

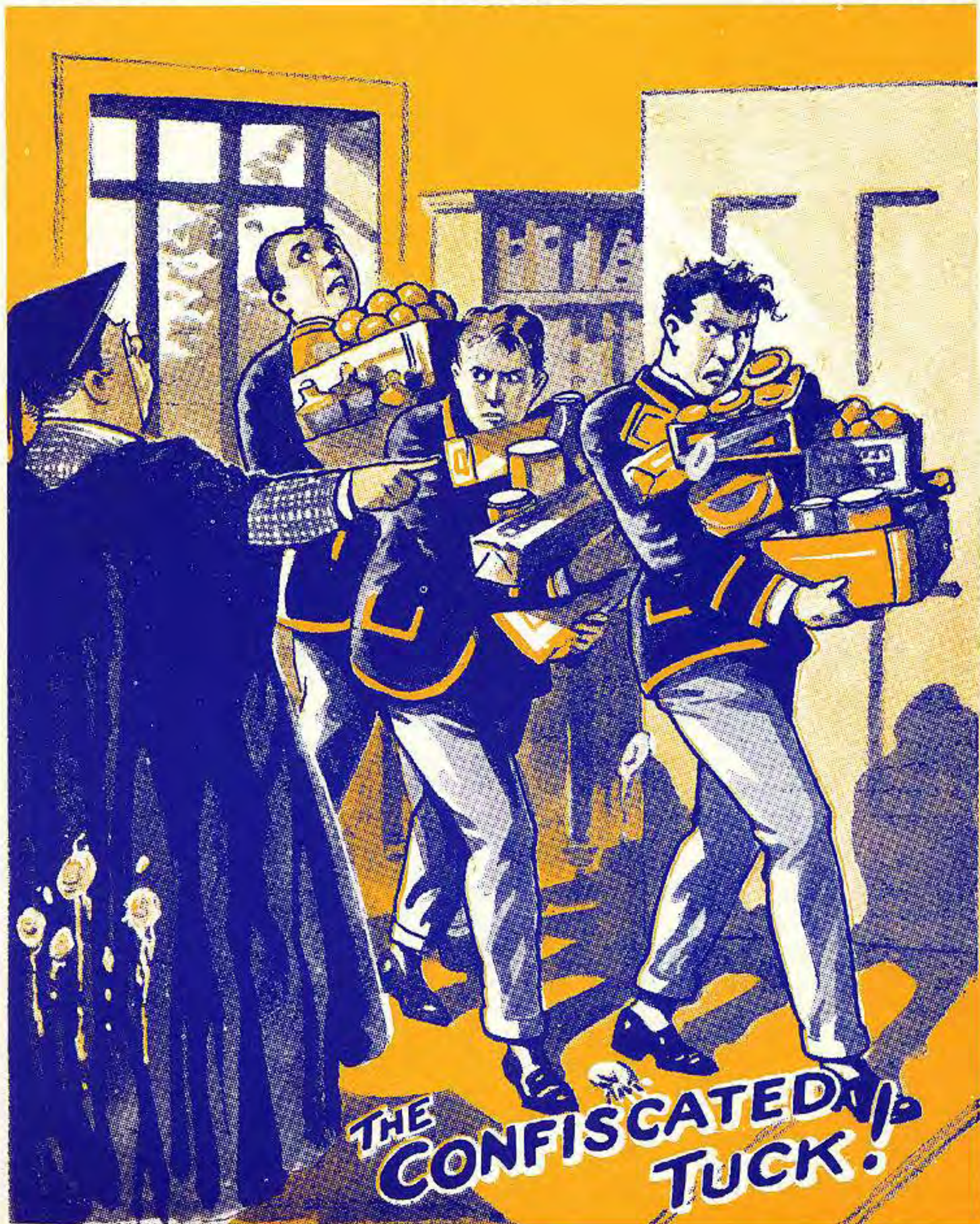
“SAVING A SCAPEGRACE!” Amazing Complete Story of Schoolboy Adventure.

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SAVING A SCAPEGRACE!

BY FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Coker Crashes!

LOOK out!" yelled Bob Cherry. "Bunter—look out!" shrieked Harry Wharton.

But Billy Bunter of the Remove had no time to look out.

Bunter was in a frightful hurry. Why Billy Bunter was racing down the Fifth Form passage at Greyfriars, hurtling along like a very fat cannonball, was not clear for the moment.

Bunter, as a Remove fellow, had no business in the Fifth Form passage. But William George Bunter had rather a way of barging in where he had no business. Having evidently barged in, he was now barging out again at express speed. Perhaps there was pursuit on his track.

Whatever the reason of Bunter's wild flight, he did the Fifth Form passage at a rate which looked as if he had a chance for the school 100 yards. And he came hurtling out of that passage on to the broad landing at the end, like a runaway locomotive with all steam on.

Which would not have mattered very much, had not Mr. Prout, the master of the Fifth, been just crossing the landing to enter that passage.

Wharton and Bob, spotting the fat junior as he came hurtling, yelled warning. It was in vain. Prout, spotting him the next moment, halted, but he had no time to dodge. Bunter did not even see him before he crashed. The fattest fellow at Greyfriars hit the plumpest master at the old school. He hit him hard. Waistcoat to waistcoat they met, and great was the concussion thereof.

Crash! Bump! Bump!
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"Oooooogh!" gasped Mr. Prout faintly.

"Wurrrrgh!" gurgled Bunter.

They sat down simultaneously. It seemed to be a case of two souls with but a single thought, two hearts that beat as one! Having crashed, they sat, and the landing almost shook as they did it.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Oh crumbs!" ejaculated Wharton.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Vernon-Smith, sighting the catastrophe from a distance. Smithy seemed to think it funny.

"Oh! Ah! Urrrgh!" said Prout, gasping for breath. "Boy! Fool! Idiot! Imbecile! Urrrgh!"

This was rather expressive language for a Form-master. But the circumstances excused Prout. Prout was damaged.

So was Bunter! Bunter sat and spluttered, groping for his spectacles, which had slid down his fat little nose.

"Ooogh! I say, you fellows—Wooogh!" gurgled Bunter.

Tramp, tramp! came the sound of running feet in the passage behind Bunter. Evidently there was pursuit. The cause of Bunter's flight suddenly appeared, in the shape of Horace Coker of the Fifth Form.

Coker, like Bunter before him, was hurtling. He hurtled recklessly. There was less excuse for Coker really, for he was not short-sighted, like the Owl of the Remove. On the other hand, Coker of the Fifth had never been known to look before he leaped, or to think before he did anything. Like Bunter, he was in a frightful hurry. He hurtled out of the Fifth Form passage to the landing, and his knees crashed on the back of Bunter's fat neck, and Coker took a header forward.

Had Coker landed on the hard, cold, unsympathetic linoleum, Coker would have been hurt. So perhaps it was fortunate that Coker landed on Prout. Coming down with such a fearful wallop, Coker really had luck in landing on something soft.

It all happened so suddenly that Coker did not know what he landed on. Only it was something large and fat and soft, rather like a feather bed. But it was not a feather bed! It was his Form-master, Prout—and Prout collapsed under that second shock, and crumpled under Coker, quite winded.

"Ha, ha, ha!" howled Smithy, evidently thinking this funnier than ever.

But Wharton and Bob Cherry did not laugh. It was too awfully serious. They rushed to render first aid.

"Oh gum!" gasped Coker. "What—what—what's this?" He scrambled wildly up, resting a heavy knee on "this." "This" was Mr. Prout's waistcoat, and a faint, agonised gurgle came from the Fifth Form beak as Coker's sinewy knee rested there, and he took Coker's weight on his equator.

Two pairs of hands grasped Coker—one pair by his ears, the other by his hair—and dragged him off Prout. How long it would have taken Coker to collect his scattered wits and get off Prout's waistcoat, cannot be said. Coker never was quick on the uptake, and he was now quite dizzy and confused. But the two Remove fellows acted promptly. Coker came off Prout with a jerk, and was strewn along the floor, out of harm's way. He roared as he was strewn.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Bob. "Coker, you fathead—"

"Ow!" roared Coker. "Wow! What the—wow!"

"Bunter, you howling lunatic—!" gasped Wharton.

"Who-hoop!" howled Bunter. "I say—whoop! Ow! I say, did I run into somebody? Who-hoop!"

Wharton and Bob rushed to Mr. Prout. They grasped him, and helped him. They raised him up tenderly, treated him with care, as the poet puts it, though he was not fashioned so slenderly, young, and so fair! They sat him up, and supported him in that position, giving him a chance to get his second wind. Prout proceeded to get it, with a series of choking gurgles and horrible gasps.

Coker resumed the perpendicular. He gazed at Prout! Horror dawned in Coker's rugged, crimson countenance as he realised that it was his Form-master that he had sprawled over.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Coker.

"I—I say, you fellows, help a fellow up!" squeaked Billy Bunter. "I say, I'm hurt! I say, keep that beast Coker off! I wasn't in his study when he found me there, the suspicious beast! I wasn't after his cake! There wasn't any cake, and I never touched it, and I had hardly a mouthful when the brute came in! I say, you fellows—Ow! Oh crikey! Wow!"

"Cut off, you fat Owl!" breathed Bob Cherry.

Coker was gazing, as if transfixed, at his gurgling Form-master. He seemed rooted with horror to the linoleum. Coker was not, so far as he could see, to blame. Still, it was an awfully serious matter to barge over a beak. Coker realised that. He had a well-founded apprehension that when Prout recovered his breath sufficiently to speak, he would say unpleasant things. He gathered that from the expression on Prout's face.

Billy Bunter blinked at him through his big spectacles. Seeing Coker's attention riveted on Prout, forgetful of his fat existence, Bunter seized the opportunity to escape. He squirmed to his feet, sidled away, and bolted for the Remove passage. Horace Coker still stood in a trance, gazing at the gurgling Prout.

"Urrrrgh!" Prout was saying incoherently. "Wurrgh! Upon my—urrgh—word! I am—gurrgh—I am quite—urrgh!"

"Oh scissors!" murmured the horrified Coker.

Other fellows were arriving on the spot now. Frank Nugent, Johnny Bull, and Hurree Singh came trotting from the Remove passage. Potter, Greene, and Blundell of the Fifth came running out of the Fifth Form games study. There were many hands to help Prout, and they were needed, for Prout was no featherweight. But many hands made light work, and the massive master of the Fifth was heaved to his feet. He stood gasping, leaning on the shoulders of Blundell and Potter, who manfully bore the terrific strain.

Prout found his voice. It came wheezing, but it came.

"Coker, you—you fell on me—"

"Awfully sorry, sir!" gasped Coker. "That young rotter Bunter was in my study snaffling my cake—"

"You fell on me!" repeated Prout.

"He bolted, sir, and I chased him down the passage, and I never saw you till—"

"You fell on me!"

"I—I hope you're not hurt, sir!" stammered Coker. That remark, if sincere, showed that Coker had a hopeful nature. It was only too clear that Mr. Prout was hurt.

"I will—urrgh—I will—gurrgh—I

will deal with you later!" gasped Mr. Prout. "Blundell, help me to my study."

"Certainly, sir!"

Mr. Prout was helped away. His gasping, his gurgling, and his wheezing died in the distance. Not till then was a chuckle heard. Then several chuckles were heard at once.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Just Like Smithy!

"JUST a joyride!"

"Fathead!"

"Look here, Redwing—"

"Oh, ass!"

"Well," said Herbert Vernon-Smith,

"I'm going!"

"You're not!"

"Rats!"

Mr. Smedley, the new master of the Remove at Greyfriars School, sat up and took notice.

Smedley was seated on one of the old oaken benches under the elms. There he had a distant view of the cricket ground, where Wingate of the Sixth and his men of the First Eleven were at practice. But Mr. Smedley was not watching the First Eleven cricketers.

His eyes were fixed on the ground before him, and his brow was knitted and clouded. If he had sat down in that retired spot to do some thinking it seemed that his thoughts were not of a happy or enlivening nature.

The Bounder of Greyfriars is tired of playing the part of a reformed character; he yearns to break bounds, even though it means expulsion if he is caught. But there are some good friends behind the Bounder who are determined to save him from himself!

Behind the bench was the thick trunk of one of the ancient Greyfriars elms. And beyond that ran the path called the Elm Walk. It was from that path that the voices came that fell on Mr. Smedley's ears and caused him to sit up and take notice.

The man who was called the Creeper and Crawler by the Removites made no sound. He listened as he recognised the voices of Herbert Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars, and his chum Tom Redwing.

Any other master at Greyfriars would have given some hint of his presence when fellows came along talking without a suspicion that a master was within hearing.

Not so the Creeper and Crawler.

Mr. Smedley, playing the part of Form-master at Greyfriars, was, in point of fact, nothing of the kind; though he had done schoolmastering in his time, among many other things.

So instead of acting as a master would have done, Mr. Smedley acted as what he was; and sat quietly and listened.

The two Remove fellows coming along the path naturally could not see him through the thick trunk of the elm. Neither were they thinking of him; though Smithy had the best of reasons to be on his guard against the Creeper and Crawler.

So far from suspecting that a listener was on the other side of the massive

elm the Bounder came to a halt and leaned on the trunk, with his hands in his pockets, Redwing standing in the path facing him. Both of them were rather angry; which was not a new thing, for though they were chums their friendship was chequered by very frequent disagreements. It was, indeed, rather odd that they were such fast friends; for on scarcely a single subject did Smithy and Redwing see eye to eye.

"I tell you," said the Bounder savagely, "that I'm sick of it—fed right up to the chin! I thought the pater would come round! He hasn't! He's still playing the stern Roman parent! Ever since I was nearly sacked last term he's kept me short of cash!"

"From what you say, he's right!" said Tom. "You utter idiot! If you're sacked, your father's going to disinherit you, and adopt your cousin Lucius Teggars in your place! And if you had money to spend, as you used to have, it would have come about by this time. Thank goodness you haven't. Your father's trying to save you from your own silly folly."

"Well, a fellow can't play the giddy ox without a bean!" said the Bounder. "But I tell you again, I'm fed-up with it! Nature never meant me to be a Good Little Georgie like you, Reddy! I must have a bit of a plunge every now and then to keep me alive. But there's no harm in what I'm talking of now—a joyride and a supper! Where's the harm?"

"Do you think the Head would believe that there was no harm, if you were caught out of bounds at night, you fathead? Anyhow, it's the sack for breaking out at night, harm or no harm. You must be potty—with that spying cad Smedley watching you like a cat—"

The man on the other side of the elm flushed. But he did not move or make a sound. Evidently it was the Creeper and Crawler's opinion that hard words broke no bones!

"I can fix up a dummy in my bed in the dorm! Even Smedley wouldn't do more than look into the dormitory if he nosed in at all!"

The man behind the elm smiled!

"He might."

"Well, I'm chancing it," said the Bounder. "Look here, come along with me, Reddy! It's no end of fun—a run of a hundred miles at top speed—supper at a place I know where I can get it on tick—and a rush home in the jolly old small hours! What? I can run up any bill I like at the garage—the pater isn't stingy about that. Will you come?"

"No, I won't, and you shan't go, either! I think you must be out of your senses! Your whole future at stake—even if you care nothing for your father—"

"Fat lot he cares for me when he's prepared to turf me out and take on a cousin I've never seen in my place!" sneered the Bounder.

"Not unless you prove that you're a worthless rotter, by getting sacked from school. And if you do that you deserve it, and more."

"You're calling me some nice names, Tom Redwing!" There was a dangerous note in the Bounder's voice.

"Not all you deserve! Your father's fond of you, and you've driven him to putting his foot down, hard! You deserve it! Why can't you behave decently, like any other fellow?" exclaimed Redwing hotly. "You're going to break all the rules of the school from sheer reckless fatheadedness. If you had money in your pockets, you'd get into gambling, too. After all the warnings

you've had! Smithy, have a little sense!"

"You won't come?" jeered the Bounder.

"Don't be a fool!"

"Well, I can fix it up with a Highcliffe man to come! I rowed with Pon & Co. in the hols, but I'm still pally with some of them. Vavasour——"

"Smithy! Think of the risk."

"I tell you I'm fed-up!" growled the Bounder, "and there isn't such a thumpin' lot of risk, either! Besides, the risk makes it more excitin'. I'll get on the phone and fix it with Vavasour at Highcliffe——"

"You won't!"

"Who'll prevent me?"

"I will!" said Redwing angrily. "I'll jolly well keep an eye on you, and if you try to get near a phone in the school to-day I'll yank you off it by your back hair. Mind, I mean that."

"You're asking for a punch in the eye, Redwing!"

"Oh, rats! I've a jolly good mind to take you by the neck and bang your silly head on that tree and see if I can knock a little sense into it!" snapped Redwing.

The Bounder's eyes gleamed at him, and he clenched his hands. For a moment the two juniors looked at one another with mutual anger, and it seemed as if a scrap was imminent. Then the Bounder unclenched his hands and shrugged his shoulders.

"Mind your own bisney, Tom Redwing!" he said. "Go your own way, and leave me to go mine!"

And with that, Herbert Vernon-Smith turned his back on his chum and tramped away along the path under the elms.

Redwing stood looking after him for a few moments, his brow dark. He was tempted then, as he had been tempted before, to take his wilful and wayward chum at his word and leave him to his own devices and the fate he deserved.

But that he could not do. What Smithy was risking was not merely the "sack" from Greyfriars, which was bad enough—but being disowned and disinherited by his father, which was worse. To a fellow of Tom's quiet and steady character that wayward restless rebelliousness was almost incomprehensible. But it was at such times that the scapegrace of the school needed his friend most to stand by him; and Tom was not going to fail if he could help it.

"The fool!" breathed Redwing aloud. "The utter fool! Well, he shan't do it—let me catch him at a phone and he will find that I meant what I said."

And Redwing went the way the Bounder had gone.

Mr. Smedley sat still and silent, smiling.

Neither of the juniors had the remotest suspicion that he was there, and had heard all that was said. Still less was either of them likely to dream that the man they knew as Mr. Smedley, master of the Remove, was known in other places as Lucius Teggars—the Bounder's rival for a fortune of millions! Mr. Lucius Teggars, alias Smedley, smiled at the pigeons in the elms. He felt that he had reason for smiling.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The Heavy Hand!

HORACE COKER of the Fifth Form grunted.

Coker's rugged face was rather clouded.

Potter and Greene, his study-mates, on the other hand, looked rather merry and bright.

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It was tea-time; and tea in Coker's study that day was going to be "some" tea. Coker's celebrated Aunt Judith had lately weighed in with one of her celebrated hampers.

Coker of the Fifth was not wholly an attractive fellow to his friends. But Coker had his good points. The best of them was his Aunt Judy!

Aunt Judy was very fond of Horace! There was, as Potter and Greene agreed, no accounting for tastes.

Her affection took the practical form of handsome hampers, which contained an almost unlimited quantity of excellent things.

There were times when Potter and Greene found Coker's company pall. Chummy as they were with Coker, they had been known to walk quickly round corners, when they espied him in the offing. But there were other times, when they loved Coker like a brother. These were the times when the hampers came from Aunt Judy.

Coker was a lavish fellow. He was lavish with his conversation, with his advice, with his instructions how to play cricket, and with his hampers. On the last-named topic, his lavishness was keenly appreciated in his study.

Potter and Greene were unpacking that hamper—a task Billy Bunter had commenced, though he had been unfortunately interrupted. They smiled cheerily, as they stacked mountains of good things on the study table. But

READERS PLEASE NOTE

that owing to the Whitsun Holidays next week's **MAGNET** will be on sale

FRIDAY, MAY 18th.

Coker, instead of his usual hospitable grin, wore a gloomy look. The sight of pounds and pounds worth of gorgeous tuck did not comfort him. He was worried about Prout.

"Making out that it was a fellow's fault!" said Coker, breaking a gloomy silence. "It was a sheer accident, of course! Anyhow, Prout shouldn't have been barging into our passage! What is he always barging in for, I'd like to know?"

"More a friend than a Form-master, you know!" said Potter, with a grin. "It's Prout's way! Coming along for one of his little chats."

"Blow his little chats!" grunted Coker.

"Well, it's his way!" said Greene tolerantly. "And a beak might be worse! Look at Hacker, the Shell beak—always snapping! Look at Quelch, the Remove beak—they say he's away getting over an attack of flu or something—but my belief is that he wore himself out whopping the Remove, and had to take a rest. Look at that man Smedley, they've got in his place—I've heard that he goes round on tiptoe, listening to what fellows say behind their backs! I can tell you, we're not badly off with Prout."

"He said he was going to deal with me later!" said Coker. "He hasn't said anything, so far! Now he's had time to think over it, perhaps he realises that I was not to blame. Still, you never know with Prout."

Coker shook his head sadly. Coker

had often had trouble with his Form-master, for which he was never to blame. Indeed, for a fellow who was always absolutely blameless, Coker collected quite a lot of trouble.

"I found that fat Remove tick, Bunter, scoffing my cake!" went on Coker. "Was a man to stand that?"

"No fear!" said Potter promptly. Potter's own eye was on that rich and gorgeous cake, of which Bunter had had only one free bite.

"I was going to thrash him, and he had the impudence to cut off before I could get going!" said Coker. "Of course, I went after him! How was I to know that he had barged Prout over, and that both of them were sitting there on the landing, waiting for me to fall over them?"

Potter thought of suggesting that a fellow might have looked before he leaped! But he didn't! It was always best to give Coker his head, and let him run on without argument. It made for peace in the study.

"Of course, he may have got over it by this time!" said Coker; another sample of his hopeful nature. Potter and Greene opined that it would take Prout a day or two to get over a hefty fellow like Coker coming down on him, slap-bang-wallop!

"Well, this looks all right!" said Potter, surveying the mountain on the table, and changing the subject. "What about asking some of the fellows? Hilton and Price——"

Grunt from Coker.

"I don't want that tailor's dummy, Hilton, and I don't want that smoky outsider, Price!" he answered.

"Um! What about some of the games men—Blundell, and Bland, and——"

"That ass Blundell is leaving me out of the Form eleven," said Coker. "I can't stand fools."

How Coker tolerated his own company, in that case, was rather a puzzle to Potter and Greene.

"Well, let's have tea, anyhow!" said Greene. And Coker, though in a gloomy and contradictory mood, assented to that.

There was a heavy tread in the Fifth Form passage outside. It was the elephantine tread of Mr. Prout. There was no mistaking it. Either it was Prout's tread, or else it was a coalman delivering tons of coal in the passage. The latter theory was inadmissible. So it was Prout.

"Coming here to jaw me!" said Coker gloomily. "Just like Prout to barge in at tea-time."

There was a heavy knock on the door, and it opened. The portly form of Prout was revealed, almost filling the doorway.

The three Fifth Formers stood at attention.

Prout stepped into the study.

He was breathing rather gaspingly. Hours had passed, but he had not yet quite recovered from Coker's performances. However, it appeared that he had recovered sufficiently to deal with Horace, and he had arrived at the study for that purpose.

Prout's stern gaze was on Coker! But the next moment it was switched to the Himalaya of tuck on the table.

He stared at it and sat down in a chair upon which Potter had thoughtlessly left a bag of tarts.

Potter and Greene exchanged a rather uneasy glance. Fifth Form seniors were not under restrictions in these matters, like mere juniors. But there was, of course, a limit. And Aunt Judy, when she dispatched a hamper to her darling Horace, undoubtedly got a little

over the limit. Potter and Greene wished that Prout hadn't barged in while all that tuck was in full view.

They also hoped he wouldn't discover that he had sat down on a bag of tarts, and some were clinging to his gown!

"I trust, Coker, that you, and Potter and Greene were not thinking of—of devouring, I may say, gorging—gorging, upon that immense quantity of foodstuffs! I trust that you were not thinking of consuming even one tenth of that vast quantity of foodstuffs."

"You—you see, sir——" stammered Coker.

"I am surprised!" said Prout. "In a junior study, I should not be so surprised! In a senior study, I am surprised! Astonished! Shocked!"

this cargo of unhealthy and indigestible food."

"Kik-kik-confiscate it!" stammered Coker. His rugged face was crimson.

This was the sort of thing that happened, if a beak happened to look into a fag's study, and spot an unusual quantity of foodstuffs there! In all the history of Greyfriars, it had never been known to happen in a senior study before!

No doubt Prout was ratty! No doubt he was tart! No doubt he regretted that a regard for the prestige of the Fifth Form prevented him from using the cane in Coker's case! No doubt his battered, bruised, and breathless state, made him take an unusually severe view of things.

Indeed, his feelings were too deep for words! In silence, tragic silence, Coker and Potter and Greene gathered up the stacks of tuck, in bags and piles and armfuls, and carried it out of the study. Weary and heavy-laden they marched off to Masters' Studies—and behind them, snorting with elephantine tread, marched Prout.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Back Up!

"I SAY, you fellows——"
 "Roll away, barrel!"
 "But I say—he, he, he!"
 Coker——" chuckled Billy Bunter.



Coker's knees crashed on the back of Bunter's fat neck, and he took a header forward. Fortunately, however, he landed on something large and fat and soft, rather like a feather bed. But it was not a feather bed! It was his Form-master, Prout! "Urrgh!" roared the master of the Fifth. "Wurrgh! Upon my—urrgh—word!" "Oh, solssors!" murmured the horrified Coker.

Prout paused for breath.

"I came here, Coker, to deal with you," he said. "Your clumsiness, your foolhardiness, your obtuse stupidity, Coker, cannot pass without reproof. If you were a junior boy, I should cane you. I will not lower the prestige of the Fifth Form by using the cane, Coker. You will take five hundred lines of Virgil."

"Oh crumbs!" murmured Coker. "But, sir——"

"Now that I am here," resumed Prout, rising from the chair, with two or three tarts clinging lovingly to his gown, and completely unaware of the fact, "I see—this!" He wagged a fat forefinger at the mountain of tuck. "This! I shall not allow this, Coker! I shall not permit it! I shall not countenance it! I shall confiscate this—"

Anyhow, there it was! Potter and Greene could have groaned! Coker was crimson with indignation. But there it was—in the Fifth, Prout's word was law! And what he had said, he had said!

The fat forefinger still indicated the mountain of tuck, accusingly and reprovingly.

"Take that," said Mr. Prout, "to my study! Take it all! Everything! Coker, Potter, Greene—all three of you—bear that—that consignment of indigestible foodstuffs, to my study. Lose no time."

"But, sir——" gasped Coker.

"Silence!" boomed Prout.

"B-b-but——"

"Another word, Coker, and in spite of the fact that you are a senior boy, I shall cane you."

Coker did not utter another word!

Harry Wharton & Co. smiled! It is said that an accepted wit hath but to say "Pass the salt!" to set the table in a roar! Certainly any fellow had only to mention Coker of the Fifth, at Greyfriars, to make other fellows smile.

"Oh, Coker!" said Harry. "What's the latest?"

"Barged somebody over again?" asked Frank Nugent.

"Fallen over the Head?" inquired Johnny Bull.

"I say—he, he, he!—I've just seen them!" chuckled Bunter. "I say, Coker was looking fearfully ratty! Prout's been after him! And what do you think? He's confiscated Coker's tuck—just like a greedy fag in the Second, you know! He, he, he!"

And Billy Bunter chortled.
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"They'll chip Coker no end about this!" chortled Bunter. "Fancy having his tuck taken away by a beak, you know! Piles of it! Tons of it! All three of them could hardly carry the lot! I say, there's a dozen fellows watching them, killing themselves laughing! He, he, he!"

"Poor old Coker!" sighed Bob Cherry.

"The poorfulness of the esteemed old Coker is terrific!" grinned Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"He might just as well have let me have the cake, as it turns out!" said Billy Bunter. "Not that I was at his cake, you know! He made out that I was, because I was in his study and had it in my hand! Suspicious beast, you know! Well, now Prout's got it! And the rest! I say, you fellows, what do you think old Prout will do with it?"

"Well, he won't eat it, I fancy!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

"It's ripping stuff," said Bunter. "But I suppose Prout's a bit too ancient to care for it! I dare say he will tell the House-dame to have it taken down to the larder! But it's in his study now! I say, you fellows, it's rather rotten for all that tuck to be wasted! I say, Prout will be going to tea in the Common-room with the other beaks—"

Billy Bunter blinked round cautiously, through his big spectacles, and lowered his voice. They were in the quadrangle, and there was nobody at hand. But Bunter went on very cautiously:

"I say, you fellows, what about bagging it?"

"Oh, my hat!"

"I'll keep an eye on Prout, and make sure that he's at tea in Common-room!" whispered Bunter. "I'll take all the risk, you know—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! You nip into Prout's study, Bob—see?"

"Not quite!" grinned Bob.

"And hand the stuff down from the window to the other fellows—see? I'll whistle if I see Prout coming."

The Famous Five of the Remove chortled. Tuck was not without its appeal to them, though it had not, for them, so strong and irresistible an appeal as it had for William George Bunter. But certainly they had no idea of bagging Coker's tuck, confiscated by his Form-master. Neither, if they had had any such idea, would they have thought of burgling Prout's study in broad daylight.

Bunter blinked at them anxiously.

"Fellows in the quad wouldn't notice!" he urged. "They wouldn't say anything if they did! You're safe unless a beak spots you! And even then it's only a whopping! Who's afraid of a whopping?"

"Well, you are, for one!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull—"

"What about you standing under the window to take the tuck?" suggested Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The idea of taking that prominent and active part in the proceedings did not seem to attract Billy Bunter!

"Well, look here, you fellows, if you're afraid of being spotted, leave it till dark," said Bunter. "If you're funky it will be safe then! Prout's practically certain to think that Coker got it back, so we're all right."

"You fat villain!"

"Oh, really, Wharton! What I mean is, Prout's practically certain to think

that it was a burglar, so we're all right!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There's been burglaries round here lately," said Bunter. "I heard that there had been one at Popper Court, and another at Hogben Grange, and another at a shop in Courtfield. Well, when Prout finds all that stuff gone he will think of the burglars at once—see?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Bob. "Burglars are likely to bust into a beak's study and bag jam tarts and cakes and pigeon pies! So jolly likely."

"The likeliness is preposterous!" chuckled the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Well, look here, never mind what Prout jolly well thinks!" said Bunter, changing his ground again. "So long as we get the tuck it's all right—that's the chief thing! I can tell you, the cake especially is fearfully good! Lots of plums in it, and marzipan on top! Not that I had any of it, you know!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You fellows can do nothing but cackle! It's not much good talking sense to you fellows!" grunted the Owl of the Remove.

"You haven't tried yet!" Bob pointed out.

"Yah!"

With that emphatic, if not elegant, retort, Billy Bunter rolled away in search of assistance elsewhere, leaving the Famous Five laughing.

It was a great scheme—Bunter felt that! All he needed was a catpaw! Like the monkey in the tale, he wanted his chestnuts pulled out of the fire, but did not want to burn his own fingers.

But he found that catpaws seemed at a discount in the Greyfriars Remove. Skinner and Snoop and Stott, tackled on the subject, agreed to help Bunter dispose of that tuck if and when obtained. But at the suggestion that they should take active measures in obtaining possession of it Skinner & Co. laughed and strolled away.

Fisher T. Fish was the next fellow Bunter asked! Fishy, being a cute and spry youth from New York, might naturally have been expected to jump at a chance of getting something for nothing.

But Fishy did not jump.

Probably the tuck appealed to him. But the risk didn't! Very much indeed the risk didn't!

"Forget it, bo!" was Fishy's answer.

Peter Todd was the next! Bunter explained to Toddy that, as a fellow in the same study, he was bound to back a fellow up.

"Back you up?" said Toddy thoughtfully.

"Yes, old thap!" said Bunter eagerly.

"After all I've done for you, you know, you're bound to back me up."

"Oh, quite!" said Peter.

And he took hold of Billy Bunter by his fat chin and backed him up suddenly against the wall. Bunter gave a gasping roar as he hit the wall.

"Ow! Wow! Wharrer you up to?" he roared.

"Backing you up!" said Toddy.

"You silly idiot, I didn't want you to back me up against a wall!" shrieked Bunter. "I didn't mean—"

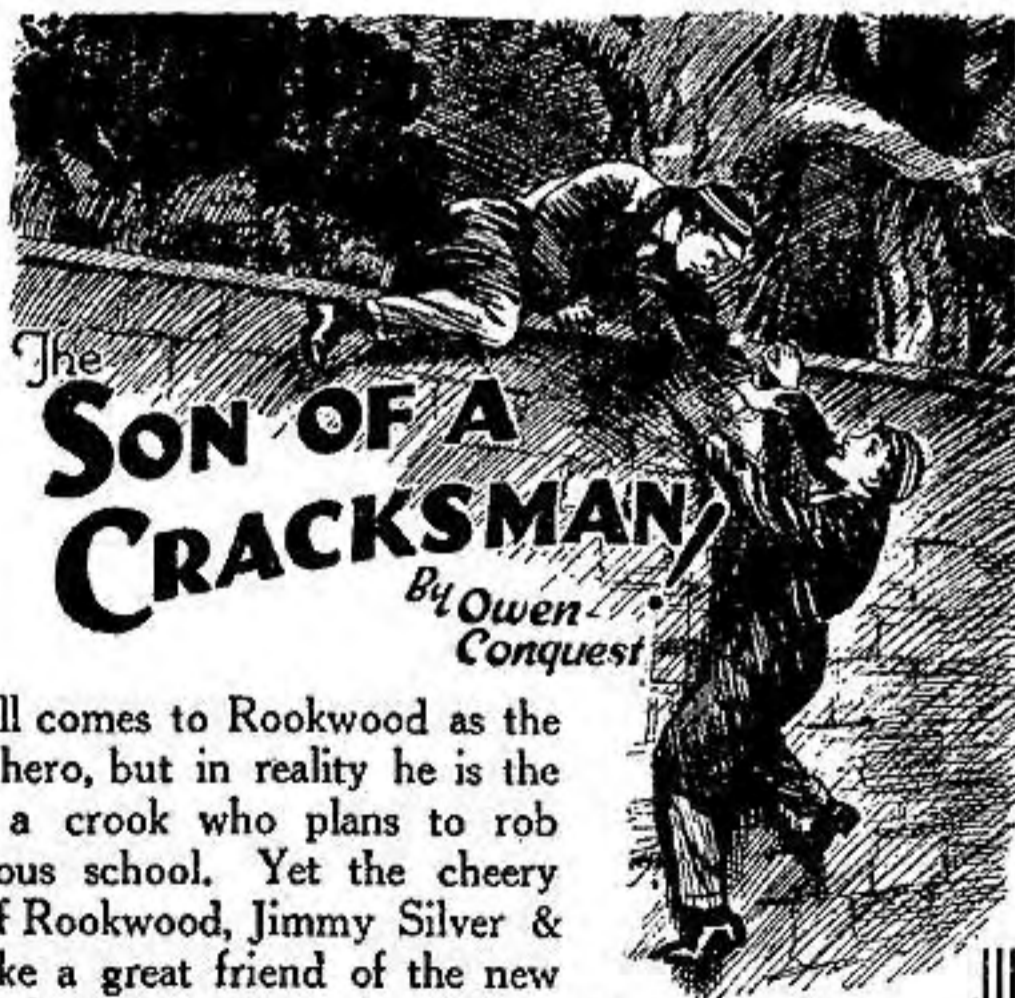
"I did!" answered Peter.

"Beast!"

Toddy chuckled and walked off.

During the next quarter of an hour Billy Bunter tried his luck in various directions. He asked Squiff and Hazeldene and Russell and Ogilvy in turns, and they laughed. He asked Bolsover major, who kicked him. He asked Kipps and Mark Linley and Napoleon Dupont, and received from each a more or less polite answer in the negative. He asked Lord Mauleverer, and Mauly

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did not even answer—he only took Bunter gently by a fat ear and pulled it, and ambled away.

By that time it dawned on Bunter's powerful intellect that if anybody was going to annex the confiscated tuck from Prout's study it had to be William George Bunter personally. And, taking his courage in both fat hands, as it were, Bunter blinked in at Masters' Common-room and ascertained that Mr. Prout was at tea there, and then rolled away to Prout's study—with his courage screwed up to the sticking-point.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Rather a Shindy!

"**H**OLD on, Smithy!"
 "Don't be a fool!"
 "Hold on, I tell you!" said Tom Redwing in a low, determined tone.

Vernon-Smith breathed hard and his eyes glinted at his chum. But he controlled his anger. It was no place for a row—for the two juniors were in Masters' passage. Smithy had walked quietly into that quarter, when he heard Redwing's voice behind him, and turned, with glinting eyes.

As the beaks were at tea in Common-room it was fairly safe there. Still, all the beaks did not "tea" at the same time, and it was probable that one or two might be in the studies. Any beak in a study would certainly have been brought forth, like a lion from its den, by the sound of raised voices in those sacred precincts.

"Will you leave me alone?" muttered the Bounder, between his teeth.

"No," answered Redwing coolly, "I won't. Do you think I don't know what you've come here for? To use a beak's phone while they're at tea. You're not going to do it."

"I am!"
 "You're not."
 "You meddlin' fool!" hissed the Bounder. "Prout's in Common-room now, and it's a chance to use his phone. Leave me alone!"

"Rats!"
 Vernon-Smith clenched his hands savagely. But he was only a few yards from the door of Mr. Quelch's old study—now Smedley's. As likely as not the Creeper and Crawler was there, and would hear a row.

Controlling his rage, the Bounder turned and ran swiftly but quietly up the passage to Mr. Prout's study.

So sudden and swift was his move that Redwing was left standing; but, with a grim expression on his face, Tom followed him.

Vernon-Smith reached the study, threw open the door, and ran in. He knew that Prout was at tea, so he had no doubt of finding the study unoccupied.

It was not, however, unoccupied. There was a startled gasp as Smithy ran in, and a fat figure standing by the table whirled round, two little round eyes almost popping through a pair of big round spectacles in alarm.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Billy Bunter. "I—I say, I'm not here, sir—I mean I—I came to—to ask you something—I mean— Oh, you beast!" Bunter broke off, with a gasp of relief, as he discerned that it was not Mr. Prout who had entered, but a Remove fellow.

Vernon-Smith stared at him. "You fat Owl, what are you doing here?" he snapped.

The question was really not needed. A smear of jam on Bunter's fat face showed what he had been doing.

The table, to Smithy's amazement, was piled with tuck. He had not heard of Coker's disaster. That was what Bunter was there for evidently. And the fat junior had not been able to resist the temptation of parking a few of the tarts before he carried off his plunder.

"Oh, really, Smithy—" gasped Bunter.

RHYMES OF THE REMOVE.

No. 16.—The Porpoise.



A parody of "The Raven," as recited, with many dolorous groans, by Harry Wharton, and written by the Greyfriars Rhymester.

Once upon a midnight weary
 While we eat in comfort cheery
 In my den at Wharton Lodge, where the
 fire burnt with a roar,
 While we chatted, nearly napping,
 Suddenly there came a tapping,
 Came a sound of someone rapping,
 Rapping at my chamber door!
 "'Tis some visitor," I muttered, "rap-
 ping at my chamber door!
 Merely this, and nothing more!"

Open here I flung the portal,
 And with boldness more than mortal,
 In there strode a cheeky Porpoise, who
 'sat down and said: "Oh, lor'!
 I've been walking from the station,
 For I've come for the vacation!
 You forgot my invitation,
 And you owe me three-and-four!
 For I could not bilk the railway, and it
 cost me three-and-four,
 Merely that, and nothing more!"

Then he started on the cheesecakes
 And he said: "I'm fond of these cakes,
 Tell your butler man to bring some, with
 hot sausages galore!"
 While I gazed at him with wonder
 As he sat and scoffed his plunder,
 And I gasped and murmured:
 "Thunder!
 I've not seen such cheek before!
 Will you go out through the window, or
 do you prefer the door?"
 Quoth the Porpoise: "Nevermore!"

And his stay he would not shorten,
 He just said: "Oh, really, Wharton!
 You did not invite me down here, but I
 know you will deplore
 Your forgetfulness, old fellow!
 Pass the coffee, while it's mellow,
 And I wish you would not bellow!"
 But I answered, with a roar:
 "On the morrow you will leave me, as
 you've had to leave before!"
 Quoth the Porpoise: "Nevermore!"

And despite repeated kicking,
 That fat Porpoise still is sticking,
 Still is sticking to my party, which he
 does his best to bore!
 Though we've hammered him and biffed
 him,
 It is quite imposs. to shift him,
 Once or twice we've tried to lift him
 Just to bump him on the floor!
 But till we go back to Greyfriars, he is
 with me, though I swore
 I would ask him nevermore!

"Shut up, you fat idiot!"
 Whether Bunter was there or not made no difference to Smithy after the first startled moment; he ran across the room to the telephone.

Bunter blinked after him through his big spectacles. Vernon-Smith grabbed up the receiver and hurriedly gave a number.

At the same moment Tom Redwing appeared in the doorway.

"Oh crikey!" ejaculated Bunter. "Look here, you fellows, I wish you'd go somewhere else! Somebody may have seen you—"

Redwing ran across the study, unheeding Bunter, and caught the Bounder by the arm.

"Let go that phone!" he snapped. "Hands off, you cheeky fool!" hissed the Bounder.

"Let go!"
 "I won't!"
 "Then I'll make you!"

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Bunter. He ceased to masticate tarts. If these two fellows were going to kick up a row in Prout's study it was time for Bunter to be gone.

Hastily, hurriedly, the fat junior began to stack the smaller and more portable articles in his pockets. But the cake was too large for stowing away like that, and Bunter could not possibly think of abandoning that magnificent cake, the work of Aunt Judy's own fair hands. He took the cake under a fat arm.

A voice was coming through on the telephone, but the Bounder did not hear it; he let go the receiver as Tom Redwing, exerting his strength, dragged him bodily away from the instrument.

With passionate fury the Bounder struck at him and struck again. He forgot friendship and forgot everything else in his rage at being overruled and handled. Twice his clenched fist landed savagely on Redwing. But the sailor-man's son did not strike back; with an iron grasp on the Bounder, he whirled him away from the telephone.

Smithy was strong and sinewy, but Redwing was stronger. The Bounder went staggering across the study in his chum's grasp.

He made a frantic effort to throw Redwing off, and almost succeeded; but Tom's grasp tightened again, and both of them reeled towards the door.

Bunter was in the way. Smithy and Redwing crashed into the fat junior, sending him spinning. There was a roar as Bunter rolled, and a thud as the cake dropped on the carpet.

"Yaroooooh! Oh crikey! Yow-ow-woop!" roared Bunter.

"Redwing, you rotter—"

"Smithy, you fool—"

"You'll have the beaks here—"

"I don't care!"

"Yarooooop!" yelled Bunter, as the Bounder, struggling desperately, landed a crashing foot on him. "Whoo-hoop!"

There was a soft step in the passage, unheard in the excitement. A rather tall and well-groomed figure stood in the doorway. It was Mr. Smedley, the temporary master of the Remove.

"Cease this at once! What does this mean?" snapped the Remove-master. "What are you doing here?"

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter. "Oh!" panted the Bounder.

The struggle ceased. Herbert Vernon-Smith and Tom Redwing, crimson and breathless, stood panting and staring at their Form-master. Billy Bunter, sitting up among squashed tarts, blinked at him. It was quite a dramatic moment.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Help from the Enemy!

HERBERT VERNON-SMITH
gripped his teeth.

He was caught!

The Creeper and Crawler, always on his track, always watching for a chance, had caught him. Whatever might happen to Redwing and Bunter, the Bounder had no doubt that he was "for" it. This meant a report to the Head; possibly a flogging—certainly another black mark against him in his headmaster's mind. The Bounder, in his present rather precarious position in the school, could not afford to give his enemy an opening. Now he had given him one.

But rather to his surprise, the Creeper and Crawler did not give him particular attention. Smedley glanced at him and at Bunter, but it was upon Tom Redwing's flushed face that he fixed his eyes.

"What are you doing here?" he repeated.

"I—I say, I—I never came after the tuck, sir!" gasped Billy Bunter, scrambling up, in great alarm. "I—I wouldn't, sir! I never knew it was here! I never saw those Fifth Form chaps bringing it here and—"

"You will take a hundred lines, Bunter, and leave this study."

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

He was amazed at getting off so cheaply. And there were buns and chocolates in his pockets, of which Mr. Smedley knew nothing!

Bunter did not linger.

He fairly bolted.

"You two boys were fighting in a Form-master's study!" said Mr. Smedley, heedless of Bunter, his eyes on Smithy and Redwing, but especially on Redwing. "I think, Redwing, that you were the aggressor."

"Very well, sir," said Tom quietly.

He, like Smithy, had expected Smedley to jump at this chance of being down on the Bounder. He was, as a matter of fact, rather pleased to find that he was going to be made the scapegoat. He could stand it.

"But I require an explanation," went on the smooth tones of the Creeper and Crawler. "I see that the receiver of the telephone is hanging loose. Replace it."

Smithy obeyed in silence.

"Now follow me to my study, both of you."

The two juniors followed him down the passage into his study. There was a faint grin on the Bounder's face. For some reason that he could not fathom, it seemed that Smedley was going to leave him alone and take it out of Redwing. Why, the Bounder could not imagine, but he drew a sardonic amusement from the fact.

In Mr. Smedley's study they faced their Form-master. The Bounder was cool as usual; Redwing quiet and composed.

"Which of you was using the telephone in Mr. Prout's study?" demanded Mr. Smedley.

"I was, sir," answered Vernon-Smith.

"Did you ask Mr. Prout's leave?"

"I forgot."

"You are aware, Vernon-Smith, that no Greyfriars boy is allowed to use a telephone without special leave. You must explain to me why you were intending to use the telephone."

"My father's been rather seedy lately, sir, and I was going to ring him up and ask how he was!" said the Bounder calmly.

Redwing compressed his lips.

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"Very well, Vernon-Smith, if that was your reason I think I can excuse you," said Mr. Smedley, with unexpected mildness. "You will, however, take a hundred lines for using a master's telephone without leave. Had you asked me, I should certainly have allowed you to use my telephone to speak to Mr. Vernon-Smith."

"You're very kind, sir!" gasped the Bounder.

It was the first time that he had received anything like kindness from the new master of the Remove, and he was astonished.

"I shall be going to tea in Common-room in a few minutes," said Mr. Smedley, "and you may telephone to your father when I am gone, Vernon-Smith."

"Oh!" The Bounder could only gasp. "Thank you, sir!"

"But this does not make it clear why Redwing began a quarrel in a Form-master's study," Mr. Smedley frowned at the silent junior. "If it was your intention to prevent Vernon-Smith from telephoning, Redwing, I cannot see that you were called upon to intervene. Vernon-Smith certainly was breaking a rule; but you are not a Sixth Form prefect! Nothing can excuse you for making such a scene in a master's study, and I should have been placed in a very awkward position, as your Form-master, had Mr. Prout found you fighting there."

"I am sorry, sir!" said Tom, in a low voice.

"I hardly understand you, Redwing! You are not, so far as I have observed, a quarrelsome boy. But I cannot possibly overlook this. I shall not cane you; but I shall detain you until preparation, Redwing. Follow me to the Form-room."

Mr. Smedley stepped to the door.

The Bounder grinned behind his back. He could hardly believe in his good luck.

He had permission to remain in the study and use the telephone—though it certainly was not to his father that he was going to phone. And Redwing, under detention in the Form-room, would not be able to interfere with him!

Tom stood as if rooted to the floor.

Mr. Smedley glanced back from the passage with a frowning brow.

"I told you to follow me, Redwing!" he said, in an ominous voice.

There was no help for it! Redwing followed him from the study, the Bounder, in quite a good humour now, bestowing a wink on him as he went.

In the Remove-room Redwing went quietly to his desk. Mr. Smedley sorted out a Latin paper at the master's desk and gave it to him.

"You will remain here, Redwing, till you have completed that paper. Then you may bring it to me in my study."

"Very well, sir!"

The Remove master left the Form-room, closing the door after him.

Tom sat staring at the paper on his desk.

He was under detention now, and it was a serious matter to break detention. The Bounder would have done so without hesitation; but Tom did not share his chum's recklessness. Yet, to remain where he was now was to let Smithy go ahead and land himself in trouble again. He was playing into Smedley's hands with this folly, and Tom was deeply anxious for him, as well as intensely angry with him.

He waited a few minutes, to give Mr. Smedley time to get away. Then he quietly rose and opened the Form-room door. He was going to stop the Bounder if he could.

"Redwing!"

"Oh!" gasped Tom.

Mr. Smedley was not gone. Silent, as usual, he was still in the Form-room passage. His hard eyes gleamed at Tom's startled face.

"Redwing! Were you going to break detention?"

It was not much use to deny it, even if Tom had thought of doing so. He did not answer.

"As I cannot trust you, Redwing, I shall lock you up in the Form-room," said Mr. Smedley, in a tone of cold contempt. "Go back to your desk."

Tom, with a scarlet face, went back to his desk. Mr. Smedley locked the door on the outside, and walked away with the key in his pocket. This time he did depart.

Redwing breathed hard. Had it been possible for Smedley to know anything of the Bounder's plans, Redwing would have supposed that the Creeper and Crawler was deliberately giving Smithy the chance to "dish" himself. But he knew nothing of Smedley's eavesdropping under the elms.

There was nothing more to be done, and Tom, in an angry, troubled, and worried mood, set himself to his detention task.

Mr. Smedley walked away to Masters' Common Room, where he joined the other "beaks" at tea, in very cheery spirits.

He had failed to trap the scapegrace; but now the young rascal was bent on entrapping himself, and all that the Creeper and Crawler had to do was to make it easy for him, and let him get on with it!

Quite unaware of that, Vernon-Smith, in Smedley's study, used the telephone. He got through to Vavasour, at Highcliffe School, and "fixed" it up with that youth. Then he got through to Courtfield Garage, and ordered the car. Then, with a grin on his face, the Bounder strolled out of his Form-master's study, feeling that all was going well, and little dreaming that his whole game was known to the man who would be waiting and watching for him when he got out of the Remove dormitory after lights-out that night!

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Cheek!

"**P**REP!" said Horace Coker
litterly.

Potter grunted.

Greene snorted.

Prep was one of those things that, like the rain and the hail, fell alike on the just and the unjust. It was all very well for Coker to say "Prep!" in a bitter and scornful tone. But it had to be done!

Coker, apparently, wasn't going to do it! Coker sat in the study armchair, with his long legs stretched out, and a deep frown on his rugged brow, while his comrades sat down to the table to work.

"You fellows prepping?" asked Coker sardonically.

"Oh, don't be an ass!" snapped Potter.

The loss of that gorgeous spread had irritated Coker's friends. They were not in a good temper.

Potter and Greene had tea'd in Hall. Like the Israelites of old, they had looked back with longing on the flesh-pots of Egypt. It was all Coker's fault. If he hadn't barged into Prout, like the footling, clumsy ass he was, Prout would never have come to the study and confiscated that mountain of tuck. Now Coker's study, instead of flowing with milk and honey, was as bare as Mother Hubbard's well-known cupboard! And so Potter and Greene, like the poor dog,



"Cease this at once—what does this mean?" snapped Mr. Smedley, appearing suddenly in the doorway. "What are you boys doing here?" "Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter. "Oh!" panted the Bounder. The struggle ceased. Vernon-Smith and Redwing, crimson and breathless, stood panting and staring at their Form-master, while Bunter, sitting up among the squashed tarts, blinked.

had none! It was enough to make a fellow shirty.

Coker's silly rot, along with Coker's hamper, was one thing. Coker's silly rot, minus Coker's hamper was quite another. Potter and Greene had tacitly agreed that they weren't going to stand Coker's silly rot—that evening, at least. Hence Potter's tart reply.

Coker sat up.

"What did you say, Potter?" he inquired.

"I said," answered Potter, with cold deliberation, "don't be an ass!"

"If you can help it!" added Greene.

Coker gazed at them.

"That's cheek!" he said.

"Oh, cheese it!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"Dry up and let a fellow work!"

Coker dried up for a few moments, in sheer astonishment. Not being quick on the uptake, Horace did not connect this outbreak of cheek on the part of his study-mates with the loss of the contents of Aunt Judy's hamper. He was simply astonished.

"Look here——" he began again, at length.

"Prep!" snapped Potter.

"I'm going to do no prep!"

"You may want a row with Prout in the morning! I don't."

"Blow Prout!" said Coker forcibly.

"Who's Prout?"

Coker's eyes began to gleam. He was not the fellow to stand being cheeked in his own study! Not Horace Coker!

"You men can chuck that," he said.

"I've got something more important than prep to think about. I've been treated like a fag——"

"That's because you've acted like one!"

"What!" roared Coker.

"Don't bellow like a bull when a fellow's got to work!"

Coker breathed hard.

"I said chuck that rot," he said, calming himself with difficulty. "I've been treated like a fag—my grub confiscated! Of course, I'm not going to stand it. I'm going to get it back! That old ass Prout seems to have forgotten all about it—it's still in his study. Of course, I'm not going to submit to this. I can't very well walk into the study and knock Prout down if he tries to stop me taking it away——"

"Oh crikey! No! Not quite, I think!" gasped Greene.

"The Head would sack me if I did!" growled Coker. "They make a lot of fuss here about a fellow punching a 'beak.' Prout's simply asking to be knocked down; but the fact is a fellow can't do it!"

"Nunno! Not quite."

"Well, that means strategy," said Coker. "Luckily, I'm the man for it! Not that I care about the tuck, you know. That's nothing. It's the principle of the thing! A Fifth Form man can't have his grub confiscated, like a greedy fag in the Second, and take it lying down. You fellows see that that's impossible."

"Hand me the dick, Greeney!"

"Here you are!"

"Leave that dick alone!" snapped Coker. "I'm speaking."

"You generally are," remarked Potter.

"Sort of disease," said Greene.

Coker stared at them.

"Are you fellows ratty about anything?" he asked, puzzled.

"Fathead!"

"Ass!"

Coker breathed hard, and harder.

"You're asking to have your heads knocked together," he said. "Better

take my tip, and don't ask again. The question is how to get that tuck back from Prout's study. I don't want a row with the man. That's why I'm going to use strategy, and you fellows are going to help."

"Are we?" said Potter grimly.

The loss of the tuck was the cause of the present "rattiness" of Potter and Greene. But they were not prepared to join in any attempt to recapture it. War with a beak might appeal to Horace Coker, but it did not appeal to Potter and Greene in the very least.

"That's the idea," said Coker. "And I've thought it out! Lucky I've got the brains—all there are in this study! As I've said, I can't walk into the man's study and simply take the tuck away. It would mean trouble."

"It would," agreed Potter. "Lots!"

"I shall leave it till after lights out," explained Coker. "Then it will be perfectly easy."

"You're going to walk in your sleep and do it?" inquired Greene flippantly.

"Don't be an ass, Greeney! We shall stay awake."

"Shall we?" murmured Greene.

"That old ass, Prout, always goes to bed early. But we'll leave it till after eleven, to make sure."

"Some of the beaks stay up late. I've heard that that man Smedley often stays up very late," said Potter. "I've heard the fags say that he sneaks about on the watch for Remove kids breaking bounds."

"And Prout locks his study at night," added Greene.

Shirty as they were with Coker, they were willing to save him from himself, so to speak, if they could.

"I've thought of all that," said Coker calmly. "We're going to take Prout's study at the window."

"The—the window!"

"We get out of the House by the door on the Sixth Form lobby. Easy enough."

Potter and Greene looked at him.

"Has it occurred to you that a man may be sacked for getting out of the House at night?" inquired Potter.

"Quite right, too," assented Coker. "But this is an exceptional case. And I'm not going to call the Head," he added sarcastically. Coker could be sarcastic. "Prout's window fastens with one of those old catches—easy enough to snap it back with a pocket-knife!"

Potter and Greene could only stare at Coker, like cows at a train. He had taken their breath away.

"I get in at the window," resumed Coker, with undiminished calm, "and hand out the stuff to you fellows outside. Easy as falling off a form."

"Ye gods!" murmured Potter.

"And when it's found in this study to-morrow they won't guess who did it?" inquired Greene.

Coker smiled an astute smile.

"I've thought of that, too! I think of everything when I'm laying plans, you know. We shan't bring it back into the House. We shall hide it somewhere in the Cloisters, or—or somewhere. We can get it later when we want it! The whole thing remains a mystery! See?"

"Lot of mystery about it—I don't think!" remarked Potter. "Have you finished your funny turn, Coker? If so, we'll get on with prep."

Coker looked dangerous.

"Does that mean that you don't want to help?" he asked.

"It means exactly that," agreed Potter, "and it means that we're not going to do anything of the kind, and that if you want to be sacked you can be sacked on your lonely own! Got that?"

"When we go to dorm to-night," said Greene, "I'm going to sleep. And if you wake me up, Coker, I'll take my bolster to you."

Coker rose from the armchair.

"That tears it!" he remarked, still calmly. "I've stood a good deal of cheek from you two, and it's not my way to stand cheek. But if you funk helping a pal, that's that! I can handle it alone, if it comes to that—better, very

likely, without a couple of footling duffers barging about. But as you seem keen to have your cheeky heads knocked together—"

Coker said no more, but grabbed at Potter and Greene's collars, to get on with knocking their heads together, as they so richly deserved for cheeking Coker.

There was a howl of rage as Potter dropped his pen on his paper, and Greene knocked over the inkpot.

Potter and Greene scrambled out of their chairs.

Crack!

Two heads came together sharply.

"Ow!"

"Wow!"

That should have ended the dispute. Having knocked their cheeky heads together, Coker was prepared to let it go at that.

Potter and Greene, as it happened, weren't!

Knocking fellows' cheeky heads together was a satisfactory proceeding to the knocker, but not, so to speak, to the knockees!

Potter and Greene leaped at Coker like famished tigers.

Coker crashed on the study carpet, and Potter and Greene crashed on Coker. What happened in the next few minutes was never quite clear to Coker.

He had a vague impression of being rolled over, jumped on, banged with a dictionary, thumped, punched, and pommelled. But it was all very vague—Coker was in rather a dizzy state.

But he knew for certain that he landed in the Fifth Form passage with a terrific crash. He was sure of that because he found himself sprawling there, dazed and breathless.

It was some minutes before Horace Coker rallied sufficiently to resume the offensive. Then he found that the study door was locked on the inside.

He breathed blood-curdling threats through the keyhole, unheeded by two fellows who were getting on with their prep. He gave it up at last.

Potter and Greene finished prep without the exhilarating company of Horace Coker.

When, later in the evening, they saw Coker in the Fifth Form games study he gave them one of those cold, steely looks, indicating that friendship, and even acquaintance, was at an end.

They let it go at that.

In point of fact, they had no special use for Coker's friendship until the next hamper came from Aunt Judy. Probably Coker would have come round by then, if he was not sacked in the interval for burgling his Form-master's study. So that was that!

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

All Clear!

SITTING in Quelch's old study, Mr. Smedley, alias Lucius Teggars, smiled.

Mr. Smedley had a pile of papers before him to correct for his Form.

But he was not giving them much attention.

The Remove were at prep in their studies. Mr. Smedley was at leisure to think agreeable thoughts.

He was thinking of Mr. Samuel Vernon-Smith's millions.

Really, it was hardly worth while to grind at correcting that pile of Latin papers. On the morrow, the whole thing was coming to an end. Herbert Vernon-Smith, caught out of bounds at night, would be expelled from Greyfriars. His disinheritance by his father would automatically follow, for there was no doubt whatever that the millionaire would keep his word. "Mr. Smedley's" work at Greyfriars would be done. On some pretext or other he would leave—and vanish. Indeed, it would be necessary to get a move on, for, having disinherited his son, the millionaire would want to see the nephew whom he had resolved to adopt in his place—and Lucius Teggars would have to be in London, on the spot.

These were pleasant thoughts.

The Creeper and Crawler was feeling no compunction. His methods, perhaps, were a little questionable—he admitted that. But what was he doing except performing the duty of a Form-master, such as he pretended to be? A young rascal who broke bounds at night knew what he was risking. He would be expelled, as he richly deserved to be.

Certainly, had Mr. Quelch been in Smedley's place, he would have prevented the lawless act, instead of letting it happen and dealing out punishment afterwards. That was the only difference! Not, in Mr. Smedley's opinion, a very wide difference!

He was anxious to get away from Greyfriars! Nobody suspected him—not even the Bouncer, who had never seen his cousin Lucius Teggars. Only Mr. Vernon-Smith knew him in his true name, and the millionaire had not visited the school since he had been there.

But he might come—which would be awkward! Prout, too, had known the real Eustace Smedley's uncle at Oxford—and he had had to quarrel with Prout to keep him at arm's length. And he loathed schoolmastering—he would be glad to have done with it!

On the morrow, he would have done with it! All was plain sailing now—he had only to let that shady young scoundrel catch himself in his own trap!

"Ow! Leggo!" came a fat squeak in the passage interrupting Mr. Smedley's pleasant thoughts, and he scowled.

There was a heavy tread outside. A sharp knock made the door creak. It opened, and the portly form of Mr. Prout appeared, marching along a still portlier form by the collar.

"I say, I—I never!" squeaked Billy Bunter.

Mr. Smedley rose to his feet. He gave Prout a cold, hard stare. Prout gave him the same in return. They disliked one another intensely. Mr. Prout had been prepared to extend a warm welcome to his old friend's nephew, coming to Greyfriars as a temporary master. He had been snubbed—severely snubbed; for what reason he could not even guess, except that the fellow was a puppy! Prout had sometimes so far forgotten decorum as to allude to Smedley, in Common-room, as "that young puppy"! Prout never had any of those long, pleasant chats he had expected to have with his old Oxford friend's nephew. He never came to Smedley's

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study. Now, however, he had come, conveying Bunter.

"Sir!" barked Mr. Smedley.

"Sir!" barked Prout. "This boy of your Form—this—this Bunter—I have brought him to you, sir!"

"Ow! I wasn't—" squeaked Bunter.

"This boy, sir, I found in my study!" boomed Prout. "I have had occasion, sir, to confiscate certain comestibles, now placed in my study. This boy, sir, this Bunter, has had the temerity, sir, the audacity, sir, to penetrate to my study, and attempt, sir, to obtain possession of those comestibles! I caught him in the very act, sir!"

Prout stopped for breath.

"I—I never—" wailed Bunter.

"You have been in Mr. Prout's study, Bunter?" snapped the Remove master, picking up a cane.

"I—I—I—thought Mr. Prout was in Mr. Capper's study, sir!" groaned Bunter. "That beast Skinner said he was, and he was only pulling my leg! I—I—I mean, I—I went to Mr. Prout's study to—to—to—to ask him whether he had got over it, sir! I—I was worried about him, sir, owing to Coker falling over on him this afternoon—"

"This boy, sir!" boomed Prout. "Come into my study, sir, while I was sitting there, sir, and had his hands, sir, on the—the comestibles, when I rose from my chair, sir—"

"I didn't know you were there!" wailed Bunter. "And I only came to ask you if you'd got over it—"

"I refuse, sir," boomed Prout. "I refuse to have Remove boys, sir, pilfering—I say deliberately, sir, pilfering—in my study! I repeat that I absolutely refuse, sir—"

"Bunter! You will bend over that chair!" snapped Mr. Smedley, swishing the cane.

"But, I—I say, sir—"

"Bend over!"

"I only went to ask Mr. Prout how he was, sir," groaned Bunter, "I never knew the tuck was there, sir! I mean, Skinner said he was in Capper's study and—"

"If you do not immediately bend over that chair, Bunter—"

"Oh lor'!"

Bunter bent over the chair. Whack, whack, whack!

"Yaroooh! Whoop! Who-hoop!"

"You may go, Bunter!"

"Yow-ow-ow!" Bunter went, and sounds of woe and anguish died away down the passage. "Yow-ow-ow-ow!"

"Now, sir, if you are satisfied—" said Mr. Smedley, with icy politeness. Grunt from Prout.

With no other rejoinder he rolled away, and Mr. Smedley was left once more to his pleasant meditations.

Already, in his mind's eye, the plotter and schemer saw himself heir to millions, in the place of the reckless young rascal who had thrown all his chances away.

Perhaps he omitted to remember that there is many a slip twixt cup and lip!

There was, so far as Mr. Smedley could see, nothing to come between him scapegrace changed his plans for the scapegrace changed his plans for the night! Which was extremely unlikely. And if anything was to come between him and success, he was not likely to suspect that it would be in the shape of a fat junior who had just gone howling down the passage!

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Two in the Dark!

HARRY WHARTON & Co. were sleeping the sleep of the just in the Remove dormitory when eleven strokes sounded from the old clock-tower.

If they were dreaming, it was probably of the coming cricket matches, or of rags in the Remove passage—certainly not that two fellows, in the same dormitory, were lying awake and listening for the stroke of eleven. And of the two fellows who were awake, neither suspected that the other was wakeful—neither, in fact, remembered the other's existence, having more urgent matters to remember.

Herbert Vernon-Smith was thinking of his reckless escapade, planned for that night. Billy Bunter was thinking of the tuck in Prout's study.

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Then tell an amusing yarn like the following, which has been sent in by Ivor Peach, "Syringa," Newport Road, West Cowes, Isle of Wight, and the postman will bring you one from me.—Ed.



Brown: "Is that a good telescope?"

Smith: "Rather! It brings the church so near you can hear the organ!"

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Bunter knew nothing of Smithy's plans. Smithy knew nothing of Bunter's. Both remained awake—Smithy with ease, Bunter with difficulty, and both stirred when eleven o'clock came. By that time all was still.

All Forms below the Sixth had long been in the dormitories. Few, if any, of the Sixth were up at eleven. A belated master or two might be up, that was all. As for the Head, he was in his own house, and it did not matter whether he was up or not.

Billy Bunter grunted, and rolled out of bed.

A dozen times, at least, he had nearly fallen asleep! But with heroic efforts, he had banished slumber. That mountain of tuck on Prout's study table haunted him, that was easier than to slip down, annex all that he could

carry, and return to the Remove dormitory, there to devour his prey at his leisure? The cake alone was worth staying awake for!

Just as Bunter grunted and rolled out of bed, the Bounder sat up, and he gave a start. He heard Bunter.

Smithy gritted his teeth.

He had not spoken a word to Redwing since the row in Prout's study. It came into his mind, now, that Tom might have stayed awake, to stop him if he sought to leave the dormitory after lights out.

But the next moment he was reassured. Tom's bed was next to his, and it was not from that bed that the sound had come. It was some fellow farther on who was getting up.

The Bounder listened savagely.

He wanted to get away quietly when he went. If that ass, Redwing, started meddling again, the game was up. A row in the dormitory, at that hour of the night, would knock the whole thing on the head. Reckless as the Bounder was, he had not forgotten that the Creeper and Crawler had a very keen eye on him, and was anxious to catch him out.

Grunt again! He recognised Bunter's fat grunt, and it occurred to him that he had not heard Bunter's usual snore since turning in. For some mysterious reason, the fat Owl of the Remove was turning out in the middle of the night—and, like Smithy, had left it till it was safe.

The Bounder breathed hard with sheer exasperation.

He did not want to wait till Bunter was clear. At half-past the hour the car was to be waiting for him at the corner of Oak Lane, and Vavasour, of Highcliffe, would be there. The chauffeur, a man who had driven the Bounder on a good many such occasions, had instructions to wait an hour—no more, in case anything turned up to prevent the scapegrace from getting out. That certainly was plenty of time, but delays were dangerous. And that fat fool, barging about in the dark, might give the alarm, and make things more perilous for the breaker of bounds. It was intensely exasperating to the Bounder.

He sat in bed and listened.

Bunter was very cautious! But Bunter's sort of caution was all his own. He grunted. He snorted. He ruffled and shuffled and scuffled as he groped for his clothes and threw them on anyhow. He bumped his head on his bed, as he sought for the slippers he had placed in readiness—only unhappily forgetting just where he had placed them!

But for the fact that the Lower Fourth were sleeping the sound, healthy sleep of youth, Bunter's cautious proceedings might have awakened the whole dormitory from end to end.

However, the fat Owl, after about ten minutes, was ready to go, and, to the Bounder's immense relief, no one had awakened.

He waited for Bunter to be gone before he went himself.

He heard Bunter's tread, cautious as that of a rhinoceros, going to the door. The door opened, and shut, softly. Even Bunter had sense enough not to slam a door at a quarter past eleven p.m.

Where the fat Owl was gone, what on earth he was up to, Smithy neither knew nor cared—though he could guess that it was a grub raid on somebody's study. Perhaps his own! That did not matter, now that the benighted Owl was safely off the scene.

The door having closed, the Bounder

slipped out of bed. Swiftly he dressed himself in the dark.

Hardly a sound was made by the young rascal, and his movements were extremely rapid. In the next bed Tom Redwing slept undisturbed. All the Remove were fast asleep.

On tiptoe Vernon-Smith crept across to the door.

He stopped suddenly, his heart leaping almost into his mouth. The door opened!

Smithy caught his breath.

He stood rooted to the floor, his heart palpitating. The only thought in his mind was that the Creeper and Crawler was spying again, that he had come up to the dormitory suspecting something. He stood almost in an agony of dread, expecting the light to be switched on and the cold, hard eyes to fall on him, fully dressed, evidently about to go out, in the middle of night!

But the light was not switched on.

Footsteps entered, and the door was closed again. The darkness was unbroken.

The Bouncer breathed more freely.

It was not the Creeper and Crawler! It was that pernicious idiot, Bunter, who had come back, after an absence of only a few minutes. Almost giddy with relief, the Bouncer stood breathing hard.

A shadow loomed up in the gloom. Vernon-Smith dodged quickly, but not quite quickly enough.

Bump!

"Ow!" gasped Billy Bunter, jumping back in alarm. "Ow! Oh! Who's that? Oh, lor! I say, you fellows! Burglars! Oh crikey!"

"Quiet, you ass!" said the Bouncer. "It's me—Smithy—"

He broke off with a howl of agony as a wildly lashing fat fist crashed on his nose. Bunter, frightened out of his fat wits, hit out without even thinking.

That unexpected punch landed hard! There was a lot of weight behind it. Taken by surprise, Vernon-Smith staggered, and went headlong over. Bunter's startled howl, and the heavy fall of the Bouncer as he landed on the floor, awoke every fellow in the Form.

"What the thump—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

"What the esteemed dickens—"

A match scratched, and Peter Todd sat up, holding it. Three or four fellows jumped out of bed. Another match flickered, and Skinner lighted a candle-end. A dozen voices were exclaiming all at once.

Vernon-Smith scrambled to his feet, white with rage. In the glimmer of the matches, Bunter blinked at him.

"Smithy!" he gasped.

Unheeding, the Bouncer ran to the door. He had wanted to get away quietly. But he was going, anyhow.

"Smithy!" gurgled Bunter blankly.

"I—I thought it was a burglar! I say, you fellows—" He gave a howl. "Ow! Beast! Don't knock a fellow over! Wow!"

Bunter staggered from the path of a fellow in pyjamas, rushing across the dormitory. Vernon-Smith's hand was on the door. In another second he would have been gone. But a grasp on his shoulder dragged him back before he could get the door open.

"No, you don't!" said Tom Redwing quietly.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Looking After Smithy!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! Is that a scrap going on?"

"What the jolly old thump is—"

"Who's up?"

"What's going on?"

"Somebody's scrapping—"

The Famous Five were all out of bed now. So were Toddy, and Squiff, and Tom Brown, and Skinner and Stott, and four or five other fellows. All were amazed and rather alarmed.

"I say, you fellows—" gasped Bunter.

"It's Bunter!" howled Peter Todd.

"And Smithy!"

"And Redwing!"

"Scrapping, by gum!"

"Well, my hat!"

All eyes turned in amazement on the two struggling figures by the door, one in pyjamas, the other fully dressed, even to cap and boots. The Bouncer's face could be seen, pale with fury, and he was fighting like a demon to release himself from Redwing's grasp. But Tom held on to him with a grip of steel.

"Lend a hand here, you fellows!" panted Redwing.

"But what on earth's the row?" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Stand clear, hang you!" panted the Bouncer.

There was a snort from Johnny Bull.

"So that rotter's going out of bounds, and Reddy's stopping him!" he said. "Rats! Let him go, and get the sack, Reddy!"

"Is that it?" gasped Wharton.

"Can't you see he's dressed? Did he go to bed with his boots on?" snorted Johnny.

"Lend a hand!" panted Redwing. "I'm going to stop him. Lend a hand, here, some of you!"

"Pleased!" grinned Bob Cherry.

Bob lent a hand—a very powerful one. The Bouncer was dragged away from Redwing and pitched headlong on to his bed. He sprawled there, gasping and panting.

Redwing stood breathing in gulps. His face was crimson. Strong as he was, the Bouncer, in his desperation, had given him plenty to do.

Harry Wharton & Co. looked at him curiously. They had their own opinion of the Bouncer and his shady ways, and they understood, too, that Tom was anxious to save his friend from asking for the "sack." But if this was friendship, it was carrying friendship to a rather unusual length.

"Well" said Skinner, with a whistle, "of all the

check! Mean to say you're settin' up to stop Smithy from doin' what he likes, Redwing?"

"I mean exactly that," answered Tom Redwing. "Smithy's not going out of this dormitory to-night."

"Cheek!" said Snoop.

"Good man!" said Lord Mauleverer. "That's what I call a pal! Smithy, old bean, you're one of the lucky ones."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Vernon-Smith squirmed off the bed. He stood panting. Tom Redwing stood with his back to the door, quiet and determined. The Bouncer's eyes flamed at him.

"You meddlin' fool, will you mind your own business?" he snarled, his voice thick with rage.

"My business is to keep you in this dormitory, at present," answered Tom. "I'm going to do it."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Isn't that rather cool, Reddy?" he asked. "Smithy's a dingy sort of worm, to be going out of bounds at this time of night; but really—"

"Redwing's right!" growled Johnny Bull. "I'll lend him a hand if he wants one!"

"There's more at stake for Smithy than you fellows know," said Tom Redwing. "I'm his friend, and I won't allow him to ruin himself."

"You're no friend of mine!" hissed the Bouncer. "Keep your rotten friendship—who wants it?"

"You're going to have it, whether you want it or not!" answered Tom coolly. "Stay where you are, Smithy."

The Bouncer came towards him, fists clenched, eyes blazing. His voice was husky with fury as he spoke.

"Get aside!"

"I won't!"

Without another word, the Bouncer hurled himself at his chum. In a second they were fighting furiously.

"Stop that!" rapped Wharton. "We shall have the beaks or the prefects up here at this rate! Stop it, Smithy!"

Vernon-Smith did not heed. He attacked Redwing as if that junior had been his worst enemy instead of his best friend. Indeed, at that moment the Bouncer regarded him only as an enemy. Anyone who came between Smithy and his own wilful way was an enemy.

"Collar him!" said Harry.

Smithy's determination to break bounds and Redwing's determination to stop him, did not concern the other fellows very much. But a row in the Remove dormitory at nearly midnight, and masters or prefects coming up, did concern them very seriously. Five or six fellows grasped Vernon-Smith, and pitched him on his bed again.

The Bouncer lashed out savagely with his fists. Bob Cherry gave a yelp, as one of them landed in his eye.

"Look here, that's enough, Smithy!" snapped Bob. "Keep where you are, and keep quiet, or you'll get handled hard."

"You meddlin' rotter—"

"Oh, shut up!" growled Bob, rubbing his eye.

"The shut-upfulness is the proper caper, my esteemed Smithy!" murmured Hurree Janset Ram Singh. "Speech is silvery, but silence is the cracked pitcher that goes longest to the well, as the English proverb remarks."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"Beast! I say—"

The Bouncer scrambled off the bed again. But he had not only Redwing to deal with now. The other fellows, far from pleased at being roused out in the middle of the night by his folly, were getting impatient. And if Smodley



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Coker grabbed at Potter and Greene's collars with the intention of knocking their heads together. There was a howl of rage as Potter dropped his pen on his paper, and Greene knocked over the inkpot. Crack! Two heads came together sharply. "Ow!" "Wow!"

happened to hear the row, and come up, it meant trouble for all.

"Look here, Smithy, chuck it!" said the captain of the Remove. "We're getting fed up. Go to sleep like a sensible fellow."

"Mind your own business! I'm going out."

"You're not!" said Redwing coolly.

"You meddlin' our—"

"Oh, chuck it!" snapped Johnny Bull. "Look here, you men, if he won't go to bed, let's put him to bed, like a baby."

"Hear, hear!" grinned Squiff.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Are you going to bed, Smithy?" asked Wharton, laughing.

"No," hissed the Bounder.

"Well, you're going, or you'll be put," said the captain of the Remove. "We're all fed up with your rot, and we're not going to get detentions from Smedley because you want to play the goat. Anyhow, you ought to be jolly well ashamed of yourself. Get those clothes off!"

"Oh, hold your silly tongue!" snarled the Bounder. And he made a step doorward.

"Collar him!"

Struggling and squirming, the Bounder was collared. For the third time he bumped on his bed. This time he was not released. Several pairs of hands held him, while his collar and tie and jacket were dragged off. His waistcoat followed, then his boots and socks. There was a ripple of laughter in the Remove, as many hands—none of them gentle—jerked away the Bounder's attire. His face was crimson with rage and mortification. But if he chose to be put to bed like a baby, that was his own look-out; and the Removites grinned and got on with it.

"Now are you going to bed, Smithy?"

"No!" panted the Bounder.

Vernon-Smith's trousers flew across the dormitory. Then he was bumped into bed, and the bedclothes piled over him.

"Staying there?" asked the captain of the Remove.

"No!" choked the infuriated Bounder.

"Sit on him!" said Harry. "Here, Bunter's the heaviest! Sit on him, Bunter."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows—"

"What's Bunter up and dressed for?" asked Bob. "He wasn't going out blagging with Smithy surely."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Kick him till he sits on Smithy!"

"Ow! Wow! Beast! Stop kicking a chap!" howled Bunter. "I'll sit on him if you like. I—I want to sit on him."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Vernon-Smith, panting, exhausted, frantic with fury, lay gasping in his bed, with the Owl of the Remove plumped on his chest. And at his first heave to dislodge Bunter, Bob Cherry's pillow came down on him with a terrific swipe. The Remove fellows were fed up, and they were making that fact very clear to the Bounder. And, savagely obstinate as he was, the scapegrace of Greyfriars had to realise that he would not keep that appointment with Vava-sour of Highcliffe that night. That, at least, was perfectly clear by this time.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Tracked in the Dark!

THERE was a pale, faint glimmer of starlight at the high windows on the big dormitory landing. Otherwise, it was in complete darkness.

From that big landing several passages opened, and several staircases descended. Any fellow, from any dormitory, who wanted to go downstairs, had to cross that landing; and a "beak" who was on the prowl for such a fellow, had only to post himself there and watch and wait. Certainly no regular member of Dr. Locke's staff was likely to think of doing anything of the kind.

But there was a temporary member of that staff, who not only thought of it, but did it. Since half-past ten, when the last light above the stairs was turned out, Mr. Smedley had been on that landing; silent, watchful, wary as a cat.

Like Bunter and Smithy in the Remove dormitory, the Creeper and Crawler heard eleven strike, in the silence of the night. Then he grew more and more watchful. Vernon-Smith, if he was going, could not be long now. The spy's ears were keen, and he listened intently. He could see little or nothing; but that suited him, as he did not want to be seen. And he could depend on his hearing.

He was some distance from the Remove dormitory. He did not intend to venture too near—a creaking board might have betrayed him, in the stillness, and he had reason to know how wary the Bounder was. It was not his object, as a schoolmaster's would have been, to prevent a young rascal from breaking out at night. It was his object to let the young rascal get out—and catch him out! Caught out of the House, at that time of night, the millionaire's son was done for. The Creeper and Crawler was very careful indeed to do nothing that might have prevented him from going.

(Continued on page 16.)

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SAVING A SCAPEGRACE!

(Continued from page 13.)

A sound came to his ears—footsteps; cautious footsteps. His eyes gleamed green like a cat's in the dark. But the sound died, and was heard no more.

He was angry and puzzled.

He was not likely to remember, just then, the fat existence of Billy Bunter. Had he remembered it he would hardly have guessed that the fat Owl had surreptitious designs on the tuck in Prout's study.

Neither could it occur to him that Billy Bunter, having ventured boldly forth, had been scared by the darkness and solitude of the House late at night, and had gone back again, with the fatuous idea of persuading another fellow to go with him.

Billy Bunter's obtuse proceedings, and the mysterious workings of his fat intellect, were quite unknown to the Creeper and Crawler. He could only suppose that the Bounder had started, and gone back again; perhaps for something he had forgotten. And he listened and waited.

Footsteps again!

Cautious footsteps.

Mr. Smedley hardly breathed.

He was crouching under the big, thick balustrade of the landing, a very undignified position for a Form-master. But the Creeper and Crawler was not thinking of dignity. He was only thinking of remaining undiscovered by the fellow who was breaking out at night.

The footsteps passed within six or seven feet of him, going towards the main staircase.

That surprised Smedley a little. Another stair led down to the Remove landing, adjacent to the Remove passage, and he would have expected the Bounder to go that way. He had not failed to learn that the box-room, at the other end of the Remove passage, had been used sometimes by breakers of bounds.

But the unseen figure in the dark had gone down the main staircase. Smedley was sure of that.

And as soon as it was gone he rose from his crouching position and crept in pursuit, making no sound in his soft slippers.

He heard a faint bumping sound below, as if the fellow ahead of him had knocked against the banisters. But Smedley himself made no sound.

Again and again a faint sound came to him—his hearing was as quick as a fox's. Silent as a snake, he followed, into the Sixth Form passage.

All the Sixth were in bed at that hour, the passage was dark and silent. Mr. Smedley guessed now for what his quarry was heading.

There was a lobby at the end of that passage, with a door on the quad. It was the easiest way out for a fellow who had the nerve to pass the studies occupied by the prefects. The Bounder of Greyfriars had never lacked nerve. It did not occur to Mr. Smedley for a

single instant that the fellow he was following was not the Bounder.

Unseen, a shadow in shadows, the fellow, whoever he was, passed into the lobby. Silent at the door, which was left half open, the Creeper and Crawler listened, and heard the key turn in the outer door and a grating sound of a bolt withdrawn.

There was a breath of fresh night air from the quad for a moment, and then the outer door closed again.

Swiftly the spy crossed the lobby and reached it.

A moment more and he had opened it, stepped out, and closed the door silently behind him.

Standing close against the shut door, Mr. Smedley looked and listened. His hard lips set in a tight line.

The May night was fine but dark. In the glimmer of the stars the buildings and the old elms stood out black.

He expected to spot the figure of the breaker of bounds in the dim starshine heading across the quadrangle, probably for the Cloisters, where it was easy to clamber out.

It did not occur to him to look round in the direction of the windows of Masters' Studies. A breaker of bounds could have no imaginable business in that direction.

Mr. Smedley breathed hard.

Vernon-Smith—he did not even think of doubting whether it was Vernon-Smith he had been tracking—was out of the House! He must have sprinted across the open the moment he got out.

Mr. Smedley reflected a moment or two. Then he reopened the lobby door, took out the key, and put it on the outside. He closed the door again, locked it, and put the key in his pocket.

That cut off the escape of the breaker of bounds if he discovered that he was followed and attempted to get back.

Whoever it was that had preceded Mr. Smedley out of the House was now locked out, and could not get in again.

Where was he?

He was out of sight, but Mr. Smedley could picture him scuttling along in dark shadows, dodging the patches of starlight, heading for the school wall and the outside world.

Mr. Smedley intended to give him plenty of time to get clear.

Obviously, the fellow had taken no alarm—had not the faintest suspicion that he had been followed. But if he did take the alarm he might double back, and though the lobby door was now locked, the young rascal might have some other way of getting back into the House. It was quite possible that so wary and cunning a fellow as the Bounder had unfastened some window as a second line of retreat, in case of accidents. Mr. Smedley remembered certain incidents of his own schooldays when he had had secrets to keep!

After a few moments' thought, Mr. Smedley moved away from the lobby door and stood under a dark tree at a few yards' distance.

There he was completely hidden from sight.

He would have preferred to see, actually with his own eyes, the breaker of bounds getting out of the school precincts. But the fellow had vanished too swiftly for that.

He would not risk giving him the alarm by making a sound or revealing himself in the glimmering starlight.

Under the dark tree he waited with the patience of a cat. He was going to give the young rascal a quarter of an hour to get quite clear of Greyfriars

and well started on his reckless excursion for the night.

Then he would re-enter the House, visit the Remove dormitory, and "discover" the Bounder's absence!

When the scapegrace of the school returned at last from his midnight excursion he would find that he had been missed, that all was known, and that the Head was up, and waiting to see him!

In the darkness under the tree the Creeper and Crawler waited—and smiled! The game was in his hands at last. He was completely satisfied! And it was as well, for his contented satisfaction, that he was not aware that it was Horace Coker, of the Fifth Form, and not the Bounder at all, whom he had tracked in the dark!

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Coker Going Strong!

HORACE COKER was going strong.

Let down by his pals, Potter and Greene, Coker was not the man to give up a plan he had formed.

If Potter and Greene would not help, Coker was the man to do without help; he was, fortunately, one of those thoroughly capable, able, self-reliant fellows equal to practically anything!

At all events, Coker believed so!

Smithy and Billy Bunter and Smedley had heard eleven strike that eventful night with wakeful ears. So had Horace Coker! Coker, in the Fifth Form dorm, had been waiting for it.

Potter and Greene were fast asleep, like the rest of the Fifth. Coker did not think of calling them. They had let him down, refused to help him, and he disdained their help.

Coker dressed in the dark, put on rubber shoes, and left the Fifth Form dormitory and crept and groped away.

He was not, of course, aware that Smedley was up! He knew no more about Smedley's plans for that night than Smedley knew about his.

Never for an instant did it cross Coker's mind that a "beak" was hidden in the darkness of the dormitory landing when he crossed it with stealthy steps to the stairs.

If he had thought of a beak at all, he would not have thought of Smedley, but of Prout, his own beak.

But Prout was well known to keep early hours, and was certainly gone to bed before that time. Coker had no doubt that Prout was fast asleep, like nearly all Greyfriars.

As a matter of fact, he wasn't! Prout had far from recovered from Coker's slap-bang-wallopp performances of the afternoon. Prout was sleepless that night, and his ears also had heard eleven strike! Still, he was in his room, so that did not matter! Anyhow, Coker did not think of him. Coker was not, in fact, much given to thinking. Still less did he think of Smedley.

So he remained blissfully unconscious of the fact that he was stealthily followed downstairs by a Creeper and Crawler who supposed that he was Vernon-Smith of the Remove in the dark!

Having let himself out by the lobby door, Coker headed for the windows of Masters' Studies.

That was how the breaker of bounds happened to vanish so swiftly from the

eyes of the shadower, who emerged a few moments later.

Had Coker been going out of bounds—a thing that Coker never dreamed of doing—he would have headed for the school wall, and no doubt Smedley would have spotted him.

As it was, he headed for Masters' Studies, and an angle of the building hid him at once from sight from the lobby door.

While Smedley was locking that door and taking up his stand under the tree near at hand, Coker, round a corner of the building, had reached Prout's window.

Happily unconscious of the fact that he was now locked out of the House, Coker climbed on the broad stone sill of the study window.

The room within was quite dark.

Evidently Prout had gone to bed, as Coker had been assured. He was not likely to be up at that hour, anyhow; but had he been, there would have been

a light in his study. And all was dark! Coker got to work!

He had planned it all, and had it cut and dried. The window fastened with a simple catch. Coker had heard and read of burglars who opened windows easily and simply, by forcing a blade between the two sashes and hooking back the catch. Easy as falling off a form—at least, until a fellow came to do it! Then the difficulties started!

By some miraculous chance, Coker had not forgotten to bring his pocket-knife. Kneeling on the broad sill, Coker opened that knife, and started inserting it between the sashes.

But Coker, really, was no burglar. In the present circumstances, he felt justified in acting like one. But he had had, of course, no training for it!

Burglary, like everything else, had to be learned. No fellow can expect to score, as a burglar, at the first shot! There is a knack in these things, and Coker hadn't the knack.

In his mind's eye, Coker had seen himself slipping that blade between the sashes, and hooking back the catch—the work of a moment! Hey, presto! And it would be done.

But, as so often happens, theory did not go hand-in-hand with practice. In theory, it was as easy as winking! In practice, Coker did not snap back the catch! He snapped off the blade of his pocket-knife!

"Oh!" breathed Coker. This was unexpected!

Coker gazed at his bladeless pocket-knife. The handle was in Coker's hand, the blade remained between the sashes. Prout's window stayed shut.

"Oh!" breathed Coker again. The inventive genius who first thought of making two blades to a pocket-knife was a good friend to Coker that night. Had Coker's knife been one of those old-fashioned ones, with only one blade, Coker would have been done!

(Continued on next page.)



"Umpire" is at the disposal of every MAGNET reader who comes across a knotty cricket problem. Write to him to-day, c/o The MAGNET, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4, and then watch for his reply in this new weekly feature.

BOWLING!

ONE of the most interesting of the new chums with the Australian cricket party is Fleetwood-Smith. I don't say that because some people seem to see in him a resemblance to Ronald Colman. He is interesting quite apart from that. I know, for instance, that he will be most carefully watched by our own fellows who have played against him in Australia.

There is by no means unanimity of opinion about the abilities of this bowler. Some of our England players think he will be a big success in this country; others consider that he may be what they call a big flop.

A feature about his bowling which intrigues me is that he is, so far as first-class cricketers are concerned, the only one I have come across who bowls left-handed and who has cultivated the "googly." As you know, a googly when bowled by a right-handed bowler is an off-break with a leg-break action.

The process is reversed in the case of a left-handed bowler; it is a leg break bowled with an off-break action.

I am assuming, of course, for the purpose of this explanation, that the batsman is right-handed.

The deadly ball which Fleetwood-Smith tries to bowl should, according to the delivery, turn from the off into the batsman's legs, but, in actual fact, it goes the other way—that is, to the off-side of a right-handed batsman. This ball is an extremely difficult one to bowl, because it has to come out of the palm of the hand, as it were, the twist being imparted by the first finger.

People differ about the probable success of Fleetwood-Smith because they cannot be sure whether, in bowling this ball, he will be able to keep a good length.

And that, after all, is the root of all successful bowling. It doesn't matter whether you bowl "googlies," leg-breaks, or off-breaks. If the bowler doesn't keep a good length then he will be punished.

BATSMAN AND ACROBAT!

I AM able to pass on an interesting story about the way in which Fleetwood-Smith became a left-handed bowler. When he was a boy he had a difference of opinion—as boys sometimes will have—with his sports master at the school about the way in which he was bowling. A bit upset at the time, the boy suddenly changed, and instead of bowling right-handed, as he had always done, he started tossing them up the other way round. To his own surprise he found that he could bowl quite well left-handed, and he became so intrigued with the possibilities of himself as a left-handed bowler that he never went back to the right-handed variety.

I have not told that story in the hope that any of my readers will follow suit to the extent of having a spot of bother with the games master at school. It is an interesting story, however, as showing how some cricketers "arrive" by accident.

While we are talking about the Australians I may also pass on what was to me a delightfully human story about their reserve wicket-keeper, Barnett. At least, he comes in the role of reserve wicket-keeper, but he is a very good bat, and it may be that he will get into the Test match team in place of Oldfield with a view to strengthening the Australian tail. Leslie Ames was preferred to Duckworth in our last touring team in Australia for the very same reason. He was nearly, if not absolutely, as good a wicket-keeper

as Duckworth, and, of course, Ames was much more reliable as a bat.

That is by the way. Coming back to Barnett, the story is that in addition to being a fine cricketer, he is also something of an acrobat. When he was playing in junior cricket he had the satisfaction of making the first century of his career. He was delighted, as every player has a right to be.

He showed his delight, immediately he had registered a century, by walking from one wicket to the other on his hands. That's one way of expressing joy.

FIELDING AND PROFICIENCY!

THE early days of a cricket season can be considered the most suitable time to say a word or two about fielding. Anyway, I do want you all this season to take an interest in the fielding side of the game, because I am sure that once you get proficient in this you will enjoy your cricket all the more.

I have not the slightest doubt in my mind that every young cricketer can make himself into a tolerably good fielder if he will set his mind to it. I will be content at the moment to quote the case of Jack Hobbs. It is a long time now since Hobbs first stepped into the cricketing arena, and he has certainly made a few runs since then.

Right at the start of his first-class career he showed real promise as a batsman. Do you know what one of the critics who saw him in his first game wrote of the great Hobbs? I'll tell you. The words were something on these lines:

"As a batsman it is reasonable to expect a great deal from him; but before he can regard himself as completely useful to his side he will have to smarten up his fielding. He seems to be able to catch the ball all right, but is somewhat slow on his feet."

Most people, as you know, cannot resist the temptation to read what other folk write about them. Jack Hobbs, so he has told me, duly read that criticism of his fielding, and he there and then made up his mind that what was said of him on his first appearance should not continue to be said. He practised the fielding side of cricket, and I need scarcely add that he became one of the finest cover-points the game has ever known. And if there is one thing more necessary than another to be a successful cover-point, it is quickness on the feet.

Coker was a sticker, a determined fellow; firm as a rock, not to say obstinate as a mule! But even Coker could never have thought of trying to force the catch of a window with the handle of a pocket-knife!

Fortunately, there was another blade! Coker opened it.

This was the smaller blade, and it entered the narrow space between the sashes much more easily than the larger blade with which Coker had started operations. Coker might really have thought of that at the start, had it been Coker's way to think of anything.

However, he got going again.

The blade slid into the appointed place. This time Coker was much more careful. He could not afford another accident!

Slowly, but surely, he worked the blade against the catch.

Simple as that catch was, it seemed to have a will of its own, and did not snap back in the easy way Coker had anticipated.

He realised, indeed, that the profession of a burglar was by no means the easy business he had carelessly supposed.

Coker had to worry that catch back. He had to persuade it. He had to treat it with tender care.

Twice he nearly got it going, and it calmly snapped back into place just when Coker thought that it was all clear.

Coker breathed hard. He was not a patient fellow, and that catch seemed bent on annoying him.

And he did not want to linger there. Even Coker realised that, justified as his proceedings were, they were open to misunderstanding, if any eye had spotted him.

But at long last there was a faint snap inside! The catch had jumped back, under steady pressure, and the window was no longer fastened.

"Oh, good!" breathed Coker.

He dropped the knife into his pocket, and proceeded to raise the lower sash. This was another of those proceedings that are easy to plan and not so easy to carry out. With nothing to grip,

Coker found difficulty in raising that sash.

But he got it up at last. With numbed and aching fingers, and a pain in his thumb, he got it up, and the way was open.

Breathing hard Coker put a long leg in at the window and felt for the floor inside.

A moment later and he was standing in Prout's study.

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Coker.

He had intended to bring a bag to carry off the plunder. He had not forgotten the pocket-knife, which was in his pocket all the time. But he had forgotten the bag, which, naturally, wasn't!

Bagless Coker paused.

He could not carry a stack of cakes, tarts, cream-puffs, pots of jam and preserves and so on, in his arms or his pockets! He did not like the idea of going back for a bag.

"Oh blow!" said Coker.

He would have to find something in Prout's study for the purpose, even if he had to borrow Prout's Master of Arts gown, to wrap up the plunder in that!

That point settled, Coker stepped towards the study table to pack up the plunder.

It was dark in the study—the glimmer of starlight showed up the window, but hardly penetrated into the room. But, dark as it was, Coker could discern that that mountain of tuck no longer adorned Prout's table.

What had the old donkey done with it?

It was there—it must be there! Coker, with great astuteness, had contrived to visit that study just before bed-time for the Fifth, to ask Prout about something in Cicero. Thus he had ascertained that the mountain of tuck was still there at bed-time.

But between Coker's bed-time and Prout's bed-time something had happened to that tuck!

The fact was that by that time Prout had decided what to do with the confiscated goods, spurred on, perhaps, by Billy Bunter's attempt to get hold of the same.

Before he went to bed Prout had called up Trotter, the House page, and given him directions to carry that pile of confiscated tuck to the matron's room.

Trotter had done so.

In these circumstances it was not really surprising that it failed to meet Coker's eye, as he scanned Prout's table in search of it.

But Coker was surprised.

He went so far as to grope over the table to make sure. He discovered that there was an inkpot there by knocking it over with his groping hand. There was rather a crash as the inkpot rolled off the table and landed on the floor.

"Well, my hat!" said Coker blankly.

Coker's powerful brain was not rapid on the uptake. In the course of time no doubt it would have occurred to him that the tuck was no longer in the study. But Coker's intellect required time to work in.

For the moment he just stared at the empty table, wondering where that old ass, Prout, had put the stuff, and whether he could venture to turn on a light to look for it.

And as he stood gazing the study door suddenly opened!

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

And Prout!

MR. PROUT, as already stated, was sleepless that night.

Billy Bunter's charge that afternoon had upset him.

Coker's sprawling over him after he was down, had upset him still more. Ever since that affair Prout had been in a breathless, wheezy, upset, nervy state.

He had gone to bed at his usual early hour. But it was in vain that he wooed slumber.

Aches and pains lingered in his portly person. Aches and pains and insomnia annoyed him, and a state of annoyance, of course, is a certain preventive of sleep. Slumber will not come to an angry man. The mind has to be calm and composed.

It was in vain that Prout counted thousands of imaginary sheep jumping over a stile. In vain he ran over yards and yards of Latin verse that he knew by heart. He was in such a wakeful state that he could hardly have slept had he been listening to one of the Head's speeches in Hall!

He turned out at last!

Anything was better than turning wearily from side to side, wooing the sleep that would not come. He donned slippers and dressing-gown, and set his nightcap straight. Prout wore a nightcap, because the natural thatch had receded from the crown of his head, leaving it pervious to draughts. Prout would not have liked anybody to see him in that nightcap. But nobody was likely to see him after half-past eleven at night. He had no doubt that he was the only person awake in all the spacious and thickly populated buildings of Greyfriars School.

He went quietly down the stairs; he did not want to awaken anyone. Prout was a considerate gentleman.

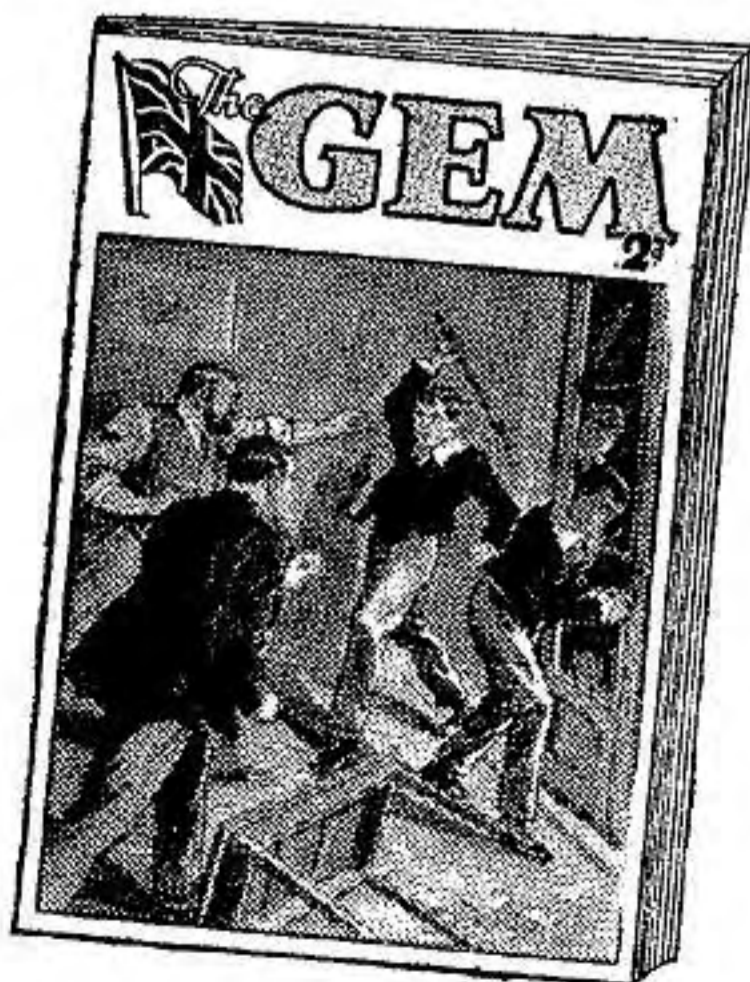
In his study he could rake together the embers of the fire, and read himself sleepy! He had several newspapers there, and by reading all the leading articles, one after the other, surely he could count on producing the desired result.

If that failed, he had papers to correct for his Form. Latin papers might make him drowsy. They often had that effect on the Fifth.

With sweeping dressing-gown, silent in his slippers, Mr. Prout descended

A Disgrace to St. Jim's!

When Jerrold Lumley-Lumley, a boy from New York, came to St. Jim's, he came with the intention of having a "good time." But when his "good time" includes shady habits that threaten to bring disgrace on St. Jim's, Tom Merry & Co. promptly show him just where he gets off! No MAGNET reader can afford to miss this great school story, which appears in our companion paper.



**THE
GEM**

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As Mr. Prout landed on his podgy knees, gasping, Coker spun away from the table and leaped for the open window. He went through it, as if from a diving-board! "Burglars!" gasped Prout, struggling to his feet.

the stairs and rustled into Masters' Passage.

He had almost reached his study when he heard a sound from it. It was a sharp, sudden thud, such as might have been made by an inkpot falling from a table.

Prout gave a start.

In other circumstances, the fall of an inkpot from a study table would not have been startling, or even surprising. It only had to be knocked over the edge by some accidental shove. Then the law of gravitation, so ably demonstrated by Sir Isaac Newton, did the rest!

But in the middle of the night it was both surprising and startling. For the law of gravitation, powerful, indeed resistless, as it is, could not get going without the inkpot being knocked off the table in the first place. That implied human agency.

Somebody was in the study!

"Good gracious!" gasped Prout.

His study door was locked! He knew that, for he always locked it at night, except when he forgot to do so. This time he had not forgotten, for he had the key with him. As the door was locked, nobody from within the school could have got into the study, even if anyone could have been imagined to want to do so. Whoever was there had come from without!

That was clear to Prout!

Back into his mind flashed the recollection of several burglaries in the neighbourhood. There had been one at Popper Court—one at Hogben Grange—one at some shop or other in Courtfield.

"Burglars!" breathed Prout.

His plump heart beat faster.

On tiptoe he crept on to the study door and listened. There was no further sound from within.

Softly, silently Prout inserted the key into the lock.

Prout was no coward.

If there was a burglar in his study Prout was prepared to catch him in the act, and tackle him, as boldly as he had tackled the festive grizzly bear in the Rocky Mountains in his younger days—rather a long time ago.

But he did not want to give an alarm without cause.

The inkpot had been knocked off the table! That was certain! But it might be the cat!

Mrs. Kobbler's cat had an irritating way of penetrating to the studies, and had sometimes been discovered, in the morning, curled up in a Form-master's armchair.

Prout naturally wanted to be sure that it was a burglar before he roared for help and rallied Greyfriars to the rescue.

It would be rather too absurd, to get a crowd on the scene, to discover that it was only, after all, the House-dame's cat!

It might be a cat! It might be a burglar! It might, indeed, be a cat-burglar! Prout had to know!

Silently, with infinite caution, Prout turned back the key in the lock. Still there was no sound from within.

Then he opened the door—suddenly! Prout's intention was to stride in swiftly, and switch on the light, which was handy to the door.

In this, however, Prout had reckoned without his voluminous dressing-gown. Throwing open the door, striding in, and reaching for the switch, all in the same rapid movement, Prout rather unfortunately tangled his legs in the sweeping folds of that flowing gown—and stumbled.

"Oooogh!" gasped Prout, as he went.

"Oooogh!" came a startled gasp from a shadowy figure standing by the table—like an echo.

Coker was transfixed for a second.

The sudden opening of the study door fairly petrified him.

Dark as it was in the study, he saw the stout figure, in voluminous gown, that stumbled in, and landed on a pair of podgy knees, gasping. He knew it was Prout, of course, though he did not know what on earth could have brought Prout down to his study at that hour of the night. In sheer horror he stared at Prout.

"Urrrghh!" repeated Prout breathlessly, as he struggled to rise, caught his foot again, and sat heavily.

Horace Coker spun away from the table. He leaped for the open window.

Coker was far from quick as a thinker. But even Coker understood what it meant if he was discovered in a master's study at nearly midnight, having forced the catch of the window.

It was all very well for Coker to believe, as he certainly did, that his proceedings were fully justified. It was all very well to consider that he had only come there for what was his own! That was all very well; but it would not help a fellow brought up before the Head charged with having burgled a master's study!

That meant the sack!

Only too well Coker knew that the headmaster would not see eye to eye with him in this matter.

Perhaps Coker had not quite realised, earlier, how very much his justifiable actions might be misunderstood in the event of discovery. He realised it now in a flash!

And he went through the open window as if from a diving-board.

"Burglars!" gasped Prout, struggling with his dressing-gown.

Coker heard him as he nose-dived from the window.

Prout struggled up.

He rushed to the window, taking care, this time, to gather his ample skirts out of the way.

There was, of course, no doubt now! It was not a cat! Cats could not open windows! And Prout had had a glimpse of the diving figure as it went.

That shadowy figure, plunging headlong from the window, meant one thing, and one thing only—burglars!

His head projected from the window, Prout stared into the dim starlight. He had a second's glimpse of a dark, running figure, that whisked and vanished round a corner of the building.

It was Coker, heading for the lobby door round the corner. Prout, of course, did not know that. To his eyes it was the escaping burglar!

"Burglars!" gasped Prout. "Good gracious! Upon my word! Burglars!"

Had Prout been as young as he had been, in the dear, dead days beyond recall, he would have hopped out of that window and rushed in pursuit.

But Prout was no longer young! Neither was he slim! Negotiating that window was rather beyond Prout.

Nevertheless, he was not going to let that scoundrel escape if he could help it. How long the villain had been at work Prout did not know—as likely as not he had been through Prout's desk and bagged his valuables. Letting him escape with his plunder, if any, was hardly to be thought of. He had been interrupted, but Prout's banknotes might be in his pockets, all the same!

Prout whirled round from the window and rushed out of the study. There was a chance, at least, of cutting off the desperado's escape, if he got out into the quad, by the nearest door, swiftly enough.

Prout feared no foe; all he wanted was to get hold of the dastard.

With his dressing-gown streaming behind him, Prout rushed like a whirlwind down Masters' Passage.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Beastly for Bunter!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

"Sit on him, Bunter!"

"Yes, but I say—"

"Get off, you fat fool!" came

Herbert Vernon-Smith's voice, thick with fury, from under the tangle of bedclothes on the Bounder's bed.

Bob Cherry grinned and lifted his pillow. The flickering light of three or four candles gleamed on Smithy's infuriated face.

"Stick it, Smithy!" said Bob cheerily. "You get the pillow again if you shift."

"Give him a few, anyhow!" growled Johnny Bull.

The Bounder's eyes blazed.

"You meddlin' rotters! By gum, I'll make you sit up for this! Bunter, you fat fool, get off!"

The Bounder heaved again fiercely. Bunter rocked. Down came Bob Cherry's pillow, swiping. Johnny Bull's bolster followed. The Bounder yelled with rage, as he got the pillow and the bolster.

"That's the way to bring the beaks here if you want them!" grinned Frank Nugent. "Do you want Smedley here, old bean?"

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"Oh, you rotters!" panted the Bounder.

He turned his eyes on Tom Redwing, whose face was cold and set. There was sheer evil in the Bounder's look.

"You rotter, Redwing—" he hissed.

"Oh, cut it out!" snapped Tom contemptuously. "You're not going out—that's that! And if you make much more row, you'll have the Creeper and Crawler up here! Serve you right if you do!"

"He can't be on the prow to-night, or he would be up here already!" remarked Peter Todd.

The Removites little guessed that the Creeper and Crawler was very much on the prow that wild night! Had Mr. Smedley still been on the watch on the landing, he must have heard the row in the Remove dormitory. But Smedley was gone on Coker's track in the dark. Smedley was far enough away now.

"I say, you fellows!" squeaked Bunter. "I don't mind sitting on Smithy, but I say, I've got something on, you know."

"I can see you have, you fat villain," said Harry Wharton. "You've got your clobber on. What do you mean by it?"

The fact that Billy Bunter was up and dressed rather excited the curiosity of the Removites. They did not suppose that he had planned to go "out on

A USEFUL LEATHER POCKET WALLET

goes to W. Smith, of 20, Queen Street, Camden Town, N.W.1, who submitted the following GREYFRIARS LIMERICK:

The last lesson was dull English
prose.
Billy Bunter indulged in a doze.
He snored loudly and clear,
Not a word did he hear,
Till Quelch told him to reach for
his toes!

Set to work now, chum, and win
one of these useful prizes—you'll
be more than pleased with it!

the tiles" like Smithy. But it was obvious that the fat and fatuous Owl had been up to something.

"The fact is, I was going down!" explained Bunter. "With all that tuck parked in Prout's study, you know—"

"Oh, my hat! Was that it?" exclaimed Peter Todd.

"Yes, old chap! I came back for you! I started to go down alone, but I thought I'd come back for you, Toddy, because—because I didn't want to leave you out of it, you being a pal. I wasn't scared by the dark, or anything like that, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It was jolly dark in the passage, and I thought I saw a shadow or something on the landing, but I never thought about burglars or anything of that sort. Besides, I'm not afraid of burglars! I came back, because I wouldn't leave you out of a good thing, 'Toddy.'"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! Then I ran into that beast Smithy, you know! Look here, I'm not going to sit on him all night! You can't expect it."

"That's for Smithy to say!" said Harry Wharton, laughing. "You're going to sit on him till he makes up his mind to go to bed."

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Will you get off?" hissed the Bounder, choking with rage.

He gave another fierce heave; and the pillow and the bolster both came into action together at once. But the heave dislodged Bunter, and he rocked over and landed on the floor with a loud howl.

"Ow!"

The Bounder sprang up. But before he could get clear half a dozen pairs of hands were on him and he was jammed back on the bed.

He struggled fiercely, but in vain. All the evil and bitterness in Vernon-Smith's nature was roused now. He hit out savagely on all sides. But he was pinned down easily enough.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Oh, shut up, Bunter!"

"Are you coming down with me, Toddy?"

"No, fathead!"

"Funk! Will you come, Mauly?"

"Fathead!"

"Beast! I say, Skinner, you come, old chap! I tell you there's piles of tuck—stacks—all on Prout's table—"

"I don't think!" grinned Skinner.

"What about you, Bob?"

"Nothing about me, fatty."

"Well, of all the rotten funks!" said Billy Bunter in deep disgust. "It seems that I'm the only fellow in the Remove with pluck enough to go down at night. I say, you fellows, who'll come? Will you, Inky?"

"The answer is in the esteemed negative!" grinned Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Beast!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, hold him!" grinned Bob Cherry, as the infuriated Bounder made another desperate effort to get loose.

Unheeding the tussle going on, Billy Bunter rolled to the door. He opened it and blinked out into the dark passage.

Bunter did not like dark passages at night.

Already he had started once, and turned back, scared by the silence and the darkness, in the hope of getting Toddy or some other fellow to accompany him in his raid on Prout's study.

But there were, so to speak, no takers! Bunter had to go it alone or give up the whole thing.

He hesitated. But the thought of the tuck was irresistible. After all, where was the danger? Silence was unpleasant, but it couldn't hurt a fellow. Shadows were disagreeable, but they didn't bite! And the fact that a lot of fellows were now awake made it seem less lonely and ghostly. Bunter determined to try it on.

He rolled out of the Remove dormitory at last and trod down the passage to the landing. His fat heart beat unpleasantly as he peered in shadowy gloom and groped to the stairs.

A stair creaked under his tread and his heart jumped. He stopped, his fat courage almost failing.

But he screwed it up to the sticking point again! Peering on all sides through his big spectacles, the Owl of the Remove trod on.

It was not till he reached Masters' Passage that it suddenly occurred to Bunter that beaks sometimes, if not always, locked their study doors at night. If he found Prout's door locked—

Bunter was not the fellow to think of getting out of the House at night and burgling a window! He lacked the nerve of Horace Coker; and was not, perhaps, so complete an ass, though he ran him very close in that respect. If Prout's door was locked, Bunter's game was up.

But he gasped with relief as he drew

nigh that door. Obviously it was not locked, for it stood wide open!

"Oh, good!" breathed Bunter.

He was about to roll on again when there was a sound of footsteps in the study.

"Oh lor'!" gasped Bunter.

He realised then why the study door was open! Prout must have come down for something!

But he had no time for thinking! As he stood in dismay a portly figure in dressing-gown, slippers, and nightcap came whisking out of the open doorway and rushed down the passage right towards Bunter.

Bunter gave one squeak, and fled.

He ran for the stairs as if for his life.

"What—what—who—?" He heard Prout's startled boom behind him. "What—who—another of them—in the House—goodness gracious—"

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

Prout had heard him! That was not surprising, as Bunter was pounding along for the staircase like an escaped elephant! It would have been rather surprising if Prout hadn't.

"Stop!" roared Prout.

Bunter was not likely to stop!

He flew!

After him flew Prout!

Prout's intention had been to cut out swiftly into the quad in the hope of yet snaffling the scoundrel who had escaped by the study window. But hearing another of the gang inside the House, of course, changed Prout's plans on the spot.

He might or might not have caught the villain in the quad. But he could most certainly catch the villain in the House—he was close behind him, and could hear his scared, terrified panting as he ran! This villain, at all events, was not going to escape Prout.

The villain flew up the stairs. Prout flew after him. Across a dark landing went the villain—after him went Prout, gaining. His outstretched hand touched the villain's shoulder on the landing.

But that touch seemed to electrify the villain into new efforts. Bunter fairly skimmed up the dormitory passage.

Prout skimmed after him.

The door of the Remove dormitory was open. From within came a sound of scuffling and a gasping voice. Fellows there were still arguing with the Bounder. Prout would have been surprised at any other time to see a junior dormitory door open at that hour of the night and a glimmer of candlelight proceeding therefrom. Now he was only thinking of his quarry. Bunter heading for home, just reached the doorway as Prout reached Bunter. Prout's grasp was on him.

"Yaroooh!" roared Bunter

"What the thump—" came a startled voice within.

Bunter wrenched. Prout grasped. They rolled into the dormitory together under the astonished stare of the whole Remove.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Smedley Sees It All!

MR. SMEDLEY hardly knew what happened.

Neither, for that matter, did Coker of the Fifth.

Smedley, standing in the black shadow of the elm at a little distance from the lobby door, was looking across the quad in the direction of the old Cloisters, by way of which he suspected that the breaker of bounds had gone.

Looking in one direction, naturally he could not see in the other.

Totally unaware of Coker's weird performances that eventful night, equally unaware that Prout had come down and nearly caught him, Smedley was quite unprepared for a charge in the back.

But that was what happened.

A sudden sound was audible behind him—the sound of desperately running feet. Coker, naturally, was losing no time.

Coker rushed past the elm, to get back to the lobby door. He had not the remotest idea that a man was standing there, deep in shadow. How could Coker have? Smedley had no time to turn.

Something that might have been a battering-ram, or might have been a cannon-ball, hit him in the back.

As a matter of fact, it was neither! It was Horace Coker of the Fifth Form!

Coker was a big fellow, a hefty fellow, a heavy fellow. He was going at full speed. Smedley was totally unprepared for the shock—and it was a terrific shock.

He crashed.

It seemed to Smedley at the moment as if the ancient walls of Greyfriars were tumbling down on him.

A frightful crash in the back hurled him down on his face, where he hit the quadrangle with his features, hard.

Coker, as surprised as Smedley, pitched over him. His knees landed in the small of Smedley's back, thudding.

"What the thump—" panted Coker dazedly.

He had run into something! He knew that! He had fallen on it ~~after~~ running into it! He realised, dimly, that it was a human form!

In other circumstances Coker would doubtless have stopped to render first-aid, or, at least, to inquire whether his

(Continued on next page.)

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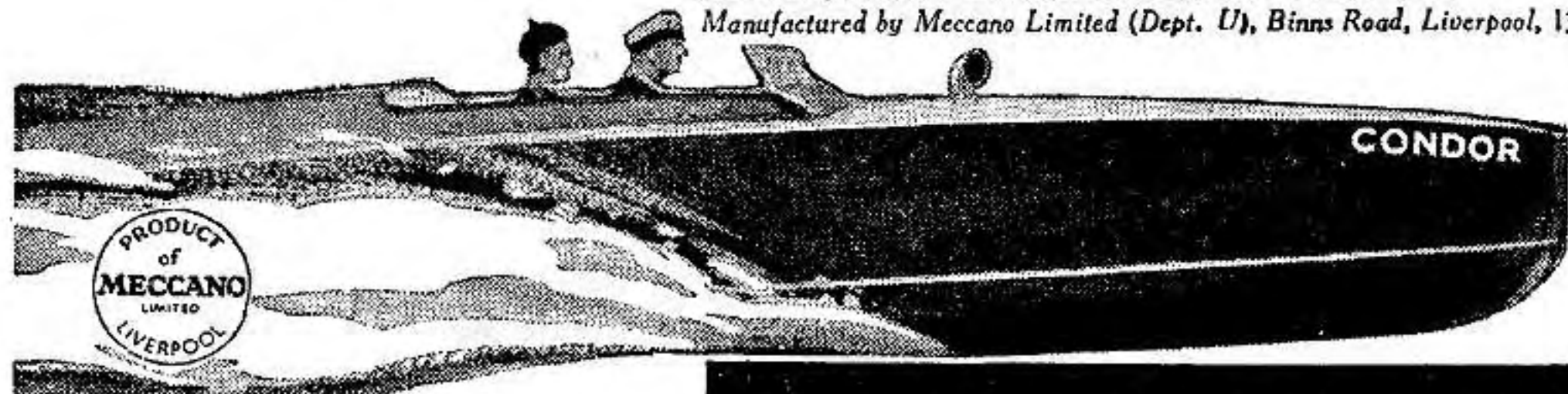
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victim was hurt. Now he did neither. He had no time to spare. Neither did he want to be seen outside the House at that hour of the night by the man he had knocked over, or anybody else. Who the man was, what he was doing there, Coker did not know—or care, for that matter.

Leaving him for dead, as it were, Coker scrambled up and tore on.

A moment more, and he was at the door of the Sixth Form lobby, frantically wrenching at the handle of the door.

To his horror, it did not open. He wrenched! He dragged! He pushed! He tugged! He wrestled! The putrid thing was jammed somehow! Then he realised that it was locked! And no sign of the key!

A gurgling gasp from behind him made Coker look round.

In the thick dimness it was difficult to see anything; but Coker made out a prone form, striving to raise itself on its hands and knees, and gurgling horribly as it did so.

It was the unknown man he had floored!

A beak—he could discern that much! Not Prout—some other beak; but any beak was a danger to a fellow who was out of his House at an hour approaching midnight. The wretched man, gurgling for wind, was struggling up. Coker could not get in; neither could he afford to wait there till the gurgling one got up and recognised him. Instant flight was indicated—and Coker fled.

He dashed away into the dim May night, and horrible gurgles and gasps died away behind him.

How he was to get into the House again was a problem which Coker, for the present, had to leave unsolved. The pressing need was to escape being discovered out of the House! Horace Coker did fifty yards at about 70 m.p.h. and vanished under shadowy trees.

Mr. Smedley dragged himself up. He was hurt! His back felt as if a sledgehammer had hit him there! Prout's experience with Coker in the afternoon was a mere nothing compared with Smedley's experience of him at night. He really wondered, for some agonised moments, whether his spine had snapped.

Fortunately it hadn't! He leaned on the elm, gasping. He was horribly winded—but his breath came back in gulps and gasps.

Faintly from afar echoed back the fleeing footsteps of the fugitive. Mr. Smedley heard them die away, though he was in no state to follow.

But he knew that the desperate runner had not gone near the House. He had run far from the House.

Mr. Smedley, as he recovered a little, groped in his pocket for the key of the lobby door.

Who had knocked him down from behind in the dark? Obviously, to Mr. Smedley, the Bouncer!

It seemed clear enough. Nobody else, so far as Smedley knew, was out of the House. Indeed, he was quite certain that nobody was out of the House except the fellow he had tracked in the dark.

But the breaker of bounds had not, as he had supposed, cleared off. Apparently he had taken the alarm! He had charged Smedley over and rushed back to the lobby door!

Smedley saw it all! Knowing that he was there, knowing that he was watching, Vernon-Smith had committed the supreme crime of an attack on a master to get back into the House undiscovered!

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And he would have succeeded, but for Smedley's precaution in locking the lobby door and taking out the key!

Damaged as he was, breathless as he was, the Creeper and Crawler was conspicuous of a bitter satisfaction! Not only breaking bounds at night, but an attack on the master who was pursuing him! The scapegrace of the school was not only done for now, but doubly done for.

Gasping, aching, but triumphant, Mr. Smedley moved back to the lobby door, inserted the key, and let himself in.

Carefully he closed and locked the door after him. Vernon-Smith—he was still in the fixed belief that it was Vernon-Smith—was locked out of the House. He had not gone on that reckless excursion in the car with a Highcliffe fellow, as he had planned. But he was out of the House at nearly midnight, and he had attacked a master in a desperate attempt to get in again. And that desperate act showed that he had no other way in.

He would not have taken such a risk had there been an unfastened window available. And the fact that he had run across the quad to the trees by the school wall showed that he had no hope of getting in, but was thinking only of escaping recognition! It was all clear to Mr. Smedley—he saw it all!

He dabbed his nose with his handkerchief. That feature had hit the quadrangle hard, and the claret was tapped.

It hurt! But Smedley did not mind! It was one more count in the indictment against Vernon-Smith! Not with impunity could a fellow tap the claret of a beak's beak!

Mr. Smedley passed out of the lobby into the Sixth Form passage. He stopped at Wingate's door, tapped, and opened the door.

"Wingate!" The captain of Greyfriars, suddenly awakened, sat up in bed.

"Hallo! What—?" came Wingate's surprised and sleepy voice.

"It is I—Mr. Smedley."

"Oh! Ah! What—?"

The Sixth Former blinked, sitting up in bed, as Mr. Smedley switched on his light.

He stared at the Remove beak. Smedley was rather dusty and untidy, very breathless, and his nose was trickling crimson. Really, he looked rather as if he had just returned from a late visit to the Cross Keys! George Wingate could only stare.

"I am sorry to disturb you, Wingate, but you are needed, as a prefect! A boy of my Form—Vernon-Smith—is out of bounds—"

"You don't say so, sir!"

"I do, Wingate, and he has had the audacity to attack me and knock me over in an attempt to escape discovery and get back into the House."

"Phew!" breathed Wingate.

"Will you get up at once, Wingate, and call another prefect! The young rascal is still in the quadrangle, and he must be found and brought in at once! I leave that matter in your hands, Wingate—I am now going to his dormitory."

"Very well, sir!"

Wingate jumped out of bed.

Mr. Smedley hurried away. Smithy might have a confederate in the Remove to let him in; and if he could get back to the dormitory he would, of course, pretend that he had never left it. The Creeper and Crawler was not going to give him a chance of that! If he got back, he was going to find his Form-master there! Mr. Smedley went up the stairs two at a time, and almost ran along the passage to the door of the Remove dormitory.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

Not Out!

HARRY WHARTON & CO, stared blankly.

They had been holding the Bouncer, but they released him as Prout and Bunter rolled in at the door. And the Bouncer stared, too—and so did every other fellow in the Remove dormitory. In the excitement going on in that dormitory Billy Bunter had slipped away almost unnoticed. But his return was not unnoticed. It brought down the house!

"What the dooce—"

"Bunter—"

"Prout—"

"Oh great pip!"

"The great-pipfulness is terrific."

There was only a dim glimmer from the candle-ends alight in the long, lofty room. Prout did not see for the moment what sort of a burglar it was that he had captured. Stumbling over with Bunter in the doorway, he rolled in with him, fiercely grasping, while the hapless Owl of the Remove yelled and struggled frantically.

"I say, you fellows— Yaroooh!" roared Bunter. "I say—"

"Scoundrel! I've got you!" panted Prout. "Boys, help here! I have caught this scoundrel; help me to secure him!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Yarooop! Leggo!" shrieked Bunter.

"Oh lor'! Oh crikey! Owl!"

"Why, what—what—?" Prout blinked at the fat Owl. Even in the dim, uncertain light he could see who and what it was.

He released Bunter quite suddenly.

He staggered up.

Bunter sat and roared.

"What—what—what—?" stuttered

Prout.

He gazed at Bunter like a man in a dream. Not for a moment had he doubted that he was pursuing a burglar—the confederate of the villain who had escaped from his study window.

He had to doubt it now. Only too plainly his capture was not a burglar; it was Billy Bunter, the fat ornament of the Remove.

"Bub-Bub-Bub—" stuttered Prout.

"Bub-Bub-Bub-Bunter!"

"Yaroooh! Keep off! It wasn't me!" howled Bunter. "I wasn't going to your study! I wasn't after Coker's tuck! I never knew it was there! I say, you fellows, keep him off!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Prout stepped to the switch beside the doorway and jerked it on. The dormitory was flooded with light.

In that bright illumination he gazed at Bunter again; but the clear light only demonstrated beyond doubt that it really was Billy Bunter, and no burglar.

"Well, Bunter's done it now, and no mistake!" murmured Bob Cherry.

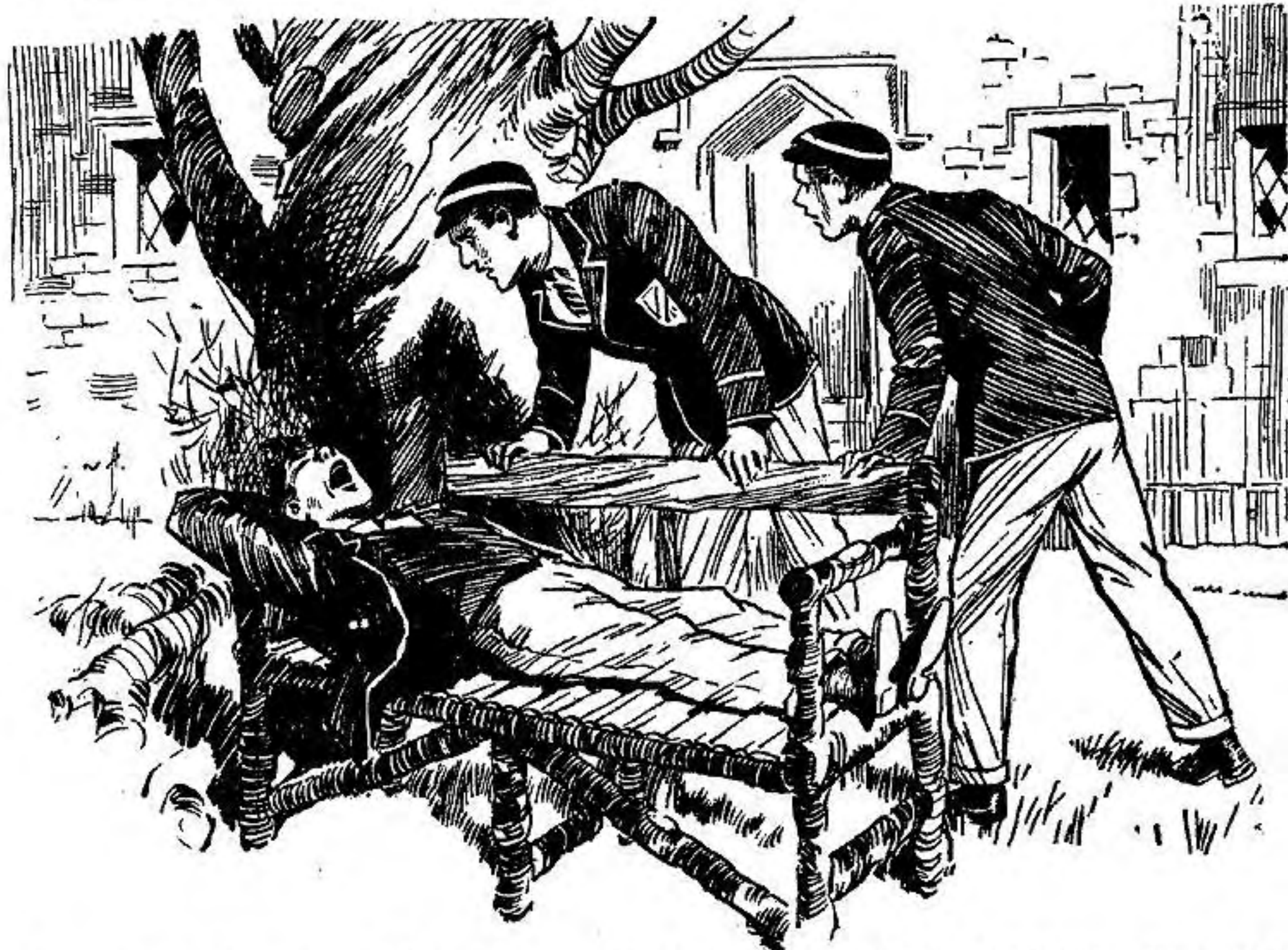
"The donefulness is terrific."

Bunter was only too woefully aware of that. He had never dreamed that Prout would be up at that hour of the night. How could he possibly have expected to find Prout in his study when he got there?

But he had! He had found Prout—and Prout had found him!

Prout gazed at him. He had supposed that the "burglar" had fled upstairs, because his escape was cut off below. Now he realised that the burglar had been making for that dormitory because he belonged there—like a homing pigeon. And that fat burglar had only been going to burgle Coker's confiscated tuck!

"You—you—you young rascal!" gasped Prout. "You have caused me to



The sound of a deep snore guided Potter and Greene to a bench under the elms, where they found Coker. They gazed at the sleeping beauty. "Let's wake him up!" said Potter. "It's the sack for him if they find he's been out all night!"

waste time and allow the burglar to escape! You have——"

"Ow! Keep off!"

"Going out now, Smithy?" whispered Bob Cherry. And his friends chuckled. The Bounder, breathless, scowled. But probably the appearance of a beak on the scene made him glad that he had not left the dormitory, after all.

And Prout was not the only beak abroad that wild night. Hurried footsteps came running up the passage; a tall figure appeared in the doorway. It was Smedley's.

"My hat! It's raining beaks to-night!" ejaculated Bob.

"The beakfulness is preposterous."

Mr. Smedley, standing in the doorway, stared in.

He was astonished to find the light on and the juniors all out of bed. His arrival was too sudden for the Removites to hunt cover.

Only the Bounder, in fact, was on a bed at all; all the other fellows were on their feet.

But the crowd of fellows round Smithy's bed hid him for the moment from Smedley's sight. And Smithy, as he glimpsed the tall figure through the crowd of fellows, promptly drew his blankets over him.

He was the only fellow in bed—the only fellow, therefore, on whom the vials of wrath could not justly fall.

Mr. Prout stared round at Smedley. Smedley stared at him. What Prout was doing there was a mystery to him.

"What——" he began.

"Oh, you are awake, sir!" boomed Prout. "You are up! I should have called you, sir! Only this evening, sir, I informed you that I refuse—I absolutely refuse—to allow boys of your

Form to come pilfering—I say pilfering, sir—in my study! I repeat that statement, sir! I repeat it with all the emphasis at my command!"

"Wha-a-at——"

"This boy, sir!" Prout pointed a fat forefinger at the squirming Owl. "This—this Bunter, sir, came down to my study in the small hours, sir— And I repeat, sir——"

"Oh crikey!"

"I repeat that I will not tolerate it, sir! I beg to inform you, Mr. Smedley, that there has been a burglary in my study to-night, and that I was about to pursue the scoundrel who escaped from my study window, when this boy—this wretched boy—appeared, and in the dark, taking him for a confederate of the marauder, sir, I pursued him——"

"Oh crumbs!" gurgled Bob Cherry.

"And the burglar, sir, has undoubtedly escaped!" boomed Prout. "This is entirely due to the outrageous conduct of this boy of your Form, sir!"

"A—a burglar——"

"A burglar, sir, whom I found in my study!" boomed Prout. "He jumped from the window and fled, sir! I saw him vanish round the corner towards the Sixth Form lobby, sir, and——" Prout gasped for breath. "I should have gone out and captured him in the quadrangle, sir, but for this—this—this—this Bunter——"

Mr. Smedley stared at him blankly.

He had been round the corner by the Sixth Form lobby, but he was unaware of any burglar.

"Calm yourself, Mr. Prout," said the Remove-master. "I have not been to bed, and I have certainly seen and heard nothing of a burglar. I think you must be mistaken——"

"Mistaken, sir!" boomed Prout. "I saw him, sir, with my own eyes! With my own eyes, sir!" repeated Prout, as if to make it absolutely clear that he did not claim to have seen the burglar with anyone else's.

"Very well, sir—very well!" said Mr. Smedley. Really he was not interested in Prout's burglar. "Bunter will certainly be punished; I shall cane him severely in the morning——"

"Oh crikey!"

"If there is, as you suppose, a burglar on the premises, he may be found, as I have sent out the prefects to look for a boy in this Form who is now out of bounds," said Mr. Smedley.

The Removites stared.

That statement made them stare.

"Wharton!" Mr. Smedley's hard eyes turned on the captain of the Remove. "Why are you all out of bed? Were you aware that Vernon-Smith had left the House?"

"Vernon-Smith I-left the House!" stammered Wharton.

"I trust, Wharton, that you are no party to this!" said Mr. Smedley grimly.

"I, sir?" gasped Wharton.

"As you are up and awake at this hour, Wharton, you cannot fail to be aware that Vernon-Smith is absent——"

"A-absent, sir!" stuttered the captain of the Remove. "Oh, no, I certainly was not aware of that, sir!"

"Smithy's not absent, sir!" said Tom Redwing.

"What? How dare you make such a statement, Redwing!" exclaimed Mr. Smedley angrily. "Vernon-Smith is out of the House at the present moment, as you are well aware, and the prefects

are searching for him in the quad-rangle."

"Oh scissors!" gasped Bob Cherry. "He will be found and taken before the Head!" said Mr. Smedley. "He will not return to this dormitory to-night; he will be locked in the punishment-room till morning!"

"B-b-but, sir—" stammered Redwing.

"Silence! All of you go back to bed at once," said Mr. Smedley sternly. "Every boy out of bed will take a hundred lines."

The juniors looked at one another. Many of them were grinning. The Creeper and Crawler, for some reason they could not even begin to guess, supposed that Smithy was out of the House. Certainly he would have been but for Redwing. But he certainly was not! He was in bed; the only fellow in the Remove who was in bed.

"That doesn't apply to me, I suppose, sir!" came a meek voice from the Bounder's bed. "I'm not out of bed, sir."

Mr. Smedley started convulsively. As the crowd of fellows, obedient to his command, moved back to their own beds, the Bounder was revealed.

He was lifting his head from his pillow and blinking at his Form-master like a fellow recently awakened!

Smedley gazed at him. The ghost of Herbert Vernon-Smith in the Bounder's bed at that moment could hardly have startled him more.

He had—or believed that he had—followed the scapegrace of the school out of the House! The prefects were hunting for him in the quad at that very moment! And here he was—in bed! Smedley's eyes almost bulged out of his head.

"Vernon-Smith!" he gasped. "Yes, sir!" yawned the Bounder. "Here, sir! As I'm not out of bed, I suppose I'm not to take the lines, sir?"

There was a suppressed gurgle among the Removites! The expression on Smedley's face was, as Skinner remarked afterwards, worth a guinea a box!

He made a stride towards the Bounder.

"Vernon-Smith! How did you get back into the House? When—" Smedley broke off. He knew that the fellow who had barged him over in the quad had had no time to get back into the House, get undressed, and get to bed.

"I haven't been out of the House, sir," answered Smithy, with an air of mild surprise. "We're not allowed out of the House, sir, after lights out."

"Smithy hasn't been out, sir," said Wharton. "Nobody's been out of the dormitory except Bunter."

The Creeper and Crawler gasped. He had tracked somebody in the dark—not, evidently, Vernon-Smith, for Vernon-Smith was there! All the Remove were there! Smithy was not even out of bed—the only fellow in the Remove who wasn't! Smedley felt as if his brain was spinning round.

Mr. Prout, snorting, quitted the dormitory. He still nourished a faint hope of catching the burglar, and he went to join the prefects who were rooting about the quad. Smedley did not heed him—did not even see him go. He stood rooted, staring at the innocent Bounder!

The juniors turned into bed again. All eyes were fixed on the amazed, exasperated face of the Creeper and Crawler.

He looked as if his gaze would devour

Vernon-Smith! But there was nothing to be done! The Bounder had not been out—Smedley knew now that he had not! Somebody was out—not a Remove man, that was clear! Who it was did not matter to Smedley as it was not Vernon-Smith!

He drew a deep, deep breath, and without another word walked to the door. The light was turned out, the door slammed, and Smedley was gone. He was gone—with feelings that could not have been expressed in words!

There was a low laugh from the Bounder's bed.

"Hard luck on Smedley, you men!" drawled Smithy. "But what on earth made him imagine that I was out of the House?"

"Goodness knows!" said Harry Wharton.

"It's clear that he's been on the watch," said Redwing. "You would have run right into him, Smithy."

"That's no excuse for your cheeky meddlin'."

"You silly ass!"

"You cheeky fool!"

"Oh, shut up, Smithy!" growled Bob Cherry in disgust. "Reddy's an ass to stop you from getting sacked! Get out now, if you like, and nobody will stop you!"

The Bounder made no answer to that. He was not likely to get out in the present circumstances. The Remove settled down to sleep again, after the excitement of the night. The last to sleep—for once—was Billy Bunter. Bunter was worried. Not only had he lost all chance of Coker's tuck—gone from his gaze like a beautiful dream—but he was booked for a whopping in the morning! It was quite a long time before Billy Bunter's snore awoke the echoes of the Remove dormitory.

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

Parted Pals!

POTTER and Greene, of the Fifth, had the surprise of their lives when the rising-bell clanged out in the bright May morning.

They had slept peacefully, forgetful of Horace Coker and all his works! They had no doubt that Coker had slept also—till they saw his empty bed in the Fifth Form dorm.

They gazed at that bed.

"Coker!" gasped Potter.

"G-gone!" stammered Greene.

"Hallo, Coker's up early!" yawned Blundell, the captain of the Fifth. "Never heard him get up, either! One generally hears Coker move—what?"

The impression of the Fifth was that Coker had gone down unusually early. Potter and Greene, knowing what they knew, so to speak, had the impression that he had gone down unusually late—and, for some inexplicable reason, stayed down!

Potter and Greene were very quickly out of dorm that morning. They got out of the House immediately the door was opened.

"He's out!" breathed Potter.

"Of his senses!" remarked Greene.

"Oh, yes—but out of the House! Has he been out all night?"

"Oh crumbs! If he was spotted—"

"For goodness' sake, let's dig him up! If he's not been seen, it may look as if he came out early with us. A night out—my hat! It's the sack! Let's look for him."

They looked for Coker

The sound of a deep snore guided them to a bench under the elms. They had found Coker.

They gazed at the sleeping beauty. Coker had not been awakened by the clang of the rising-bell. He had had a rather late night!

Potter shook him by the collar. Coker's eyes opened.

He sat up.

"Oh!" he said "You!"

"You've been out of the House all night!" gasped Greene.

"Did you think I should knock up the House after I was locked out?" inquired Coker sarcastically. "That's the sort of thing you would think, I suppose, with a brain like yours."

"If Gosling, or Prout, or somebody had found you snoozing here—"

"I haven't been asleep! Only dozing! I should have heard the rising-bell—"

"Rising-bell's gone, and stopped."

"Oh, has it? Well, don't jaw!"

Coker rubbed his sleepy eyes and got off the bench. "I've had a rotten night, through you fellows letting me down! Some bargee came out and locked the lobby door after I was outside. Old Prout came down to his study, and thought I was a burglar! Rotten time all through! Silly fools of prefects rooting about for an hour—I had to climb a tree to keep out of sight till the silly fools went in again!"

Coker yawned extensively.

"I never got the stuff" he said.

"That's the worst of it! Prout had shifted it off the table, and before I could find it he barged in I hooked it!"

"Oh!" gasped Potter and Greene.

"The whole thing went wrong through you fellows letting me down. Some bargee locked me out. I fancy it was the same man I ran into and knocked over, getting away from Prout's window. I think he was hurt—I hope he was! I've got an idea that it was Smedley—I've never liked that man—too creepy and crawly for me! Anyhow, he was hurt—that's one comfort!"

"Did he spot you?" gasped Potter.

"Don't be an ass, Potter! How could he spot me, down on his face, with my knees jamming in his back?"

"Oh crumbs!"

"He'll have a pain in his back this morning—that's one comfort. If it wasn't Smedley it was Hacker. I shall know which when I see him—he's bound to wriggle a good bit. I know he was hurt. Hallo, there's the chapel bell! I'll go in with you fellows—no need to tell anybody I've been out all night. It might be misunderstood!"

"It might!" gasped Potter.

"Oh, come on! But this doesn't mean," added Coker, with severity, "that I'm taking you up again, after your rotten treatment of me! I'm not!"

Whereat Potter and Greene smiled. Horace Coker's friendship was, of course, a boon and a blessing. But Potter and Greene were not really yearning to be taken up again—until the next hamper from Aunt Judy was due! Then, they had no doubt, a little gentle leg-pulling would set the matter right!

Meanwhile, Coker went in to prayers with them, just as if he had come down from the dormitory like the other fellows. There was no suspicious eye on Coker, and he got away with it.

At breakfast in Hall he had the satisfaction of ascertaining, beyond doubt, that it was Smedley into whom he had barged in getting away from Prout's window. Smedley, undoubtedly, wriggled a good bit!

(Continued on page 28.)

The MAN BEHIND the SCENES!

Starring **FERRERS LOCKE**, detective, and his clever boy assistant, **JACK DRAKE**.



BY **HEDLEY SCOTT**

HOW THE STORY STARTED.

MERVYN VILLIERS and **JULIUS TANKERHEAD**, two clever criminals, have been pulling off big coups in connection with sporting events. In order to find out how these crooks work—their clever swindles, **FERRERS LOCKE**, detective, poses as Jules Martinez, a wealthy Argentine bookmaker. He accepts a big wager from the two schemers, and wins £10,000. Rather than pay, the two villains scheme to "bump off" Martinez. The plot fails, and Villiers attempts to pull off another swindle by backing Ralph Rackstraw which, by means of a chalked code on the roof of a car outside Martinez's office, he already knows has passed the post first in a big race run in South Africa. Villiers' face drops, however, when a later message comes through on the tape to the effect that an objection has been lodged against the winner.

(Now read on.)

The Two Signatures!

MERVYN VILLIERS waited in an agony of suspense.

Ferrers Locke, by the window, now knew he had been caught. Like Villiers, his eyes were drawn to that stationary car with the black roof which he recognised. Like Villiers, he too, saw the three chalk marks on the roof, and tumbled the astute dodge which had been employed to swindle him out of a fortune.

It was as clear to Ferrers Locke now that the two crooks had reckoned between them that of the entire field for the South African race only three "fancied" runners were worth considering as winners. Between them they had worked their code. One chalk mark, possibly, would convey to the watching Villiers that the favourite, Terrible Tantalus, had won. Two chalk marks indicated that Oliphant, the second favourite, had won, whilst the three chalk marks said plainly enough that Ralph Rackstraw had won the race. How Tankerhead had managed to learn of the result of the race was also quite clearly understood by Ferrers Locke now. For he knew that the jeweller opposite rented a tape machine; and it would be an easy matter for Tankerhead to learn the vital news from there, whilst visiting the shop on some pretext or other. Quite easy, too, for him to chalk his code message on the roof of the saloon car for the watching Villiers to see.

The dodge was cunning and cleverly thought out, seemingly fool proof.

Villiers could not be accused of knowing the result before he laid his wager, for he had been in the office a long time before the race had been run, without speaking to a soul save the bookmaker.

Locke's mouth set grimly as he reached these conclusions and turned from the window. Then his "Argentine" smile returned to his face. Like Villiers, he was now all eagerness to know the result of the stewards' inquiry into the running of the race and whether the objection would be sustained. If so, it meant that Ralph Rackstraw would be disqualified and automatically Villiers would lose his bet.

Villiers, in an agony of suspense, was thinking of that, too. In that event he would owe this smiling bookmaker, whom he had thought so easy to plunder, another ten thousand pounds.

A cold sweat broke out all over him. In devising this peculiar form of swindle he had not counted on an objection marring the result of the race. He did not know it, but during all this time Jack Drake, disguised as Martinez's Argentine clerk, was studying his every changing expression. Without being told Jack Drake knew that Villiers had attempted to pull off another swindle.

A faint grin spread over his olive complexion, complete with jet-black wig of well oiled hair, when he saw Villiers start back from the tape machine, his face now a ghastly pallor.

"Well?" asked Martinez quietly. "What's the result of the race, my friend?"

Mervyn Villiers could hardly speak. He pointed to the clicking tape machine and mumbled incoherently. Drake sprang forward and picked up the tape.

"Objection sustained, Mr. Martinez," he drawled musically. "The race has been awarded to the second, Terrible Tantalus, and Ralph Rackstraw is disqualified for bumping and boring."

"Tough luck, Mr. Villiers," said Jules Martinez sympathetically. "That's too bad. So I have won again, eh?"

Mervyn Villiers was hard put to it to restrain himself. All his deep-laid plans had fallen to pieces like a house made out of a pack of cards. Far from scooping in a fortune he now owed Jules Martinez another ten thousand pounds!

He made no pretence to act the sportsman now. He was defeated, baffled—a bad loser and a villain self exposed. Without a word he snatched up his hat

and gloves and stamped out of the office.

From the window Ferrers Locke watched him go. He was not surprised, however, when Mervyn Villiers did not cross and join his confederate in the waiting car. At that moment Villiers would not have trusted himself even to meet his partner in crime.

But Julius Tankerhead, watching from the driving-wheel of the saloon, saw his confederate stamp out of the bookmaker's offices, and sensing something wrong, started up his car and followed him.

All this Ferrers Locke saw; then he turned to Drake.

"Just slip over to the jeweller's and ask them if their late customer—Tankerhead—used the tape machine while he was in the shop. Tell them anything you like, as an excuse—I just want to satisfy myself, that's all."

Drake wasn't gone more than five minutes, but his face was gleaming with excitement when he made his report.

"Just as you said, gov'nor," he announced. "That guy Tankerhead hung about the jeweller, making a pretence of buying a pearl necklace. Then he messed about near the tape machine, so the assistant told me. That's how the scoundrels worked the swindle—or tried to. They got the result, and Tankerhead somehow passed it on to Villiers, who was waiting here."

"Ah!" ejaculated Locke. "Clever—diabolically clever. And it might have cost me a small fortune."

"But how did Villiers get on to the first result—that Ralph Rackstraw had won, gov'nor?" asked Drake in perplexity.

"You remember, my lad, that Villiers drew his chair up to the window and sat gazing out of it, just as if he were thinking deeply over something or other. He was waiting for a message from that scoundrel Tankerhead."

"Yes, but how?"

"By means of a piece of chalk, used according to an agreed upon code, on the roof of the black car."

"By Christopher!" exclaimed Drake. "Phew! They nearly caught us, gov'nor!"

Ferrers Locke smiled.

"Nearly, but not quite," he agreed. "There's an old saying, my lad, which suggests that there's many a slip 'twixt the cup and lip."

"Not half!"

"And that slip on the part of Villiers and Tankerhead undoubtedly saved our bacon. Wonder what precious game they'll be up to next?"

"I wonder!" echoed Drake.

He would have given a month's pocket-money just then to have seen the faces of the two conspirators.

"Well, Mervyn," he exclaimed. "It was a great wheeze. I saw you spot my signal on the roof. Did that fool Martinez fall for that bet?"

"He did!" snarled Villiers. "And it's cost us exactly another ten thousand pounds!"

"What? What?" Tankerhead fell back in utter dismay. "But how—how? Ralph Rackstraw was number three as agreed between us. He won all right!"

"Sure, you big fool!" snapped back Villiers. "And he was disqualified, too! And the bet was on! Now do you see, you poor simp, or shall I have to tell it to you all over again in words of one syllable?"

Even then Tankerhead was not convinced. But a passing newsboy, from whom he bought a sporting paper, confirmed Villiers' words. Ralph Rackstraw had won—and lost.

So had Villiers and Tankerhead.

A Diabolical Plot!

"JULIUS!" Mervyn Villiers' voice held a high note of mingled excitement and alarm next morning. "Julius! Come here!"

Julius Tankerhead, who was scowling blackly at the pages of a sporting paper which made a feature of the surprise result of the big South African race, while his confederate opened his morning mail, looked up irritably.

"What is it? What is it?"

For answer, Mervyn Villiers dangled before his eyes a cheque which his bank had cancelled and returned in the customary fashion, upon payment to a certain Jules Martinez having been completed.

Julius Tankerhead recognised that cheque without troubling to rise from his armchair and draw closer.

"Trying to rub it in?" he half-snarled. "That's the cheque for eight thousand quid we lost to Martinez, over the Wexborough Stakes. Oh, I recognise the blamed thing all right!"

But Villiers had more to get excited about than that. He rose from his little writing desk and came towards Tankerhead.

"I've made the discovery of my life, Julius!" he exclaimed. "See this endorsement—Jules Martinez?"

"Yes, of course! What about it?"

Villiers played his trump card. He now flourished before his astonished confederate's gaze a circular from the Sportsman's Club, signed "Ferrers Locke, vice-chairman."

"Look at those two signatures, Julius!" He could hardly contain himself. "Look at them—compare them!"

Some of Villiers' excitement now began to take hold of the sullen Tankerhead. He took the cheque and the circular and began to compare the signatures. Slowly the colour began to ebb from his face.

"Gosh, Mervyn," he croaked hoarsely. "I believe those two signatures came from one and the same man." He was quivering with excitement and fear.

"Yes, I'm sure of it. Look at the 'E's' and the 'R's.' Phew!" His words ended in a whistle of astonishment!

Tremblingly,

Villiers retrieved the two documents and studied them afresh, this time under a magnifying glass, not that he wanted any further convincing that he had pounced upon that chance discovery the moment he had glanced casually at the cancelled cheque.

He wiped the moisture from his brow and sank down into an armchair directly opposite his partner.

"Now I'm beginning to see things," he remarked grimly. "Now I know how we've come a cropper time and time again. Mister clever Ferrers Locke never left the country at all. That was a blind, to throw us off our guard. He's Jules Martinez—as sure as my name's Villiers!"

Tankerhead licked his dry lips.

"You're right, Mervyn," he agreed. "The fiend has bluffed us. He's playing with us." Instinctively he began to run his forefinger between his neck and his collar, then grinned sheepishly. "I suppose—I suppose we're not jumping to a fool's conclusion."

Mervyn Villiers bared his teeth in a wolfish snarl.

"I'm right; I know it!" he snapped. "And, by Christopher, I'll soon prove it. Listen! You remember Inspector Pycroft was on the Morris job? Well, Pycroft, I happen to know, is a personal friend of Locke's."

"So I believe," murmured Tankerhead nervously. "But what—"

"Listen!" broke in Villiers impatiently. And for five minutes he talked with a rapidity which astonished his companion. Emergency often stimulates the brain to an amazing extent. This case was no exception, for Mervyn Villiers' villainous mind conceived something in the nature of a brainwave—clever, diabolically clever.

"Gosh!" exclaimed Tankerhead, sitting bolt upright. "You're the man for ideas! Gosh, I believe it will work. Fact, I'm sure it will. And I've got one of those special bombs at home, all ready for the job."

Villiers considered a few moments more, reached for the telephone, motioned his confederate to keep silent, and asked for Jules Martinez's number. In a few seconds he was through.

"Jules Martinez's office," came the lisping reply in a youthful voice which Villiers was now convinced belonged to Jack Drake. "What—"

"Speaking for Inspector Pycroft!" snapped back Villiers in a gruff policeman's voice. "Inspector Pycroft requests Mr. Locke to call upon him at the Yard at once. Most important discovery. At once, sir!"

"I'll tell Mr. Locke. Hold on!" came the reply.

"Thank you, sir."

Winking at Tankerhead, Villiers sat back in the armchair holding the telephone instrument, what time Jules Martinez's clerk delivered the message.

"Pycroft wants you, guv'nor," said Drake. "His man's just phoned through. Wants to know if you'll pop along to the Yard right away."

The detective's brows came together wrathfully.

"Did he ask for me by my own name, my lad, or did the prize boob remember that for the time being I'm Jules Martinez?"

Drake blushed, for he felt a reprimand was coming.

"His man asked for Mister Locke," he replied. "And—"

"You should have been more cautious, my lad, and said that this was Jules

Martinez's office. For all we know it may be someone bluffing us!"

"I realised that, guv'nor," said Drake uncomfortably, "the moment I said I'd speak to you. But I feel certain it's genuine."

Locke crossed to the phone. "Hallo, is that Jenkins speaking?" he asked.

Mervyn Villiers, moist with perspiration, decided to take a chance.

"No, Mr. Locke, this isn't Jenkins. I'm Harvey, sir—Inspector Pycroft's new man. He wants you to come over straight away, sir."

"Very well," answered the detective. "Tell the inspector I'll be with him in ten minutes."

Mervyn Villiers planked down the receiver and grasped his confederate by the shoulders.

"Julius—I was right. It's Locke, right enough. He didn't even try to disguise his voice. No Argentine lisp about it, anyway. Quickly, we've got exactly ten minutes."

And the two conspirators crowded activity into those ten minutes, what time, Ferrers Locke, all unsuspecting of any trap, journeyed to Scotland Yard.

Drake, alone in the Pall Mall office, looked up in some surprise as two shadows darkened the glass panels of the doorway. A moment later Mervyn Villiers and Julius Tankerhead strolled in.

Drake, remembering his part as the Argentine clerk, twisted his olive features into a welcoming smile and offered his visitors a chair.

"Mr. Martinez is absent for a few moments, gentlemen," he half-lisped. "Perhaps you will wait—"

Villiers and Tankerhead smiled genially.

"We ran into him a few moments ago, my young fellow," said the former easily. "He told us to leave our cheque with you and—"

"Martinez said you would drive us out in his new Rolls for twenty minutes or so," broke in Tankerhead with equal genially, "until he comes back. Martinez knows I'm keen on getting a Rolls."

Drake listened to this latter in some perplexity.

"He also asked me to give you this message," added Villiers. "He said laughingly, 'tell my clerk to keep an eye on you and see you don't get up to any tricks.' He said something else about a 'yard,' or something, but I didn't quite catch it. But, tell me, young man, is this Rolls as good as old Martinez makes out?"

"I should say it is," replied Drake, now convinced by that mention of the word yard and the reference to keeping an eye on the two visitors that the message was genuine and that they had met Locke en route. "Come on, then, I'll run you round in the car till Mr. Martinez comes back."

"Splendid, young fellow!" exclaimed Villiers. "But here, don't let us forget the cheque."

He handed Drake a cheque for twenty thousand pounds and that clinched the matter in the youngster's mind. After all, there was no harm in running these two birds round the town for a bit until his chief returned. Much better, he reflected, than being left alone in the office with them where they might begin to cross-question him about the Argentine and Jules Martinez' big business there.

Drake picked up his cap, ushered his

genial visitors out of the office, locked it, and crossed the road to the garage wherein his chief kept his cars in the name of Jules Martinez.

And at the moment when Ferrers Locke was confronting a very amazed and indignant inspector at Scotland Yard who answered to the name of Pycroft, Drake was speeding the beautiful Rolls saloon along the Great West Road. Suddenly as the car turned a curve in the road, Villiers, who was sitting beside Drake, lurched clumsily against the youngster.

Drake let out an involuntary howl as something sharp pierced his arm.

"I'm terribly sorry," smiled Villiers, regaining his position. "You're rather a speed hog, young man. You unnerved me. Please go slowly—my heart, you know!"

The apology and the explanation came so naturally that Drake, who knew he was a speed fiend when he had a good car under him, smiled in return, apologised and slackened down speed to something like twenty miles an hour.

"Beautiful!" purred Villiers with a cocked eye which seemed to indicate the country around, but which, in reality, was voicing satisfaction at the peculiar expression which was beginning to settle on Drake's youthful

features. Even under their olive make-up they appeared to blanch.

The youngster did not know it yet, but that sudden lurch against him and that something which had pricked his arm, were all part of a diabolical plan. A plan in which a loaded hypodermic syringe, with a fine needle-like point, had played a big part.

The pace of the car became slower, for Drake, taking one hand from the wheel, dragged it across his face like a man does who suddenly feels faint. He shrugged himself, gulped, blinked—did everything to master the uncanny feeling of inertia which was rapidly spreading through his veins and failed miserably.

"Phew!" he panted. "I feel blessed faint! I—I shall have to stop."

Which was exactly what Villiers and Tankerhead had banked upon—for they knew the power of the drug which the syringe had jabbed into the youngster's arm!

The conspirators exchanged nods, glanced around them, saw the road was clear, and dragged Drake unceremoniously from the driving seat into the back of the car. Here Tankerhead ruthlessly crashed his fist in the youngster's face, driving what little

consciousness that remained with Drake into a black realm of oblivion.

"Drive on, Mervyn!" whispered Tankerhead excitedly. "Gosh! It's worked like a charm."

But Mervyn Villiers was already at the wheel of the Rolls and jabbing the self-starter.

The car began to glide forward.

"Shove him on the floor of the car, Julius," Villiers threw back over his shoulder. "Put the blanket over him. I'm going to put my foot down now."

He gave the accelerator full pressure as he spoke and the car shot forward at tremendous speed. But the wily Villiers did not linger on the Great West road. He turned and cut across to the Portsmouth road and soon was hitting up a speed of sixty miles an hour.

On the outskirts of Witley Common, a great rambling desolate expanse of natural country, loomed a tumbledown cottage of Tudor design. It was owned by a certain Mr. Eustace Johnson, so the country folk said, but he seldom visited the place. And that Mr. Eustace Johnson was, in actual fact, Mr. Mervyn Villiers. To this cottage sped the Rolls as fast as its beautiful engine would allow. And into the cottage Villiers and Tankerhead carried a bulky object

(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.

ONCE again I wish to extend a hearty welcome to all those readers who, possibly with this issue of MAGNET, are meeting Harry Wharton & Co. for the first time. That, of course, also applies to my new readers living overseas, particularly those in Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa, where, it is very apparent, the fame of the good old MAGNET is spreading with every fresh issue. To you one and all a hearty welcome, and may you continue to be interested in the adventures of the chums of Greyfriars for many years to come!

THERE'S an interesting motor-racing query to answer this week. A Southampton reader asks for information concerning

THE MILLE MIGLIA,

one of the most hazardous and gruelling road races in the world. This is held in Italy, and the route is a thousand miles in length, passing through sleepy villages, large towns, over dangerous mountain passes, and around hair-raising bends. Racing drivers say it is the most strenuous and most exciting of all racing-car events. The race begins at Brescia, and the route leads through Cremona, Parma, Reggio, Modena, Bologna, and Florence. There are several mountain passes to negotiate before Sienna and Rome are reached. The route then continues through Perugia, Ancona, Pesaro, and Forli, doubling back towards Bologna. Over the Dolomite Alps it goes to Verona, and then back to Brescia, from where the race started.

For many years the Italians, with their

superior knowledge of the country, succeeded in winning this race consistently, but G. E. T. Eyston and Count Lurani, in an M.G. Magnette, were the first drivers to lower the Italian colours, by beating the Italian cars of the same horse-power as their machine in the 1933 event.

Now for a few

RAPID-FIRE REPLIES

to various readers' queries.

What do the Letters N. V. Stand For? ("Inquirer," of Stockton).—They are short for "Novissima Verba," meaning the latest information. You will often find them at the end of reference books, at the head of the section which gives the latest information to hand before going to press.

What is a "Sweet Potato"? (G. R., of Barrow-in-Furness).—This is a name given to the yam, which is a climbing herb found in the Philippines, the East Indies, and the West Indies. The yam is rich in starch, and is used in the same way as the potato.

What Two Towns in France are Like a Dutchman's Trousers? ("Magnetite," of Derby).—This reader is trying to pull my leg. I suppose he refers to Toulon and Toulouse. ("Too long" and "too loose!")

Is There Such a Thing as an Electric Razor? (L. M., of Jersey).—Yes, quite a number are already in use. They are like safety razors, but the blades are given a "too-and-fro" motion by electric power. There are also electric seals which melt sealing wax, put it on a letter, and stamp a seal upon it!

"TALKIE" fans will be interested in the following reply to Jack McKay, of Wembley, who wants to know

HOW MUCH DOES A HOME "TALKIE" COST?

I suppose the answer is: "As much as you care to pay for one." The cheapest "talkie" at present available is priced at sixty-five pounds. There are others ranging from one hundred pounds to several hundreds, while, of course, a professional equipment such as is used in the big cinemas will run to several thousands of pounds. But home "talkies" are certainly catching on, and before long, when the price has been reduced, such a machine will be found in many homes. Also, now that television sets are coming down in price, it will not be long before the broadcasting of cinema films will be possible. When this comes about you won't have to leave home to go to the cinema. It will be brought right into your own room for you!

Now comes the question to which you all want to know the answer! What is in store for MAGNET readers next week? Well, as Fisher T. Fish would say: "Get an eyeful of this":

First and foremost, along comes Frank Richards with one of his tip-top-notchers, entitled:

"THE BOUNDER'S SACRIFICE!"

The title will give you an idea of what to expect, but the story itself will certainly exceed your expectations. When I tell you that it is one of the best schoolboy adventure stories that even this popular author has given us, you'll know that it's something extra-good. So don't run the risk of missing it. Tell your newsagent that you want a copy reserved for you. There will be another full-of-thrills instalment of our splendid serial and, as usual, our shorter features will include a full-of-chuckles "Greyfriars Herald" supplement, a clever poem by the Greyfriars Rhymester, an interesting cricket article by "Umpire," and another little chat with

Your sincere pal, YOUR EDITOR.

covered in a travelling rug. The object was, of course, the unconscious Drake.

In the low ceilinged living-room of the cottage, beneath a much-worn carpet was a trap door, which led to a cellar. Down into this cellar the two conspirators carried their unconscious burden, with many a grunt at his weight.

A few moments later Drake was being bound to a chair, a gag was wedged tightly into his mouth. Then came the most diabolical part of the plot, for as the two conspirators retreated to the short staircase leading to the cellar flap, Tankerhead very gingerly and carefully laid a queer shaped bomb, with a length of flex attached to it, on the floor directly beneath the flap and, climbing the stairs paid out the flex behind him.

Once in the living-room Tankerhead, who was an authority on explosives, lowered the trap until it almost fell into position and hooked the flex to a small ring bolt on the under side. Villiers stood regarding him with admiration.

"Very ingenious, Julius," he grunted. Tankerhead now gently lowered the trap the few remaining inches and straightened himself.

"Gosh, Mervyn. We're going to kill two birds with one stone—or rather bomb. The moment that trap is thrown back or lifted—and it doesn't have to be thrown back far, only a matter of inches—the pull on the flex will explode the bomb. It's a special firing apparatus of my own."

"Don't I know it," chuckled Villiers. "It was that which prompted my idea. Shove the carpet back. That's right! Now all we've got to do is to let Mr. clever Locke know that his precious assistant is here. Then, hey presto, up will go the whole show."

"And what's more," chuckled Tankerhead. "Mr. Johnson will claim the insurance money for the total destruction of his valuable—ahem—old Tudor cottage. Come, let's go!"

(The villainous Villiers and Tankerhead look as if they're on a "winner" this time, what? But—Look out for more thrills in next week's chapters of this popular tea story; boys!)

SAVING A SCAPEGRACE!

(Continued from page 24.)

He had a pain in his back! He had another in his nose! And, to judge by his expression, he had still another in his temper—and a much worse one! All of which was satisfactory to Horace Coker! The bargee who had locked him out deserved all he had got, and more, in Coker's opinion. Coker only wished that he had had the presence of mind to stay and jump on him at the time! It was too late to think of that now! But it was a comfort to see Smedley wriggle.

There was a little excitement in the school that morning. A police-constable came from Courtfield and examined Prout's window. There were unmistakable signs that the catch had been forced from without. It looked as if Prout had not been dreaming, and there really had been some sort of a burglar. No doubt the local police looked for him! Fortunately, they did not think of looking in the Fifth Form at Greyfriars!

Common-room, that day, had the benefit of unending discourses from Prout on the subject of his burglar. The villain had, unfortunately, escaped. But he had taken nothing—Prout had interrupted him, in time to save his property. Nothing was missing. But for that wretched boy, Bunter of the Remove, Prout would have had him! Prout was sure of that!

That wretched boy, Bunter, suffered for his sins! Smedley was in a mood that morning to handle the cane with vigour! Bunter came in handy for the purpose!

By the time Smedley had finished with him, the Owl of the Remove deeply repented that he had gone down after Coker's tuck! Even that tuck could not have comforted him!

Smedley was a puzzled and angry man that day. He had tracked somebody out of the House—who, he did not know, and cared little. It was not Smithy! And it was not Smithy who had barged him over in the dark by the corner of the Sixth Form lobby! That must have been Prout's burglar

—fleeing from Prout! He had fancied that he was at the end of his peculiar task at Greyfriars. It seemed that he was still only at the beginning! The Remove did not find their temporary beak agreeable in the Form-room. More than ever they wished that Quelch was back!

The Creeper and Crawler was finding his task much more difficult than he had anticipated. But he might have been encouraged had he known that he was going to receive assistance—from an unexpected quarter! That was from the Bounder himself!

When the Remove came out of class that day Tom Redwing joined his chum and walked into the quad with him. During the day Smithy had not spoken a single word to him; and Tom knew that he was still savagely resenting the happenings in the dormitory. What had happened had saved the reckless young rascal, and both of them knew it. But that did not alter the fact that the wilful, wayward scapegrace of the school had been overruled, handled, bolstered and pillowed, and prevented from having his own wilful way.

In the quad Vernon-Smith came to a halt and faced Redwing. His eyes were gleaming unpleasantly.

"What do you want?" he asked. Redwing looked at him.

"I'm fed-up with your meddlin'!" said the Bounder, in a low, distraught voice. "You've taken it on yourself, to look after me—unasked! I'm not a fellow to be looked after by a cheeky fool who can't mind his own business! Is that plain enough for you?"

"You need a friend row, Smithy, more than you've ever needed one before," said Tom, in a low voice.

"When I want your friendship I'll ask for it! Keep it till it's asked for!" With that, the angry Bounder turned his back and walked away.

The Creeper and Crawler's task was an easier one now, had he only known it!

THE END.

(The next yarn of this exciting series is entitled: "THE BOUNDER'S SACRIFICE!" and it's one of Frank Richards' masterpieces. Avoid disappointment by ordering your MAGNET in good time, chums!)

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