth. On his new line of reform and good behaviour, the Bounder had written his lines with unusual care, and placed them in the prefect's study in good time. So his resentment was aroused by being sent for like this, and it was roused still further by the grim look Wingate gave him.

The captain of Greyfriars rose and picked up a cane.

"Bend over!" he said.

"What for?" asked the Bounder, between his teeth.

"Six!" answered Wingate laconically.

The Bounder did not bend over as bidden; his brow darkened savagely, and he clenched his hands.

"May a man ask what he's going to get six for?" he inquired sarcastically.

"You're not going to do it simply as a form of physical jerks, I suppose?"

Wingate looked at him.

"I gave you two hundred lines for snowballing Walker of the Sixth," he said. "I saw you, though Walker didn't. Walker would have whopped you."

"I know that."

"Well, as you prefer the whopping, bend over and take it," said the Greyfriars captain. "You've had plenty of time to do the lines."

"You know I've done them!" snarled the Bounder.

"You've done them?"

"You know I have!"

"If I knew you had, Vernon-Smith, I shouldn't be going to whop you for not having done them," said Wingate quietly. "Take care how you talk. If you've done your lines, where are they?"

"Look here, what are you getting at, Wingate?" demanded the Bounder.

"You must have found my lines on your table when you came in."

"Do you mean to say that you left them here?"

"Of course I did!"

"Well, I've seen nothing of them," said Wingate, with a very suspicious look at the Bounder. "Where are they, if it's as you say?"

Vernon-Smith glanced at the table. His lines were not visible there. That he had left them there was certain. But they were not to be seen.

"Well?" rapped Wingate impatiently.

"What have you done with them?" sneered the Bounder.

"I've told you that I never found them here."

"You can tell me that till you're black

in the face!" said the Bounder, his savage temper breaking out. "But you can't expect me to believe it, when I know that I laid the impot on your table."

Wingate looked at him long and hard. "I believe that game is sometimes played on Monsieur Charpentier, and on Capper in the Fourth, Vernon-Smith," he said very quietly; "but you won't get away with it here. I'm not the man to forget whether I've had the lines or not."

"I know that!" sneered the Bounder. "You've had them! You're down on me, and you want an excuse for a whopping! The lines were here, and you know it!"

Wingate's face set grim and hard. But the Bounder's look was savagely defiant. He knew that he had left the lines there. They must have met Wingate's eyes when he came into the study. All the bitter suspicion of his nature was roused. He was a dog with a bad name, and the prefects were down on him. If he did not commit a fault to give them an opening, he was to be made to appear to have committed one.

That was the Bounder's angry and bitter belief. There was some excuse for him, for certainly he knew whether he had left the lines there or not—and he knew that he had! As for another fellow having annexed them, that idea naturally did not cross his mind, or Wingate's either. An impot was of no use except to the fellow who had written it—as a rule!

The Greyfriars captain's grasp tightened on the cane. Herbert Vernon-Smith made a backward step. Good resolves were flung to the winds now. He was once more the reckless and rebellious Bounder of last term.

"Bend over that chair!" rapped out Wingate.

"I won't!"

"You won't!" repeated Wingate blankly. "Do you know what you're saying, Vernon-Smith?"

"Quite!"

"Do you want me to take you to the Head?"

"I don't care!"

"Well," said Wingate grimly, "I won't bother Dr. Locke with you just at present, you cheeky young rascal; he's got enough to worry about since that Remove kid was kidnapped, without bothering about you. Bend over that chair at once, or I'll make you!"

The Bounder made another backward step towards the door. Wingate of the Sixth strode forward, and grasped him by the shoulder.

It was rather beyond the limit, even for the cool and iron-nerved scapegrace of Greyfriars, to refuse to obey a prefect's order to "bend over." Even Smithy had not carried his defiance of authority to that length before.

Wingate, with his left hand, swung him towards the chair. His face was set. He was going to give the rebel of Greyfriars a "six" that he would remember for a long time to come. That Vernon-Smith actually had placed the lines in the study, that he was genuinely indignant, the Greyfriars captain did not believe for a moment. He would have taken the word of a fellow like Harry Wharton, or Mark Linley, or Frank Nugent—strange as the circumstances seemed. But Smithy was paying the penalty of his own misguided ways. Masters and prefects, from his point of view, were fair game, and he had little scruple in lying when dealing with them. It naturally followed that his word was worth little.

With a swing of his strong arm Win-

gato whirled him to the chair. The Bounder struggled savagely.

"Let go!" he yelled.

Down he went, across the chair. The ashplant swished over him. But before the lash could fall, the Bounder twisted desperately away and rolled out of reach.

The cane came down on the chair with a loud whack.

"By gum!" gasped Wingate.

"You—!"

He made a jump at the Bounder. Smithy, on his feet in a twinkling, dodged round the study table. Across the table he glared defiance at the captain of the school, and Wingate, angry, but more amazed than angry, stared back at him.

"Are you mad?" he gasped.

"You're not licking me for nothin'," said the Bounder, between his teeth.

"I'll go to Quelch, if you like—"

"You'll bend over that chair!"

"I won't!"

Wingate rushed round the table.

The Bounder darted to the door. Wingate's grasp barely missed him as he leaped into the passage. He dashed away, panting.

Gwynne of the Sixth was in the passage. Wingate shouted:

"Stop him!"

"Eh? What?"

Gwynne stared round and grabbed at the Bounder a second too late. Smithy dodged swiftly and raced past.

"What the thump—" ejaculated Gwynne.

Wingate did not answer. He was striding angrily after the Bounder. But Vernon-Smith raced ahead, and reached Masters' Passage. He knocked on Mr. Quelch's door, and without waiting to be told to come in, threw open the door and entered breathlessly. A moment more, and the captain of Greyfriars, red with wrath, reached the doorway.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Quelch Solves the Mystery I

MR. QUELCH almost jumped.

"What—" he ejaculated.

He rose from his table.

Vernon-Smith stood red and panting. Wingate stood in the doorway, the cane still in his hand.

Mr. Quelch stared from one to the other.

"What—" he repeated blankly.

"I appeal to you, sir!" panted Vernon-Smith. "Am I to be caned for nothing?"

Mr. Quelch gave him a look.

"As Vernon-Smith has come here, sir, I will leave him to you!" said Wingate, as calmly as he could. "I do not think you will believe that I was going to punish him unjustly."

"Certainly I should not believe anything of the kind," said Mr. Quelch. "Is it possible, Vernon-Smith, that you have dared to resist the authority of the head prefect of Greyfriars? If so—"

"I've a right to appeal to my Form-master against injustice, sir," said the Bounder. "Wingate pretends that I never took my lines to his study—"

"Pretends!" gasped Mr. Quelch.

"That's the word, sir! I left my lines on his table, and he must have found them there! He says he did not."

Wingate's face was crimson.

"You hear him, sir!" he gasped.

"You know whether—"

"I hear him!" said Mr. Quelch grimly, "and I will hear him out before I take him to the headmaster to be flogged for his insolence, Wingate."

"Is it insolence to tell the truth?" said the Bounder savagely. "I put my

lines—two hundred of Virgil—in Wingate's study, on his table. They're not there now, so he must have found them. He says he didn't."

"Do you dare to cast doubt on Wingate's word?"

"Yes," said the Bounder coolly.

"Vernon-Smith—"

"I can prove that I did the lines! Redwing was in the study with me when I wrote them—" snarled the Bounder. "He came down with me, with the impot in my hand! Bunter saw it, too, if his word's any good."

"Bunter!" repeated Mr. Quelch.

He started.

"The lines were not in my study, sir!" said Wingate.

"I am aware of that, Wingate, as you were intending to punish this boy," said Mr. Quelch quietly, "I should not be likely to take his word against yours—or indeed against anyone's. I shall, however, inquire into this matter, as I think I can guess what has happened."

He stooped and took a crumpled half-sheet of impot paper, with a charred edge, from his wastepaper basket. He smoothed it out, watched in surprise by the Bounder and Wingate.

"Some time ago," said Mr. Quelch, "Bunter of my Form, Wingate, brought me an imposition. I saw it in his hand—"

—but by accident, as I then believed, he stumbled, and it flew into the fire. This half-sheet is all that remained. It is in Vernon-Smith's hand."

"Oh!" said Wingate blankly.

"Bunter explained that he had copied Vernon-Smith's hand, which is a very good one, to improve his writing," said Mr. Quelch. "I could hardly believe that even Bunter had been so stupid. Had I been aware then that lines written by Vernon-Smith were missing, I should not, of course, have believed him for a moment."

"Oh!" repeated Wingate.

The Bounder's jaw fell.

He had a glimmering now of what had happened.

"Will you fetch Bunter here, Wingate, please?" asked the Remove master.

"Certainly, sir!" The prefect left the study.

Mr. Quelch gave the Bounder one cold glance. The contempt in it stung Smithy. What became now of his wretched suspicion of double-dealing on the part of the Greyfriars captain?

The Bounder stood overwhelmed. Mr. Quelch gave him only that one glance, and resumed correcting a pile of papers for his Form, while he waited for Wingate to return with the Owl of the Remove.

A fat voice, in tones of remonstrance, was heard in the passage.

"I—I say, Wingate, what does Quelch want? I say, I haven't done anything, you know! If Coker says anybody has been after his tarts—"

"Come on!"

"I say, I've done my lines for Quelch. I gave them in, you know. I say— Oh lor'!"

The fat figure and dismayed face of Billy Bunter appeared in the doorway, with Wingate's hand on a fat shoulder.

"Here is Bunter, sir!"

"Come in, Bunter!" said Mr. Quelch grimly.

Billy Bunter blinked at him, and blinked at the Bounder. He almost tottered into the study.

"Bunter! Some time ago you brought me an imposition—"

"Oh lor'!"

"This half-sheet is all that remains of it—"

"Ow!"

"Did you take an imposition written by Vernon-Smith from Wingate's study?"

"Oh dear! Oh, no, sir! I—I never

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IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

thought of it!" groaned the Owl of the Remove. "I—I did my lines, sir! I—I did all of them! I never knew that Smithy had lines for Wingate! I never saw him come downstairs with the impot in his hand. Besides, he pushed me over, sir—"

"Well my hat!" murmured Wingate. "Oh, you fat rotter!" breathed the Bounder. "You—"

"If—if Smithy says I bagged his impot, sir, he—he's prevaricating, sir," stammered Bunter. "Smithy never tells the truth, sir! Not at all like me—"

"Have you been in Wingate's study, Bunter?"

"Oh, no, sir! I—I shouldn't dare!" gasped Bunter. "How could I know he wasn't there, sir? I never saw him walking in the quad with Gwynne."

"I think the matter is clear now," said Mr. Quelch.

"Quite sir!" said Wingate.

"C-c-can I go now, sir?" gasped Bunter.

"No, Bunter," said Mr. Quelch, in a grinding voice. "You may not go!"

"Oh lor'!"

"You took Vernon-Smith's lines from Wingate's study, and endeavoured to pass them off as your own! Had all the lines fallen into the fire, I might never have discovered your trickery! You have caused Wingate to fall into an error—and you have caused Vernon-Smith to entertain a base, unworthy, contemptible suspicion of a prefect's good faith, for which he will be very severely punished."

"Oh crikey!"

"I'm sorry, sir!" said the Bounder. "I'm sorry, Wingate! I thought—"

Wingate's lip curled.

"You should not have thought what you did, Vernon-Smith! Such a thought could only enter a bad and suspicious mind!" said Mr. Quelch sternly. "You will now go with Wingate to his study, and take any punishment that he thinks fit to administer. And in case of any rebelliousness on your part, you will be expelled! Go!"

In silence the Bounder followed Wingate! There was no rebelliousness in his thoughts now, or in his heart. To do him justice, he was thoroughly ashamed of himself.

They reached Wingate's study in the Sixth. There, George Wingate gave the Bounder a long look.

"Well?" he said tersely.

"I—I'm sorry, Wingate! I might have known better," stammered the Bounder. "I—I suppose I'm an ass, and a bit of a rotter, too! I'm ready to take six, or a dozen, if you like."

Wingate laid the cane on the table.

"I was making a mistake, owing to that young rascal Bunter," he said. "But I should have taken your word if your word was good enough to be taken."

The Bounder winced.

"You can cut!" added Wingate briefly.

"You're not going to lick me?"

"No!"

The Bounder went slowly to the door. He would have preferred a licking to the scorn in the Greyfriars captain's face.

At the door he hesitated and turned.

"I—I'm really sorry, Wingate!" he stammered.

"Oh, all right! Try not to be such a young rotter!" said Wingate.

"I'll try," said the Bounder, with a faint grin, and he went. Billy Bunter was not getting off so cheaply!

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Beastly for Bunter!

"I—I SAY, sir!" stammered Bunter, as the door closed, and Mr. Quelch proceeded to select a cane.

"You need say nothing, Bunter!" snapped the Remove master.

"But, sir—" groaned Bunter.

"You will bend over and touch your toes, Bunter!" said Mr. Quelch, swishing the cane he had carefully selected.

"Wha-a-at for, sir?" gasped Bunter.

"What?"

"I—I brought you my lines, sir," gasped Bunter. "I—I did them very carefully, sir! You—you noticed how my handwriting had improved, sir!"

"Upon my word!" said Mr. Quelch, staring blankly at that hopeful member of his Form. "Bunter! Is it possible that you are still maintaining that you wrote the lines you brought to my study?"

"Oh, yes, sir! Every one of them," said Bunter. "I never asked Wharton and his friends to help me out. Besides, they refused! In fact, they slung me out of the study! Not that I asked them, of course! I—I wouldn't!"

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Quelch.

"As for Smithy, I don't believe he had any lines at all! As for bagging his lines, it never entered my head. Besides, he pushed me over, and it served him right—"

"Bend over!" hooted Mr. Quelch, in a voice that made the Owl of the Remove jump almost clear of the floor.

"Oh lor'!"

Billy Bunter bent over at last. He bent over with deep apprehensions that proved to be fully justified. Six times the cane came down, and six times Billy Bunter roared, with a roar that might have excited the admiring envy of the Bull of Bashan of olden times.

But Mr. Quelch was not finished yet.

"Six" was usually the limit! But the Remove master felt that this was a case calling for unusual severity.

"That, Bunter," he said, pausing, "is your punishment for having failed to write your lines."

"Yaroooooh!"

"I shall now proceed to punish you for—"

"Oh crikey!"

"For having abstracted another boy's lines, and endeavoured to pass them off as your own—"

Swish, swish, swish!

Swish, swish, swish!

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"Yow-ow-ow!"

Swish, swish, swish!

"Yarooop! Whooop! Yoooop!"

Mr. Quelch laid down the cane. Bunter straightened up! He roared! It was the toughest licking Billy Bunter had ever experienced in all his fat career.

"And now, Bunter——"

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"Silence!"

"Yoo—hoo—hoooooop!"

"If you continue to utter those ridiculous noises, Bunter, I shall cane you again!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch in great exasperation.

"Oh crumbs!" Bunter made an effort to repress the ridiculous noises.

"Now, Bunter, I have canded you, but it is my duty to impress upon your obtuse mind that you must not be guilty of such unscrupulous trickery!" went on Mr. Quelch. "You will write out a hundred lines of Virgil——"

"Oh dear!"

"Every day——"

"Oh crikey——"

"For two weeks——"

"Oh lor'!"

"And since you have assured me that you are endeavouring to improve your bad handwriting," added Mr. Quelch, with grim humour, "I shall expect your lines to be well and neatly written, Bunter! And if they are not, I shall cane you on each occasion that you bring them to me. Now you may go!"

Bunter went!

He was as glad to get out of his Form-master's study, as Daniel might have been to get out of the lion's den!

He wriggled away down the passage! He wriggled up to the Remove studies! The Bounder had just returned there, and he grinned at the sight of the wriggling, woeful Owl.

"Had it bad?" he asked.

"Ow-wow! Yes!" groaned Bunter.

"Serve you jolly well right!"

"Beast!"

"You bagged my lines!" said Smithy. "You made me make a fool of myself! I don't suppose Quelch has given you enough! Anyhow, I'll give you some more."

"Ow! Keep off!" roared Bunter, and he fled for his study.

He hurled open the door of Study No. 7. But the Bounder was close behind, and he let out a foot as Bunter bolted into the study! Bunter had already been helped out of a study that day! Now he was helped into one! He shot across Study No. 7, roaring.

"What the thump——" ejaculated Peter Todd.

"Yaroooh!"

The Bounder walked away laughing. Bunter sat up and roared.

"Yow-ow-ow! I say, Toddy, you go after that beast Smithy—you can lick him! I say, he kicked me! You can lick Smithy, old chap! I say, he says you're a silly looking freak——"

"Eh?"

"He says that your face would stop a clock, old chap! I'd jolly well lick a chap for saying that!" gasped Bunter.

"So I will!" said Peter Todd cheerfully, getting up from prep and picking up a ruler.

"Oh, good!" gasped Bunter. "Give it to him hard, Toddy! Whop him! Here, I say, wharrer you up to?" yelled Bunter, as Peter rolled him over on the carpet, with a grasp on the back of his neck, and applied the ruler to the tightest trousers at Greyfriars School. "I say—yaroooh—wharrer you mean—yoooop!"

"I'm licking a chap for saying that

my face would stop a clock!" explained Peter genially.

"Ow-wow! Yow! Yooop!"

Whack, whack, whack!

"Yurrooogh! Beast! Leave off!" howled Bunter. "Oh crikey!"

Peter Todd chuckled and sat down to prep again.

But Bunter did not sit down to prep.

After what he had been through, he did not feel disposed to sit down at all. Neither did he feel equal to the exertion of prep.

It was not a happy evening for Billy Bunter.

Often had the fat and fatuous Owl of the Remove suffered for his sins; but seldom had he suffered for them so severely.

Lickings wear off in time; but a daily dose of a hundred lines of Latin for two weeks had to take a whole fortnight to wear off. That was the unkindest cut of all.

Mr. Quelch considered it probable that that hopeful member of his Form, after such a lesson, would not entertain the thought of passing off another fellow's lines as his own again. No doubt he was right. Diplomacy of that kind had no further appeal for Billy Bunter. But there were other thoughts in his fat mind—thoughts that would have surprised Mr. Quelch if he had suspected them, which he certainly did not.

The worm will turn.

"Let him wait," Billy Bunter said darkly and mysteriously to Peter Todd after prep.

Peter stared.

"Let who wait for what?" he inquired.

"That beast Quelch! He gave me twelve!" said Bunter. "And I've got a hundred lines to do every day now. That's what they call justice here. Making out that I bagged a chap's lines, you know. A hundred lines a day, Peter. I've a jolly good mind not to do them. But I'm not going to argue with Quelch."

"I wouldn't!" grinned Peter.

"But let him wait," said Bunter darkly.

"For the lines?" asked Peter. "I shouldn't keep the old bean waiting for them, fatty, in his present frame of mind."

"I don't mean the lines, fathead! But let him wait! Let him look out! I'll make him sit up! I'll make him sorry for himself! I'll make him squirm!"

"How?" asked Peter.

"I haven't thought that bit out yet."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But I'm going to," said Bunter. "I'm going to think that out, and——"

"What with?" inquired Toddy, with interest.

"Yah!"

Bunter found, however, that that bit required some thinking out. Making a beak sit up and squirm was not an easy proposition—especially when a fellow was very anxious to keep at a safe distance from the beak's cane. Indeed, when the whopping had worn off, Billy Bunter might have forgotten his scheme of deadly vengeance, but for the daily dose of lines. That kept its memory green, as it were.

If there was anything that could exasperate William George Bunter into a state of dangerous ferocity, it was work. And lines every day was work. Deeply and darkly the fat Owl brooded over his wrongs and grievances, and his deadly intention of making Quelch "squirm." And Mr. Quelch went on

the even tenor of his way, neither squirming, nor even aware that he was booked to squirm.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Billy Bunter on the Warpath!

"**B**OB CHERRY——"

"What?"

Four juniors bounded, as if moved by the same spring at the same moment.

It was a Saturday afternoon, and St. Jude's were coming over to play the Remove at football. It was the first football fixture since the disappearance of Bob Cherry, and Wharton had to find a new half. The change he had to make in the Remove eleven did not bother him so much, as the thought of playing the match without cheery old Bob in the middle line. But he had his duty as football captain to think of, and tried to dismiss other thoughts from his mind.

Redwing was taking Bob's place—much to the satisfaction of his chum, the Bounder, who was never tired of pushing Tom's claims to play for the Form in season, and out of season. Now Harry Wharton & Co. were heading for the changing-room, their thoughts with the missing junior who should have been playing that afternoon, when Billy Bunter barged in and uttered the name that was in all their minds.

Bunter blinked at them.

Full of his own important business—chiefly his "feud" with Quelch—Bunter wondered what made the fellows jump. He had not forgotten Bob Cherry's existence, for here he was mentioning him by name. But certainly he had forgotten, or, at least, ceased to think of, the painful and troublesome associations of that name.

"I say, you fellows—Wharrer you grabbing me for, Wharton?"

"Is it news?" gasped Wharton breathlessly.

"Eh?"

"What about Bob?" exclaimed Frank Nugent.

"Leggo my shoulder, you ass! I——"

"Is it news of Bob?" roared Johnny Bull.

The chums of the Remove could see no other reason for Bunter to mention the name of the kidnapped junior. And they were longing, aching for news of their missing chum.

Major Cherry, they knew, was moving heaven and earth in search of his son. Scotland Yard was lending its aid. All over the kingdom the police were on the alert. It seemed at least probable that news might come in any day, any hour. And Bunter was the fellow to be first with the news. So long as keyholes were made to doors, Bunter was not likely to be left in the dark.

Wharton, in his eager excitement, shook the fat junior.

"What is it?" he exclaimed. "Get it out!"

"Ogggh! If you make my specs fall off——" gasped Bunter.

"Cough it up, you silly fathead!" hooted Johnny Bull.

"You'll have to pay for them!" gasped Bunter.

"Cannot you see that we are on the tender hooks, my esteemed and idiotic Bunter?" exclaimed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh; probably meaning tenter-hooks.

"Oh, really, Inky——" Bunter gasped. "I say, you fellows, Bob Cherry——"

"Quick!"
 "Had an electric torch—"
 "What?"
 "And I want one to-day—"
 "Wha-a-at?"
 "Do you know where he left it?"
 Harry Wharton & Co. gazed at Bunter.

It was not news of Bob. Bunter wanted Bob's electric torch—that was all. They had jumped for nothing.

"You blithering, burbling, blethering blighter!" growled Johnny Bull. "I've a jolly good mind to kick you across the quad!"

"Oh, really. Bull! What's the matter?" demanded Bunter, blinking at them through his big spectacles. "If one of you has bagged Bob's torch now he's gone, it's jolly mean—"

"Wha-a-at?"
 "He may come back," said Bunter. "Ten to one he's still alive—"

"What?" gasped Wharton.
 "Well, I think it's very likely," said Bunter. "I dare say you fellows don't care much. You never liked old Bob as I did. He was rather a beast in some ways. I remember he refused to cash a postal order for me the day before he went. Still, I hope he's still alive, you know. If you fellows have forgotten him, I jolly well haven't! I'm not selfish, I hope."

"You burbling idiot—"
 "Oh, really, Wharton! But look here! I want that electric torch! Do you know where it is? If Bob ever comes back, I shall hand it to him, of course. If he doesn't—"

"If—if what?"
 "If he doesn't, I— Yarooop!"
 Billy Bunter never knew why the four juniors grasped him, banged his head on the wall of the changing-room, and strewed him along the passage.

But they did; and they left him roaring as they walked on.

He sat up, still roaring.
 "Ow! Wow! Beasts! Rotters! Wow!"

Bunter's cheery suggestion that Bob Cherry might never come back had earned him that drastic treatment. It was really not the sort of suggestion that a tactful fellow would have made to a missing man's anxious friends.

"Hallo! Taking a rest, fatty?" asked Peter Todd, coming along the passage. He paused, to stare down at the gasping Owl.

"Ow! Gimme a hand up, Toddy!" Bunter staggered to his feet. "I say, old chap, can you lend me an electric torch? I was going to borrow the one Bob Cherry had, but I fancy one of those rotters has got it, and doesn't want to give it up. They cut up frightfully rusty when I asked them about it. Will you lend me yours, Toddy?"

"What the thump do you want a torch in the daytime for?" demanded Toddy, staring. "It won't be dark for hours yet."

"That's telling." Bunter gave him a fat wink. "I may be going underground, and I may not. Toddy. I may be going to make Quelch sit up, and I may not. I'm not telling you anything."

Peter Todd looked at him quite concerned. Often and often had it occurred to him that Billy Bunter was not far from the edge of idiocy. Now it seemed as if Bunter had toppled over the edge.

"Hadn't you better see the school doctor, Bunter?" asked Toddy.

"Eh—what for?"
 "I mean, if you're going potty—"
 "Beast!"

"Well, if you're not potty, what do you mean?" demanded Peter.

"Oh, nothing! Can I have your torch, Peter?"

"You can borrow it if you like—"

"Thanks!"
 "But the battery's done—"

"You silly ass!" roared Bunter.

"What the thump's the good of the torch if the battery's done?"

"None at all!" agreed Peter, and he walked on to the changing-room, leaving Bunter blinking after him in great wrath.

The fat Owl rolled away to the Remove passage. He required an electric torch for the mysterious operations he had planned for that afternoon while Harry Wharton & Co. were playing football. On the Remove staircase he met the Bounder and Tom Redwing coming down.

"Hold on, Smithy!" he exclaimed. "You've got an electric torch, old chap."

"Yes."
 "Will you lend it to me?"

"No!"
 "Oh, really, Smithy—"

"Go and eat coke!"
 "I—I say"—Bunter caught the Bounder by the arm—"I say, old chap, I'll tell you what I want it for! I can trust you! I'm going to make Quelch sit up!"

The Bounder jerked his arm away, but he paused. Tom Redwing stared at the fat Owl blankly. The Bounder grinned. Bunter on the warpath—especially against such a formidable adversary as Henry Samuel Quelch—rather tickled his sense of humour.

"What's the deadly scheme?" he asked.

Billy Bunter blinked round through his big spectacles, and lowered his voice mysteriously.

"You know old Quelch's study's got oak-panelled walls?" he whispered. "I dare say you've heard that there's a moving panel—that chap named Levison found it out when he was here—"

"Well?" gasped the Bounder.

"Well, that's an entrance into the school vaults," explained Bunter. "There's two or three, and that's one of them."

The Bounder stared blankly.

"You can get into the vaults from the old priory in Friardale Wood, you know!" breathed Bunter. "There's an underground passage—lots of fellows have been along it! It was boarded up once, but some fellows pulled out one of the boards, and a chap can get through. See the idea?"

"Blessed if I do!"

"I go along that passage, and get to the vaults," explained Bunter, in the same mysterious whisper; "then I got to that panel in Quelch's study! I've got a squirt—"

"I heard Skinner asking if anybody had seen his squirt—"

"It isn't Skinner's squirt—besides, he lent it to me. Fancy getting Quelch with a squirt full of ink—"

"Oh crumbs!"

"In the ear, or in the neck, you know. He, he, he!"

"My hat!"

"He'd never know what hit him! I mean, he'd never know who did it! I squirt him—and disappear—"

"Ha ha, ha!" yelled the Bounder, while Redwing gazed at the fat and fatuous Owl o p e r - mouthed. Evidently thoughts of vengeance had been working hard in Billy Bunter's fat brain.

"He, he, he!" cackled Bunter. "Funny, what? I say, Smithy, if you like to chuck the footer this afternoon and come along with me, I'll let you squirt Quelch—"

"Yes—I can see myself chucking the footer, specially to ask for the sack!" agreed the Bounder. "Sort of appeals to me."

"You awful idiot, Bunter!" exclaimed Redwing, aghast. "Put that silly idea out of your silly head—"

"You shut up, Redwing! I say, Smithy, you'll lend me your torch, won't you?"

"Certainly! It will make life at Greyfriars really worth living if you're sacked, old fat man."

"Oh, really, Smithy—"

"Don't let the fat fool have it, Smithy," said Redwing.

The Bounder shrugged his shoulders.

"Why not? A fellow's tuck will be safe in his study cupboard, if Bunter's sacked! The torch's on my mantelpiece in Study No. 4, Bunt—go in and win!"

And the Bounder went down the stairs roaring with laughter. Billy Bunter rolled on up the passage to Study No. 4.

Redwing's remonstrance, and the Bounder's laughter, made no difference to the avenging owl. He was going to make Quelch sit up! Undoubtedly, a sudden stream of ink in his ear, or in his neck, would make Henry Samuel Quelch sit up! It would have made any Form-master sit up! That the sitting-up process would be continued by Bunter himself, would have seemed probable—to anybody but Bunter. But Bunter had no doubts. It seemed to Bunter as safe as houses. That afternoon, although it was a half-holiday, Bunter had his usual hundred lines on hand. There was a distinct satisfaction in the thought of Quelch cleaning ink off his ears and his neck, while Bunter was writing those lines!

Bunter found the torch and slipped it into his pocket, with Skinner's squirt. Then he donned coat and hat, and rolled out of the House.

Quelch was going to get the surprise of his life, if Bunter could work it. And Bunter had no doubt that he could!

Harry Wharton & Co. were going down to the footer—the Bounder grinning as he went—when Bunter rolled out. The fat Owl of the Remove gave them a disdainful blink through his big spectacles, and rolled away to the gates. Mr. Quelch, a little later, walked down from the House with Mr. Lascelles, the games master, to give the junior footballers a look-in. But Quelch's time was very valuable, and when the second half started, he walked back to the House and to his study, and sat down to work at his study table.

Deep in a pile of Form papers, Mr. Quelch forgot the fat existence of Billy Bunter—and, had he remembered him, it certainly would not have occurred to him that the Owl was on the warpath! But if Quelch had forgotten Bunter, Bunter had not forgotten Quelch!

(Continued on next page.)

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THE NINTH CHAPTER.

An Unexpected Meeting I

DARK and gloomy looked the ruins of the old priory in Friardale Wood, when Billy Bunter, puffing and blowing after a long walk in the frosty air, arrived there.

There was a hanging mist from the sea over Friardale Wood. There was snow stacked among the old masses of masonry, shapeless masses that were all that remained of the ancient building in the heart of the wood.

Billy Bunter blinked round him rather uneasily as he rolled into the ruins.

The place was lonely, deserted.

In the summer, Greyfriars fellows sometimes picnicked there, and seaside visitors sometimes came along, and elderly gentlemen of archaeological tastes gave the old place the "once-over." But in the winter hardly a soul ever came within a mile of it. Tramps had been known to camp there in the summer—but the hardest tramp gave it a wide berth in the winter. Misty, snowy, swept by the bitter wind from the sea, the old priory was far from inviting in such months as January and February.

Loneliness and silence and solitude had no appeal for Bunter. He was a gregarious animal.

Never, like the sage, did he see charms in the face of solitude! Certainly, in the present circumstances, considering what the vengeful Owl had in mind, solitude was safer! Still, he did not like it, and his little, round eyes blinked uneasily behind his big, round spectacles.

An arched opening gave admittance to the vaults under the old priory, from which the one-time "secret" passage ran to Greyfriars School. In ancient days, when Greyfriars had been a monastery, the passage had really been secret, and it was said that smugglers had conveyed all sorts of foreign dainties and the wines of France and Spain, by that deep passage, for the behoof of festive ancient abbots.

But the secret had long been revealed, and plenty of Greyfriars fellows had explored the tunnel, or part of it—for it was so long, and so cold and dark and dank, that explorers were very easily fed-up with such an exploration.

The opening in the floor under the arch was closed by a large stone, and it suddenly occurred to Bunter that his strength might not be equal to lifting that heavy stone. It was like Bunter to think of this after he arrived, and not before he started!

He turned on the light of Smithy's electric torch in the deep dusk under the old arch, and gave a grunt of satisfaction. The stone was open!

Evidently some visitor to the place had raised it, and had not taken the trouble to replace it afterwards.

That was rather dangerous, for a fellow coming there without a light might have tumbled in, and damaged his limbs on the steep stair below. That reflection, however, did not bother Bunter—he had a light, and was not much given to bothering about other people.

He flashed the light into the opening, and stepped down in a rather gingerly way.

At the school it had been easy to plan this little game, and Bunter had been quite keen and enthusiastic about it. Now that he was on the spot, however, he realised that a deep, dark, lonely underground passage was not a really attractive proposition.

Slowly, and more slowly, the fat Owl

descended into the vault underneath the old priory.

He flashed the light round him.

There was a series of vaults, and from the last one Bunter knew the passage opened that led to the vaults under the school. He had been through once with Harry Wharton & Co., terms ago, and there was nothing to prevent him from going through again. But it was a full minute before he left the stone stair and started on his way.

He did not like the job he had set himself. As Bunter never foresaw anything, he had not foreseen how very unpleasant it would be.

He was, in fact, tempted to "chuck" the whole thing and return to Greyfriars on the earth's surface.

But he screwed up his fat courage to the sticking-point and kept on. After all, what was there to be afraid of? The lonelier the place was, the safer it was, and assuredly he did not want to be spotted on his present remarkable stunt! There were legends of ghosts in the ancient vaults, but Bunter did not believe in ghosts—at least, in the daytime. Only deep down under the earth it was more like night than day, and the thought of ghosts was rather discomforting.

More and more uneasy, the fat Owl traversed the series of vaults, and arrived at the opening of the stone-walled tunnel that led to the school.

Once it had been boarded up, as it

OVERSEAS READERS PLEASE NOTE!

Readers living overseas and in the Irish Free State will appreciate the difficulties of supplying them with gifts of toffee. But in this issue an alternative gift scheme has been arranged for their benefit.

was out of school bounds; but, as Bunter knew, some of the boards had been broken away. He turned the light on the opening, and discerned ample room to pass through.

But he paused.

That deep, dark tunnel was nearly a mile long—more than half a mile, at any rate. It was frightfully dark. Now that he blinked into it, it seemed less inviting than ever.

As he stood there, blinking and hesitating, a sound reached his ears. He gave a convulsive start.

It was a sound from the depths of the old tunnel.

The fat junior trembled from head to foot.

Someone—or something—was there. The old story of the ghost of Greyfriars flashed into his mind. His podgy knees knocked together.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

He backed quickly away from the opening. Then he discerned a flicker of light in the dark depths.

Whoever was there was carrying a light.

Ghosts, it was certain, did not carry lights about. Billy Bunter remembered the open stone. Of course, it was somebody exploring the place. He had supposed that somebody had left the stone open and gone away; but he realised now that the "somebody" had left it open because he had gone down.

Relieved of his ghostly fears, Bunter recovered his courage a little. It was a human being who was coming along the tunnel with a light in his hand, and there was no particular reason to be afraid of him, unless it was a Greyfriars

master or prefect, which was improbable.

A sound of pattering came from the tunnel, and the light jerked and shifted swiftly. The man there was running now. Bunter wondered why, for a moment, and then it occurred to him that the man had seen his light and knew that he was there. Perhaps he was startled. Anyhow, he had burst into a rapid run, and was coming along the tunnel towards the vault where Bunter stood, at a great rate.

Very quickly he reached the opening and came scrambling through into the vault. Bunter turned the light of his torch on him.

Then he gave a yelp of surprise.

He knew that short, thickset, stocky figure; that hard-featured face with its light-blue eyes as hard as flints. He had seen the man before—at Greyfriars. It was the "Old Boy" who had given Mr. Quelch a lift to the school in his plane—by name Franz Kranz. Bunter had reason to remember him, as it was upon Kranz's head that he had tumbled in escaping from Mr. Quelch's study by the window that day.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

The stocky man leaped towards him. He turned his own light on Bunter's fat, startled face, and uttered an exclamation.

"The fat fool! You!"

The recognition was mutual.

Billy Bunter backed away in alarm. What might possibly be Kranz's object in exploring that hidden tunnel under the earth he could not begin to guess or imagine. But he could read in the glinting eyes that the man was savagely angry at finding him there.

Bunter had no idea that Kranz was still in the neighbourhood of his former school. It was many long years since Kranz had been a Greyfriars fellow, and he had never revisited the school until a week or two ago, when he had come down with the returning Remove master. Now that he had seen the old place again, however, his interest in it seemed to be sustained, to judge by his present proceedings.

Had it been some complete stranger that he had met in the priory vault the meeting would not have troubled Bunter. But he was dismayed to see Kranz there.

The fat Owl was out of school bounds, and he did not want that fact reported to his Form-master, especially considering the reason for which he was out of bounds.

"I—I—I say, it—it's you!" he stammered. "I—I say, I'm jolly glad to see you, Mr. Kranz! I—I—I—"

"What are you doing here?" snapped Kranz harshly.

Billy Bunter was not a bright youth, but he was rather too bright to tell anyone what he was there for—especially a man acquainted with his Form-master.

"Oh, I—I—I came!" he stammered.

"Did you know that I was here?"

Bunter blinked at him in astonishment.

"Eh? How should I know?" he ejaculated.

The cold, keen, light-blue eyes searched his fat face. But Franz Kranz read only astonishment in that fat visage.

"Well, why did you come to this lonely and dangerous place?" he asked.

"I—I was just exploring!" explained Bunter. "We—we sometimes explore this old passage, you know—"

"It is a dangerous place; there are pitfalls. I should have thought that your headmaster would have placed it out of bounds."

"I—I say, you—you needn't mention that you—you saw me here!" stammered



As Bunter caught his foot in the rug and stumbled, the sheaf of paper flew from his hand into the fire. "Bunter!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch angrily. "You utterly clumsy boy!" "Oh lor'!" gasped Bunter. The master of the Remove did not know that this was diplomacy on Bunter's part.

Bunter. "I—I forgot that it was out of bounds."

Kranz's eyes glittered.

"I am afraid that I cannot undertake to conceal what you have done, my boy," he answered. "The place is dangerous. You might fall and break a limb. And suppose your light failed, and you were lost in the dark!"

"Oh lor'! I hadn't thought of that!" gasped Bunter.

"You see, your headmaster has good reason for placing such a spot out of school bounds," said Kranz more amicably. "It is a dangerous place. I explored it long ago, as a Greyfriars boy, and I had a curiosity to see the old place again after all these years. But I did not go very far. I found that the flooring of the old passage was unsafe—"

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter. "I never knew—"

"Some of the old flagstones seem to be loose," said Kranz, watching the fat face intently. "I had a narrow escape of a fall."

Bunter shivered.

The thought of the old stone flags caving in under his feet, and letting him through into some dark and noisome pit, sent a chill down his podgy back.

Kranz smiled faintly.

"I have no authority to stop you, of course," he said. "You may proceed if you like—"

"No fear!" said Bunter, shivering. "I'll watch it!"

"It is rather fortunate for you that I met you here," said Kranz. "I should have closed the stone after leaving, and I fear that you would not have been able to raise it from below. You would have been imprisoned here."

"Oh lor'!"

Billy Bunter started back through the vaults towards the stone stair at the entrance. Kranz, breathing hard and

deep, followed him. The fat Owl was already feeling rather fed-up with his adventure, and what he had heard from Kranz had quite decided him. He only wanted to get out now, and to keep out. He reached the stone stair and scrambled up, and the "Old Boy" of Greyfriars followed him. Bunter rolled out into the open air, Kranz stopping to tip the heavy stone into place over the opening. Then he came out of the archway after Bunter.

The fat Owl blinked at him uneasily. He was alarmed, and it did not even occur to his fat mind that Kranz had been alarmed, too, by the unexpected meeting in the priory vault.

"I—I—I say, sir!" stammered Bunter.

"Well?" rapped Kranz.

"You—you won't mention to Quelch—"

"I think it is my duty to report you at your school, Master Bunter, to prevent you from taking such risks again!" said Kranz, shaking his head.

"I—I ain't coming here again, sir!" gasped Bunter. "Think I want to break my neck tumbling through some hole in the floor—"

Kranz gave him a very keen look.

"Very well, Master Bunter; if you will not break school bounds in this direction again, I will not mention the matter at Greyfriars!" he said.

The fat Owl, naturally, did not imagine that Kranz might have his own reasons for not desiring to draw attention to his own presence there.

"Yes, rather!" gasped Bunter. "Catch me going down into that beastly hole again! No jolly fear!"

Franz Kranz smiled.

"Very well the matter closes, then," he said; and, with a nod to the Owl of the Remove, the Old Boy of Greyfriars walked out of the ruins and disappeared through the frosty wood.

Billy Bunter followed more slowly. His game was up! Quelch, sitting in his study correcting Form papers, never knew what a narrow escape he had had from Skinner's squirt.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Who's Afraid of Quelch?

"I SAY, you fellows!"

Billy Bunter blinked into Study No. 4 in the Remove.

Harry Whatton & Co. were there, teaing with the Bounder and Redwing after the football match. They had drawn with St. Jude's; Bob Cherry was sorely missed, not only as a pal, but as a footballer. The chums of the Remove agreed that, with Bob in his old place in the ranks, that draw would have been a win.

The Bounder, however, was feeling pleased with himself. His chum Redwing had done quite well in the game, and Smithy himself had kicked the equalising goal. Wingate of the Sixth had been referee, and he had given the Bounder a word of cheery commendation, apparently quite forgetful of the recent offences of the scapegrace of Greyfriars. The Bounder grinned at the sight of Bunter's fat face in the doorway.

"Here's the giddy avenger!" he remarked. "Did you get away with it, old fat man?"

"What has the fat duffer been up to?" asked Johnny Ball.

"Deadly vengeance!" grinned the Bounder.

"I say, you fellows, it was rather a frost!" said Bunter. "Here's your torch, Smithy. I—I never went through

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(Continued from page 13.)

that passage from the priory, after all—

"What the thump were you going to do that for?" asked Harry Wharton, staring at the fat Owl in astonishment.

"Well, I don't mind you fellows knowing if you keep it dark," said Bunter. "I'll sample that cake, if you don't mind, Smithy."

"I do!" said Smithy.

"Oh, really, old chap!" Bunter sampled the cake, all the same. "I say, you fellows, I was going to squirt ink at Quelch through that secret panel in his study, but—"

"You blithering idiot!" said Johnny Bull.

"Well, you wouldn't have the nerve!" sneered Bunter. "You haven't got the pluck to get back on a beak! Yah!"

"Bunter's the man for pluck!" said the Bounder gravely. "Only Bunter thinks of these daring things! Rather lucky he only thinks of them, and doesn't get any farther—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I haven't done with Quelch yet, I can tell you!" said Bunter, his mouth full of cake. "There's more ways of killing a cat than choking it with cream. 'Tain't safe to go along that underground passage, with the floor rocky—"

"The floor's as solid as the jolly old earth," said the Bounder. "I've been along it myself, from one end to the other. Tell us a better one than that!"

"That's all you know!" said Bunter. "Kranz told me—"

"Who's the thump's Kranz?"

"That Old Boy who came with Quelch. He was there," explained Bunter. "I met him there, rooting about underground, and he told me he had found the floor unsafe."

"What on earth was Kranz doing there?" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "I never knew he was still anywhere near Greyfriars."

"Well, he is," answered Bunter. "He was jolly well there, and I ran into him, and he told me he was looking round the old place again. I dare say he's interested in it, as an Old Boy; he told me he had explored it when he was at Greyfriars donkeys' years ago. Mind if I finish this cake, Smithy?"

"Yes."

"Oh, really, Smithy!" Bunter proceeded to finish the cake. "Not a bad cake, old chap! Not like the cakes I get from Bunter Court, of course!"

"I know that! That's a real cake!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yah!" Bunter munched cake. "I say, you fellows, I didn't come in here to bag a tea—"

"The bagfulness seems to be terrific, all the same!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"I came to speak to Smithy! You being the pluckiest fellow at Greyfriars, Smithy—"

"Eh?"

"Daring and bursting with pluck, and all that—"

"Pile it on!"

"Not like these fellows!" said Bunter, with a disparaging blink at the Co. "They wouldn't have had the pluck to call Wingate of the Sixth a liar to his face, as you did!"

The Bounder coloured. That was not, as Bunter supposed, a pleasant recollection to him.

"You potty owl! Shut up!" he snarled.

"Oh, really, Smithy! I say, you being so plucky, I want you to do something for me."

"Now we're coming down to brass tacks!" sneered the Bounder.

"Well, you being the bravest fellow at Greyfriars—"

"For goodness' sake, cut it out, you fat owl!"

"Bursting with courage, and having a nerve of iron, and all that," went on Bunter—"you wouldn't be afraid to nip into Quelch's study, Smithy, and bag the key of the vaults—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"I'd do it myself, only—only—"

"Only you funk it?" suggested the Bounder.

"Beast! I mean, look here, old chap, I'll keep cave at the end of the passage while you get the key. Once I've got the key, it will be all right. I can get into the vaults if I've got the key, and then—"

The Removites gazed at Bunter.

Evidently the vengeful Owl was still on the warpath!

Mr. Quelch had official charge of the key of the vaults, and any fellow who had nerve enough could have "bagged" it from his study. The trouble with Bunter was that he hadn't nerve enough. That was why he was bestowing such a liberal dose of "soft sawder" on the Bounder. Bunter was in want of a catspaw!

"Fancy old Quelch's face when he gets a squirt of ink in his ear, and doesn't know where it comes from!" grinned Bunter. "What?"

"And fancy your face when he walks you off to the Head to be bunked!" gasped Frank Nugent.

"Well, if I get him from behind that panel, he won't see me! He won't know anything about me! I've got it all cut and dried!" said Bunter cheerfully. "Leave it to me to think a thing out, you know! I've got the brains for it!"

"Brains! Oh, my hat!"

"The brainfulness is not terrific, my idiotic Bunter!"

"If you get that key for me, Smithy, I'll—"

"If!" chuckled the Bounder.

"What about you, Redwing?"

"Nothing about me!" said Tom, laughing.

"You're as funky as Smithy! Well, look here, Wharton, as captain of the Remove, it's up to you!" said Bunter.

Harry Wharton laughed. He was not likely to lend his aid in the fat Owl's fatuous schemes of vengeance.

"Will you do it, Nugent?"

"Hardly!"

"You, Inky?"

"The answer is in the ridiculous negative!" chuckled the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"You're a plucky chap, Bull—"

"You blithering idiot!"

"I mean, you're as rotten funky as the rest! Blessed if I ever saw such a set of moulting funks!" said Bunter scornfully. "Here am I, ready to take all the risk of making Quelch sit up and squirm, and you fellows won't even bag a key for a chap! Yah!"

"You howling ass!"

"Yah! You're all afraid of Quelch!" sneered Bunter. "I'm the only man in the Remove that's not afraid of the old ass! I've got another hundred lines to

do for him to-day! Well, I haven't done them yet! And if Quelch comes up after me, I'll jolly well tell the man what I think of him! Who's Quelch, anyhow?" snorted Bunter. "A silly old ass—a cheeky old ass, too! Cheeky old ass, with a face like a file and a voice like a saw! And I'd jolly well tell him so for two pins—"

"Bunter!"

"Oh lor'!" gasped Bunter, spinning round to the open door like a fat humming-top.

"Oh, my hat!" muttered Smithy. The tea-party in Study No. 4 all rose to their feet as Mr. Quelch looked in.

He did not look at them! He looked at Bunter! His gimlet eyes seemed to bore into the unhappy Owl of the Remove! Coming up the Remove passage to Study No. 7 to inquire after Bunter's lines, Quelch, passing the open doorway of Study No. 4, had the pleasure—or otherwise—of hearing Billy Bunter's candid and unqualified opinion of him! He did not seem pleased!

"Bunter!"

"Oh crikey! I—I didn't know you were there, sir!" groaned Bunter. "I—I've done my lines, sir, only—only Toddy accidentally used them to—light the study fire—"

"I heard what you said, Bunter."

"D-d-did you, sir?" gasped Bunter.

"I—I wasn't saying that you were an old ass, sir! I'd never think of saying what I think of a Form-master, sir—I'm too respectful!"

"Follow me to my study, Bunter!"

"Oh crikey!"

Mr. Quelch whisked away, with an expression on his speaking countenance that might have daunted a stouter heart than Bunter's. Billy Bunter stood rooted to the floor of Study No. 4, his fat face the picture of dismay.

"Oh crumbs!" groaned Bunter.

"Well, you've done it now, you blithering Owl!" remarked Johnny Bull.

"The donefulness is terrific!"

"Lucky Bunter's not afraid of Quelch!" remarked the Bounder. "Though, looking at him now, a fellow might fancy that he was!"

"Oh dear!"

"Bunter!" came from the passage.

"Ow!"

Bunter rolled out of the study. He rolled away dismally after his Form-master. If, as he had stated, the fat Owl wasn't afraid of Quelch, appearances were very deceptive!

It was ten minutes later that the fat junior came back to the Remove passage. He came in a doubled-up state, as if trying to shut himself up like a pocket-knife.

"Yow-ow-ow-ow-ow!" Bunter was saying as he came. And for quite a long time afterwards, Bunter's remarks consisted chiefly of "Yow!" and "Ow!" and "Wow!"

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Tries It On Again!

"PLEASE, sir—"

"What?"

Mr. Quelch snapped the word out like a bullet.

It was second lesson on Monday morning. Bunter rose in his place to speak to his Form-master, and almost fell down again as Quelch barked at him.

"Please, sir, may I fetch my map?" gasped Bunter.

Second lesson was geography, and the Remove had been told to bring maps. Bunter, apparently, hadn't!

"Your map!" snapped Mr. Quelch. There was no doubt that Quelch was very sharp with the hapless Owl these days.

Bunter had not been able to overcome his constitutional disinclination to work. His hundred lines a day were never done to time. Almost every day since that impot had been imposed, Bunter had been whopped for not handing in the lines. Quelch seemed to be getting fed-up with Bunter! The feeling was mutual; Bunter was fed-up with Quelch also!

"Have you not brought in your map, Bunter?" rapped the Remove master.

"I—I forgot it, sir!"

"You will take fifty lines for forgetting, Bunter! You may go and fetch your map!" snapped Mr. Quelch.

Billy Bunter rolled out of the Remove

Form Room. Having closed the door, he shook a fat fist at it.

Then he rolled away.

But his footsteps did not take him in the direction of the Remove studies. He rolled away to Masters' Passage.

With all the Forms at work, and the masters in charge of them, that passage was, naturally, deserted.

The coast was quite clear!

Bunter lost no time! It was not a map he wanted! It was a key!

He cut into Mr. Quelch's study, blinked round him there. A number of keys, of which the Remove master had charge, hung behind his desk. The long, heavy iron key, that belonged to the door of

the vaults, was conspicuous among them. Bunter knew it by sight well enough.

He grabbed it down and thrust it into his pocket. Then he hurriedly rolled out of his Form-master's study.

The coast was clear! Bunter grinned as he went away to the Remove passage for his map—which he had not forgotten. That map was an excuse for getting out of the Form-room while Quelch was far from his study! It was, Bunter considered, rather masterly strategy! True, it had earned him fifty extra in the way of lines. But it was worth it. He would give Quelch a little extra ink in return for those extra lines
(Continued on next page.)



"Linesman" is an authority on football, and he will solve all your problems for you. Write to him, c/o The MAGNET, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4, and then watch out for a reply in this regular weekly feature.

"IDENTIFICATION PLATES!"

SOMETIMES I wish I could convey to MAGNET readers the eager interest with which I turn to the contents of my postbag. The letters I get are so varied, and raise such interesting questions, and before I deal this week with the many topics raised by correspondents, I should like to thank all who have written to me. Don't be shy. Ask me anything you want to know. It is my job to help you.

A reader from Crown Hills, Leicester, cannot understand why the players of the big League clubs do not carry numbers on their backs. He thinks that he would be able to follow the star players much more intelligently if they carried these numbers. This reader has my sympathy and, personally, I think the objections to the numbering of football players are trivial. I cannot, for instance, believe that the team spirit would be in any way destroyed simply by the players having numbers on their backs. The team spirit is based on a much more solid foundation than that.

However, there it is. Two or three seasons ago certain League clubs were in favour of the idea of numbering their players, and the Chelsea men turned out in one League match with the "identification plates" in proper position.

The League authorities, however, stepped in, said it was an innovation which required general approval, and when the conference of the League clubs debated the point, they decided against it. And so no League team can now number its players in a League match.

The Cup is different, because that competition is run by the Football Association, and the Football Association have given their tacit consent to numbering, as revealed by the fact that the players have worn these numbers in the last two Cup Finals. In the last Cup Final the Everton players were numbered one to eleven and the Manchester City players twelve to twenty-two. It fell to the lot of Jimmy McMullan, the Manchester inside-left, to wear the number thirteen, and those who are superstitious quickly

pointed out that McMullan was the first player to be laid out injured in that game. Strange, wasn't it?

CONCERNING THE OFFSIDE RULE!

I AM a bit doubtful as to what is meant by the question: "Which club has been in the First Division the longest?" Probably the answer will be provided by saying that two clubs—Aston Villa and Blackburn Rovers—were members of the Football League when it was first formed, and have been in continuous membership ever since. Of course, there was only one League to twelve clubs when this sort of football was inaugurated, and of those original twelve the two I have named are the only ones who have not dropped out at some period or another.

Perhaps it is more than a coincidence that, in addition to the distinction shared by the Rovers and Aston Villa, these two clubs should also share the distinction of having won the Cup more times than any of their competitors—six in all.

There is some doubt as to which is the oldest football club in existence, but there are records which show that an association football club was formed in Sheffield in 1885, and it was out of this club that Sheffield United eventually arose. The claim, then, that Sheffield United are the oldest football club is a good one. Anyway, rules for playing the game were first framed in Sheffield, and some of those rules remain, substantially the same, until to-day.

Talking of rules leads me to reply to a reader who lives near the Cup Final ground at Wembley, concerning offside. There is still a lot of confusion concerning the offside rule, and it may help others if I describe its working briefly and in as plain language as possible. An attacking player is offside if when he is in his opponents' half, he receives a forward pass from one of his colleagues when he has no more than one opponent between him and the goal he is attacking.

Note that it is the position of the player when the ball is last kicked which matters, not when he receives the ball. If the ball comes to him from an opponent, the attacker is not offside, no matter what his position, and also it is not an offence merely to be in an offside position. The player who is offside must interfere with the play before he is pulled up.

TICKLISH PROBLEMS!

UP to 1925 the number of players which an attacker had to have between him and the goal he was attacking was three, but in that year the rule was changed to make it read two players. Whether the game has been improved as the result of this alteration is a matter for debate. "Bill" McCracken who is now the manager of Millwall, and whose offside dodge was mainly responsible for the change in the rule, does not think the change has made the game better. In his view the new rule reduces the necessity for forwards thinking, and that, according to him, is bad.

Now we can deal with another question which reaches me from Lowestoft. A forward is going through when he is fouled in the penalty area. The ball goes on, however, to a member of his side who is in an offside position. Can the referee allow the offside player to score a goal, ignoring the offside law? The answer is that the referee cannot do this.

He has the power to refrain from whistling for a foul if he thinks the player fouled is likely to score, but he can't allow a player in an offside position to notch a goal, even though the ball may go into the net before the whistle is blown.

Another question. Suppose the ball is being dropped in the penalty area by the referee, and before it touches the ground a defender touches it with his hand, what should the referee do? This is a ticklish problem which is not dealt with precisely in the rules, but Rule 16 does state that if the ball is played before it touches the ground a free kick shall be given to the other side. I think this rule must apply even if the ball is touched by the hand of a player, even in the penalty area.

Yet one more. A full-back takes a goal kick—as full-backs often do—and the ball is blown back towards goal. To prevent it going through the full-back handles. What is the decision? A free kick for playing the ball twice.

As a brief reply, there is no trace of Hyde United, now in the Cheshire League, ever having been members of any of the four leading Leagues.

"LINESMAN."

when once he got going with Skinner's squirt!

Quelch was not likely to miss that key. If he did, he was not likely to suspect Bunter. At least, the fat Owl hoped that he wasn't!

With the key out of sight in his pocket, and the map in sight in his fat hand, Bunter rolled back to the Form-room.

Mr. Quelch gave him a grim glance as he came in. Bunter did not mind grim glances. He grinned as he sat down.

But the grin soon faded from his fat face. Just as if he was bent on keeping the fat Owl on the trail of vengeance, Quelch gave him particular attention in that lesson.

Sam Weller's knowledge of London was said to be extensive and peculiar. Bunter's knowledge of geography was peculiar, but not extensive.

Some masters might have passed over such a very obtuse and backward pupil and saved the trouble of dealing with him. But Mr. Quelch was one of those dutiful masters, keen on bringing backward pupils forward.

Bunter was quite content to remain in a state of abysmal ignorance; and could have been quite happy in that state! But Quelch was not content to leave him there!

And perhaps Mr. Quelch's temper had a little extra acerbity these days. He was worried and troubled about the affair of Bob Cherry. With that worry and trouble on his mind he did not consider that he ought to be worried and troubled also by the laziness and obtuseness of William George Bunter. There was no doubt that he was unusually sharp with the Owl of the Remove. Probably he would have been sharper, had he known of the deep, dark schemes that were working in Bunter's fatuous brain! Fortunately for Bunter, Quelch did not even dream of suspecting that he had set up as an avenger!

It was bad enough for Bunter as it was! He felt that he was persecuted in the Form-room! What did Bunter, for instance, care about the famous Five Rivers of India?

Nothing at all! Bunter was prepared to leave the King's Oriental Empire to take care of itself, and did not care two straws whether it was provided by Nature with rivers or not. If he remembered the Ganges, he did not remember very clearly whether it was a river, a city, or a province. If he remembered the Sutlej, he could not have undertaken to say whether it was, or was not, a rajah or a maharajah!

But that didn't do for Quelch! Quelch would shoot a question at a fellow and expect him to know the answer! Quelch was quite cross, when Bunter, at a venture, told him that the Five Rivers of India were the Mississippi, the Nile, the Rhine, the Seine, and the Great Ouse. Even Bunter would have realised that that answer wasn't quite right, on reflection.

But Quelch didn't give a fellow time to reflect! He made Bunter stand up before the Form, and scarified him with his tongue. It lasted five minutes at least! Bunter, on the whole, liked being "jawed" better than being taught. Still, it was very disagreeable, and it was still more disagreeable to be given those five beastly rivers to write out fifty times. And as he had already plenty of lines on hand to occupy his leisure time that day, the iniquitous Quelch kept him in break to deal with those putrid rivers!

That was the unkindest cut of all! Bunter had intended to "touch" Lord Maulverer for a small loan in break,

the same to be expended at the school shop. Instead of which, he had to stay in the Form-room writing out the names of rotten rivers!

"Let him wait!" murmured Billy Bunter, his little round eyes gleaming vengefully behind his big, round spectacles. "Let him wait!"

And he drew comfort from the thought of Quelch sitting up and squirming when he landed that stream of ink in his august ear! Bunter's time was coming!

At dinner that day Mr. Quelch interposed to prevent Bunter receiving a fifth helping of beefsteak pudding! Possibly he feared that Bunter might burst in the dining-hall!

But to Bunter's fat mind it was more "persecution"; another offence that had to be avenged! Bunter was quite implacable now!

And in class that afternoon, when Quelch rapped his knuckles with a pointer for inattention, Bunter came very near hissing: "You wait!"

Fortunately, he did not quite hiss. He sucked his fat knuckles, and thought of what was going to happen after class.

After class, the fat junior left the Remove-room with the rest of the Form, but in a few minutes he disappeared on his own.

He was not missed!

Nobody missed Bunter when he was not present; only when he was present they generally wished that he was missing!

If anyone had given him a thought—which probably nobody did—that one would hardly have guessed where Bunter was, or what he was up to.

Bunter had failed on Saturday! On Monday he was going to succeed! And—having taken the risk of abstracting the key from Mr. Quelch's study—the rest seemed easy.

A long, secluded passage led to the old arched doorway of the school vaults. Except a very occasional maid with a broom, hardly anyone ever entered that passage.

It was easy enough to slip into it unseen; and, once there, there was hardly any danger of being spotted.

Bunter rolled along that passage to the ancient, iron-barred, and nail-studded door in the carved arch. Seldom indeed was that door opened. The old vaults under the school had, once upon a time, been used for storage purposes; but it was many a long year since they had been used for any purpose whatever. Indeed, they were scarcely safe for a fellow on his own, for they stretched a great distance, with many passages and tunnels—a regular labyrinth.

In old days, when it had been necessary to have hiding-places and ways of escape from lawless enemies, that labyrinth had been useful enough to the former inhabitants of Greyfriars. In modern lawful times it was quite useless—and far from attractive. That heavy, solid oaken door had certainly not been opened that term—probably not for several terms. When Bunter shoved the long iron key into the ancient lock, he found it very difficult to turn. Lock and key both needed oiling; but Bunter, of course, had not thought of that!

However, with great efforts, he turned the big key at last, and the heavy door was pushed open.

The fat junior rolled through. Inside the deep doorway he shut the door, creaking on its ancient, rusty hinges, leaving it, however ajar for his return. Certainly, nobody was likely to come along and observe that it was ajar.

Then he turned on the light of Smithy's electric torch, and descended the stairs into the school vaults.

Bunter had been down there before, once or twice, with exploring fellows, and the place was not strange to him. He knew in which direction to head, if he wanted to reach the tunnel that led to the old priory. But that was not the direction he wanted.

He wanted to find a certain spiral stair which led upwards to the ancient wall of a certain study—that was Bunter's game. A fellow named Levison had found it once, and, at the time, many fellows had gone down and looked at it, Bunter among them. He had no doubt that he would be able to find it again. A passage that opened from the vaults led to it, he remembered that. Moving along, flashing the light before him, the fat Owl blinked round for that passage.

He found a stone-walled passage. Whether it was the right one or not Bunter could not be sure until he had explored it. He moved along, blinking in the light of the torch.

Suddenly he stopped. The passage ended in a wall of solid stone blocks.

Bunter gave a snort of disgust. It was the end of a "blind alley." Evidently this was not the passage he wanted.

"Br-r-r!" grunted Bunter. He turned and retraced his steps. He was about half-way back to the vault, when he gave a sudden start at a sound behind him.

It was a heavy, thudding sound, as of the closing of a weighty door! The fat junior, utterly startled, jumped almost clear of the stone flags, and Smithy's torch dropped from his hand.

It went out as it struck the stone, and Bunter was plunged into deep darkness. "Ow!" gasped Bunter.

He stood thrilling with terror. Who—what—was there behind him in the darkness? What was the cause of that thudding sound? The stone passage had no outlet, no door—he had seen that, only a few minutes ago, with his own eyes! Then what—

Palpitating with funk, the fat Owl stood staring back into the thick, dense darkness. A twinkle of light caught his eyes.

He blinked at it. Someone was there! How could someone be there when only a few minutes ago he had seen the end of the passage, shut in by solid blocks of stone?

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter. He stopped and scrambled desperately after the fallen torch. A sound reached his fat ears—a sound of movement—adding to his panic terror. The twinkle of light was gone, and all was dark again.

His fat, groping fingers touched the fallen torch, and he grabbed it up. But even as he rose to his feet again, to flee, he heard a panting breath, and hands reached out and grasped him in the darkness.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

A Mystery of the Dark!

BILLY BUNTER yelled. That yell of terror, as the unseen hands grasped him in the blackness, awoke a thousand echoes in the dim old vaults and passages under Greyfriars School.

In utter terror, hardly knowing what he did, the fat junior struck out with both hands at the unseen figure.



"From this window, Trotter," said Harry Wharton, "you can see the gym and a corner of the football field and the library wall. Keep your eyes on them." "Oh, sir!" gasped the page, as he felt a coin slipped into his hand. Meanwhile, the Removites were scudding along to the arched doorway of the vaults.

Crash!

Both fat fists landed, by luck, in the face that was close to him, though totally unseen.

He heard a grunt, and the grasp of the hands relaxed. Instantly the terrified Owl tore himself away.

A split second more, and he was running.

Where he was running he neither knew nor cared; his only thought was to get away from that fearful, unseen figure that had seized him in the darkness of the underground passage.

Who it was, whether earthly or unearthly, he did not know; but he knew that it made his very flesh creep with fear.

He ran madly in the darkness, bumping into stone walls, staggering, stumbling, and running on again.

He gasped with terror as he ran.

If only he could get out of those horrible vaults! If only he had not been such an ass as to enter them! Was the Thing after him?

Breathless, streaming with perspiration, in spite of the chill of the vaults, Bunter paused at last and blinked round, his eyes almost popping through his spectacles in his fear.

There was a pattering sound of footsteps.

But it ceased the next moment.

With his fat wits quickened by terror, Bunter understood! The Unknown had been following him—by sound! Now that he had stopped, the Unknown could hear him no longer, and had lost his guide.

As he realised that, Billy Bunter breathed a little more freely. He stood quite still.

There was no light! The man—if it was a man—had a light, he knew that, but had shut it off when he heard Bunter!

Why? There was only one answer to that question. He was afraid of being seen!

Whoever it was rooting about in the school vaults, it was someone who had no right there; someone who wanted to keep his presence a secret.

Bunter realised that!

It could not be anybody belonging to Greyfriars—no fellow with a fancy for exploring the vaults. Who could it be? What could he be doing there—under the school?

Bunter waited, trembling in every fat limb, his fat heart beating in great thumps. The remembrance of that savage grasp in the darkness thrilled him with dread. So long as the Unknown did not show a light, he was safe. If he made no sound, he could not possibly be found in the darkness.

There was a sound at last!

It sent icy thrills creeping down Bunter's back! It was the sound of stealthy, creeping footsteps!

The Unknown could not see him—could not hear him—could not spot him in the blackness of the vault. But he was creeping in the dark, seeking him like a beast of prey.

It was all that Bunter could do to repress a gasp of terror—which would have guided the unseen searcher to where he stood.

Fortunately he did repress it.

He strove to still his breathing as he heard the creeping, stealthy footsteps draw nearer.

Then they grew fainter. The searcher had passed him—only a few feet from him—in the dark.

Bunter made no movement. He was too frightened to move. But he strained his fat ears to listen. The sounds died away.

Still the fat junior did not stir. He was no longer thinking of trying to find

that spiral staircase that led up to the panel in the wall of Mr. Quelch's study. All his fatuous schemes of vengeance on his "beak" had been washed out by his terrors. He was only thinking of getting out into the daylight again. But that he could not do without turning on a light; and he dared not show a light while the unknown enemy was hunting him in the vaults. In an agony of apprehension he waited and listened.

Suddenly a spot of light broke the black darkness.

Bunter blinked at it.

He realised that the hunter had made up his mind, at last, to turn on a light, despairing of finding what he sought in the darkness.

"Oh crikey!" groaned Bunter.

Down the long line of vaults the light was approaching him. The Unknown had passed him in the dark; but he was coming back light in hand.

In a few minutes that glittering beam of light would pick up Bunter and reveal him to the searching eyes.

Of the man who carried it he could see nothing. Behind the light he was invisible.

But that gleaming speck of illumination came nearer and nearer. Bunter's heart thumped and bumped.

He groped in the darkness to the side of the vault, and crouched beside the lower part of the arch dividing it from the next.

Now the man would not be able to see him till he actually entered the vault where the fat Owl crouched.

But that was only a brief respite, as the man with the light was only two or three vaults away.

But Bunter's fat brain, under the influence of terror, worked at double pressure. He had put on his cap and coat before coming down, on account of the cold. Now he grabbed the cap

from his head, and crumpled it in his hand, ready to throw as soon as the light appeared through the arch close at hand. Sometimes the extremity of terror will lend a kind of desperate courage; and that was Billy Bunter's state now.

The light winked close at hand.

Whiz!

The whizzing cap struck the electric lamp, and knocked it from the hand that held it, a second before its beam would have turned on Bunter.

Crash!

The fat junior heard the crash of the falling lamp as it struck the stone floor. The next instant he was running.

He heard a muttered exclamation behind him—a sound of rustling and groping. The Unknown was groping after his lamp. Then there was a sound of footsteps, but no light. Apparently the lamp had been injured in its fall. Bunter fled on blindly, bumped into a buttress, and fell. He lay gasping; but the sound of pattering footsteps caused him to subdue his gasps and almost hold his breath.

Had the light beamed out again he would inevitably have been discovered. But there came no beam of light—evidently the lamp was damaged. Bunter lay still where he was, and again and again he heard the sound of footsteps. But there was silence at last.

He wondered whether the Unknown had given up the search. It seemed like it, for long minute followed minute, and there was no sound.

Bunter ventured at last to rise to his feet.

He listened, with palpitating heart, and blinked round him in the gloom. He could not find his way without turning on Smithy's torch, and if the enemy was still there, the light would betray him.

The fat Owl palpitated.

Was the man gone?

Who was he? What was he doing in those dark, dismal, deserted vaults under Greyfriars? Bunter could not guess; but he knew that he was in deadly terror of the man, whoever and whatever he was. If he was gone at last—

"Oh lor'!" breathed Bunter, as a sound came to his ears. It was a sound of footsteps.

A light shone out in the darkness. With a yell of terror the hapless Owl of the Remove fled.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Hope?

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"

It was strange enough that Bob Cherry could utter that cheery hail in his present circumstances.

But somehow or other Bob was keeping up his spirits in his strange and mysterious imprisonment. It was Bob's way to look on the bright side of things.

The solitude and silence were the worst he had to bear. He nourished the hope of escape, though no chance had turned up yet. He knew that his father would be leaving no stone unturned to find him; and he was confident that sooner or later Major Cherry would succeed—if he did not escape in the meantime.

And—looking in his habitually cheery way on the best side—he admitted that he might have been worse off.

Once a day the man with the jutting nose visited him in his hidden prison to bring him food, and doubtless to ascertain that he was still safe.

Even the cheery Bob could not feel kindly towards the mysterious man to

whom he owed his imprisonment in the vault; but he was glad to see him when he came, as a break in the dismal monotony.

Just now Bob was going through some physical jerks. His gaoler had paid him the daily visit, and left a bag of provisions. His watch told him that it was his usual tea-time, and he was working up an appetite for tea with some strenuous exercises. He did not expect to see the man with the nose again for twenty-four hours as usual.

So he uttered that ejaculation as the stone door suddenly swung open and the bearded man stepped in.

Bob stared at him. It was scarcely half an hour since the man had left him. Now he was back again and he was breathing hard, as if from exertion. An electric lamp was in his hand, but it was not burning. Bob, glancing at it, noticed that the bulb was broken. The man stepped in quickly, shut the stone door behind him, and stood breathing hard and deep, staring at Bob.

Bob Cherry grinned at what he read in the half-hidden bearded face.

"Still here, old bean!" he said. "Did you think I'd done the vanishing trick, or what? Not a chance!"

The man stared at him through the glasses under the peak of his cap. Bob could see that he was troubled in mind, even alarmed. Why, he could not guess, unless the man had feared that he had escaped. Yet what could have put such a fear into his mind?

"You have not been out of this vault?" The man with the jutting nose muttered the words as he scanned the junior's surprised face. "No—I know it is impossible. I knew it—and yet—answer me!" He broke off, and Bob grinned.

"If I'd been out I shouldn't have come back, old tulip!" he said. "If I knew the way out, you wouldn't find me here when you blew in again."

"No. But then who—what—who—?" The man muttered to himself. "If it was not you escaping, as I feared for a moment, who— But I knew it could not be that. I knew it was impossible. And yet—" He broke off again, evidently puzzled and perplexed.

Bob's eyes gleamed. Something, it was clear, had happened, since his captor had left him—something that had alarmed the man with the jutting nose. Was it possible that the search for him was getting close—that there was a chance of rescue? Bob was making the best of things in his imprisonment, but he had a deep and intense longing to see the light of day, and the faces of his friends again. His eyes danced at the thought of it.

The man was watching him savagely, suspiciously.

"Have you seen—heard—anything—since I left you?" he snapped suddenly.

"Nothing!" answered Bob, in wonder.

"You did not know—" Again he bit off his words abruptly.

"What?" asked Bob.

The man with the jutting nose made no answer. He scanned the junior's astonished face searchingly, and then turned away, and cast a suspicious, searching glance round the vault. It was very plain that he was uneasy.

He turned to Bob again suddenly.

"You do not know where you are?" he rapped.

"Not the foggiest."

"You've made no guess?"

"How could I guess?" asked Bob, wondering more than ever. "I was taken miles and miles in a plane, and then in a car while I was unconscious. I haven't the faintest idea where you've stowed me away. How could I have? I'm not a jolly old magician."

"No," said the man slowly, "you could not know; you could not guess. If you did, it would matter little; you could not pass your knowledge beyond the walls of this vault. You are safe here; wherever they look for you, they will never dream of looking here. And yet, who could it have been—?"

"Who could who have been?" asked the wondering Bob. "Has somebody been rooting about here? And did you fancy it was me making a getaway?" He laughed. "I jolly well wish it had been—"

"After all, it was nothing—some fool meddling where he had no concern," muttered the man with the jutting nose, and with that he went back to the moving stone and left the vault.

The heavy stone thudded into place after him, and Bob Cherry was left alone—wondering. But there was a new light in the imprisoned junior's eyes, a new hope in his heart. What had happened he could not guess, but something had happened—something that had alarmed his captor. It was plain that the man had scented danger; and danger to the kidnapper meant hope to the kidnapped junior. Bob Cherry resumed his physical jerks in quite a cheery frame of mind.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

To the Rescue!

"HA, ha, ha!"

The Bounder roared. He was laughing as he came up the Remove staircase. Several fellows in the Remove passage glanced at him. Smithy, apparently, was in possession of a first-class joke.

"Ha, ha, ha!" he roared.

"What's the jolly old jest?" asked Skinner.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Bounder. "Bunter's done it this time!"

"Bunter!" repeated several voices, and there was a general grin. All the Remove knew of Bunter's "feud" with his Form-master, and had derived considerable entertainment therefrom.

The Owl of the Remove had made no secret of his intention to make Quelch "sit up and squirm." But the opinion of the Remove was that the fat Owl was much more likely to do the sitting up and the squirming.

Harry Wharton glanced out of Study No. 1.

"Bunter?" he exclaimed. "He hasn't—"

"He has!" yelled the Bounder.

"Not squirted Quelch!" exclaimed Frank Nugent, aghast.

"Ha, ha! No! Not quite! Quelch didn't look squirted!" chortled the Bounder. "I've just seen him— Ha, ha, ha! Somebody's pinched the key of the vaults from his study—you know he keeps it hanging up behind his desk—"

"That blithering ass! Does Quelch know?" exclaimed Wharton.

"Not yet. But he will!" The Bounder wiped his eyes. "He doesn't know that jolly old Bunter is on the giddy warpath! He never seems to have thought of Bunter playing Chingachgook on the wild trail of vengeance—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But he missed the key; I saw him whisking into the passage to the vaults, and wondered what was up. I guessed that jolly old Bunter had been up to something after what he told us!" chuckled Smithy. "And he has! Quelch

(Continued on page 22.)

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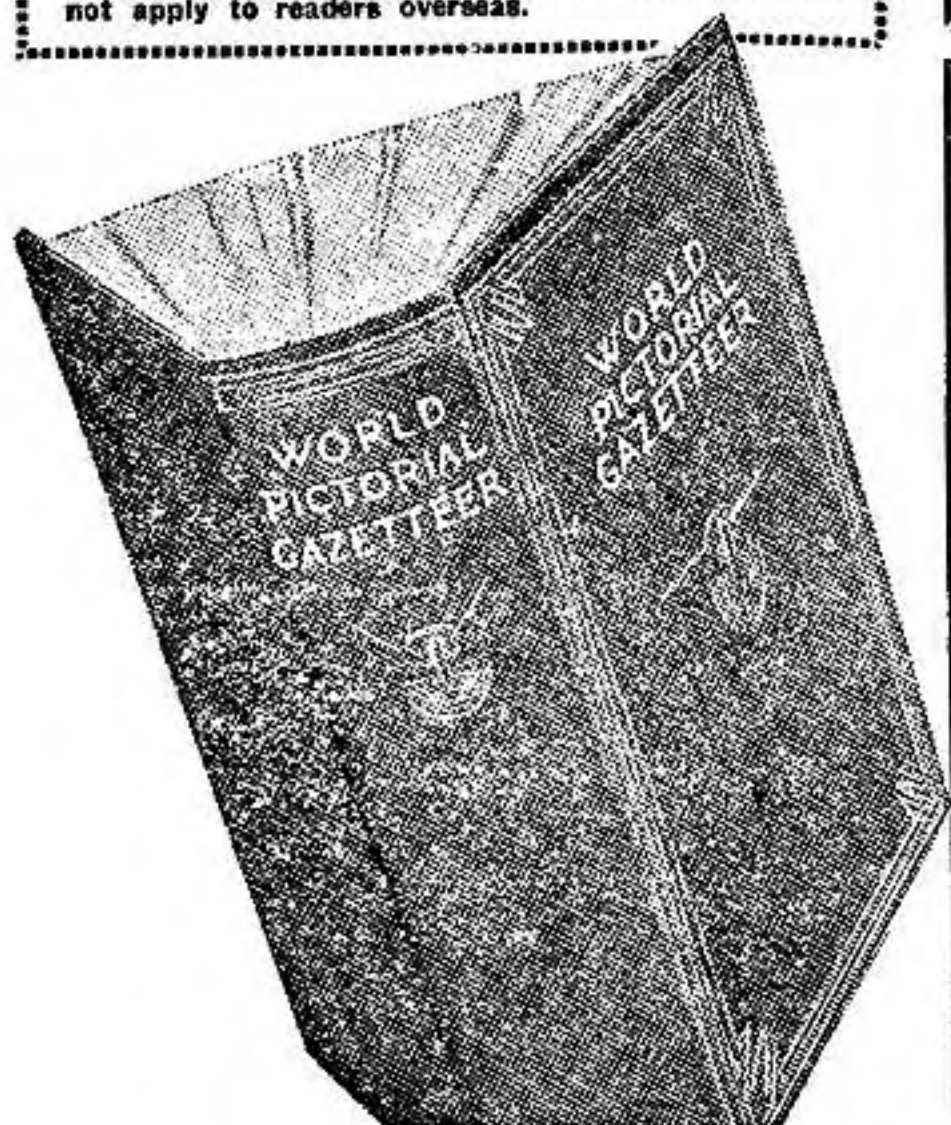
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found the door ajar, and the key sticking in the lock. He knows that somebody went down; he doesn't know yet that it was Bunter. I suppose he thinks it's some ass keen on exploring the vaults—out of bounds, you know. He's locked the door—"

"Locked it!" exclaimed Wharton.

"Locked it!" chortled the Bounder. "Bunter's locked in the vaults now! When he comes back he will have to hammer on the door to be let out."

"Oh, my hat!"

"That's Quelch's idea. See? Poor old Bunter! Fancy his face when he finds the door locked and has to rouse all Greyfriars to get out!" And the Bounder roared again.

Harry Wharton laughed; he could not help it. Billy Bunter's weird schemes of vengeance were really enough to make a cat laugh.

Bunter, who never foresaw anything, had not foreseen this very probable possibility.

Had he succeeded in his wonderful scheme of "squirting" Quelch, the identity of the "squirter" would have been infallibly revealed when he had to get out of the vaults.

Perhaps it was just as well for Bunter that he had had no luck in bringing off that wonderful scheme.

But Harry Wharton became grave again. Absurd as Bunter's antics might seem to the Removites, there was no doubt that the Remove master would take a much more serious view of them. Bunter was "for it."

"The burbling bandersnatch!" said Harry. "He jolly well deserves a whopping, but—"

"And he will get it!" said Nugent. "The vaults are out of bounds; and taking a key from a beak's study, too—"

"The whopfulness will be terrific."

"Quelch has left the key in the lock, and told Trotter to keep an eye on the passage," said Vernon-Smith. "He's to let the fathead out when he hears him knock, and take him to Quelch's study. Let's hope, for Bunter's sake, that he won't have done any squirting!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The howling ass!" said Johnny Bull.

"Why, it would be the sack—"

"The short, sharp sack!" grinned the Bounder. "Bunter's the man to ask for things, isn't he?"

"Well, we don't want the fat idiot sacked," said Wharton.

"Who'd miss him?" yawned Skinner.

"Oh, rats!"

Vernon-Smith went to his study laughing. Apparently he was not much concerned about Bunter's possible fate. Skinner chortled. Harry Wharton & Co. went back into Study No. 1, where they had been at tea when the Bounder came up.

Wharton's face was very grave. Nugent looked at him with a faint grin.

"Nothing doing!" he said. "The fat chump's asked for it this time. He's going to get it."

"In the neck!" agreed Johnny Bull.

"The neckfulness will be preposterous," remarked Harree Jamset Ram Singh. "If the esteemed Trotter is on the watch we cannot barge in helpfully, my esteemed Wharton."

"Well, that kid Trotter isn't a bad sort," said Harry slowly. "He might be got off the scene for a minute or two—"

"Um!" said Nugent. "Better think twice. Quelch isn't in the best of tempers these days."

"I know. But—" Harry Wharton put down his teacup. "Look here, let's

trot along and see if anything can be done. That fat idiot doesn't seem to have weighed in with the squirt; we might be in time to stop him."

"Let's," agreed Nugent—rather dubiously, however.

The four juniors left the study and went down. At the end of the passage leading to the arched doorway of the vaults they found Trotter, the House page. There was a faint grin on Trotter's face.

"Waiting for anybody, Trotter?" asked Harry.

"Yessir!" grinned Trotter. "Mr. Quelch says somebody has gone down into the vaults, sir, and I'm to wait and take him to Mr. Quelch's study when he comes out, sir. I expect to 'ear him knocking any minute."

"Look out of this window, Trotter."

"Eh? What for, Master Wharton?"

"Fine view from here," said the captain of the Remove. "You can see the gym and a corner of the football field and the library wall—"

"I've seen 'em before, sir," said the mystified Trotter.

"They're worth seeing again," said the captain of the Remove affably. "Keep your eyes on them for a few minutes, Trotter."

"Oh, sir!" gasped Trotter, as he felt a half-crown slipped into his hand. "Oh, Master Wharton!"

It was bribery and corruption. Trotter rather liked half-crowns, and he was not keen on getting any fellow into a row. Leaving him standing at the window, the four juniors went down the passage, and Trotter was left hardly knowing what to do. Certainly he did not want to call Mr. Quelch and get those four fellows into a row. It was rather a difficult position for Trotter, and he decided to take Wharton's advice and continue to admire the view from the window.

Leaving him admiring that view, Harry Wharton & Co. scudded along to the arched doorway at the end of the passage.

To unlock the door and whip through occupied hardly more than a moment.

Harry Wharton closed the door, leaving it a few inches ajar, as Bunter had done.

Within was black darkness.

Wharton had slipped a pocket-torch into his pocket before leaving Study No. 1. He turned it on now, and the juniors descended the stone steps into the vault below.

Dark and gloomy, lost in dim shadows, the great vaults stretched, seemingly endless, before their eyes. They peered to and fro.

"Bunter will have a light!" said Harry. "He's got Smithy's torch, of course! We shall spot him—"

"Anyhow, he will spot our light!" said Frank. "But where—"

"Hallo! What the thump—"

There was a sudden yell in the darkness.

"Yaroooh! Keep off, you beast! Oh crikey! Ow!"

That yell was followed by a sound of running feet in the darkness. Harry Wharton & Co. stood almost petrified. They recognised Billy Bunter's voice as he yelled. But why he had rushed away in panic terror was a mystery to them.

Crash! Bump!

A crash told that the fleeing Owl had run into something solid, and the bump indicated that he had come a cropper.

"Ow! Keep off! Yaroooop!"

"Has he gone potty?" gasped Nugent.

"Sounds like it! Come on!" exclaimed Wharton.

Holding up the light, he ran forward, his comrades at his heels.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

An Amazing Meeting!

BILLY BUNTER sprawled and roared.

"Ow! Help! Wow! Keep off! Yoooop!"

"Bunter—" panted Wharton.

"Bunter, you potty ass!" gasped Johnny Bull.

"You blithering idiot!" exclaimed Nugent.

"You terrific and preposterous fat-head!" hooted the Nabob of Bhanipur.

Bunter sat up, blinking in the light.

His little round eyes almost popped through his big round spectacles at the sound of the familiar voices of the chums of the Remove.

The fat Owl, when he saw the light gleaming in the darkness, had not doubted for a moment that it was the mysterious man of the vaults who was after him again! Now he realised that his terrors had deceived him.

"Oh!" he gasped. "You!"

"You howling, blithering, jabbering jabberwock!" growled Johnny Bull.

"What's the matter with you?"

"Oh dear!" gasped Bunter. "I say, you fellows— Oh lor'! Oh crikey!"

He staggered to his feet.

The presence of the Removites was a relief to him, but he blinked round in the gloomy vaults with terrified eyes behind his big spectacles.

"I say, you fellows— Ow! Oh crikey!" he groaned. "I say, have you seen him?"

"Him! Who?"

"That awful beast!" gasped Bunter.

"Who?" howled Wharton.

"That awful villain who was after me!" gurgled the Owl of the Remove. "He grabbed me in the dark, and I dodged him— Oh dear!"

Wharton turned the light on the terrified fat face. It was easy to see that Billy Bunter had been scared out of his fat wits. The juniors could only conclude that his light had gone out and that he had been frightened in the dark.

Bunter grabbed hold of Wharton's arm.

"D-d-don't leave me!" he gurgled.

"All right, fathead! Keep your pecker up," said the captain of the Remove soothingly. "We came down after you, you silly ass! Quelch missed the key and locked the door—and—"

"The beast!" gasped Bunter. "It's all Quelch's fault! Making out that a fellow bagged another fellow's lines, you know—"

"You howling ass—"

"Oh, really, Bull—"

"What's frightened you, you piffing funk?" snorted Johnny Bull. "Are you afraid of the dark, you fat owl?"

"I was grabbed—" gasped Bunter.

"Rats!"

"Somebody got hold of me—"

"Rubbish!"

"I tell you he did!" howled Bunter.

"And I tell you he didn't!" snorted Johnny. "There's nobody here except you and us, and so who could have grabbed you, you podgy funk?"

"I chucked my cap and knocked the light out of his hand!" moaned Bunter. "But for that he'd have had me."

"Bosh!"

"Hold on, though—he seems to have lost his cap, if he had it on," said Harry Wharton. "Look here, Bunter—"



"That villain!" panted Harry Wharton. "Collar him!" As the juniors rushed, the man drew a revolver from under his jacket, and levelled it. Bang! The report of the pistol filled the underground spaces with a roar of sound, like the roll of thunder.

"Case of blue funk," said Johnny Bull. "How the thump could anybody be down here in the dark—except that howling ass? Nobody else got any idea of squirting a Form-master with ink, I suppose?"

"It's not a Greyfriars man, you beast!" groaned Bunter. "It's some awful villain! I don't know what he's up to, but he was after me. Oh dear!" The fat junior shivered and shook. Evidently, with or without cause, the Owl of the Remove had had the fright of his life.

Wharton circled the light round. The juniors stared into the gloomy shadows of the vaults. Nothing was to be seen or heard.

"Oh, let's get out before Quelch spots the door open!" growled Johnny Bull. "We shall all get into a fearful row for coming down here after that fat idiot if it gets to Quelch! There's nobody here, and hasn't been! How could there be?"

"Well, anybody who had a fancy to could get along here from under the priory in Friardale Wood!" said Harry. "Bunter said the other day that he saw that man Kranz there—"

"So I did!" said Bunter.

"Perhaps it was Kranz again, doing some giddy exploring, if you found anybody here! But I don't see why he should grab you—unless he was as frightened in the dark as you were—"

The juniors chuckled.

"He had a light, but he turned it out when he heard me," said Bunter. "He got after me in the dark! It can't have been that man Kranz. Whoever it was, was afraid of being seen. Kranz wouldn't care, would he?"

"There was nobody!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Afterwards, when I dodged him, he turned on the light again to hunt for me, and I knocked it out with my cap!" gasped Bunter. "I—I say, he's gone now. Let's go and look for my cap."

The silence and the presence of the juniors had reassured Bunter. He had no doubt that the mysterious man was gone—and, even if he was not gone, there were enough fellows there to handle him if he showed up and offered trouble.

"Look here, if Quelch—" began Johnny Bull.

"Oh, don't be funky!" said Bunter.

"What?" gasped Johnny.

"I'm not afraid of Quelch, if you are! Have some nerve!" said Bunter. "If it's the dark you're afraid of, stick close to me!" Evidently the Owl of the Remove was recovering!

Johnny Bull's face was a study!

"Oh, come on!" said Harry Wharton hastily. "Let's find the blithering idiot's cap for him!"

He moved on, flashing the light to and fro. A few minutes later Bunter's cap was spotted, lying where it had fallen in the arch between two vaults. The fat Owl pounced on it and jammed it on his bullet head. Wharton flashed the light on the damp old stone flags of the floor near the spot and scanned them curiously. If there was any truth in Bunter's startling tale, he wondered whether he could pick up any sign of his mysterious assailant. He gave a sudden exclamation as a glitter of broken glass on the old stone flashed back in the light.

"My hat!" he ejaculated.

He stooped, and examined the tiny fragments. According to Bunter, the mysterious man's lamp had dropped, and he had not been able to light it

again. Bunter's strange tale was borne out by those fragments of glass—for obviously they were left by a small pocket-lamp that had smashed on the stone. The juniors stared blankly at that tell-tale "sign." Even Johnny Bull had nothing to say to that!

"Somebody's been here!" said Harry at last.

"Bunter's busted Smithy's torch perhaps!" muttered Johnny, still in his role of Doubting Thomas.

"Look at it, then!" grunted Bunter, and he held up Smithy's torch—broken!

Johnny was silent again.

"That settles it!" said Frank. "But who the thump—and why—"

"The whyfulness is terrific."

"Hark!" exclaimed Harry Wharton suddenly, startled by a distant, heavy, thudding sound in the silence of the vaults.

Bunter jumped and gave a frightened squeak.

"That's what I heard—and then—oh, lor'! I—I say you fellows, run for it! I say—"

Wharton was already running! But he was not running to escape from a supposed danger. He was running swiftly in the direction of that strange and startling sound, determined to know what it meant.

Holding the torch up before him, to light the way, he ran hard and fast into the stone-walled passage—the "blind alley" where Bunter's strange adventure had started.

All was dark there—if there was anyone there he was not carrying a light. Swiftly the captain of the Remove ran, his chums breathless at his heels, Billy Bunter squeaking with terror in the darkness behind, unheeded.

A figure loomed up, clear in the light of Wharton's lamp. The beam of electric light played full on it—on a dark coat, with the collar turned up; a peaked cap pulled low, with glasses under it; a bearded chin, and a prominent, jutting nose! In alarm the man stared at the juniors who had so suddenly appeared out of the darkness—and in sheer stupefaction they gazed at him as they recognised the man who had kidnapped Bob Cherry in the aeroplane on the football field of Greyfriars.

"The kidnapper!" panted Harry Wharton.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Surprise for Quelch!

"THE kidnapper!" Each of the juniors panted out the words. They knew him—they knew him at a glance. It was the kidnapper—the man who had carried off their comrade—whom they had supposed to be with his prisoner, hundreds, if not thousands, of miles away. The kidnapper—

"I say, you fellows!" came Bunter's squeak from the darkness behind. Nobody heeded it.

For a long second the four juniors and the man with the jutting nose stared at one another, equally startled by the meeting. A blaze shot into Harry Wharton's eyes.

"That villain!" he panted. "Collar him!"

"At him!" muttered Johnny Bull between his teeth.

They leaped forward.

The man with the jutting nose made a backward spring. Twice again he sprang back, escaping the rush.

But that brought him to the end of the stone passage, where the way was closed by solid stone.

With his back to the stone he stood panting.

The four juniors, with gleaming eyes, rushed at him. His hand was groping under his coat; it flashed out with an automatic in it. The weapon was flung up to a level.

Bang!

The report of the pistol filled the underground spaces with a roar of sound like the roll of thunder. Instant darkness followed. Harry Wharton felt a numbing shock in his arm, and for a moment he believed that he had been hit by the bullet.

Then he understood. The electric lamp had been shot from his hand. It was not at his life that the automatic had been aimed. Kidnapper and desperate rascal as the man was, he stopped short of that—perhaps for his own sake.

Neither did he need such desperate measures, for the smashing of the pocket-lamp left them in utter blackness. The juniors could not even see one another let alone their enemy.

There was a rush in the darkness.

Wharton was staggering. The shock had numbed his hand, and he felt a trickle of wet on his fingers; a strip of skin had been torn away. It was Johnny Bull who grabbed at the unseen figure that rushed by, and caught hold; but the next second he was hurled aside, and went sprawling. Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh grasped at an arm that touched him—but a gasping voice announced that it was Nugent's arm. The rapid patter of running feet was heard. The man was fleeing desperately in the darkness.

"After him!" panted Johnny Bull, staggering to his feet.

But the man was past then, and running. It was clear that he knew his way about the subterranean depths under Greyfriars School, for he ran swiftly and surely even in the dense darkness. In a few moments the pattering footsteps were no longer heard.

"Get a light!" panted Wharton. "Anybody got any matches?"

"The matchfulness is terrific!" gasped Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh. He found a matchbox and struck a match.

In the flickering light the juniors stared round them. The stone-walled passage was empty, save for themselves. The man with the jutting nose had vanished.

"You're hurt, Harry!" panted Nugent. He caught the trickle of red on Wharton's fingers.

Wharton set his lips.

"Just a scratch—he fired at the light and took a bit of skin off my finger—it's nothing. But—he's gone!"

"The gonefulness is preposterous!"

Bunter's terrified howls still rang from the darkness of the vaults.

"I say, you fellows! Help! I say—"

"Get back to Bunter," said Harry. "He's got Smithy's torch—if he had sense enough to turn it on. Come on!"

Striking matches as they went, the juniors hurried back to the vault where they had left Bunter. His terrified squeaking guided them.

"You silly ass, put on the light!" snapped Johnny Bull.

Bunter seemed to have forgotten that he had Smithy's torch still in his fat hand. He flashed it on, the light dancing as he held it in his trembling, shaking hand. Wharton jerked it away from him.

"No good looking for that blighter now," he said. "He's gone! Let's get out of this!"

"Yes, rather!"

"It was the kidnapper, right enough," said Harry, as they moved away towards the stone stair that led out of the vaults. "No doubt about that. It was the man who came in the plane that day—"

"The man who got old Bob!" said Frank.

"But what's he doing here!" exclaimed Johnny Bull. "I fancied the villain was as far away as he could get. Looking for somebody else to kidnap, or what?"

"Can't make it out. But the sooner the police know that he's been seen, the better."

The chums of the Remove tramped up the stone stair to the oaken door above. It was ajar as they had left it. Harry Wharton opened it, and they passed out into the dusky passage.

"I say, you fellows!" Billy Bunter squeaked anxiously, as he rolled after the juniors up the passage. "I say, you needn't mention to Quelch that I was down there, you know! Of course, I'm not afraid of Quelch—not like some chaps I could name. But I'd rather he didn't know—see? The fact is I prefer to keep clear of the whole thing. I say—Oh lor'!"

Billy Bunter broke off at the sight of an angular figure standing beside Trotter at the window at the end of the passage. A voice reached his ears—the well-known voice of his Form-master.

"You have heard nothing so far, Trotter? You—"

Mr. Quelch broke off, and stared along the passage—at five figures that were coming along from the arched doorway of the vaults.

"Oh, my eye!" murmured Trotter; and he slipped away.

Mr. Quelch fixed his eyes on the juniors. There was thunder in his brow.

"Wharton, you—"

"It—it wasn't me, sir!" gasped Bunter.

"What?"

"I—I never bagged the key, sir!" gasped Bunter. "I went out of the Form-room this morning for a map, sir, just as I told you. I—"

"Silence! All of you will follow me to my study!" said Mr. Quelch; and, with a thunderous brow, he stalked away.

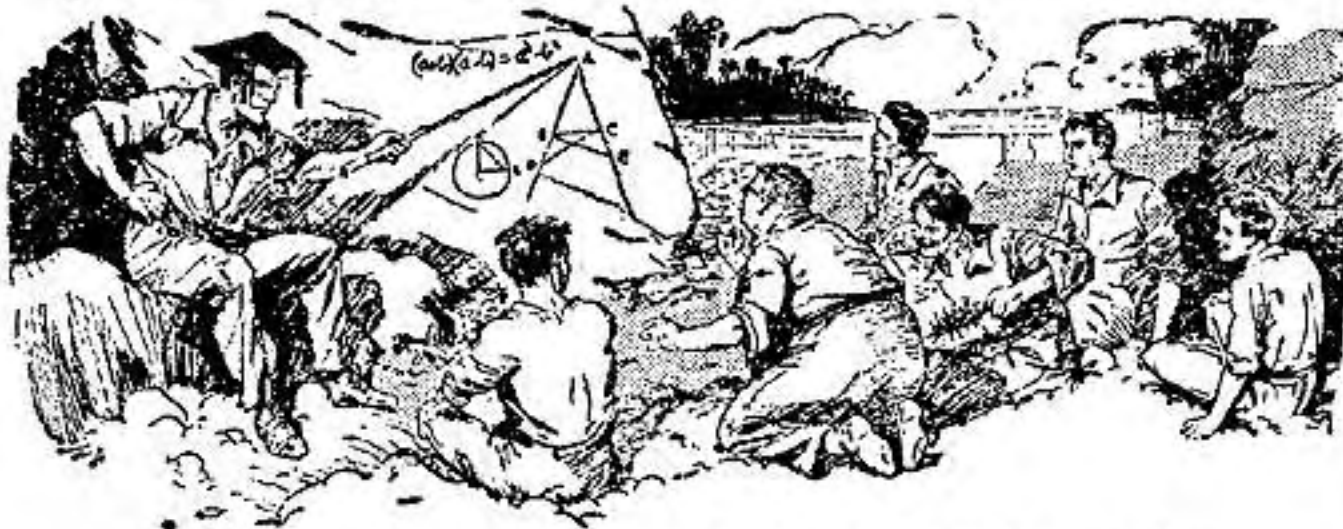
Harry Wharton & Co. followed on. They had to speak to Quelch, anyway.

In his study Mr. Quelch fixed his gimlet eyes on the juniors.

"You have the key of the vaults, Wharton, I see."

(Continued on page 28.)

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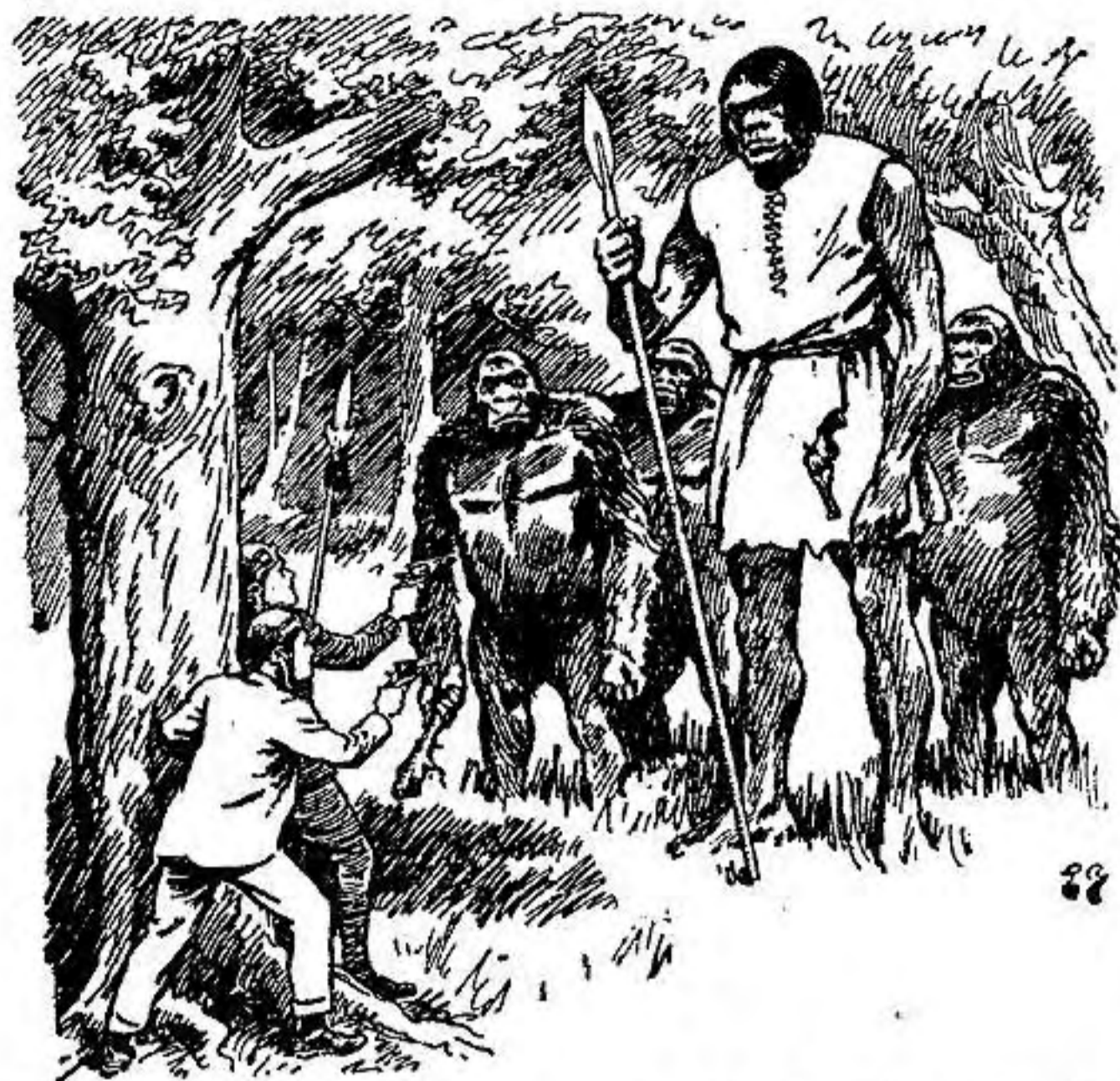
The RANGER - 2^D.

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SUPER THRILLS AND HIGH-SPOT ADVENTURE HERE, BOYS!

WHEN the GREAT APES CAME!

By STUART MARTIN.



HOW THE STORY STARTED.

GERRY LAMBERT and **BILLY MURCHIE**, two young airmen, are brought down in the African jungle by an army of apes—led by Big Ling, a giant ape-man—reared to crush civilization by a renegade called Stein. Gerry escapes, but Billy is forced to lead an expedition to England which spreads devastation in all directions. Reunited once more, Gerry and Billy, in company with Commander Walsh, of the R.A.F., are trailing the enemy in the New Forest, when Gerry is captured. His life is spared, however, thanks to the timely intervention of a friendly gorilla known as the Watcher. Meanwhile, British forces charge the enemy, hurling bombs that blister and blind.

(Now read on.)

Stein's Last Venture!

AS if he bore a charmed life, Big Ling charged wherever his apes were being thrown back. Right through the smoke he went, his club rising and falling with terrible regularity. His coat of mail saved him time and again from the bullets that sang about him. He reached a gun and beat down the gunners, throwing the gun over on its side.

From gun to gun he charged, followed by his ape-men and his gorillas, until he had every gun out of action; then, turning, he loped towards the next battery, destroying as he went.

Gerry saw all this, fascinated. He saw the massive form of Ling come towards where he stood, apes following on his heels, howling like demons. The officers who had not moved except to give orders were directly in Ling's path. Their revolvers rose and discharged their contents at the monster, but he rushed at them. One sweep of his club cleared the ground, the men going down like corn before the sickle. And then Ling's eyes fell on Gerry.

His great mouth opened in surprise and his teeth gnashed. He flung out his arm, raising his club above his head.

"This time you will not escape!" he roared.

Down came the club as Gerry fired. The bullet glanced into Ling's hair; but before the club reached Gerry a black form shot through the air and landed on Ling's chest, tearing and worrying at his throat.

It was the gorilla Gerry had befriended.

Its body took the blow intended for Gerry, and it sagged under it, but nothing could loosen its powerful paws which were around Ling's neck. He staggered about, tearing at the hairy arms, biting at the gorilla as it bit at him. It was a fight between two giants. Down they went to the ground, then up again, and still Ling was tearing the arms apart. They were like two dogs, both seeking a grip for teeth and claw.

The end came quickly, however. Ling's fangs caught the gorilla in the jugular. He bent his head as his teeth fastened on the animal's neck, then shook the creature as a hound shakes a fox.

A howl broke from the animal. Its arms went limp. It dropped to the ground, dead, its life-blood racing in a stream from its severed throat.

The scene had horrified yet fascinated Gerry, who had remained rooted to the spot. He saw Ling raising himself from the ground, but at that moment other forms came upon them. The troops had rallied, and were driving gorillas in their direction.

Crowds of apes and troops, mingled in close fighting, swarmed everywhere; and Gerry, overwhelmed in the struggling mass, felt himself lifted from his feet and carried along in the melee. He was in the arms of an ape-man, who did not crush him, but bundled him out of the scrum and raced onward with giant strides.

Then a guttural voice spoke.

"Do not struggle. Am I not your friend?"

It was the Watcher who had plucked Gerry from that pandemonium of fighting.

"Where are you going with me?" demanded Gerry; for the Watcher was peering this way and that in the gloom as if seeking something.

He did not answer, but ran on until they were faced with a hedge that bordered a roadway. There he set Gerry down.

The sound of a car being cranked up came to Gerry's ears. Presently a small car moved forward, gathering speed. It passed them at a close distance.

Gerry whipped out his gun and fired at the figure crouched over the wheel. Still the car sped on.

"You were right," muttered the Watcher, seeing the look in Gerry's face. "That was the Master. That was Stein."

"Where is he going?"

"Look and listen."

Down the road came battalions of gorillas headed by ape-men, rushing past Gerry and the Watcher towards the scene of the battle.

"The Master's forces!" exclaimed the Watcher. "He has brought up his own army, yet he knows there will not be victory that will last. He has gone to make victory for your people impossible."

"How?"

"He carried small tubes of poison. He has gone to drop the poison into the big tanks of water from which your people drink. Your reservoirs."

"Watcher, how do you know this?"

Gerry saw the answer in the Watcher's hand—a test-tube sealed at the top with red wax.

"This is one of his tubes," said the ape-man. "I stole it. Take it to your chief and tell them. Then you will know. Meanwhile, I have other work to do."

And, before Gerry could say a word, the ape-man had bounded off into the night.

It was true, this diabolical thing that Stein had set his heart on. He had been preparing for the possibility of defeat by manufacturing a weapon that would slay whole towns and cities without discrimination.

Stein was a scientific outlaw, one who had already been banished from human ken because of his heartless experiments, his cruelty and inhumanity. His revenge on humanity was the bringing of the armies from the forests of Africa to crush the civilization that had punished him. As he bent over the wheel of his car, he curled his lips in the exultation of his unspeakable plan.

While Ling fought the armed forces of England, he would spread death and destruction among the unarmed. He had in his car enough poison to destroy the entire nation. All he had to do was to drop a test-tube into a city's reservoirs and the germs would lay populations low.

The awful power in the hands of such a remorseless madman was so terrible, yet so simple, that it was literally as if he held the lives of the people of England in his grasp.

"Ling will be king!" he kept mutter-

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ing, as he forced the car to its utmost capacity and flew along the road. "Ling will steal the world from men. Already he is destroying them. Now, with my help, he is about to take the country that rules the world."

He chuckled diabolically as he thought of the scheme. He was not fleeing from the field of battle. He was extending the field. He was thinking of the brutes he had let loose with Ling in the north of England and in the Midlands. The south was in a hubbub already. The Midlands and the north had to be slain not mainly by gorillas, but by the power that lay inside his tubes.

He knew the roads well enough. Through Amesbury he drove, turned to the right, and saw a signpost marked "To Andover." He drove to Andover, and when he arrived there, the dawn was beginning to rise above the eastern horizon.

All was peace and quiet here, the inhabitants knowing nothing whatsoever of the criminal who was plugging through its streets. He did not stop at Andover. That was too small fry for him just then. He was making for a big centre, a place where his poison would spread death on a large scale.

His objective was none other than the city of Oxford, the centre of learning which Stein knew and hated.

At Whitechurch he turned left and had a country road practically to himself. He passed nobody except a few policemen, who wondered at the speed at which he was travelling. But some distance on he stopped his car.

Taking a pair of pliers from his pocket, he climbed a telegraph-pole and snipped the wires. To get up the pole he had fastened to his boots the spikes used by telegraph repairers. He had thought of everything.

An Automobile Association telephone-box next claimed his attention. He broke it open and tore at the telephone, disconnecting it. He knew that if any policemen had suspicions of him they would make for the box on that country road, and if he was being followed by scouts or police cars they would not gain reinforcements.

This took place outside Newbury, and he required petrol when he reached that town.

At a wayside garage he filled the car's tank, then sped on, flashed through Elisley to the junction of roads before Sutton Courtenay, where he smashed a second telephone-box.

After that he made for Abingdon, and then, a little farther on, another telephone-box was destroyed. He was now within half a dozen miles of Oxford.

As he reached the outskirts of the city he was faced with a policeman who stood in the centre of the road with arms outstretched.

Stein hesitated whether to stop. Should he kill the policeman and rush on?

The policeman still remained in the centre of the road, and Stein, who had reduced speed a trifle, saw the man's hand go to his baton and raise it.

Stein lifted a revolver and fired as he came within distance. There was no report, just the usual "ping" of a silenced gun.

The constable dropped in his tracks, and Stein flew on.

He knew that there must have been some sort of alarm sent ahead of him, in spite of his wrecking of the telephone-boxes. Who could have sent the alarm? He did not know or care.

He turned off from the main road just before the town was reached and swung away to the right. He knew where the reservoir was situated, and he was taking a roundabout road to cut off the town.

As he turned another corner he saw a police car stationed by the side of the road. Two uniformed men were in it and were consulting a map spread out on their knees. One of them raised his head as Stein's vehicle came into view. Next moment, the police car swung across in front of Stein's and tried to block his way.

But Stein had been watching. He manipulated the wheel, mounted the pavement, and cleared the police car by inches. As he did so, he fired twice. He did not notice whether his bullets hit the men. He raced on, and in his driving-mirror he saw them turn the car and come in pursuit.

Through street after street he raced, taking corners at full speed, skidding and sliding.

The police car kept on his trail and was gaining on him gradually. He saw in his mirror one of the men stand up and heard him shout.

A revolver-shot rang out, and a bullet sang over Stein's head. He did not reply just then, but, turning a corner, he pulled his car up almost in its own length to stop beside the gutter.

The police car came round with a rush, and as the driver stamped on his brakes, Stein lifted his gun and fired.

Twice his gun spoke. The officers sank back in their seats, hit, but not killed.

Picking up a test-tube, Stein threw it into the driving-seat. Smoke arose, flames broke out, enveloping the car and its occupants.

But this turn had taken him off his direction. Turning back, he drove back to the road he desired.

He had not gone far however, when he met more opposition. Several policemen and soldiers armed with guns were grouped at a crossroads. They signalled to him to stop, raising their guns.

Stein pretended to obey, but when near them he hurled a handful of test-tubes. They broke on the road at the feet of the men, spurting yellow flames and smoke. Stein drove through them, hurling them to the side. Guns crashed out, but he was away, driving like a maniac.

Stein reached the country road. But another car was in pursuit. He tossed

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tubes behind him which sent up gas and flame. The car, however, was too near to be affected.

Looking in his mirror, Stein recognised a figure standing beside the driver, gun in hand. It was the figure of Gerry.

He manoeuvred his steering-wheel so that he was a constantly shifting target. The reservoir came in sight. Into a hedge Stein drove his car, grabbed his tubes, and leaped. He gained the slope and began to scramble up.

He heard shouting behind him. Bullets began to fall around him, but he kept dodging between shrubs. More shots. His pursuers were shooting at random.

Not once did Stein come into the open. He marked the spot where he would make the rush for the water. Up went his arm in a big swing as he heaved a tube towards the embankment. The tube rose high in the air and fell out of sight. Had it reached the water?

Up the slope Stein scrambled now, regardless of danger, defying the bullets. One struck him in the back, but he ploughed on. Bullets were nothing to him. He wore a shirt of mail similar to that which Ling had donned.

Another bullet caught him between the shoulders and sent him sprawling. He managed to reach the top of the slope, however. The sheet of water on which the lives of thousands depended

(Continued on next page.)

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., The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. A stamped, addressed envelope will ensure a reply.

WELL, chums, I guess you thoroughly enjoyed this week's magnificent FREE GIFT—the bar of Walters' Chocolate Nougat, and I know beforehand that you'll make short work, too, of

THE THIRD SPLENDID FREE GIFT

which will come into your hands when you get next Saturday's issue of the MAGNET. Walters' Strawberry Flavoured Toffee—a bar of which will be presented FREE to every reader next week—is calculated to "tickle the palate" of the average boy. I can visualise you smacking your lips! When I got my teeth into a bar of it, I—well, 'nuff said! That bar's no more, anyway! Don't waste time, order your copy of next Saturday's MAGNET right away! I shouldn't like any of my regular readers to be disappointed by being told that the "Old Paper" is "Sold Out." Better still, give a regular order for the MAGNET—it's the safest in the long run!

By the way, if you want a copy of our

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you must carry out the necessary particulars on page 21 of this issue without further delay. It is absolutely your last chance to get the most valuable and interesting reference book yet published in this country. The WORLD PICTORIAL GAZETTEER—which is offered to readers of the MAGNET on terms practically amounting to a gift—will be found indispensable to everyone who wants a quick and ready reference to any place in the world. Knowledge is power, and the possessor of this Gazetteer will find at his elbow such knowledge of the world and its affairs as will be of tremendous assistance to him, while preparing for an exam or entering into any debate. Mention this wonderful offer to your parents, for they will, I am sure, be quick to see the many advantages behind it.

HERE'S a poser which one of my readers puts up to me this week. He asks:

WHICH IS THE WORLD'S LARGEST CITY?

Be careful! There's a catch in this question! Most people would say London—but actually the City of London is a very small part of the metropolis, and one

of the smallest cities in the world. The largest "city" is Honolulu. Sounds strange, doesn't it? But the inhabitants of Fisher T. Fish's country—to which Honolulu belongs—have a passion for creating "big" things, and when the bounds of the "city" were established, they were fixed to reach from Midway Island to Palmyra Island. That is a distance of over 2,000 miles!

Several of my readers have asked me if I will give a further selection of

THINGS YOU'D HARDLY BELIEVE!

Well, here goes:

The Tree that Refused to Die! Forty years ago, a giant redwood tree fell in California. To everyone's amazement, smaller trees began to sprout from it, and there are now twenty-four small trees growing from it.

A Crab that goes Birds' nesting! A species of crab found in the Azores is known to climb high cliffs and steal the eggs from birds' nests.

The Bull that Couldn't be Beaten! The world's champion fighting bull was never beaten. Every time it entered the ring the matadors were soon driven out. It was the only bull to defy bull-fighters for ten years, and it died peacefully.

A Man who can Shout Seven Miles! The voice of W. Abbot, an English town crier, has been heard at a distance of seven miles!

Our Ancestors had no Surnames! Surnames did not come into use in England until after the Norman Conquest.

A Human Pineushlon. A Bohemian gipsy, to show his fortitude, stuck no fewer than 3,200 needles into his arm, and kept them there for thirty-one hours!

READERS of old-time pirate stories will be interested in the question which George Barclay, of Slough, asks me:

WHAT WAS A CULVERIN?

You will find it mentioned in a great number of stories, but few people know what it was, for the name has died out. Actually, it was a cannon which fired a shot weighing eighteen pounds. Here is a list of the old names that were given to cannons: Carthoun, 48 lb.; Culverin, 18 lb.; Demi-Culverin, 9 lb.; Falcon, 6 lb.; Siren, 60 lb. Afterwards, cannon were known by the weight of their shots, such as six-pounders, twelve-pounders, etc. Nowadays, of course, they take their name from the diameter of the bore.

Thus a sixteen-inch gun fires a shell which is sixteen inches in diameter.

J. McNally, of Glasgow, asks me to tell him something about

THE BIGGEST ELK IN THE WORLD.

Nowadays, elks, or moose, are not found in the British Isles, but you might be interested to know that at one time these islands were the haunt of the largest species of elk in the world. This was known as the "Irish Elk," although its remains have also been found in Scotland and England. This beast was a real giant. The tips of its antlers were actually eleven feet apart, so you can imagine what large and strong limbs and neck were required to carry such a tremendous weight. The remains of the Irish Elk are found in what is known as the Pleistocene strata—which means that it lived in the days when these islands were covered with glaciers. That was a bit before my time.

Incidentally, it is a good job I didn't live a few hundred years ago. I might have found myself amongst those journalists who suffered

PUNISHMENT BY PILLORY,

about which Stan Lord, of Dover, asks me. The pillory, although originally intended for the punishment of forgers, users of false weights, and so on, became used extensively for the punishment of journalists who had offended the "powers that be." Daniel Defoe, the author of "Robinson Crusoe," was one of the unfortunate writers who spent some time in the pillory. The pillory was not abolished in this country until 1837, and it was kept in use in the United States for two years later.

If the author of "Robinson Crusoe" was put in the pillory, I wonder what might have happened to your Editor—or Frank Richards? There's one thing, however, Frank certainly couldn't be pilloried for writing such a fine series of stories as those which he is now turning out for us. Next week you've got a treat in store when you read:

"THE BOUNDER'S FOLLY!"

which is Frank Richards' latest yarn of the chums of Greyfriars. It's bang up to the mark in every way—full of drama and thrills, too! It is, in fact, one of the finest stories that have ever come from "F. R.'s" facile pen—or, I should say, typewriter. When you've read it, you'll join me in saying: "More power to your elbow, Mr. Richards."

You'll find more startling developments in our next chapters of "When the Great Apes Came!" while, of course, there will be fun galore in the "Greyfriars Herald" supplement. "Linesman" and the Greyfriars Rhymester will add to this bumper programme, and—don't forget that FREE bar of Walters' delicious Strawberry Flavoured Toffee!

If this isn't the best twopennyworth, well—I'll eat the office-boy's hat!

YOUR EDITOR.

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lay before him. The tube he had thrown had fallen short.

A voice behind him called his name. "Stein, put your hands up!"

Stein turned and presented a full target for Gerry, who was in advance of the others.

Crack! went Gerry's rifle. Again Stein was struck in the chest. He laughed wildly and drew his own gun.

Gerry was coming up the slope, which was wet and muddy. His feet slipped as he climbed. Stein levelled his gun and took careful aim.

As he drew the trigger, however, another shot from a soldier caught him in the leg. He dropped, his gun exploding in the air.

He rose again, and a shot struck his body and glanced off. Had it not been for that shirt of mail he would have been riddled long before this.

Up went his hand bearing the test-tube. Gerry was on his knees on the slope below. Carefully he sighted that upward thrust of Stein's hand.

Just as Stein was about to throw the tube far into the reservoir, Gerry fired.

The tube exploded in Stein's hand, and a spurt of flame seemed to rise from his palm. He yelled in pain.

Up the slope Gerry rushed, followed by his companions. Stein had dropped on the level of the mound beside the water. He lay there enveloped in a blue flame that licked his body from foot to head, a flame that burned bright blue and then changed to purple, and then to a ruddy tint.

It spread over the whole of his body. It spurted into his face, and gave rise to an acrid smell. The spirit that was in the chemical in the tube had splashed over him when the tube was smashed, and every spot seemed to become alive with a tongue of flame that seared and scalded him.

His agony was intense if it was short.

The flame died down at last, and Gerry found himself looking down on the twisted, charred, chemically burned form of Stein, which was no longer recognisable, and was like the tortured remains of one of the gorillas he had commanded.

(Stein has paid the penalty in full! And now what fate is in store for Big Ling? Be sure and read the follow-up of this powerful story which will appear in next week's FREE GIFT NUMBER of the MAGNET. There's a thrill in every line!)

THE MYSTERY OF THE VAULTS!

(Continued from page 24.)

"Yes, sir!" said Harry.

"You may put it on the rack where it belongs."

Wharton did so.

"And now you will explain your conduct."

"I—I say, sir, I—I—" babbled Bunter.

"Silence! You will speak, Wharton! As you brought the key of the vaults away with you, I conclude that you did not intend to keep this escapade a secret. But I do not understand—"

"No, sir," said Harry quietly. "After what's happened down there we couldn't. We were coming to speak to you, sir."

"Indeed!" said Mr. Quelch dryly.

Wharton coloured.

"We heard that Bunter was there, sir, and—and we—we dodged Trotter, and went down to help him out," he said. "We should have kept it dark—er—tried to, at least, but after what's happened—"

"What has happened?"

"Bunter barged into somebody there in the dark, sir, and then we did the same. A man—"

"Do you mean to say that there was some person—some extraneous person—in the school vaults?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch, in amazement.

"Yes, sir; a man we'd seen before who—"

"Once before," said Nugent.

"Indeed! And who—"

"The man who kidnapped Bob Cherry in the aeroplane, sir," said Harry.

"Wha-a-t?"

Mr. Quelch fairly staggered.

"It's true, sir," said Harry quietly.

"I got the light right on him, and he shot the lamp out of my hand!"

"Wharton!"

The captain of the Remove held up his right hand. A strip of skin was missing from a finger-tip, and it was bleeding. Mr. Quelch gazed at it—dumb!

"But before the light went, sir, we all saw him—and it was the man!" said the captain of the Remove. "What he was doing there, I can't imagine; but there isn't any doubt whatever that he was the man who came down in the plane on the football field and kidnapped Bob."

"Wharton!"

"I'm quite certain of him, sir," said Harry.

"Upon my word!" gasped Mr. Quelch. He scanned the four faces before him, perhaps wondering for a moment whether this was some egregious attempt to pull his leg. "If—if that is the case, Wharton, the police must be notified immediately, if you are absolutely certain of the man's identity, and—"

"Quite, sir!"

"It seems incredible that the wretch should dare to revisit this locality— incredible! And why—unless, indeed, he may have designs on some other boy at Greyfriars. At all events, if you are not mistaken, this information will be very useful to the police—"

Mr. Quelch broke off.

"For the present you may go," he said. "I must speak to the headmaster at once, and telephone to the police station. You may go now."

And the juniors went.

"Gammon!" That was Skimmer's verdict.

"Sounds frightfully steep!" was the Bounder's opinion.

Many and various were the opinions expressed in the Remove, and in other Forms, when the news spread that Bob Cherry's kidnapper had been seen; and, of all unexpected places, in the vaults below Greyfriars School!

Whether the chums of the Remove had it right, or whether they had it wrong, at all events it was a thrilling piece of news, and it was breathlessly discussed in all the studies.

Only Billy Bunter did not give the subject attention. He had far more important matters to think of. He was wondering when, and whether, Quelch was going to call him to account for abstracting the key of the vaults, and whether it would be more lines, or a whopping? With that urgent and distressing problem on his fat mind, Billy Bunter had no time or attention to waste on either Bob Cherry or his kidnapper.

THE END.

(Now watch out for next week's BUMPER FREE GIFT NUMBER of the MAGNET, which will contain the third story in this magnificent new series, entitled: "THE BOUNDER'S FOLLY!" If you miss it, chums, you'll miss, too, the bar of Walters' succulent strawberry flavoured toffee which will be given away free with this issue. Be sure and order your copy EARLY!)

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February 3rd, 1934.

EDITED BY HARRY WHARTON.

No. 70 (New Series).

MY WORST AND BEST EXPERIENCE

By Mark Linley

One of the most unpleasant things that can happen to any law-abiding citizen fell to my lot last summer at a French seaside resort. I was staying there for a week, out of the proceeds of a prize I had won in a Crossword Competition. Incidentally, one of my fellow-guests at the hotel where I stayed was the leader of the so-called "Smart Set" at Highlife—Cecil Ponsonby.

On the second night of my stay, I heard sounds of a "schemerzle" coming from the local casino. A little later, I saw Ponsonby dash by me and run into the hotel; and immediately after, to my surprise and indignation, two gendarmes who had apparently been chasing him, seized me and clapped a pair of handcuffs on my wrists, and marched me along to the police-station!

Naturally, I kicked up a fuss. But the excited gendarmes poured out such a torrent of explanations to the officer in charge at the station, that I could hardly get a word in edgewise. Fuss or not, I was charged with defrauding the casino authorities, and assaulting the police in the execution of their duties!

Fortunately, it didn't take me long to clear myself, for the casino representatives who turned up in court, recognised that I was the wrong man. I was released at once, with profuse apologies, and afterwards the mayor himself called on me and offered compensation in cash—which offer I cheerfully admitted I accepted! So it all ended happily; but I can assure you it was a most uncomfortable business while it lasted.

Turning to more pleasant experiences, I can easily name the happiest event of my life. It was the winning of the scholarship that brought me from the Lancashire mill, where I worked, to Greyfriars School! I'd swotted for months, after the factory had closed, for I was dead set on getting a tip-top education if it lay in my power. After the examination was all over, however, my heart sank down into my boots. I remembered a score of mistakes and omissions in my paper, and it seemed impossible that I could ever win.

Then, one evening, the postman delivered an official-looking letter addressed to me. My hands were trembling so much that I could scarcely open the envelope; but I did so at last—and you can just imagine my joy when I read that I had been awarded a scholarship to Greyfriars!

I had a pretty rough passage when I first arrived, as most of you know. But when I think of the good times I've had since, and the crowds of good friends I've made, I feel that that scholarship victory will always be the best experience of my life.

(Well done, Linley! And now, boys, get ready for Lord Maltrevier in next week's number! The "lauguid lord" is being specially energised to enable him to write something extra-special!—Ed.)

ASTONISHING!

Dr. Locke has a very small appetite. Considering that he's the "Beak," isn't it surprising that he's not more "peckish"?

COKER SEES SARK MONSTER

But Angling Efforts Fail

"Boeh!" was Coker's verdict, when he heard about the monster which is alleged to be haunting the depths of the River Sark.

Potter and Groene looked rather wrathful.

"That's what we thought, too—until we saw it!" Potter said tartly. "Now we've seen it, and we've changed our opinion. There's a monster in the Sark all right—a monster with a huge, horrid head and a ghastly great eye. We saw its head come out of the water, and so jolly well ran for it—and so would you run, if you saw it!"

"Utter bosh!" Coker snorted. "I'm surprised at two more or less rational creatures like you falling for superstitious legends like this Sark Monster fairy-tale. That's all it is—a fairy-tale!"

"But we saw it—both of us!" hooted Groene.

"You mean to say you THOUGHT you saw it," corrected Coker. "It's what they call mass-hallucination, I fancy. You thought you saw it, just as people in olden times used to think they saw witches riding over the houses on broomsticks! Pull yourselves together, you men—you're no longer infants now, you know!"

Potter and Groene breathed hard.

"Perhaps you'd care to come down to the river yourself, after tea?" suggested Groene. "We may have the luck to see it again, and possibly that will satisfy you!"

"Oh, anything for a quiet life!" said Coker, still grinning sceptically. "I'll trot down with you and hold your



When Fisher T. Fish came into class wearing an extremely loud check suit, he explained to Mr. Quelch that brighter clothing meant more efficiency. If Fisher hadn't bungled his "construe," Quelch might not have caused him!

PAPER-CHASERS DEFY POPPER

Violent Scene—Happy Sequel

Sir Hilton Popper has been out on the warpath again this week; but don't trouble to lead your peashooters, boys—the trouble was over almost as soon as it started—thanks to Bob Cherry and the Bounder!

Bob and Smithy were the best to incur the vials of Sir Hilton's wrath, when he decided to stop the Remove paper-chase from setting foot on his land, for the reason that they happened to be the "hares." They had no idea that there would be any objection, since Sir Hilton's agent had already given permission—but Sir Hilton has an unhappy knack of countermanding the authority of his agent when he feels like it. He stood in their path when they entered the first field belonging to him, and pointed to the road.

"Trespass on my land, would you?" he roared. "Get back to the road at once, you young rascals!"

Bob and the Bounder didn't obey immediately. They waited to point out gently that Sir Hilton's own agent had given permission for the paper-chase, and that it was somewhat out of joint if they had to re-plan the whole thing at this juncture.

Now, if there's one thing above all others that Sir Hilton cannot stand, it's argument. As Bob and the Bounder put their point of view, his face changed rapidly from rosy red to passionate purple. And when they had laughed, and it was up to him to make reply, he made a walking-stick!

But on his way he passed



away, and Bob pulled his hat over his eyes; then they both put him gently on to his own land. After that, feeling that they might as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb, they continued their journey across Sir Hilton's land!

The "hounds" who followed in their track shortly afterwards, describe Sir Hilton as leaning against the hedge, speechless with rage. Apparently, he was pretty well paralysed, too—for he didn't make a move till the last of them had passed! Eventually, however, he did move—first to his agent's house to tell his agent just what he thought of him, and afterwards towards Greyfriars to demand that Vernon-Smith and Cherry be hung, drawn, and quartered, and afterwards expelled, at the very least!

WIBLEY'S ONE-MAN PLAY

Amazing Memory Feat

We've always granted that Wibley had unique Thespian gifts. His paper is a famous actor, and Wibley undoubtedly inherits the ability.

But we never dreamt he was so good as he has proved himself to be this week.

Confronted with the seemingly insurmountable difficulty of a strike of all the actors engaged in his production of "As You Like It," Wibley solved it in an amazing fashion. He acted the whole thing himself, from beginning to end!

The actors engaged in the piece were getting restless towards the end of last term. Wibley is an exacting producer, and his rehearsals are extremely trying—especially when he takes a dislike to the way you're saying your lines!

This week, the storm broke. At the final dress-rehearsal, Wibley was in his most ferocious mood. The actors stood for a time, and then the entire company turned on their producer as one man, and bumped him on his own stage!

The production was billed for the same evening, and Wibley did his frantic best to get the company to take to the stage. But all his efforts were in vain; the last straw had broken the camel's back, and the "As You Like It" company had definitely decided that it didn't like it at all. There was nothing doing!

The audience turned up in the Rag in a boisterous mood. Everybody had heard of the trouble, and everybody was determined to give Wibley a warm reception when he turned up to apologise. But the warm reception didn't materialise. When Wibley calmly announced that he had decided to act the entire play himself, the fellows were too flabbergasted to do a thing!

Amazing as it may seem, Wibley carried it off! "As You Like It," probably for the first time in all history, was acted solo—and the audience that had come to jeer, finished up by cheering after all! So far as we were able to judge, Wibley was word perfect in every part—and how he acted it!

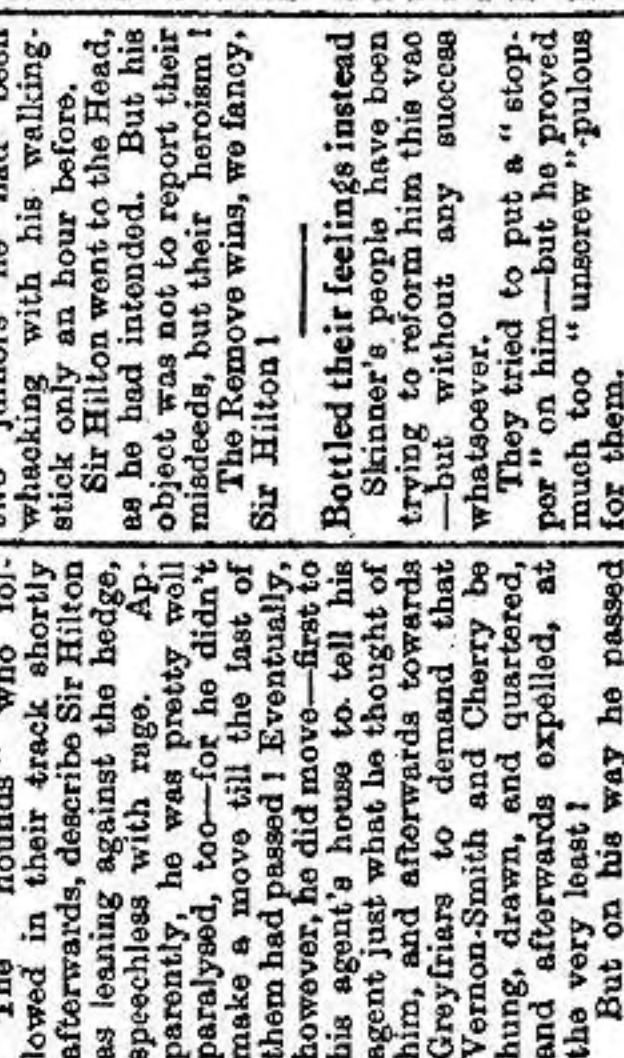
No question about it, Wibley, we've got to hand it to you where the drama's concerned!

GREYFRIARS FACTS WHILE YOU WAIT!

Micky Desmond kissed the famous old Blarney Stone when at home, in Ireland, during the vac, and is firm in the belief that it will bring him luck. Micky scored three goals for the Remove against Second XI last week against Claremont!

George Bulstrode is a keen fisherman, and when Bunter offered to show him how to catch sharks, Bulstrode took him up, and all Bunter caught was a cold—whereat Bulstrode laughed heartily!

When Fisher T. Fish came into class wearing an extremely loud check suit, he explained to Mr. Quelch that brighter clothing meant more efficiency. If Fisher hadn't bungled his "construe," Quelch might not have caused him!



But on his way he passed



But on his way he passed

DICKY NUGENT'S WEEKLY WISDOM

Sammy Bunter is offering, at double the normal prices, boxes of blotters direct from a relative of his at Yarmouth.

Sammy always was a "sell fish" kind of fellow!

"Snappy" Idea!

We were a little surprised the other day to stumble across young Gatty in the chemical lab, with his shirtsleeves rolled up and his arms immersed in a bath of photographer's "hyppo."

Then he explained and we smiled and passed on.

He was trying to "develop" his muscles!

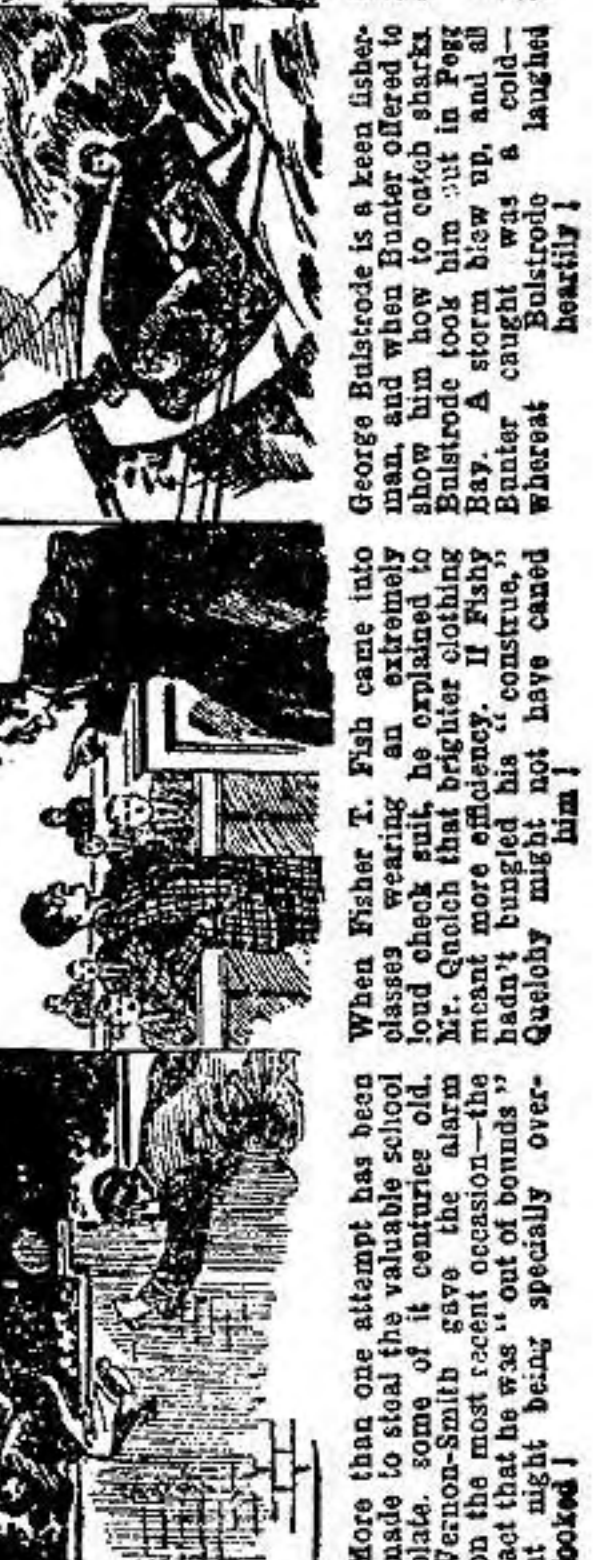
GREYFRIARS FACTS WHILE YOU WAIT!



WOULD YOU BELIEVE IT?



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