

"The BROTHERHOOD of JUSTICE!" RED-HOT STORY OF SCHOOLBOY ADVENTURE FEATURING .. Harry Wharton & Co.

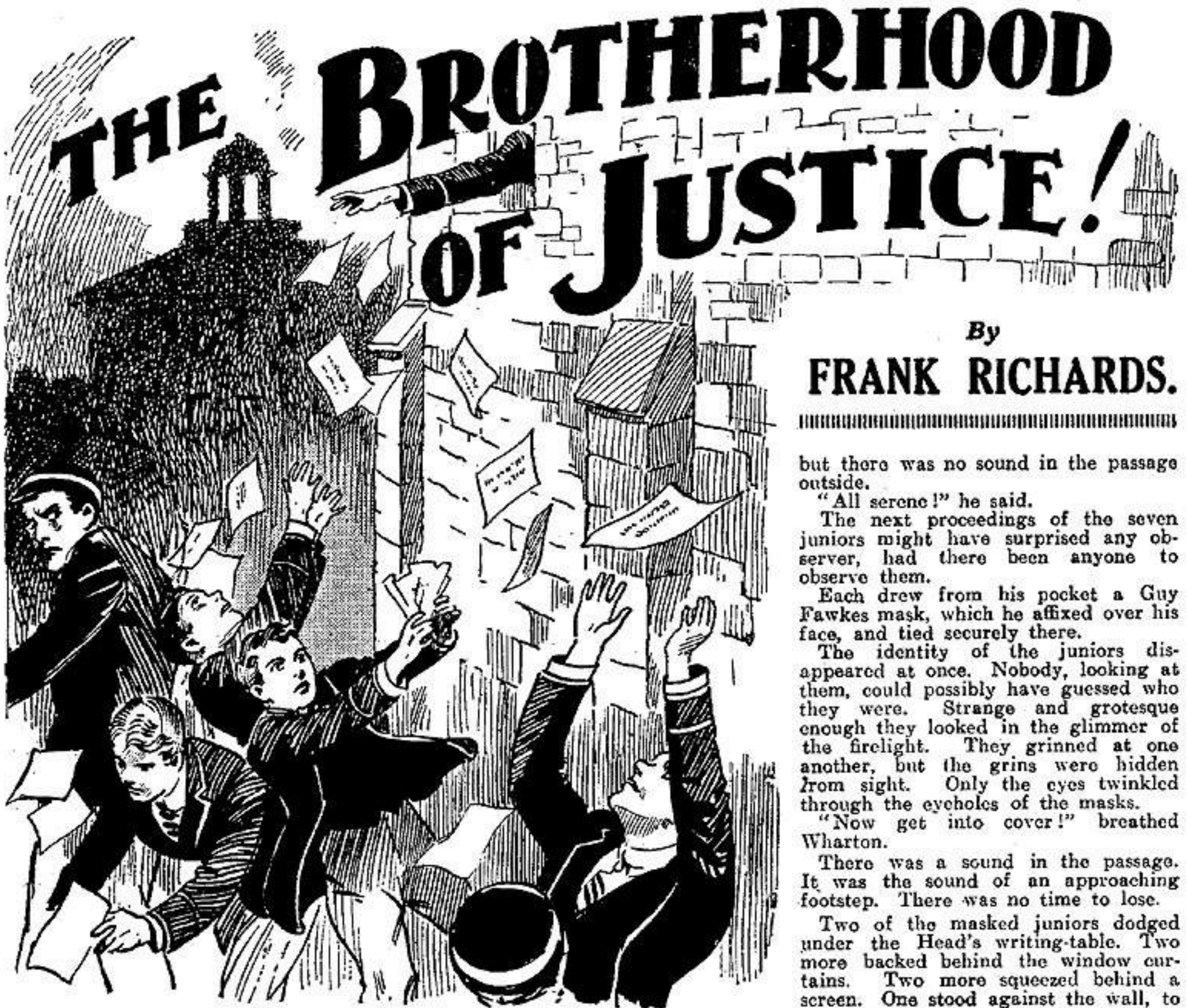
The MAGNET 2^D

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By
FRANK RICHARDS.

but there was no sound in the passage outside.

"All serene!" he said.

The next proceedings of the seven juniors might have surprised any observer, had there been anyone to observe them.

Each drew from his pocket a Guy Fawkes mask, which he affixed over his face, and tied securely there.

The identity of the juniors disappeared at once. Nobody, looking at them, could possibly have guessed who they were. Strange and grotesque enough they looked in the glimmer of the firelight. They grinned at one another, but the grins were hidden from sight. Only the eyes twinkled through the eyeholes of the masks.

"Now get into cover!" breathed Wharton.

There was a sound in the passage. It was the sound of an approaching footstep. There was no time to lose.

Two of the masked juniors dodged under the Head's writing-table. Two more backed behind the window curtains. Two more squeezed behind a screen. One stood against the wall, to be hidden by the door when it opened.

Then they waited with bated breath. The footsteps came up the passage outside and stopped at the door.

Tap!

The door opened.

Gerald Loder of the Sixth Form appeared in the doorway, against the light in the corridor.

He stared into the study and grunted. "Not here!"

He switched on the electric light and stepped in. Behind the open door a masked junior squeezed close to the wall. Loder of the Sixth had not the faintest suspicion that he was there. Neither did he see a sign of anyone else in the study. So far as Loder knew the room was empty.

It ought, of course, to have been empty until Mr. Prout came. Now that Dr. Locke was away in a nursing-home, Mr. Prout had taken possession of his study as temporary headmaster. Loder, his head prefect, came there to make his reports. Little dreaming that hidden eyes were on him, Loder stepped across to the Head's table, and sat on it, to wait for Prout.

There was a paper in Loder's hand. It contained a list of names that were to be reported to Prout. He glanced over it as he sat on the table.

Then he grunted again. Five o'clock rang out from the clock-tower. Loder was on time for his usual interview with the headmaster. Prout wasn't.

"The old ass!" Loder muttered the

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

In the Head's Study!

HARRY WHARTON, the captain of the Greyfriars Remove, stopped at the door of the Head's study, and tapped.

There was no answer to his tap.

He opened the door, and stepped in. The study was empty.

Outside in the quadrangle the dim November dusk was falling. Lights had begun to gleam from many windows.

But there was no light in the Head's study; only a faint glow came from the red embers of the fire, burning low in the grate.

Wharton closed the door quickly when he was inside. He closed it without a sound, and stood listening.

But the coast was clear. No eye had seen him enter the study, which was rather important, considering why he was there.

He crossed the room to the window. Softly, silently, he raised the lower sash, letting in the chill November air. He leaned out, and whispered:

"You fellows there?"

"Yes; rather!" came a whisper from below the broad, stone window-sill.

"The ratherfulness is terrific!" came another whisper.

"Buck up, then!"

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From the dimness outside six faces looked up. Wharton stepped back from the window, and the juniors outside climbed in one after another.

Bob Cherry was the first. Next came Hurree Janset Ram Singh; then Frank Nugent and Johnny Bull. After them came Herbert Vernon-Smith and Lord Mauleverer.

Seven Remove fellows stood within the study. Bob Cherry drew the heavy curtains across the window, leaving it open. The way of escape had to be left open; but the interior of the study was now screened from any casual glance from the quad.

In the dim glimmer of the firelight within the seven Removites grinned at one another.

"Safe as houses!" murmured Bob.

"Quiet!" muttered Wharton. "Loder won't be long now."

"If Prout comes in first—" breathed Nugent.

"He won't. He's talking to Woose; and when he begins to wag his chin, he never leaves off in a hurry."

There was a faint chuckle in the dim study.

"Loder comes here at five," went on the captain of the Remove. "He will have to wait for Prout."

"We'll keep him amused while he's waiting," murmured Smithy.

And there was another chuckle.

"Quiet!" breathed Wharton.

He stepped to the door and listened;

words aloud. "Bother him! He would grouse fast enough if a fellow kept him waiting, but he keeps me waiting five times out of six. Jawing somewhere, I suppose."

Seven hidden juniors grinned. They wondered what Mr. Prout would have thought, and said, and done, if he had heard that muttered observation from his trusted head prefect. Evidently Loder of the Sixth had no nattering opinion of the temporary headmaster of Greyfriars School. In point of fact, Loder rather despised Prout. It was useful and satisfactory to him to pull that pompous gentleman's portly leg; but he rather despised him for having his leg pulled, all the same.

"Old ass!" repeated Loder. "I've got to wait! Bother him!"

Bang!

Loder jumped and stared round.

The door had suddenly closed.

Click!

The key turned in the lock.

With a gasp Loder slid off the table, and stood staring blankly at the junior who had been revealed by the closing of the door.

"What—" he gasped.

Ho stared at the grotesque mask that covered the face. Then, with gleaming eyes, he made a stride at the masked junior.

Before he reached him, however, there was a scuffling and pattering of feet in the hitherto silent study.

Six other masked fellows emerged from various places of concealment, and they all rushed on Loder at once.

Not a word was spoken. The Secret Seven of Greyfriars had no intention of giving the bully of the Sixth any clue to their identity. In silence they grasped Loder, and up-ended him on the Head's carpet. A yell burst from Loder.

"Ow! Help! Yaroo!"

Loder was a big fellow, and rather burly. He struggled fiercely; but seven pairs of hands were too many for Loder—a good many too many.

One of the masked juniors snatched a cord from his pocket. Swiftly it was knotted round Loder's wrists, while the other fellows held him, wriggling, on the carpet. Then he was plumped into the Head's chair, and another length of cord tied him there. Loder howled and spluttered frantically. But the work was swiftly done. His howling and spluttering changed to wild gurgling as the inkpot was snatched from the table, and emptied over his features.

Then the seven masked juniors disappeared behind the window curtains. Out of Loder's sight the masks disappeared from their faces, and were thrust back into pockets. Swiftly they dropped from the open window, one after another, scudding into the dim quad.

The Secret Seven of Greyfriars were gone. They had been hardly more than a minute dealing with Loder of the Sixth, but they had dealt with him faithfully. They were gone, and Loder was left tied in the Head's chair, gurgling and spluttering, to greet the astonished eyes of Prout when he arrived.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Told on the Telephone!

B UZZZZZ!

It was the telephone bell in the Remove master's study.

Mr. Prout gave an impatient grunt as he heard it. Prout disliked interruptions when his plump chin was going strong.

Mr. Woose, the new master of the Remove, on the other hand, was barely able to suppress a gasp of relief.

Never had the buzz of the telephone bell been so welcome to his ears. In itself it was not musical. But it interrupted Prout! For that reason it came to Mr. Woose's ears as pleasantly as the music of the spheres or the melodious strains of Jack Payne and his band!

Prout had stopped at the door of Mr. Woose's study to speak to him. Standing there, nearly filling the doorway with his portly person, Prout boomed.

Woose made assenting noises. That was all that any member of the Greyfriars staff could do when Prout was talking.

Even under Dr. Locke's rule, when Prout had been only a Form-master, his booming voice had dominated Masters' Common Room. Now that he was temporary headmaster in Dr. Locke's place, he was, of course, more dominating than ever.

Prout was dealing with a serious subject now! It was an important subject—an urgent subject—a troublesome subject! It caused Prout to forget that he was to be in his own study at five to see Loder!

That subject was the mysterious "secret society" of Greyfriars, which called itself the Secret Seven, but was suspected of having ever so many more than seven members.

Prout's belief—fostered by Loder—was that the ringleaders of that mysterious brotherhood were to be found in the Remove! It was also his idea that

In the "war" between Gerald Loder and the Greyfriars Secret Society, the tyrant "skipper" is very far from having things all his own way. It's a case of playing the game or paying the piper!

Mr. Woose, as master of that Form, ought to root them out, and hand them over to dire and appropriate punishment.

He was explaining all this to Mr. Woose, at great length, after class. He had intended to stop and speak for only a few minutes, and then go to the Head's study, to see Loder. But Prout's voice was music in his own ears, if not in Mr. Woose's. He went on and on and on.

Woose could only grin and bear it! Unlike Mr. Quelch, the regular master of the Remove, he was very nervous of the pompous Prout!

Quelch had had to go, because he stood up to Prout! Prout liked the mild and submissive Woose much better. On the other hand, he had to admit that Woose was not the man to handle the Remove as Quelch did. Woose was willing to listen to any number of orders, commands, instructions, and exhortations. Carrying them out was quite another matter!

Mr. Woose was beginning to wonder now whether Prout ever would leave off talking, or whether, like the little brook, he would go on for ever! Never had the buzz of the telephone bell been so well timed!

"The telephone!" ejaculated Mr. Woose, in great relief. "Excuse me, sir—"

Mr. Woose stepped to the telephone. He had not been expecting a call; but he inwardly blessed the unexpected caller.

Prout surely would go! But he did

not go. Leaning on the doorpost, he seemed in no hurry to get under way.

"Hallo!" squeaked Mr. Woose into the transmitter.

"Hallo!" came a deep bass voice—a voice that even the unsuspecting Mr. Woose guessed was purposely disguised. "Is that the Squeaker?"

"What?" gasped Mr. Woose.

"What?"

Possibly Mr. Woose did not know that he was nicknamed the Squeaker in the Remove!

"Is that Woose?"

"Yes, certainly! What—?"

"Prout still there?"

"Eh?"

"Is Old Pompous still there jawing?"

"Good gracious! What—what—?"

"Tell Prout he's wanted on the phone! I want to speak to Prout."

"Goodness gracious me!"

Woose turned from the telephone with quite a dazed expression on his mild face. He blinked at Prout, who was slowly detaching his portly form from the doorpost.

"Mr. Prout! The call is for you—"

"What?" boomed Prout. "What?"

"Some person desires to speak to you, sir."

"To me?" ejaculated Prout. "It is very singular, sir, that anyone should ring me up on the telephone in your study, instead of my own! Very singular indeed. However, I will take the call!"

Prout took the receiver from Mr. Woose, and applied it to a plump ear.

"Mr. Prout speaking!" he boomed.

"Good! Do you want Loder?"

"Loder?" repeated Mr. Prout.

"Loder the bully—Loder the rotter—Loder the sneaking worm—Loder the limit!" came the deep bass voice.

Prout gasped.

"Who—what—what—" he stuttered.

"If you want the cad, he's in your study! He's rather anxious to see you there! Buzz off, Prout!"

"Who is speaking?" shrieked Prout.

"Brother No. 1 of the Secret Seven of Greyfriars—the Brotherhood of Justice!"

"Wha-a-t?"

"Deaf, Prout?" inquired the voice.

"Upon my word!" gasped Prout.

"This—this is—is unheard of! Am—I actually speaking to one of the young rascals who have dared to form themselves into a so-called secret society in the school?"

"Guessed it in one!"

"Who are you?" roared Prout.

"Brother No. 1—"

"Your name?"

"Guess, old bean!"

"What—what—what did you call me?" stuttered Mr. Prout, hardly able to believe his plump ears.

"Old bean!"

"You—you—you impertinent young rascal! You shall be expelled for this insolence!" roared Prout.

"First catch your hare!"

"I—I—I—"

"Sing it, old thing!"

"Wha-at?"

"Singing is good for stuttering!"

"Good gad!" gasped Prout. "Upon my word!" He boomed into the transmitter: "Who are you? I command you to give your name!"

"Bow-bow!"

Prout gurgled! That evidently was not the name of his interlocutor! It was simply a disrespectful ejaculation!

"Where are you speaking from?" roared Prout.

"Oh, Prout!" came the voice in reproachful tones. "Where's your grammar? You're master of a senior Form—you're setting up as a headmaster! Don't you know you mustn't end—"

sentence with a preposition? Is that the kind of thing you teach in the Fifth?"

Prout spluttered! The unknown speaker had him there! Generally, Prout would have perished rather than have uttered such a sentence. It showed how deeply disturbed he was by this cheeky conversation on the telephone!

"From where are you speaking?" he shrieked.

"That's better!" came the voice. "I am glad to see that your grammar is improving, Prout."

"Will you answer me? I have no doubt that you are using one of the school telephones!" raved Prout. "I demand to know which! I will flog you—expel you! I—I—I will—"

"Stuttering again! You sound as if you're in a bad temper, Prout!"

"Boy!"

"Keep your wool on!"

"I—I—I—"

"Loder's waiting for you all this time! He's tied up in your chair in the Head's study—"

"What?" roared Prout.

"That's a tip what we think of your precious head prefect! Thank your lucky stars we don't tie you up and ink you as well! We let you off because you're really a harmless old ass!"

Mr. Woose, gazing at Prout, was almost terrified by the expression on his crimson countenance. Prout hurled the receiver away, leaving it hanging at the end of its cord, and strode from the study.

"Goodness gracious me!" squeaked the Squeaker, and he recaptured the receiver and replaced it on the hooks. "G-g-goodness gracious! I—I—I really—really—really—" Words failed Mr. Woose. Still, he was glad that telephone call, startling as it was, had come! Prout was gone!

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Exciting!

HELP!"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Help!" came in a frenzied yell from the Head's study.

And two or three dozen fellows in the corridor stared at one another, and most of them grinned.

"That's Loder's toot!" said Temple of the Fourth.

"Jolly old Loder!" agreed Hobson of the Shell.

"Help!" came the roar.

"Something seems to have happened to Loder!" remarked Squiff of the Remove. "I wonder what?"

"I say, you fellows, think Prout is whopping him?" asked Billy Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a yell of laughter at the suggestion that Mr. Prout might be in the study whopping his head prefect.

"Well, it jolly well sounds like it!" declared Bunter. "What's Loder yelling for, if he's not being whopped?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Help!" came Loder's yell.

"Anybody going to help him?" grinned Skinner of the Remove. "Don't all speak at once—you're all so fond of Loder!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Where's old Prout, if he's not in the study?" asked Billy Bunter. "He's got the door locked—I've tried it! The key's inside."

"Help!"

"What on earth's all this thundering row?" Coker of the Fifth came up the passage. "What are all you fags doing here, outside the Head's study?"

"Listening to the band," answered Peter Todd.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The band?" repeated Coker.

"What band?"

"Help!" came a yell from within.

Coker jumped.

"That's Loder!" he ejaculated.

"Dear old Loder!" said Temple.

Coker of the Fifth tried the door-handle. But the door did not budge. It was evidently locked on the inside.

"That you in there, Loder?" he shouted.

"Yes! Get in and let me loose!" howled Loder.

"Unlock the door, then!"

"I can't! I'm tied to a chair!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Coker.

"Ware prefects!" said Hazeldene, as Sykes of the Sixth came up the passage.

Fellows of all Forms were being attracted to the spot by the extraordinary uproar from the Head's study.

"What—" began Sykes, the prefect.

"It's Loder having some sort of a game in the Head's study!" grinned Coker. "He says he's tied up!"

Sykes tried the door-handle.

"You in there, Loder?" he called out.

"Is that Sykes? Get in somehow, Sykes! Call Walker and Carne! I've been set on by a mob of fags and tied to Prout's chair—"

"Oh, my hat! How am I to get in?" asked Sykes. "I'm rather too big to get through the keyhole."

"You silly idiot!"

"Thanks!" said Sykes, and he walked away.

"Help!" roared Loder.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" It was Bob Cherry's voice, as the Famous Five of the Remove joined the crowd in the passage. "Anything up?"

"I say, you fellows, somebody's tied Loder up in the Head's study!" yelled Billy Bunter, in great excitement.

"Gammon!" said Bob Cherry gravely.

"The gammonfulness is terrific!" chuckled Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"I say, you fellows, it's true—listen to him!" gasped Bunter, as another roar came from the study.

"Help! Get in somehow, you fools! Help!"

"Begad, that sounds like Loder!" remarked Lord Mauleverer.

"I'll say it does—just a few!" chuckled Fisher T. Fish.

"Call Prout!" roared Loder from within. "Some of you go and find Prout! Tell him to come!"

Not a fellow left the spot. They grinned at one another, that was all. The bully of Greyfriars had no help to expect from them. There was not a fellow there who had not had a taste of the ashplant since Loder of the Sixth had been appointed captain of the school. Some of them had had many tastes of it. Nobody went for Prout.

"Anybody know where Prout is?" grinned Nugent.

"Talking to Woose, I believe!" said Harry Wharton, laughing.

"Help!" yelled Loder. "Go and fetch Prout! Do you hear?"

"Loder seems in rather a hurry!" remarked Skinner. "Anybody here fearfully keen to help him out of his fix?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here comes his jolly old pals!" remarked Bob Cherry, as Walker and Carne of the Sixth came along the corridor. Apparently they had heard that something had happened to Loder in the Head's study.

Carne swished his ashplant round, and the juniors scuttled back from the study door.

Walker turned the door-handle.

"Hallo, it's locked!" he exclaimed.

"What's up in there, Gerald?"

"I'm tied up!" yelled Loder. "They left me tied up, and got out of the window! The door's locked! Call Prout!"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Walker. "But who—"

"Those young scoundrels—seven of them—got up in Guy Fawkes masks!" yelled Loder.

"The Secret Seven! Oh crumbs!"

There was a heavy, not to say elephantine, tread in the passage. It heralded the approach of Prout.

His face was crimson, and his eyes glittered under knitted brows, as he strode up to the door of the Head's study. The crowd of juniors backed farther away. Prout looked rather dangerous.

"Walker—Carne—what—"

"Help!" came Loder's yell. "Get me out of this, I tell you! I'm drenched with ink!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!" roared Prout, with a glare at the crowd in the passage. "Loder, the door appears to be locked on the inside! Unlock it immediately!"

"Is that Mr. Prout? I can't get to the door, sir—I'm tied in your chair!"

"Upon my word! Who—what—how—why—"

"Those young scoundrels, sir, who call themselves the Secret Seven!" panted Loder. "They were hidden in the study when I came here, sir!"

"Are they present now, Loder?" boomed Prout.

"Are they?" murmured Bob Cherry to his chums, and there was a subdued chuckle.

"No, sir; they got out of the window more than ten minutes ago. I've been shouting for help ever since!"

"Unprecedented!" gasped Prout.

"Indeed, unparalleled! They shall be expelled from the school, Loder! Every one of them shall be discovered, and immediately expelled from Greyfriars! Walker!"

"Yes, sir!" gasped Walker.

"Go round to the study window, and enter that way, and unlock the door from inside."

"Oh, yes, sir!" James Walker departed on his mission.

Prout stood, like a frowning statue of wrath while he waited.

More and more fellows gathered in the broad corridor. The news was spreading far and wide now. Among the rest came Herbert Vernon-Smith, who winked at the Famous Five as he arrived. Mr. Prout did not even glance at Smithy, and certainly had no idea that that cheery youth had recently got off a telephone.

Sixth Form men, Fifth and Shell, Fourth and Remove, even fags of the Third and Second swarmed to the spot, attracted by the startling and thrilling news that the captain of the school was tied up to the Head's chair in the Head's study!

The Secret Seven had got busy on a good many occasions in the "war" with the bully of Greyfriars. But they had never gone quite this length before. This was the limit!

Several members of the staff came along, as well as the boys. Hacker, the master of the Shell, sniffed. Capper of the Fourth whispered to Mr. Wiggins that this sort of thing had never happened in Dr. Locke's time, and the Third Form master nodded assent. Mr. Capper was careful, however, not to let that disparaging remark reach Prout's ears. He did not want to go the way Quelch had gone.

The passage buzzed and swarmed, when at last Walker was heard dropping in at the window. Then the door was unlocked and thrown open.

Mr. Prout strode in with a brow of thunder.

Fellows crowded up on all sides to stare in after him. And at the sight of Loder of the Sixth sitting tied in Prout's chair, with ink streaming down his infuriated face, there was a tremendous roar.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh crumbs!"

"Oh crikey!"

"I say, you fellows, look at Loder!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Loder!" gasped Prout. "Is—is—it possible?" Prout gazed almost dumb-founded at his hapless head prefect.

"Loder——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Prout spun round, blazing.

"Silence! Silence! How dare you laugh! Is this a laughing matter? Silence! Disperse at once! Go! I will cure any boy who is not gone in one moment——"

There was a scampering of feet in the passage. From a distance floated back a howl of merriment.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

According to Prout, it was not a laughing matter. But the Greyfriars fellows evidently thought that it was! And they roared.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Begs for It!

"PLEASE, sir——"
"What?" squeaked Mr. Woose. "What is it, Bunter?"
"May I fetch a map, sir?"

"A—a map?"

"I've forgotten my map, sir!"

Mr. Woose blinked at Billy Bunter over his glasses. The Remove fellows grinned. To the Remove it was clear that Billy Bunter was inventing an excuse for getting out of the Form-room. It would have been equally clear to Mr. Quelch, who knew his Bunter. But Mr. Woose was new to Greyfriars, and did not know Bunter so well. So he was puzzled.

"Did you say a map, Bunter?" he asked.

"Yes, sir! I forgot my map!"

"But a map will not be required for this lesson, Bunter!" said Mr. Woose. "There is no occasion for fetching a map!"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

It was last lesson, and just going to begin in the Remove Form-room. All the Form knew that it was English literature in that lesson, except Bunter, who wasn't interested.

Bunter was thinking of other things. Chiefly he was thinking of a cake that had been parked in the study cupboard in No. 4 in the Remove for tea that day. Bunter had seen Vernon-Smith buy that cake at the school shop. He had seen him convey it to his study and park it in the cupboard, shortly before class.

Smithy, no doubt, supposed that that cake was still where he had parked it. Bunter knew better!

Bunter knew that that cake had been surreptitiously and feloniously spirited away from the cupboard in Study No. 4. Bunter knew, because his own fat hands had done the trick!

There had been no time before class for Bunter to devour that cake. Indeed, it had only been because the bell was ringing for classes, and the fellows going to the Form-rooms, that the fat Owl of the Remove had found an opportunity of getting away with it undiscovered.

Bunter had only had one or two bites at that cake. There had been no time

for more. All that the fat grub-raider of the Remove could do in the circumstances, was to conceal his plunder in a safe spot, to be dealt with after lessons.

He did not choose his own study for that purpose. Any fellow who missed a cake would have looked in Bunter's study first, as a matter of course. Billy Bunter knew, by sad experience, how beastly suspicious fellows could be!

That cake had been dropped into an empty box in the Remove box-room, to wait till called for, as it were! After class, Bunter was going up to the box-room to devour his prey at his leisure. In that secluded and seldom-visited spot it was safe till wanted.

Bunter had been late for class; which, fortunately, did not matter much with Mr. Woose. Woose gave him fifty lines, but it was most likely that he would forget to ask for them.

During afternoon school, Bunter was not worrying about the lines and still less about his lessons. He was thinking of Smithy's cake! The flavour of two or three sample bites lingered in his fat mouth. Bunter was always hungry before tea-time. The memory of that luscious cake made him hungrier.

For which reason, the Owl of the Remove wanted to get out of the Form-room before class was over. Had a map been wanted for the lesson, the good-natured and unsuspecting Woose would certainly have given him permission to fetch one.

Unfortunately, maps were not wanted. Bunter had not thought of that. Artfulness and obtuseness were beautifully mingled in Bunter's fascinating character. But obtuseness had the upper hand.

The fat Owl sat silent while Mr. Woose sorted out books for the lesson out of Mr. Quelch's desk.

He was not beaten yet. He was going to get out of the Form-room if he could! His fat mouth watered at the mere thought of that lovely cake, waiting in the box-room to be devoured. Lessons, at such a time, seemed to Bunter a sheer frivolity; like Nero fiddling while Rome was burning.

"If you please, sir——" Bunter restarted. "May I fetch my Latin grammar, sir?"

Mr. Woose blinked round again.

"Did you say your Latin grammar, Bunter?"

"Yes, sir!" answered the hopeful Owl. "I forgot to bring it with me, sir."

"You are a very forgetful boy, Bunter!" said Mr. Woose severely. "You have forgotten a map, and forgotten your Latin grammar! You must be more attentive, Bunter! However, a Latin grammar will not be required for the next lesson, so it does not matter."

"Oh lor'!"

There was a chuckle among the Removites. Mr. Woose did not yet perceive what was plain to all the Form—that Bunter had some secret reason for wanting to get away, and was inventing one idiotic excuse after another.

"I—I say, you fellows," whispered Bunter, as Mr. Woose put his nose into the Form-master's desk again. "I say, what's the next lesson?"

"Algebra!" whispered back Skinner, who was not a truthful youth.

"Eh? We have algebra from Lascelles!" grunted Bunter. "Is that old ass Woose going to give us algebra? Blow him!"

Bunter stood up.

"Please, sir——"

"Pray be silent, Bunter! Sit down!"

(Continued on next page.)

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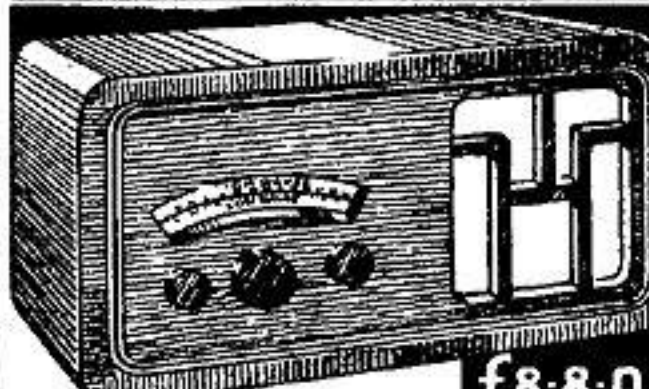
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snapped Mr. Woose. He was beginning to get tired of Bunter.

"But I've forgotten my algebra, sir!"

"Your-what?"

"My algebra book, sir! M-may I go and fetch it, sir?"

"What do you mean, Bunter? You will not need an algebra book for English literature! Are you trying to make excuses for getting away from class, Bunter?" asked Mr. Woose; the obvious fact dawning on him at last.

"Oh crikey! You beast, Skinner!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!" said Mr. Woose. "My boys, we shall take Gray's famous Elegy as our subject. Most of you, I have no doubt, are already somewhat acquainted with that great work——"

"If you please, sir——"

"Silence, Bunter!"

"I—I—I've forgotten my poetry book, sir——"

"What?"

"C-c-can I fetch it from my study, sir?"

"If you have really forgotten your book, Bunter——"

"Oh, yes, sir."

"You will take fifty lines——"

"Oh!"

"And you may share the book of the boy next to you when a book is required in the lesson."

"Oh crikey!"

There was another chuckle in the Remove. Billy Bunter had expected better luck with a soft and mild gentleman like Woose, than with a crusty old bean like Quelch! But he was getting no better luck.

English literature proceeded. Billy Bunter sat crushed.

The beauties of Gray's famous Elegy in a Country Churchyard were quite lost on him. He did not care whether the curfew tolled the knell of parting day or not. He was not interested in the lowing herd winding slowly o'er the lea! He was quite indifferent to the ploughman homeward plodding his weary way. He was thinking of the cake hidden in the box-room—lost to sight, but to memory dear!

Never had literature, English or otherwise, interested Billy Bunter very much. But never had it seemed to him so weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable as it seemed now!

The great General Wolfe, the conqueror of Quebec, declared that he would rather have written that famous Elegy than have won a great victory! Billy Bunter was far from agreeing with him. Bunter would have given Gray's Elegy, and Gray along with it, for one plum out of Smithy's cake in the box-room!

It seemed to Bunter that that lesson would never end. Gray's Elegy seemed to drag its weary length along like a wounded snake.

Bunter's thoughts were on the cake, and his eyes on the clock. With a quarter of an hour still to go, Bunter felt that he could bear it no longer.

"If you please, sir——"

"You are interrupting me, Bunter!"

"Yes, sir! I—I've got a headache, sir——"

"Bunter!"

"I—I think it would do me good, sir, if I could walk in the quad for a few minutes, sir——"

"If you speak again, Bunter——"

"Oh, really, sir——"

"I shall punish you! Be silent!"

Bunter was silent for about three minutes. Gray's Elegy continued to drag its weary length along. Ten

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,397.

minutes more to go! Bunter was fearfully hungry. The thought of the cake made him hungrier! He tried again.

"Please, sir——"

"Boy!"

"My—my toothache's getting worse, sir——"

"Your what?" almost shrieked Mr. Woose.

"My toothache, sir! It's fearfully painful!"

"A few minutes ago, Bunter, you stated that you had a headache!" yapped Mr. Woose.

Bunter started! He belonged to the class of persons who, proverbially, ought to have good memories. Nature had, unfortunately, provided him with a bad one!

"I—I mean my headache, sir!" he stammered.

"You—you mean your headache!" gasped Mr. Woose.

"Yes, sir! It's a fearful ache in a double head—I mean a double tooth—that is—I mean——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bunter! You are a lazy, idle, undutiful, inattentive and untruthful boy," said Mr. Woose. "You will be detained for half an hour after class——"

"Eh!"

"You will remain in the Form-room and write out Gray's Elegy——"

"Oh lor'!"

"And if you speak again, Bunter, I shall cane you."

Bunter did not speak again. He blinked at Mr. Woose with a fat face as dismal as that of an expiring codfish, and was silent.

He was squashed! Not only had he failed to get out of the Form-room before the end of class, he had succeeded in getting detained for half an hour after the other fellows went. He was not going to be early in dealing with the hidden cake in the box-room. He was going to be late! He sat over-whelmed.

When the Remove were dismissed, Bunter had to remain at his desk. He had to write out Gray's Elegy! Had Mr. Woose followed the Form out, Bunter might have risked slipping away and chancing the consequences. But Mr. Woose did not follow the Form out.

He remained busy with papers at the Form-master's desk. And Bunter, with feelings too deep for words, remained busy with Gray's Elegy!

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

A Session of the Secret Society!

"A LL present?"
"Smithy's not here."
"Where's Smithy, Redwing?"

"I think he's paying Loder's study a visit."

"The fathead! He knows the meeting was booked to take place after class to-day," said Harry Wharton. "Smithy ought to be here."

"Lots of Remove kids here, if you come to that!" remarked Hobson of the Shell.

"Lots!" agreed Temple of the Fourth.

"Too many, really."

"You ass, Hobson——"

"You cheeky tick, Temple!"

"Order!" Harry Wharton rapped on a box-lid with a fives bat. "Order! Members of the Greyfriars Secret Society are not allowed to call one another fancy names at business meetings."

"We don't want any Shell swank——"

"Or Fourth Form cheek——"

"Order!"

"The orderfulness is the proper caper,

my esteemed idiotic fellow-members of the absurd secret society."

It was really not the easiest task to keep order at a full meeting of the Greyfriars Secret Society. That Brotherhood of Justice included the chief members of the Remove, the Fourth, and the Shell. Outside the select circle of the secret society they were rather accustomed to ragging. Within that select circle they had rather a propensity for doing the same!

It was a very numerous meeting. The Remove box-room was crowded, not to say crammed.

Boxes and trunks and other lumber had been piled out of the way along the walls. Some of them served as seats for the honourable members of the Secret Seven. Had the eye of authority fallen on the meeting that eye would have detected, easily enough, that the Secret Seven numbered very many more than seven members.

The Famous Five were there, and Lord Mauleverer, Redwing, Peter Todd, Squiff, Tom Brown, Monty Newland, Wibley, Kipps, Russell, and Ogilvy, Mark Lanley and Dick Penfold, and others of the Remove. Half the Form, in fact, had been admitted to membership.

Temple, Dabney, Fry, and Scott, and three or four more of the Fourth Form were there. They were fewer in numbers than the Remove members; but in their own opinion, at least, they made up in importance what they lacked in numbers.

There were only three Shell fellows; Hobson; Hoskins, and Stewart. But as Shell, which they considered Middle School, had hardly any juniors at all, they fancied that they were the goods, so to speak.

Hobson had no doubt that the leadership ought to have been left in his hands. Everybody else doubted it, however, and Hobby had no chance of figuring as leader.

Cecil Reginald Temple, the captain of the Fourth, had the same persuasion with regard to himself. But Temple, like Hobby, had that persuasion all to himself.

Harry Wharton had been voted leader. As the Remove members outnumbered both Shell and Fourth members, there had been no difficulty about that.

But Shell and Fourth were disposed to be critical of Remove leadership; sometimes over-critical. And even in the Remove members there was sometimes disunion. Herbert Vernon-Smith was liable to take his own way and disregard authority—as indeed was happening on the present occasion. Instead of attending the meeting in the box-room, to which all members had been called, the Bouncer was following some stunt of his own. Which was against all the rules of the Secret Seven.

"Gentlemen of the Greyfriars Secret Society——" began the captain of the Remove, having restored order.

"Hold on," said Hobson. "Look here——"

"Order!"

"Silence for the chair!"

"Well, look here——"

"Shut up, Hobby!"

"Gentlemen and fellow-members——" recommenced Harry Wharton.

"Hear, hear!"

"Not too much row," said Temple.

"Shut up, Temple!"

"Well, Loder's always nosing up and down the passages," said Temple. "If he hears you Remove fags shouting——"

"Order!"

"Look here," said Hobson. "I was going to say that it would be safer to meet in the old tower, like we did before——"



"My toothache's getting worse, sir," said Bunter. "If I could walk in the quad——" "A few minutes ago you stated that you had a headache!" yapped Mr. Woose. "I—I mean my headache, sir!" stammered Bunter. "It's a fearful ache in a double head—I mean a double tooth—that is—I mean——" "You will be detained for half an hour after class, Bunter!" said Mr. Woose.

"Safer here!" said the chief. "That ass Coker nosed out one of our meetings in the old tower. Nobody's likely to come up to a box-room."

"Well, I think——" "Draw it mild, Hobby!" urged Peter Todd. "You can't expect anybody who knows you to swallow that!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "If you want a thick ear!" roared Hobson.

"Order!" "Silence!" Rap! Rap! Rap went the fives bat on the boxlid.

Hobson shook his fist at Toddy and relapsed into silence.

"Gentlemen, we have met——" "I guessed that one!" said Fry of the Fourth.

"Shut up, Fry!" "We have met," resumed the chief,

with a withering glare at Edward Fry, "to discuss business, not to listen to a Fourth Form ass making a funny idiot of himself."

"Hear, hear!" "Yesterday," went on the chief, "the Secret Seven gave Loder a lesson. They haven't found out yet who tied him up in the Head's study."

"Bravo!" "Loder's going to have some more lessons!"

"Hear, hear!" "He's sneaked into old Wingate's

place, now that Wingate is away crooked. He's got to learn to be as decent as old Wingate, or else chuck up the job. The Greyfriars Secret Society is going to educate him."

"Yes, rather!" "The ratherfulness is terrific!"

"The secret society is now in session,

to discuss further moves against the enemy," went on the chief. "Any member who has a suggestion to make, I——"

"Hark!" "Quiet!" "Somebody's coming!"

There was sudden silence in the crowded box-room. Footsteps were audible on the stair that led up from the Remove passage. The creaking of the old stair, under a heavy tread, was plainly heard.

The members of the secret society exchanged startled glances.

"Is the door locked?" whispered Nugent.

"Yes, of course." "If it's Loder——"

"He can't get in, anyhow." "Quiet!"

The secret society hardly breathed. Really, that remote box-room seemed a safe place for a secret meeting of a secret society. Two or three garrets adjoined it, but they were disused, and always unoccupied. But it was certainly true that Loder of the Sixth was fearfully keen on rooting out that secret society—especially since Prout had found him tied up, and inked, in the Head's study. And Loder had a way of paying stealthy and unexpected visits to the Remove quarters, in the hope of catching somebody out in something.

"It's all right," breathed Bob Cherry.

"If it's Loder, we get out by the window—easy enough to scud over the leads."

"Quiet!" The footsteps had reached the landing. They crossed to the door of the box-room.

The door handle was turned. There was a sudden bump on the door outside. It was followed by a loud and angry ejaculation:

"Ow!"

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

No Admittance!

BILLY BUNTER was annoyed. He rubbed his fat little nose which had bumped on the box-room door rather hard.

"Wow!" he repeated. Bunter, naturally, had expected the box-room door to open when he turned the handle. It was rather unusual for a box-room door to be locked.

Expecting the door to open as he turned the handle and pushed, Bunter would have followed it in as it opened—had it opened. But it did not open, with the result that the fat Owl was brought to a sudden stop by his nose bumping on the door.

"Ooogh!" said Bunter, rubbing his nose. "Wow! Wooogh!"

He turned the door handle again and shoved at the door—this time taking more care of his nose.

But the door remained shut. "What the thump!" snorted Bunter.

"The beastly thing's got jammed, somehow. Bother it! Blow it!"

He rattled savagely at the door handle. After half an hour of detention in the Form-room, Bunter was hungrier than ever—keener than ever to get at the cake hidden in the box-room. This was an unexpected obstacle, quite unforeseen by the fat Owl. There had been nothing wrong

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with that lock when he visited the box-room with Smithy's cake before class. Now it seemed to be jammed, somehow. Anyhow, it wouldn't open.

Quite unaware that that box-room was the meeting-place of the secret society of Greyfriars, Bunter did not suspect yet that the room was occupied, and the door locked against intruders.

There was no sound from within. All the fellows there had heard Bunter's voice. It was a relief to know that it was not Loder of the Sixth at the door. But Bunter was not wanted. The chatterbox of the Remove was about the last fellow in the world to be entrusted with the secrets of the mysterious brotherhood of Greyfriars.

Rattle, rattle, rattle!
"Blow the beastly thing! What on earth's the matter with it?" snorted Bunter. "It was all right to-day. It can't be locked! Blow it!"

The secret society grinned at one another silently. Bunter evidently had not the faintest suspicion that they were there. Why he had come up to the box-room at all was a mystery to them. They hoped that he would get fed-up and clear. They were not aware of the hidden attraction in that apartment, which drew the Owl of the Remove like a magnet.

Bang!
Bunter kicked fiercely at the door.
Bang! Thud! Bang!
"Blow it!" hissed Bunter. "Why won't it open? What the dickens—"
Bang! Thump! Bang!
"What the dooce does that fat idiot want?" whispered Lord Mauleverer.

"Goodness knows!"
"I'll scrag him for this when I get him in the study!" breathed Peter Todd.

Bang! Thump! Kick! Thud!
Bang!

Billy Bunter was losing his temper over the door that would not open.

"Look here! Let's go out and pitch him down the stairs!" muttered Hobson.

"Quiet!"
"Well, look here—"
"I say, you fellows, I can hear you!" came a fat squeak from outside. "I say, you let me in, you beasts!"

The secret society looked daggers at Hobson of the Shell. That rather fat-headed youth had incautiously revealed the fact that the box-room was occupied. Bunter's ears had caught his whisper.

"You ass!" breathed Bob Cherry.
"You fathead!" murmured Temple.
"Well, let's go out and scrag him!" grunted Hobby.

"I say, you fellows!" Bunter howled through the keyhole. "I know you've got the door locked! Let me in, you beasts! If you've got the cake—"

"The cake!" gasped Bob. "Is that blithering fat idiot after a cake?"

"I say, you fellows, I'll whack it out with you, if you open the door!" howled Bunter. "Are you there, Skinner? If you've come up here to smoke cigarettes, you beast, you can let me in! I won't give you away!"

No answer.
"Will you let me in?" howled Bunter. "I know you're there! I can jolly well hear you! Lemme in, you beasts! That's my cake! You're jolly well not going to scoff my cake! Beasts! Lemme in!"

Bang! Kick! Bang! Thump!
Billy Bunter, in a state of great alarm about the cake, banged and kicked and thumped on the door, with a din that rang far and wide. The secret meeting of the Greyfriars society

was not likely to remain secret much longer, at this rate.

"Let him in, and smash him!" muttered Hobby.

"You ass! If he sees this crowd here, he'll guess what's on!" hissed Johnny Bull. "It will be all over Greyfriars before prep."

Bang! Thump! Bang!
"What's that row?" came a sharp voice from the bottom of the box-room stair.

Bunter jumped.
"Oh lor', Loder!"

He blinked round in alarm as the bully of the Sixth came up. Loder had his ashplant under his arm.

"I—I—I say, Loder, it—it—it's all right!" stammered Bunter. "I—I say, I'm not doing anything, Loder!"

"What are you kicking up this shindy for?" demanded Loder, staring at the fat Owl of the Remove. "I heard you from the staircase at the other end of the Remove passage."

"I—I didn't know you were spying in the Remove!"

"What?" roared Loder.

"I—I mean, I—I didn't— Whoop!" roared Bunter, as Loder's ashplant established contact with a fat shoulder.

"Yarooop!"

"Now what's this row about?" demanded Loder.

"Yow! Ow-ow! Wow!"

"Is somebody in that room?"

"Ow! No! Yes! Wow! I—I— Wow!" gasped Bunter. "I say— Wow!"

Loder grasped the door handle and turned it.

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"Locked!" he said. "Who's in there, Bunter?"

"I—I don't know!" gasped Bunter.

"The beasts won't let me in! I believe they're after my cake!"

"Who's in here?" called out Loder, rapping on the door.

There was no answer. Harry Wharton had silently opened the box-room window. Outside were flat leads, from which it was easy to reach the ground. One by one, silently but swiftly, the secret society of Greyfriars were departing by way of the window and the leads.

With Loder of the Sixth at the door, it was time for that session of the Greyfriars Secret Society to terminate.

Loder rapped angrily at the door.

"Let me in at once!" he snapped.

But by that time there was no one to answer Loder. The secret society were dropping from the leads, and Harry Wharton, the last to leave, closed the box-room window. Loder rapped and rapped on the door of an empty room.

He dropped on one knee, and applied his eye to the keyhole. He was just in time to see the window close on the opposite side of the box-room.

Loder started.

"Who was there, Bunter?" he asked quietly.

"I don't know. I heard them whispering."

Loder gave him a keen look, and then turned and descended the box-room stair again.

Bunter waited till Loder's footsteps had died away down the passage to the Remove staircase, then he thumped on the door again.

"I say, you fellows!" Thump! "Let me in, you beasts!" Kick! "I jolly well know you're there, you rotters!" Bang! "Will you let me in, you rotters?" Thump! "I say, you fellows, I'll whack out the cake! Honour bright!"

But answer there came none. Billy Bunter thumped and banged and howled through the keyhole to empty space. Like a fat Peri at the gate of Paradise, he could not tear himself away. But he thumped and banged and howled in vain; the box-room door remained fast, and from within came not even a whisper.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

In Hiding!

HERBERT VERNON - SMITH stood in Loder's study in the Sixth Form passage with a stick of chalk in his hand and a grin on his face.

Having from a corner of the passage seen Loder safely off the scene, the Bounder had whipped into the study and closed the door, and he was now busy. With the chalk he was tracing a message on Loder's looking-glass in large capital letters.

Smithy intended to be only a few minutes in the study, and then to beat a rapid retreat and join the meeting of the Secret Seven in the Remove box-room. But on this occasion it was the unexpected that happened.

As he stood chalking on the glass the door-handle turned and the study door opened.

The Bounder had just time to duck down under Loder's table and vanish from sight as Walker of the Sixth came in. Carne followed him in.

Loder's two pals were actually within the study when the Bounder, out of sight below the level of the table, crawled silently under that article of furniture. There, on his knees, with his heart thumping, he crouched unseen—but absolutely certain to be spotted if either of the Sixth Form men happened to glance under the table.

"Gerald's not here," Carne remarked. "Somebody's been here!" grinned Walker, pointing to the looking-glass. And Carne laughed as he glanced at it. He read the inscription, evidently intended as an acrostic:

Loafer!
Ogre.
Duffer.
Eavesdropper
Rotter.

The initial letters, read downwards, formed Loder's name.

Carne laughed and Walker grinned as they looked at it.

"Some fag's handiwork!" grinned Walker. "Shall I rub it out?"

"No; leave it for Gerald to see. It will be amusing to watch his face when he comes in," said Carne.

"Might have caught the young rascal if we'd come in a few minutes sooner," remarked Walker, as he dropped into Loder's armchair. And the Bounder, as he heard that remark, was glad that it did not occur to Walker that the young rascal was still there.

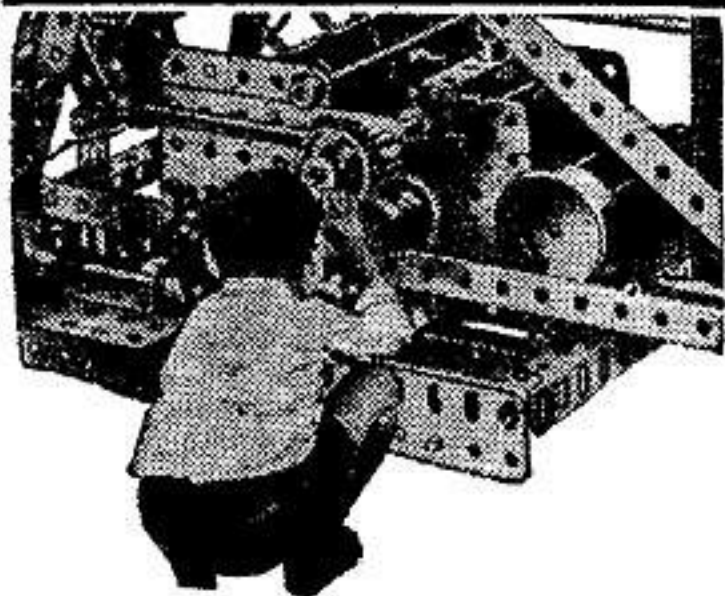
Carne sat on the edge of the table, swinging his legs. The Bounder hardly breathed.

"No smokes here, I suppose!" said Walker.

(Continued on page 10.)

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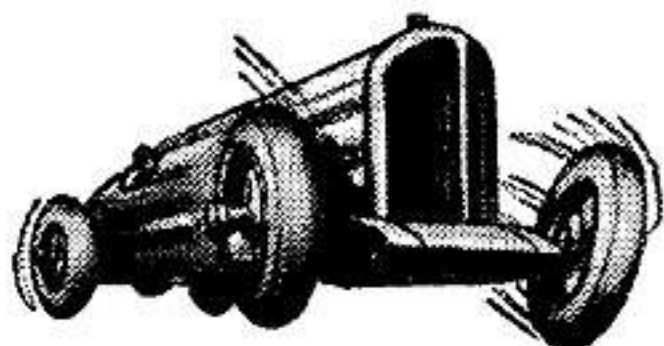
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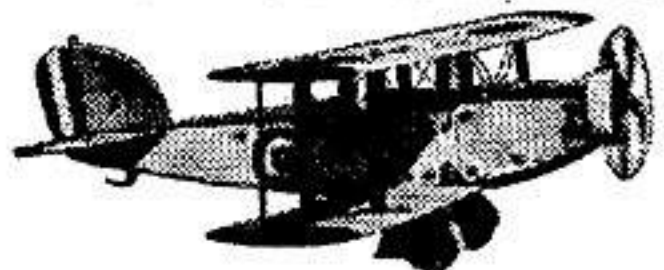
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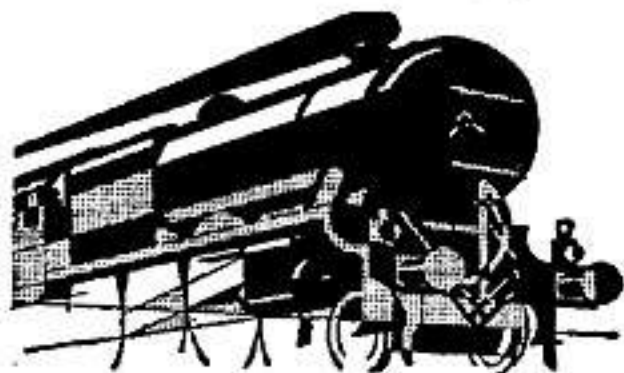
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"No fear! Gerald doesn't keep smokes in his study now," said Carne. "Not since that young villain Vernon-Smith rooted them out and very nearly gave him away to Prout."

"You got any?" yawned Walker.

"Here you are."

The two black sheep of the Sixth lit their cigarettes. Under the table Herbert Vernon-Smith breathed suppressed fury. Evidently Loder's pals were going to wait there till Loder came in. Smithy wished that he had been safe in the Remove box-room, at the meeting of the secret society.

It was about ten minutes later that Gerald Loder arrived. He nodded to Walker and Carne, and then glared at the inscription on the looking-glass.

"Who did that?" he snarled.

"Found it when we came in, old bean," said Walker. "The fags seem keen on letting you know what they think of you—what?"

"Oh, don't be a silly ass!"

Loder took a duster and wiped the inscription from the glass, his two friends watching him, with grinning faces.

"We've been waiting for you, Gerald," said Carne. "About to-night—"

"Never mind that now," said Loder.

"But we were going—"

"Never mind now! I've got on to something," said Loder, with a glitter in his eyes. "I fancy the young scoundrel who chalked that rot on my glass will be sorry for himself pretty soon! And the other young rascals, too!"

"Getting on the track of the jolly old Secret Seven?" yawned Walker.

"Exactly!"

"Oh!" Walker and Carne sat up and took notice at that. Under the table Vernon-Smith gave a start.

"I've been up to the Remove," went on Loder. "And I fancy I've spotted the young scoundrels at last. I know that they had some place where they held their meetings, of course, where they lay their rascally plots against the prefects. I rather fancied it was in the Cloisters, or the old tower, or somewhere like that, safe out of sight. But I've spotted it now; they hold their meetings in the Remove box-room."

"How do you know?"

"That young ass Bunter was banging at the door of the box-room. I heard him and went up to see what the row was. The door was locked. The young ass couldn't get in. He thought somebody was there, but they wouldn't answer him. I knocked, and there was no answer."

"Mayn't have been anybody there," said Walker. "Some kid may have locked the door—"

"I looked through the keyhole, and was just in time to see the window closed from outside."

"Oh!" said Walker.

"Somebody was there, and got out of the window," said Loder. "A lot of them, I fancy. Bunter said he heard whispering. There was no time to cut round to the back of the House and snaffle them; of course, they cleared off the moment they were out. But—"

"But—" said Carne, with interest.

"I've got it pretty clear. They hold their precious meetings there, and lock the door, and have the window and the leads handy to clear off if there's any alarm. They don't know I've spotted them, of course; I said nothing to Bunter, and let the matter drop at once. But"—Loder's eyes gleamed—"we're on the track now, you men. Next time they hold a meeting in the box-room they're going to be nailed—the whole gang of them!"

"I don't see it," said Walker. "Sup-

pose you run a mob of fags down in the box-room. They'll have the door locked, and they'll clear off by the window just the same—"

"And while I'm knocking at the door you and Carne will be waiting under the leads for them to drop into your hands," said Loder. "All I've got to do is to spot the next meeting. We've never been able to identify the young rascals because they mask their faces when they're ragging. Seven of them bagged me in the Head's study yesterday, and I hadn't the faintest idea who they were. But they won't have Guy Fawkes masks on their faces when they scoot out of the box-room window."

Walker whistled.

"They may make out that it wasn't a meeting of the secret society in the room at all—"

"They can make out what they like when we have the whole gang up before Prout and they have to explain what they were meeting there for," said Loder. "Lying won't help them out very much."

"By gum! It looks like a catch this time!" said Carne. "A crowd of juniors meeting in the box-room with the door locked—the thing speaks for itself. Prout could hardly have any doubt that they were the secret society."

"He's as keen on snaffling them as we are," said Loder. "He was simply boiling over what happened in his study yesterday. And one of them appears to have slanged him on the telephone, too. We've got them this time!"

"But if they guess that you've spotted their jolly old rendezvous—" said Walker.

"They won't! They don't know I spotted the window closing through the keyhole. If I hadn't, I shouldn't have guessed. All they know is that I heard Bunter kicking up a row and came up to stop him. I'm not letting a word drop, of course. All we've got to do is to keep an eye open and spot the next meeting. Most likely it will be pretty soon, as they were interrupted this time. Now we know the place, that's easy enough."

"Looks like a catch!" said Walker. "I've a pretty clear idea of the names of some of them. I'd swear that that cheeky young scoundrel Vernon-Smith is one of the leaders, and Wharton's another. I believe there are Shell and Fourth Form fellows in it, too—Hobson for one. But proof's another matter—and Prout can't sack a man without proof."

"Well, we're going to have proof pretty soon," said Loder, with a grin, "and it's the sack for the ringleaders—and a flogging all round for the rest. Vernon-Smith and Wharton and Hobson will be expelled if they're in it—and I'm pretty certain they are! I'll be jolly glad to see them bunked out of the school!"

Under the table, the Bounder scarcely breathed. If the three bullies of the Sixth discovered him there, he was booked for a severe handling. But he was not thinking of that now. He was thinking of the danger of the Greyfriars Secret Seven.

For there was no doubt that Loder had them on toast now! Only the fact that Smithy had learned what Loder knew, and was able to convey a warning, could save them from absolutely certain discovery at the next meeting in the Remove box-room. The Bounder was glad now that he had been cornered in Loder's study. Whatever might happen to him he would be able to put the secret society on their guard.

"By gum, I'll make the whole crew sorry for themselves, once I've got proof who they are!" said Loder. "I'll—"
He broke off suddenly.

He had stooped, while speaking, to throw a log on the fire. His eyes fell on a figure doubled up under the table.

"Why—what—who—" stammered Loder.

He made a dive at the table. The next moment the Bounder was grasped, and dragged out of his hiding-place.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Shut Up!

"VERNON-SMITH!"

Walker and Carne ejaculated the name together as they started to their feet. The Bounder, panting, wriggled in Loder's savage grasp.

"You!" breathed Loder.

Vernon-Smith struggled for a moment. But there was no escape for him, and he was cool again at once.

Loder eyed him as if he could have eaten him. He knew at once that the Removite, hidden under the table, must have heard every word spoken in the study. He gritted his teeth with rage.

If Vernon-Smith was a member of the Secret Seven—and Loder had no doubt that he was—his scheme for "snaffling" that mysterious and troublesome brotherhood was knocked on the head at once! They would be put on their guard immediately Smithy got away—and certainly there would be no more meetings in the Remove box-room.

"You—you young sweep!" hissed Loder. "You've been listening—"

"Not at all!" drawled the Bounder. "I dodged under the table when those two silly asses barged in."

"You heard—"

"I'm not deaf!"

Loder compressed his grip savagely on the Bounder's shoulder. There was a mocking gleam in Smithy's eyes. He was going to get the whopping of his life—he expected that! But he was going to put the secret society on their guard! Any amount of whopping could not prevent that.

"It was you chalked that rot on my glass!" said Loder at last.

"Was it?" drawled the Bounder.

"Not much use denying it, as we've found you here," said Carne.

The Bounder shrugged his shoulders. "And now," said Loder, in a low, savage voice, "you're going to tip the other young rascals that I'm on their track?"

"What young rascals?" asked Smithy innocently.

"You know whom I mean—the young scoundrels who call themselves the Secret Seven!" snarled Loder.

"I believe I've heard them spoken of!" admitted the Bounder calmly. "But from what I've heard, nobody knows who they are."

"You're one of them, at all events!" said Walker.

"Any proof of that?" asked the Bounder, with an air of polite interest.

Loder, still gripping the Bounder's shoulder, reached out his free hand for his ashplant. He picked it up; but he laid it down again, to the surprise of the Bounder, and of Walker and Carne also.

"You're going to whop the young sweep!" said Walker.

Loder shook his head.

"No! I'm taking him to Prout."

The Bounder stared. Prout, it was certain, would punish him for having chalked that acrostic on Loder's glass. But Prout never laid it on like Loder! A licking from Prout was as moonlight unto sunlight, as water unto wine, compared with a licking from Loder.

"But—" said Walker, in astonishment.

"But—" said Carne.
Loder did not heed them. With his grasp like iron on the Bounder's shoulder, he marched him out of the study.

The Bounder went meekly enough. He was both surprised and relieved to be taken to Prout, instead of being given "six" by Loder.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" Bob Cherry sighted them in the passages. "Smithy, what's up?"

"Cherry, take a hundred lines, and go to your study and write them out at once!" yapped Loder.

Bob stared.

"Mustn't a fellow speak?" he inquired.

"Take two hundred lines!"

"Oh, my hat!"

Loder jerked Vernon-Smith rapidly along, leaving Bob staring. The Bounder grinned. Loder had not given him a chance to speak to a Remove fellow—but there would be plenty of chances as soon as he came away from Prout!

They reached the Head's study, and Loder tapped at the door. Prout's deep boom bade them enter.

Mr. Woose was with the temporary headmaster in the study. He was listening patiently to Prout's boom. Prout was pointing out to him, for the umpteenth time, that it was up to him to discover the members of his Form who had had the unprecedented and unparalleled insolence to band themselves together in a secret society. Woose was not enthusiastic.

The secret society never bothered him—and he did not want them to begin. And, though he did not venture to tell Prout so, his opinion was that Loder of the Sixth asked for all he got from that mysterious society, and more! Prout would have been surprised to learn how many members of his staff held the same opinion.

"Vernon-Smith!" said Prout, turning a baleful glare on the Bounder as Loder marched him in. "A Remove boy! Mr. Woose, your Form is the most troublesome in the school. I had hoped for better things when you took the place of Mr. Quelch! But there has been no improvement! None!"

"But—" squeaked Mr. Woose.

Prout waved a hand. Woose was not there to talk. He was there to listen.

"I repeat, there has been no improvement!" boomed Prout. "None! Now, Loder, why have you brought this Remove boy to me?"

"I am sorry to say, sir, that he was caught in my study chalking an insulting inscription on my looking-glass," said Loder.

"I am not surprised to hear it!" boomed Prout. "Not in the least surprised! Vernon-Smith is the most unruly boy in an unruly Form! Your Form, Mr. Woose, is the most unruly in the school!"

"But, sir—"

"I repeat, Mr. Woose, that your Form is the most unruly in the school! I shall deal with this boy!"

"If I may make a suggestion, sir—" said Loder.

"Certainly, Loder—most certainly. Make it!"

"I should have caned this boy myself, sir, without troubling you in the matter," said Loder. "I am very unwilling to waste your time, sir. But the fact is, that this boy, Vernon-Smith, has been caned very many times, and it has made no difference to his conduct. I think, sir, that a few days in the punishment-room might have more effect on him. It would give him more time to reflect, sir, and perhaps lead to an amendment of his conduct."

"Quite so, Loder," said Prout approvingly. "A very good suggestion. A very good suggestion indeed."

The Bounder caught his breath.

He understood now why Loder had brought him to Prout, instead of handing out the whopping he yearned to inflict upon him.

In "punny" he would be barred off from communication with the other fellows, and would not be able to convey any warning to the secret society of what he had heard in Loder's study.

Smithy set his teeth.

"I am glad to hear you make this suggestion, Loder!" said Mr. Prout.

"I have once or twice thought you a little severe in the matter of caning the

GREYFRIARS CARTOONS

By Harold Skinner.

No. 23.—RICHARD PENFOLD.

the Poet of the Remove.



The midnight oil Dick Penfold burns. As from his tollworn brain he churns His endless yards of verse and rhyme; He'll go bald-headed in his prime! Or else he'll burst a sparking-plug And conk right out upon the rug!

And then we'll buy a handsome plate: "Here lies our Poet Laureate! In poet's craft he was 'well versed,' And wrote and wrote until he burst! Now lies he here, so fair and young, Unwept, unhonoured, and unsung!"

juniors, and I am glad, very glad indeed, to see that you are unwilling to administer corporal punishment when it can be avoided. Certainly your suggestion will be adopted, Loder."

Prout turned to the Bounder "Vernon-Smith! You will be confined to the punishment-room for two days! I trust that you will take advantage of your seclusion to meditate on your unruly and outrageous conduct, and form better resolutions for the future. And you may thank Loder that you are not severely caned."

Smithy did not feel like thanking Loder.

Prout sorted a long iron key out of his desk.

"Here is the key of the punishment-room, Loder!" he said. "Take the boy away at once and lock him in!"

"Very good, sir!"

Loder slipped the key into his pocket, and marched the Bounder out of the Head's study. The door had hardly closed when Prout's boom recommenced, poor Woose wondering dismally whether it would ever cease.

In the passage Loder tightened his grip on the Bounder's collar. He was prepared for some desperate attempt on Smithy's part to get away.

"You rotter!" breathed Smithy.

Loder grinned.

"Come on!" he said.

At the corner of the passage the Bounder made a sudden wrench. But it was in vain. Loder's grip was like iron; and in that iron grip the Bounder of Greyfriars was marched up a back staircase, and along the passage leading to the isolated punishment-room.

Loder unlocked the door and threw it open.

"Now, you young rascal—" he said, between his teeth.

He swung the junior into the doorway, and delivered a powerful kick! Herbert Vernon-Smith spun headlong into the punishment-room, and crashed on his hands and knees there with a yell.

Loder chuckled, slammed the door, and locked it. As the infuriated Bounder scrambled to his feet, the bully of the Sixth walked away down the long passage, the key in his pocket and a grin on his face. No warning was likely to be conveyed to the Greyfriars Secret Society now!

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

What Happened to the Cake!

"I SAY, you fellows—" "Blow away, Bunter!" "Had your tea?" "No; blow off!" "Like a cake for tea?" "Scoot!" "A ripping cake!" said Bunter temptingly. "A lovely plum cake! Sugar on top! I say, I want to whack it out, if you fellows like the idea—what?"

The Famous Five were in Study No. 1. It was nearly tea-time. Bob Cherry had just come up, with the announcement that he had seen Loder of the Sixth marching the Bounder off to the Head's study, and had received two hundred lines for speaking a word to him on the way.

"Smithy's the man to ask for it!" grunted Johnny Bull. "Why couldn't he come to the meeting, like the rest, instead of carrying on by himself? I suppose Loder nabbed him in his study. Redwing said he was going there."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Hook it!"

"About the cake—"

"Bother the cake!" hooted Bob Cherry. "Go and bury yourself and take the cake to the funeral!"

"Oh, really, Cherry! I say, it's not every fellow who would offer to whack out a ripping plum cake," said Bunter. "You'd like a cake for tea, I suppose? I tell you I want to stand the cake!"

"Buzz along and fetch it, then—if any—" said Johnny Bull sceptically.

"It's in the box-room."

"Oh!" ejaculated the Famous Five together.

"I say, you fellows, I shoved it in the box-room, because—because— I mean, I put it there for safety, you know, because that brute Loder's always looking for a chance to confiscate a fellow's tuck! That's what he calls it, confiscating—I call it pinching!" said Bunter. "Well, some beasts have locked themselves up in the box-room and won't let a fellow in!"

The chums of the Remove grinned.

Bunter evidently had no idea that he was addressing some of the "beasts" in question, who had long since left the box-room by the window.

"I've been hammering and banging on the door," continued Bunter. "But they won't open it and won't even answer. Fancy that!"

"Only fancy!" murmured Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! I say, that beast Loder came up and said I was kicking up a row, and gave me a lick with his cane. I thought he was going to make them open the door; but the silly ass seemed to think nobody was there, as they didn't answer to his knock! That's the sort of silly fool he is! I jolly well know they're there, because I heard them whispering, though Loder didn't! I say, you fellows, you go and make 'em let me in, and I'll get the cake and whack it out!"

"Sure the box-room is locked?" asked Wharton gravely.

"Yes, you ass! It was when I left it, anyhow. I've asked Toddy to go up and make 'em let me in, and he only laughed."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, don't cackle!" roared Bunter. "Look here, I want that cake!"

"But I fancy you're mistaken about the box-room door being locked," said Harry. "It was unlocked when I went up a few minutes ago."

"Was it?" ejaculated Bunter.

"Certainly it was!"

Which statement was perfectly correct, for Wharton had gone up specially, as soon as the coast was clear, to unlock the door of the box-room, and replace the key on the inside. There was no doubt at all that the door was unlocked now.

"Oh, all right!" gasped Bunter. "I suppose the beasts must have come out while I was speaking to Toddy in Study No. 7, if it's unlocked! I'll cut off and get the cake!"

Billy Bunter rolled away in a great hurry.

He found the box-room door unlocked, as Wharton has told him. He rolled into the room, in which the secret society of Greyfriars had so lately met, and retrieved Smithy's cake from the box in which it was concealed.

His little round eyes gleamed through his big round spectacles as he gloated over that luscious cake.

He made a step towards the door.

Then he stopped.

Instead of leaving the box-room he sat on the box from which he had disinterred the cake, and proceeded to dispose of it with huge bites.

Possibly the chums of the Remove were expecting him to return to Study No. 1 with that cake, to whack it out as promised. More probably, knowing their Bunter, they were not!

If they expected it, at all events, they were doomed to disappointment. It was a large cake; but only enough for three or four. It was, therefore, just about enough for Bunter.

And the fat Owl of the Remove proceeded to dispose of it to the last plum and the last crumb.

Meanwhile, the Famous Five sat down to tea in Study No. 1. Tea was going on when there was a tap at the door, and Tom Redwing came in. Redwing glanced round the study.

"Seen Smithy?" he asked.

"Bob saw him about half an hour ago," answered Wharton. "Loder seems to have bagged him in his study; anyhow, he's taken him to Prout."

"But he can't be with Prout all this time," said Tom. "He hasn't come up

to tea. I've been waiting for him, but he hasn't turned up. I thought he might be teeing with you fellows, as he seems to have shifted the cake."

"The cake?" repeated Wharton.

"There was a cake in our study cupboard; Smithy got it in for tea, but it's not there now—"

"I don't fancy it was Smithy shifted it, though!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "I fancy I've heard of that cake!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, my hat! exclaimed Redwing. "That fat villain Bunter was burbling something about a cake at the door of the box-room, when we were there—"

"Hush!" breathed Bob Cherry, as footsteps came down the Remove passage from the direction of the box-room stair.

A fat face and a large pair of spectacles glimmered in at the door. Billy Bunter blinked at the Famous Five. He did not observe Tom Redwing standing in the study.

Bunter's fat face was shiny and adorned with sticky crumbs. He was breathing rather hard, as if he had been exerting himself. No doubt he had for he had travelled through the big cake in record time.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Whacking out that cake?" grinned Bob Cherry.

"The—the fact is, there—there wasn't a cake!" said Bunter. "I was only—only joking, you know. Just one of my little jokes! He, he, he! But I—I say, you needn't mention it to Smithy."

"Why not?" asked Bob. "Smithy might like to hear the joke."

"Well, he might fancy it was his cake," said Bunter. "You know what a suspicious beast Smithy is."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Not that there was a cake at all, you know," added Bunter cautiously.

"I was only pulling your leg about a cake! One of my jokes—he, he, he! Still, if Smithy missed a cake from his study, he might fancy a fellow had had it! I'd rather you said nothing about the matter to Smithy! The actual fact is that I believe Redwing had the cake."

"Redwing!" gasped Wharton.

"Yes—he's in the study now, and I believe he's scoffing Smithy's cake at this very moment!" said Bunter. "He might make out it wasn't there when he came up, if Smithy asked him! I'm afraid he's untruthful."

"You—you—you're afraid he's untruthful!" stuttered Wharton, while the rest of the Co. stared blankly at William George Bunter. Redwing was standing back out of his line of vision, and the short-sighted Owl of the Remove had not spotted him yet.

"Well, lots of fellows ain't so particular about the truth as I am, you know," said Bunter, shaking his head. "If Smithy had a cake, I'm pretty certain that Redwing scoffed it. That would account for its being gone, wouldn't it? Not that I know anything about it personally, of course. I wasn't in the tuckshop when Smithy bought that cake before class, and I didn't follow him out—I stayed there till class."

"Oh crumbs!" gurgled Bob. "You weren't there—and you stayed there till class!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh! I—I—I mean—"

"You fat brigand!" roared Tom Redwing coming forward into Bunter's view. "So I scoffed the cake, did I?"

Billy Bunter jumped.

"Oh, lor'! I—I didn't see you, Redwing, old chap! I—I never meant that you had scoffed the cake, old fellow!

Nothing of the kind! The—the actual fact is, that Loder had it!"

"Loder!" shrieked the juniors.

"Yes, Loder of the Sixth, you know! He made out that he came up here because I was kicking up a row in the box-room, but the actual fact is, that he was after Smithy's cake! He snooped it! I—I saw him."

Harry Wharton & Co. gazed at Bunter! They were prepared to believe almost anything of Gerald Loder of the Sixth Form! But they were not quite prepared to believe that statement especially as many crumbs of the cake were still adhering to Bunter's fat countenance.

"That's how it was," said Bunter. "You—you might mention that to Smithy, Redwing, if—if he asks about the cake! Tell him I actually saw Walker of the Sixth snaffle it—"

"Walker?" gasped Tom.

"I mean Loder! Loder, of course. I—I wonder what made me say Walker—"

"Perhaps it was because you never remember your last whopper, before you roll out the next!" suggested Bob.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"So Loder had the cake?" said Redwing. "And did Loder plaster those crumbs over your sticky chivvy?"

"Eh?" Bunter passed a fat hand hurriedly over a fat face. "Oh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows, don't cackle!" said Bunter anxiously. "That beast, Smithy, will be frightfully ratty about the cake—you know what an ill-tempered beast he is! Look here, I'll tell you exactly what happened to that cake! Knowing that Loder was after it, I—I hid it in the box-room, to—to save it for Smithy! And a lot of fellows locked themselves up in the box-room and—and scoffed it!"

"Wha-a-t?"

"It was those fellows locked in the box-room who had it!" said Bunter. "That's why they kept the door locked, see?"

The fellows who had been locked in the box-room blinked at Bunter.

"I don't know who they were," went on the fat Owl. "But I actually heard them eating the cake—heard their jaws going at it, you now. I heard them telling one another how jolly good it was!"

"Well, my hat!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Ain't he the jolly old limit? Turn round, Bunter."

"Eh? What for?"

"I'm going to kick you!"

Billy Bunter did not turn round. He made a backward jump into the Remove passage and vanished.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Communications Cut!

"**W**HERE'S Smithy?"

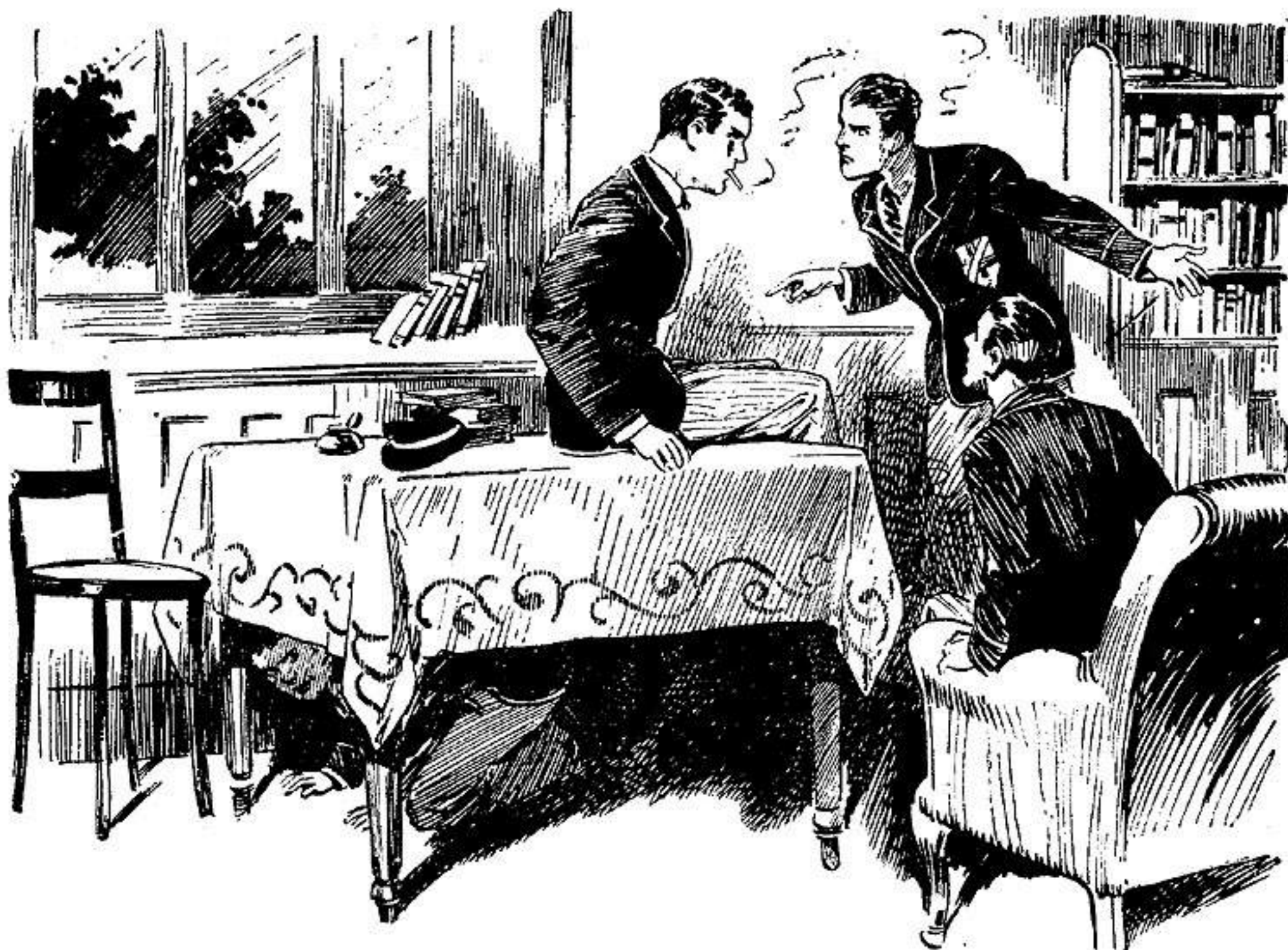
That question was being asked by a good many fellows after tea.

The Bounder seemed to have vanished.

At calling-over in Hall he did not turn up with the Remove. Mr. Prout took the roll, and the Remove fellows expected him to miss the Bounder at once. But he did not call the name of Vernon-Smith.

Evidently Prout did not expect Smithy at roll-call. Which added to the surprise and mystification of the Remove fellows.

When the school was dismissed after roll, Redwing stopped to speak to Mr. Woose as he was going out. From the "Squeaker" he received news of his missing chum.



"I've got it pretty clear!" said Loder, to Walker and Carne. "The Secret Seven hold their meetings in the box-room. They don't know I've spotted them, of course. We're on the track now, you men. Next time they hold a meeting in the box-room they're going to be nailed—the whole gang of them!" Hidden under the table, the Bounder listened to every word.

His face was dark as he went to the Rag to pass that news on to the other fellows.

"Smithy's in punny!" he said. "He's got two days in punny for chalking up some rot in Loder's study."

"Poor old Smithy!"

"The silly ass should have come to the meeting instead of going off on his own and playing the goat!" granted Johnny Bull.

"Loder must have caught him!" said Bob Cherry. "I saw him marching old Smithy off to Prout! So they've landed him in the clink!"

"Rotten!" said Frank Nugent.

"The rottenfulness is terrific."

"This is a new dodge of Loder's, landing a man in punny instead of whopping him!" said Peter Todd. "Smithy will feel it a good bit more than a whopping."

Harry Wharton knitted his brows.

"Smithy's one of us!" he said.

"We've got to give Loder as good as he gives us."

"Hear, hear!"

"I'm going to get a word to him, if I can!" said Redwing.

"Ware prefects!" said Bob. "You can bet that Loder will be looking for fellows getting a word with Smithy."

Redwing nodded and left the Rag. It was lock-up now, and the House was closed. Redwing made his way quietly to the passage that led to the punishment-room, high up in the back of the building.

Half-way down that passage was a door that closed the corridor when locked. It generally stood open, back against the wall. But it was shut and locked now.

That was the rule when a fellow was locked in "punny," to keep other fellows from communicating with him by tapping at the door and whispering through the keyhole. It was not a rule that Loder was likely to forget.

The corridor door stopped Redwing and he had to turn back. But his mind was made up to speak a word to his imprisoned chum. As it was lock-up, he could not leave the House in the usual way, but he went downstairs and dropped quietly from a secluded passage window.

Outside the House, he cut round the building to the spot overlooked by the high, barred window of the punishment-room.

A light glimmered from that high window, showing that the solitary room was occupied.

Redwing wondered whether the Bounder would be looking out. It was fairly certain that he would expect to see or hear something of his friends.

The bars in the deep window prevented a fellow from leaning out, but the window inside could be opened and a hand stretched forth to wave a signal. And though it was a risky business to call, for it was necessary to shout to be heard the distance, it was easy enough for a note to be dropped out if the prisoner so desired. Prisoners in "punny" were generally put on short commons, but a string could be let down to draw up supplies—if there were no watching eyes about.

But it was only too likely that there would be watching eyes!

As Redwing stopped beneath the high window, hesitating whether to call or to toss up a stone to call the prisoner's

attention, a shadow emerged from the shadows of the ivied wall. A hand dropped on Tom Redwing's shoulder, and as he started and stared round, Loder of the Sixth grinned at him.

"Caught!" said Loder genially.

Tom's lip curled.

"Spying, as usual!" he said contemptuously.

"Come with me!" said Loder grimly.

He marched Redwing with a grip on his collar, round to the door of the House. A crowd of fellows saw him brought in.

With a quiet, set face, Redwing walked to the Head's study with Loder's heavy hand on his shoulder.

He was marched into Prout's portly presence.

"I have to report this junior, sir, for breaking House bounds and communicating with a boy locked in the punishment-room!" said Loder.

"Upon my word!" exclaimed Mr. Prout. "There seems to be no end to the unruly rebelliousness of the Remove. Redwing, how dare you do anything of the kind?"

Redwing did not answer. He had broken a rule—a very strict rule—and there was nothing for him to say.

Mr. Prout selected a cane.

"You will bend over that chair, Redwing!"

"Yes, sir," said Tom quietly.

He took his "six" without a murmur.

Prout laid down the cane.

"I have caned you, Redwing!" he said. "Any boy who attempts, after this, to hold communication with

(Continued on page 16.)

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Tricked!

HERBERT VERNON-SMITH stared from the window of the punishment-room in the morning sunlight with a scowling

face.

He had the window open, but the bars outside, across the deep embrasure, prevented him from putting his head out.

He could not see the ground below the window, and a dozen fellows might have been standing there without Smithy being aware of it, unless they called up to him.

At a little distance there was a wall, overhung by trees, leafless now, and that was the nearest spot of which the Bounder had a view from the high window.

"The fools!" muttered the Bounder. "The idiots! The silly asses!"

He knew that the corridor door was kept shut and locked, so that there could be no communication that way. And he had waited and watched in vain for any sign from outside the House.

Knowing what he did, and fervently anxious to convey a warning to the Secret Seven, the Bounder was angry and irritated. It seemed to him that the other fellows ought to have guessed that Loder had some secret and powerful reason for segregating him. They ought to have got in touch with him somehow.

As a matter of fact, of course, the Remove fellows guessed nothing of the sort. It did not occur to anyone that the Bounder was shut up in "pranny" to keep his tongue quiet.

The punishment-room was seldom used. Still, it was there to be used when occasion demanded, and there was nothing surprising in the Bounder getting a sentence of "clink" for a couple of days. In fact, it was a thing that might have been expected to happen to the most unruly and rebellious member of the Lower School.

That Smithy had made a discovery in Loder's study, and that Loder had taken measures to keep him from passing it on, was not likely to occur to any fellow. The Bounder, in his angry irritation and impatience, did not realize that.

"The fools!" he repeated savagely. "This means the sack for some of them! That cad will catch them fairly on the hop!"

He gritted his teeth at the thought. The secret society, so far, had beaten Loder of the Sixth! Whatever suspicions he might have as to the identity of some of the members, he had never had a chance of getting any proof.

He could guess, of course, that they held meetings to discuss their plan of campaign against the bully of the school. But he had never had a chance of spotting one of those secret meetings.

Now all was changed! Loder knew! At their very next meeting the secret society of Greyfriars would be nailed!

And the worst of it was that that meeting was likely to be held very soon. Likely enough, a meeting would be called to discuss the very state of affairs that had now arisen—Smithy's imprisonment in the punishment-room!

Anyhow, a meeting would be held before Smithy was let out! Loder would take care of that, for if it did not take place during the two days for which his sentence ran, his imprisonment would be prolonged. Loder could

contrive that easily enough. He had Prout in his pocket!

The Bounder knew that he was not going to be allowed a chance to get a word of warning to his friends till a meeting had been held again—after which it would be useless.

"The dummies!" he muttered savagely.

He had hoped to get a message, or a note, away by means of Trotter, the page. Trotter had had to come there to prepare the room for his occupation; he had had to come to make the bed in the morning and to bring breakfast. But Loder put "paid" to that hope! Trotter did not come alone! Every time the page came, Loder came.

There was nothing doing in that direction.

Now the fellows were in class! Smithy's school books were on the table in the room, and he had been set a task—to which he gave no attention whatever.

He was thinking of one thing, and one thing only—how to get a warning to his comrades before disaster happened.

And he could think of no way!

If a fellow had signalled from below he could have dropped down a note, pencilled on a fly-leaf of one of the books. Certainly, he could not have ventured to write a message in plain English, warning the Secret Seven, lest it should fall into the wrong hands. Such a message would have amounted to a confession that he was a member of the secret society; and that, if it fell into the hands of authority, meant the "sack," short and sharp! Prout already suspected him, and he only wanted proof!

But the Secret Seven of Greyfriars were equal to that emergency. They had been well aware, when the secret society was formed, that necessity might arise for secret communications. For that very purpose they had adopted the "Sheriff's Secret Code," of which Loder of the Sixth had never heard.

By means of that code it was easy enough to write a message which would tell a plain tale to the initiated, and utterly puzzle anyone unacquainted with the code.

Indeed, the Bounder, in the hope of hearing a signal from below, had already written out a code message, and it was ready to be dropped from the window.

"Fools!" he growled again.

If only they had guessed! No doubt the bully of Greyfriars was carefully on the watch. But if the fellows had guessed how important it was they would have contrived somehow to get in touch with the prisoner. But, apparently, they did not guess.

It seemed an age to the imprisoned Bounder before his watch told him that it was time for morning break.

But break came at last, and he knew that the juniors were out of the Form-rooms.

He pressed his face against the window-bars, trying to get a peep at the ground below.

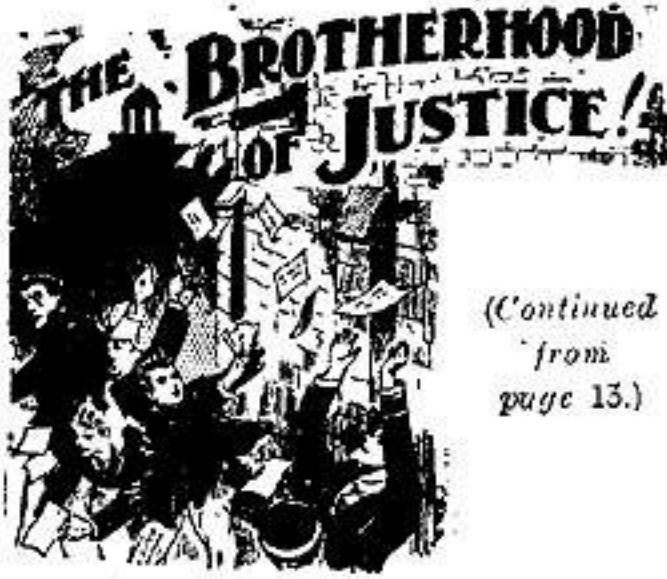
But it was in vain. He could see nothing that was nearer than a score of yards from the building.

Loder would be watchful; he was sure of that. A fellow could not venture to shout, if he crept round under the high window. But some signal could be given. Surely some fellow would come.

The Bounder started suddenly.

From below there floated up to his listening ears the sound of a low whistle.

It was a signal!



(Continued
from
page 15.)

Vernon-Smith in the punishment-room will be flogged. You will tell the Remove so. Loder, I shall rely on you to keep these unruly boys under necessary observation."

"Certainly, sir!" said Loder.

There was no doubt that Loder, not generally a very dutiful prefect, would obey that injunction. He was going to be very careful indeed that there was no communication between the prisoner of the punishment-room and the rest of the Remove. Loder had very good reasons for that.

Redwing left the study.

It was useless to make another attempt to speak to the Bounder—for the present, at least, and he went to his own study in the Remove for prep.

Other fellows, who might have thought of getting a word to the Bounder gave up the idea after what had happened to Redwing. They would have liked to call up a cheery word of encouragement to the prisoner, but it was not worth a flogging. And it was clear that the bully of Greyfriars was on the watch for delinquents.

During prep Loder of the Sixth walked up and down the Remove passage several times and looked into some of the studies. The juniors were well aware that he was on the lookout for any fellow who might have got out of House bounds to go round to the punishment-room window. After prep, when the Removites went down to the Rag, Loder was still watchful. Several times Loder or Walker or Carne looked into the Rag.

"Keeping a jolly old eye on us!" remarked Bob Cherry, with a grin. "No catch, so far!"

"The catchfulness will not be terrific!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "The esteemed and ludicrous Loder will have his ridiculous trouble for his absurd pains."

"We'll find a chance to give Smithy a word to-morrow," said Harry Wharton. "And to-morrow we'll hold a meeting of the whole society to see what's to be done. We're not going to let Loder get away with this without hitting back."

"No fear!" agreed the Co. emphatically.

Loder of the Sixth saw lights out for the Remove that night. Some of the fellows, who had not gone to sleep, heard a sound of stealthy footsteps outside the dormitory door later. Evidently the bully of Greyfriars had a suspicion that some fellow might think of breaking dormitory bounds. Keen as Loder was to catch fellows for punishment, the Removites were rather surprised at his taking all this trouble. They were not aware—yet—of the very powerful reasons Loder had for cutting off all communication between the Bounder and his friends.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,397,

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

A Mysterious Message!

"Oh, good egg!" he breathed. The whistle was repeated, low but clear. Between the bars the Bouncer whistled back. Then the whistle came again from below.

Vernon-Smith drew from his pocket the message he had written, and which he had wrapped and tied round a pen-knife to give it weight in falling. He stretched his hand between the bars, and let it drop. If that signal whistle had come from a friend waiting below, his warning message was gone to the right quarter. If not—

He listened, expecting to hear a whistle again. He did not hear a whistle. The sound of a laugh floated up.

The Bouncer gritted his teeth. It was not a friend who was below the window of the punishment-room. It was Loder of the Sixth. He had been tricked.

GERALD LODER laughed. Loder was amused. He stood by the wall under the high window, the little packet in his hand, a flyleaf torn out of a Latin grammar, wrapped round a penknife, and tied with string.

It had dropped at his feet from the window of the punishment-room, and he had only had to stoop and pick it up.

His trick on the imprisoned Bouncer had been an easy success. He had wondered whether so wary and sagacious a young rascal as Herbert Vernon-Smith would "fall" for so transparent a trick. But he had calculated on the imprisoned junior's desperate keenness to convey a message to his confederates. And he had been right.

The Bouncer had dropped the message, and now it was in Loder's hand.

And, unless Loder was very much mistaken, what was written in that message was enough, more than enough, to get the young rascal sacked from the school.

Prout, though from different motives, was as keen as Loder to get on the track of the secret society. Once he had a member of that society in his hands, with proof, there was no doubt about what Prout would do. He would expel that member on the spot as a warning to the rest.

And if that did not scare the young rascals from combining against Loder's tyranny, Loder was much mistaken, and he did not think that he was.

He laughed aloud.

Then he looked up at the barred window.

"Thanks!" he called out.

(Continued on next page.)



If you're in doubt over any Soccer problem, boys, write to "Linesman," c/o The MAGNET, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. He'll be only too pleased to give you his expert opinion.

UPS AND DOWNS!

WHILE there's life there's hope." All members of a football team should bear this in mind. No matter how badly the side may be playing; no matter how long-continued the record of failure, the turning in the lane is sure to come if the players just "stick it" and keep on doing their best.

In this connection I was interested to learn, not long ago, that Barholm United had won a football match. The only thing this team had won for a long time previously was fame for keeping on trying. For more than two seasons they had played in the Stamford and District League without winning a match; and 180 goals had been scored against them. But at long last they found the turning in the lane, and won a League match by five goals to one!

The same sort of thing happens in the higher circles of football; the game is just a thing of ups and downs for the clubs.

Most of us remember the time when Cardiff City were a power in the land. They came very near to winning the championship of the First Division one season, and they did actually win what is called the English Cup. But Cardiff City started dropping, and actually finished last season in the bottom place of the Southern Third Division. But brighter times will come back to Cardiff—if they "stick it."

If you doubt the truth of this, think of Stoke City. They have been one of the big surprises of the First Division this season, and the other week, when the name of the club appeared second in the League table, I happened to meet one of their directors

"Years ago," he said, "if anybody had told me that Stoke would ever again be a big power in football I would have thought him more than a bit mad."

A TEAM TO BE FEARED!

CERTAINLY this Potteries side has experienced the ups and downs of football, and felt, to a greater extent than most clubs, the "slings and arrows of outrageous fortune." There was a time, twenty-odd years ago, when the officials felt they could no longer continue the struggle, and they voluntarily vacated their place in the Second Division. Incidentally, Tottenham Hotspur were elected to fill that place.

But Stoke came back to life. Even so, they met with a lot of trouble, and spent one season in the Northern Third Division.

Now they are a team to be feared, and local enthusiasm for the doings of the club runs high.

I should like to think that Stoke may this season win the championship of the First Division. Perhaps they won't do that, but they are a good team, and this season their outside-right, Stanley Matthews, has been capped for England. It is thirty years since a Stoke player was thus honoured.

I am glad to be able to put in this bit about Stoke, because I have at least two readers who are very much interested in the club, and they have each written to me to say that I haven't said much about Stoke previously. Well, I can't be accused any longer of ignoring them, and it has certainly never been my intention to do so. I have a great admiration for their full-back, Bob McGrory. Two seasons ago he himself thought he had finished his playing career. He was appointed coach to the club, but just as a passing thought the officials included him on their list of players.

Circumstances compelled him to go back to the first eleven, and to-day McGrory is playing as well as ever with the first team.

Yes, this football is a funny game. Plenty of questions reach me about the offside rule, and I would like to answer at least one of them by stressing the point that a footballer is not breaking any rule merely because he is in an offside position. The referee should not stop the play and award a 'free-kick' unless the "offside" player is interfering with the play.

It is rather difficult to explain, really, just when a player is interfering with the play. The referee may decide that the position of a player is such that, even when the ball is some distance away from him, his position is affecting the play of the other fellows. The wise course, for a player who knows he is in an offside position, is to stand perfectly still.

THE IDEAL SHORT PASS!

A YOUNG player writes and asks if I can give him a hint on trapping the ball; or, to use the expert player's description "kill it." There are several ways of bringing a ball under control. One is to put the sole of the boot on it just as it falls. In that way the bounce can be prevented, and the ball kept down "dead."

Another way is to "stroke" the ball, with the side of the boot, just as it is about to bounce

By applying the side of the boot in this way, the ball is not brought down "dead," but is pushed just a little way ahead. The use of the side of the boot, however, imparts back spin to the ball, and it is thereby prevented from going a long way ahead of the player

The more I see of football of all kinds—big League games and boys' matches as well—the more I am convinced that too much use is made of the toe of the football boot and not enough use made of the side of the boot. When Peter McWilliam was playing for Newcastle United—and was one of the greatest half-backs in the game—it used to be told of him that the toes of his football boots never even required brushing, but that the sides were in constant need of repair.

That, of course, as an exaggeration. The idea which the story was meant to convey was that McWilliam did all the feeding of his forwards—passing the ball to them—with the side of his boot, and not with the toe. It is much easier to make an accurate pass with the side of the boot, and what is very important—the ball is kept on the ground. In short, the ideal short pass is pushed, rather than kicked

"LINESMAN."

"You rotter!" came a furious shout from above.

Loder laughed again, and walked away. He came back into the quad, where he stopped Walker of the Sixth.

"Cut round, and keep an eye on punny, Jimmy," he said. "I've got to go in and see Prout."

"Oh, bother!" grunted Walker.

"The bother won't last long, old bean," grinned Loder. "I fancy that young scoundrel will be outside Greyfriars in a few hours."

"Eh—why?" asked Walker.

Loder held up the little packet. James Walker stared at it.

"What the dickens is that?" he asked.

"Message from Vernon-Smith," grinned Loder. "Dropped from the window, fairly into my hands."

"The young ass!" said Walker. "He must have fancied there was some Remove kid under the window."

"I fancy he did, when he heard me whistle," said Loder coolly. "He took it for a signal."

Walker made a grimace.

"That's rather thick," he said. "Dash it all, Loder, you ought to draw a line somewhere! That's a dirty trick!"

"Thanks for your opinion!" said Loder cheerfully. "You can keep it to yourself, though. I'm not interested."

"I suppose that's a tip to the other young rascals that their meeting-place has been spotted," said Walker.

"It can't be anything else," grinned Loder. "And that means that Vernon-Smith is giving himself away as a member of the gang."

"Have you read it?"

"I'm taking it to Prout to read. Prout's going to open it, and see for himself," Loder chuckled. "This does for Vernon-Smith—the worst of the whole crew. I've not much doubt that he was one of the gang who tied me up in the Head's study. Anyhow, he's one of the precious secret society, and this message, in his own fist, will prove it. I've got him!"

"Looks like it. But—"

"And if there's names mentioned in the message, we've got some of the others, too," said Loder venomously. "We shall see. Anyhow, we've got the young rotter who wrote this, and he won't be able to squirm out of it. He can get ready for the long jump. I fancy he will be packing his box before dinner."

And Loder laughed, evidently very much bucked by that prospect.

"I knew I'd get them, sooner or later," he said complacently. "They've had a bit of a run, but I knew I'd put paid to them. I fancy the other young villains will be scared stiff when Vernon-Smith is bunked. I'm going to Prout now—"

"Are you going to tell him how you diddle the kid into dropping that message into your hands?" asked Walker sarcastically.

"Oh, shut up!" snapped Loder. "Get round and keep an eye on the window of the punishment-room. Some of the fags may be sneaking round to get word with him, and that won't do."

Walker nodded and walked away; and Loder went into the House. Quite a number of fellows noted the gloating look on his face as he went, and eyed him curiously.

"Loder looks fearfully bucked," Bob Cherry remarked, staring after the bully of the Sixth.

"The buckfulness seems terrific," said

Hurree Janset Ram Singh. "Something has happened to please the esteemed and disgusting Loder."

"Somebody landed in trouble, I suppose," said Harry Wharton. "That's the sort of thing to please Loder."

But the chums of the Remove did not guess what it was. Loder went direct to the Head's study, the little packet in his hand.

The gloating grin disappeared from his face as he entered the presence of the temporary headmaster of Greyfriars.

"What is it, Loder?" asked Mr. Prout genially.

Loder laid the packet on the table. "This is some sort of a message, sir, dropped by Vernon-Smith from the window of the punishment-room," he said.

"Bless my soul!" said Prout, blinking at it. "How did it come into your hands, Loder?"

"I have been keeping an eye on the spot, sir, during break," explained Loder. "I am afraid that some of the Remove would have had no scruple whatever, sir, in breaking the rule against holding communication with a boy in the punishment-room."

"An unruly Form!" said Prout, frowning. "A very unruly Form! Mr. Quelch left his Form in a very in-subordinate state."

"Vernon-Smith may have heard me there; and fancied that it was one of his friends—I might say confederates," said Loder. "Anyhow, he dropped the message, whatever it is. I thought it my duty to bring it to you, sir, so that you might examine it."

"Quite so!" said Prout. "I shall certainly do so, Loder! I think it very probable, Loder, that such a message as this may contain some reference which may furnish a clue to the lawless and disrespectful association among the juniors, which they foolishly call a secret society."

"I suppose that is possible, sir," said Loder gravely.

He did not mention that he was quite certain of it, and that that was the reason why he had brought the Bounder's message to Prout.

"It is quite possible, Loder—indeed, I think very probable," said Mr. Prout, in his pompous way. "I am very glad indeed, Loder, that you have intercepted this message. If it should contain proof that Vernon-Smith is a member of the so-called secret society, I shall not hesitate to act with the necessary severity. I shall expel him from the school at once."

Loder's eyes gleamed.

Mr. Prout took up the little packet. He cut the string that fastened the paper round the penknife and unrolled the paper, flattening it out on his writing-table. He gazed at it, then he stared at it, then he blinked at it. Loder, watching his face, wondered at the changing expressions thereon. To his surprise Mr. Prout gave an angry snort.

"What nonsense is this?" he exclaimed.

"What—"

"Absolute nonsense!" snapped Mr. Prout.

"But, sir—"

"Look at it!" boomed Prout. "Look at it! A meaningless farrago, sir—utter nonsense! If Vernon-Smith wrote this, and allowed it to fall into your hands, he must have been making a fool of you, Loder!"

"But—" gasped Loder, in astonishment and dismay.

"Look!" boomed Prout in great annoyance.

He pushed the paper across the table to Loder of the Sixth. And Loder's eyes almost bulged from his head as he read:

[G.] NYOAU JIY5E FAAVWIG
SNRQA WE VXA UAFY7A
BYIUYYF.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Quite a Puzzle!

MR. PROUT snorted. Loder stared.

Having, by a cunning trick, snaffled the message Vernon-Smith had tried to send to his comrades, Loder had considered the rest plane sailing.

All that he had to do was to place that tell-tale paper in Prout's hands. A message of warning to the Secret Society was, in itself, a condemnation of the Bounder as a member of that society. It was enough to get him sacked—Loder had had no doubt about that.

Not for an instant had it occurred to him that the message might be in code.

He had, indeed, wondered a little that so wary a customer as Vernon-Smith had taken the risk of dropping that message into unseen hands on no better guarantee than a signal whistle.

He realised now that the Bounder, in taking that chance, had taken no risk!

If the message fell into Remove hands, well and good! If it did not, no harm was done.

Certainly no fellow could be found guilty of anything on a message that read:

[G.] NYOAU JIY5E FAAVWIG
SNRQA WE VXA UAFY7A
BYIUYYF.

To Prout's eyes it was a meaningless succession of letters and figures—a farrago, as he called it! Loder, who was rather brighter than Prout, guessed that it was a message in code.

But that guess got him no forrarder. He did not know the code; and it looked rather tough for guess work!

Loder bit his lip till it almost bled in his rage at this utterly unlooked-for check.

He stared at the paper, as if by staring he could make the mysterious message give up its meaning—if any! But staring couldn't!

The bully of Greyfriars was completely beaten.

"Absurd!" snorted Prout. "Ridiculous! Nonsensical! I fear, Loder, that that mischievous boy Vernon-Smith was aware that you were on the watch and made up this absurd and meaningless message to delude you. He has caused you to waste your time—and my time!"

"But, sir—" gasped Loder.

"Throw it into the wastepaper-basket," boomed Prout. "And on any other occasion, Loder, please exercise a little more thought—a little more discretion, Loder! You have wasted your headmaster's time by your absurd gullibility, Loder!"

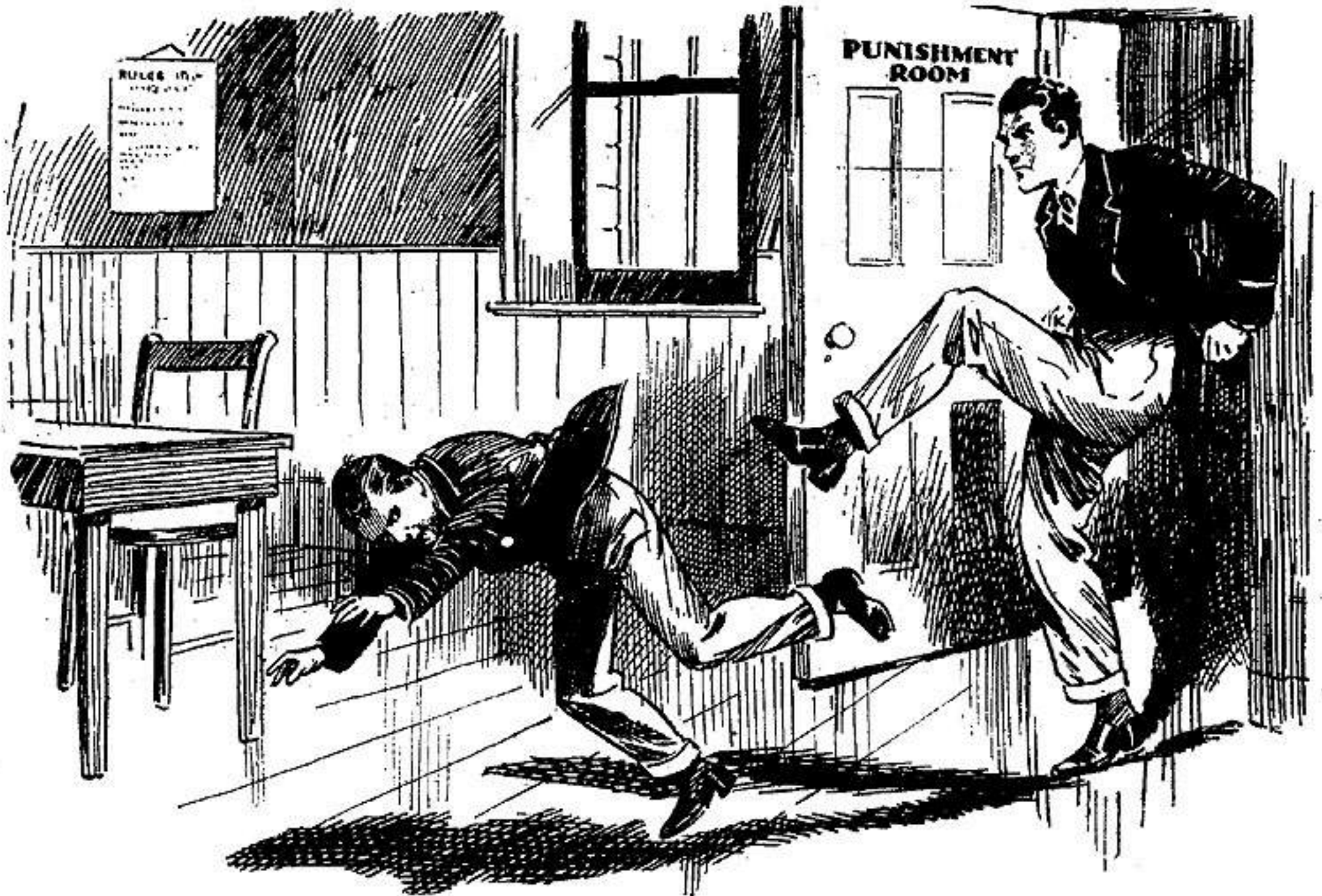
Loder breathed hard.

It was difficult for him to swallow this with patience. Never had he come so near to telling Prout what he really thought of him!

But he restrained himself. Prout had to be treated with tact. He had to be, in Shakespeare's words, tenderly led by the nose as asses are!

"I think, sir, that it is a message!" Loder cut in, as Prout paused to snort with contempt.

"A message! Nonsense! What can it mean?"



"Now, you young rascal," said Loder, between his teeth, as he threw open the door of the isolated punishment-room, "get in there!" He swung the junior into the doorway and delivered a powerful kick. Herbert Vernon-Smith spun headlong into the punishment-room, to crash on his hands and knees.

"A code, sir——"

"A what?" boomed Prout.

"It looks to me, sir, like a message written in a secret code!" said Loder. Really, that ought to have occurred to Prout himself. But ideas did not evolve quickly in Prout's massive intellect.

"Oh!" said Mr. Prout. "Ah! I did not think of that, Loder! Certainly, I did not think of that!"

Loder refrained from telling him that he lacked the necessary apparatus for thinking with!

Prout looked at the mysterious message again, with a new interest.

"A code!" he said. "A cryptogram, what, what? It is possible that those young rascals have adopted a cryptographic method of communicating with one another! Bless my soul! Do you think it possible, Loder?"

"I do, sir! In fact, I am sure of it!" said Loder. "Vernon-Smith hoped that one of his confederates would get this message—but he took care to make it incomprehensible to anybody else."

"I could send for the boy," said Prout thoughtfully. "I could command him to translate this absurd message."

Loder barely controlled his impatience. He knew exactly how likely the Bouncer was to translate a code message that would earn him the sack. If that message ever was decoded, it certainly would not be by Herbert Vernon-Smith!

"I am afraid, sir, that you would get no truthful answer from him on this subject," said Loder.

"Possibly, possibly! Indeed, doubtless he would be afraid to decode the message if it contains proof of his participation in the lawless activities of the so-called secret society!" said Prout. Prout's powerful brain moved very slowly, its wonders to perform!

He blinked at the paper.

"In my youth, Loder, I had some skill

with cryptograms!" he remarked. "I have little doubt that I shall be able to decipher this! Very little doubt."

Loder had a very great doubt.

Prout's youth was a long way behind him; and if he had been at all sharp at that distant date, he had not preserved that gift later in life!

Loder doubted very much whether he would be able to decode the mysterious message himself! He was absolutely certain that Prout wouldn't be able to.

"The letter 'G' occurs by itself first of all in brackets," remarked Prout. "No doubt the name of the boy to whom the message is addressed."

Loder thought it more probable that the bracketed letter was a code sign; but he did not gainsay Prout.

"Is there a boy in the Remove, Loder, whose initial is G?" asked Prout.

Loder ran over the names in his mind. "No, sir!"

"Oh!" Prout was a little dashed. His first shot had missed. "It might, however be the initial of a Christian name. Can you recall any such?"

Loder made a mental effort again.

"No, sir; I can't think of any."

"Oh!" said Prout again. "But there are other boys, as well as Remove boys, in this—this lawless organisation, Loder! Some boy in another Form!"

But "G" seemed to be rather an uncommon initial at Greyfriars. Loder could think of nobody, except his own fag, Tubb of the Third, whose front name was George. There was Greene of the Fifth; but it was fairly certain that Fifth Form seniors were not members of the secret society of the Lower School.

Prout frowned. He did not like being checked like this! He would have been glad to display his intellectual powers to Loder by reading off the cryptogram like a paragraph in the "Holiday

Annual!" But it was evident that there were difficulties in the way.

Prout gave up "G" as a bad job.

"Only one word of English occurs—the short word 'we.' That, at least, is quite clear, and evidently not in code, Loder."

To Loder's more sagacious mind that word "we" was as clearly in code as the rest, and it was sheer chance that made the code letters form a genuine word, even so short a one.

But it was not his cue to argue with Prout.

"That, however, does not get us far," said Prout thoughtfully. "You will observe, Loder—please observe—that numerals occur among the letters."

Loder had already observed that.

"There is a '5' and a '7,'" resumed Prout. "These numerals may refer to the numbers of studies in the Remove, Loder."

Loder thought it improbable.

"The last word should give us some letters, which may enable us to decipher the whole," went on Prout. "Doubtless it is the signature."

Loder did not think it likely that Vernon-Smith would sign a letter in code, and thus give away a number of the code letters. Prout, however, proceeded to examine "BYIUYF" very carefully.

"Certainly that word cannot imply Vernon-Smith," he said musingly. "The number of letters is insufficient for the purpose, Loder."

Loder very nearly said "Go hon!"

"Is the boy known by any nickname in his Form, Loder, to your knowledge?"

"I think he is usually called Smithy, sir."

"That word contains only six letters, and this final word contains seven," said Prout. "It cannot be 'Smithy.' But

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I think I have heard that he has some sort of a nickname—"

"He is called the Bounder, sir."

"The Bounder! Seven letters!" said Prout triumphantly. "No doubt he has signed this letter by his nickname, Loder! Stay—what is his Christian name?"

"Herbert, sir!"

"Seven letters again. The last word may therefore be Herbert!" said Mr. Prout. "Either Herbert or Bounder, Loder! What, what?"

"But there's a double letter in the last code word, sir," said Loder, as patiently as he could. "And there is no double letter in either Herbert or Bounder."

"Oh!" said Prout. He blinked at the paper again. "Quite so! I had not for the moment observed it. A double letter—undoubtedly; represented here by two 'Y's.' Loder, that last word cannot, I think, be a signature."

Loder knew that already.

"It is very puzzling—very perplexing indeed!" said Prout. He knitted his plump brows over that puzzling and perplexing message.

Loder waited. He had no hope that Prout would be able to decode that mysterious message, though he was going to try his own luck later. For fully five minutes there was silence in the study, while Prout's rather stolid brain laboured—in vain!

He made a gesture of angry impatience at last.

He was beaten—beaten to the wide by that code. But Prout did not like to admit being beaten. He preferred to dismiss the matter as trivial, and unworthy of his attention.

"We are wasting time, Loder!" said Prout. "Time is too valuable to waste on what is, after all, only a foolish trick of a mischievous schoolboy. Probably the message, if deciphered, would mean nothing—nothing at all! I am afraid I can give the matter no further attention, Loder."

Prout made a gesture of dismissal.

Loder picked up the paper and left the study. Prout gave an irritated grunt as he went. He did not really like being beaten. Neither did Loder—but he had to admit that he was beaten, after he had made his head ache over that perplexing message in code.

That it was a message to the secret society, that it conveyed a warning of Loder's knowledge of their plans, that it held evidence to convict Herbert Vernon-Smith of being a member of that secret society, Loder had not the slightest doubt. He was certain of that.

But that certainty was no present help to him! Concentrate as he might on that mysterious cryptogram, he could make neither head nor tail of it, and that was that!

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Tipped in Time!

"MAD!" said Coker of the Fifth. "Talking about yourself as usual?" yawned Potter of that Form.

"Don't be a cheeky ass, Potter!"

"Anybody else mad?" asked Greene.

"Don't be a cheeky fathead, Greene!"

That afternoon was a half-holiday at Greyfriars. The Remove had played a Form match with the Fourth; but a good many fellows had not given their attention to the football match, but to attempts to get a word with the prisoner in the punishment-room.

All such attempts, however, had been unavailing.

As a fellow found at it was booked

for a flogging, they had to be very careful. Fellows would stroll in an accidental and casual sort of way round the school buildings, as if thinking of anything in the world but Smithy in "punny." And in every case they had to shear off, finding that watch and ward was kept.

Either Carne or Walker was always in the offing, strolling about, with his ashplant under his arm.

Redwing was the most determined of all to get a word to his chum, but he had no luck.

Loder was taking great care of that. He could not decipher the code message he had got hold of by a trick. But, at all events, he could keep the Bouncer from dropping a message to anyone who would be able to read it. He could, at least, guard against the Bouncer putting the secret society on their guard, even if he could not convict Smithy of being a member of the same.

The junior football match was over now. More and more fellows took a casual sort of stroll round the school buildings, but they were rewarded only by a distant view of a patrolling prefect, and had to scuttle off again.

Some of them were beginning to wonder at the extraordinary care Loder was taking to keep communications cut.

Even seniors who chanced to stroll in the forbidden direction were turned back. Coker of the Fifth, much to his indignation, had been told curtly to "cut" by Walker of the Sixth when he happened along. Loder was taking no chances, though this excessive watchfulness had the effect of drawing general attention to the prisoner of the punishment-room.

Coker at the present moment was standing by the House steps. His loud voice reached many ears, as well as those of his friends Potter and Greene.

Coker, in stating that somebody was "mad," was not, as usual, talking about himself, as Potter had playfully suggested.

Horace Coker was looking surprised, perplexed, and a little concerned. Several fellows stopped to hear what Coker had to say.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, who's gone off his rocker in the Fifth?" Bob Cherry inquired affably.

Coker gave him a glare.

"Shut up, you cheeky fag!" he said. He turned his back on Bob, and continued to address Potter and Greene. "He's mad—mad as a hatter! What do you think of a fellow standing at a window chucking bits of paper out—"

"Wha-a-at?" ejaculated Potter.

"With a lot of silly rot scribbled on them," said Coker. "What do you think of that?"

Potter and Greene stared. So did other fellows, who gathered round to hear about this: If any fellow was acting in the manner described by Coker, it certainly seemed to imply a doubt of his sanity.

"But who's doing it?" gasped Potter.

"That Remove kid in punny!"

"But what—why—"

"Beats me hollow, unless he's mad!"

said Coker. "Must be absolutely barmy, I think. I walked round, you know, and that cheeky cad Walker had the nerve to tell me to cut. He was picking up bits of paper."

"Picking up bits of paper?" said Potter almost dazedly.

"Just that!" said Coker. "And I saw that kid's paw sticking out of the bars of the window, you know, dropping some more. The wind's blowing them all over the place."

"Well, my hat!"

"One bit flew past me, and I got it,"

said Coker. "I looked at it, and it had some mad stuff scribbled on it—a lot of meaningless letters and figures—just mad piddle! Looks to me as if that kid Vernon-Smith has gone right off his rocker in punny. Something ought to be done about it. Think a fellow ought to speak to Woose?"

"Got the paper?" asked the mystified Potter.

"No; I chucked it away after looking at it. It was a leaf torn out of a school-book and written on. Mad stuff—no sense in it at all. It didn't even make words—just a lot of letters and figures."

Bob Cherry listened—and drew a deep breath. He was glad that he had stopped to hear Coker's remarks.

Leaving Coker still discussing this extraordinary phenomenon with his friends, Bob ran into the House and up to the Remove passage.

He found his comrades in Study No. 1. After the football match, the meeting was booked to take place in the box-room before tea. It was not yet time for the meeting, but the word had been passed round to the numerous members of the secret society in the various Forms.

"What's up?" asked four voices together, as Bob burst breathlessly into the study.

"Smithy—" gasped Bob.

"We can't get at Smithy," said Johnny Bull. "No good asking for a flogging. But—"

"Shut up, old chap, and listen!" said Bob, and he hurriedly related what he had heard from Coker of the Fifth.

Harry Wharton gave a whistle.

"It's the Sheriff's Code!" he said. The members of the Secret Seven all knew that at once.

What seemed to Coker startling evidence that the imprisoned junior had gone "off his rocker" was clear enough to Smithy's associates. If he was throwing papers out of the windows, scribbled on with seemingly meaningless letters and figures, it meant one thing—and one thing only—that he had something urgent to tell his fellow-members, and was adopting that desperate expedient to get in touch with them.

"Let's go and see!" said Nugent.

And the Famous Five hurried out of the House at once.

From a distance they had a glimpse of Walker of the Sixth under the high window of the punishment-room. He was still there on the watch, and it was impossible to approach the spot.

Communication with Smithy was as impossible as ever. But it was possible to see the high, barred window from a safe distance, and that was all they wanted now.

Keeping in cover of a gardener's shed, well out of Walker's view, the chums of the Remove fixed their eyes on that distant high window.

They waited.

But they had not long to wait.

Between the bars of the window a hand was stretched from within. Far off as it was, they could see that the hand held a number of small sheets of paper.

It opened, and the papers—six or seven of them—floated away on the wind.

The November wind was rather gusty, and the papers fluttered away in all directions.

Most of them fell near the wall, and they had a glimpse of James Walker scuttling after them and picking them up.

But one or two sailed away on the strong wind and landed on roofs, or in the branches of trees, out of Walker's sight.

"Well, my hat!" said Bob Cherry.

"We've got to get hold of one of those papers!" said Harry. "Smithy's trying to get word to us about something. It must be something urgent, or he wouldn't be using the code."

"But what?"

"Goodness knows!"

None of the papers had fallen anywhere near the Famous Five, and they could not venture to let Walker spot them. They waited.

Only a few minutes later the Bouncer's hand emerged from the bars again, and a whole handful of papers dropped and scattered on the wind.

The juniors watched keenly. Four or five of the papers—pages torn from a schoolbook—floated far on the gusty wind. One of them dropped only a few yards from the shed where the juniors were in cover.

Bob Cherry whipped after it, grabbed it, and scudded back to his comrades.

"Got it!" he gasped.

"Cut!" said Wharton briefly.

Without waiting to look at the message, the Famous Five retreated from the spot. As they went, another handful of papers came fluttering down from the barred window. Evidently the Bouncer was making innumerable copies of his message and scattering them on the wind in the hope that one of them would fall into friendly hands.

The Famous Five hurried back into the House, the captured paper safe in Bob's pocket. Not till they were back in Study No. 1, with the door closed, did they look at the paper. Then it was spread on the study table, and all the Co. read it together.

[G] NYOAU JIY5E FAAVWIG
SNRQA WE VXA UAFY7A
BYIUYYF.

It was strange enough to look at. No wonder Coker of the Fifth had fancied that Smithy must be potty to have written such meaningless stuff and scattered it from the barred window! But it was not meaningless to the members of the Greyfriars Secret Society.

Harry Wharton took his copy of the code and cipher key from his pocket. It consisted of two cardboard discs, a smaller one revolving on a larger.

On the outer rim were the alphabet and numerals; on the inner rim were the code letters.

"G," the letter in brackets, was the "code letter." By turning the inner disc till the "G" on it came opposite the "G" on the outer disc the "code" was revealed.

Thus, "R" came opposite to "A," and so "R" stood for "A" in the code. "J" came opposite to "K," and so "J" stood for "K." And so on through the whole alphabet.

It was easy enough to decode once the code letter was placed in position.

[G] NYOAU JIY5E FAAVWIG
SNRQA WE VXA UAFY7A
BYIUYYF.

LODER KNOWS MEETING PLACE IS THE REMOVE BOX-ROOM.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

No Luck for Loder!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. stared at that decoded message. They stared blankly.

That the Bouncer had something urgent to convey to his comrades was evident from the extraordinary expedient he had adopted, but they had not had the faintest idea what it was.

Now they know!

"Loder knows meeting-place is the Remove box-room," repeated Harry Wharton blankly. "How the thump can Loder know?"

"And how the thump can Smithy know that he knows?" said Bob Cherry in wonder.

"The howfulness is terrific," remarked Hurrce Jamset Ram Singh. "But the esteemed Smithy must know what he is talking about, my absurd chums, and he has given us the tip. And as the English proverb remarkably observes, a tip in time saves the cracked pitcher from going longest to the well."

"But how——" said Nugent blankly.

"Can't make that out," said Harry. "Loder must have spied it out, and Smithy got on to it. That's pretty clear."

"My hat! And that's why they've been taking such jolly good care that Smithy never got a word with any of us!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Loder gave me lines for trying to speak to him when he was taking him to Prout yesterday. And they've been watching like cats ever since."

Harry Wharton nodded.

All was clear now.

If Loder had spotted the secret meeting-place of the secret society and knew that the Bounder was aware of it, it was evident that he would take the greatest care to keep Vernon-Smith from getting a word to his comrades.

The captain of the Remove breathed hard.

"By Jove!" he said. "That bully knows—and, of course, he's on the watch for our next meeting—to bag the lot of us!"

"Phew!"

"And Smithy knew that, and couldn't give us the tip!" said Frank Nugent. "I dare say that was why Loder got him into punny, instead of whopping him."

"That's pretty certain," said Harry. "By gum, it's jolly lucky he had the code to fall back on! If he'd written this in plain English it would be enough to get him sacked! It's a proof that he's a member of the secret society. Prout would have sacked him on this."

"He couldn't have risked it," said Bob. "But the jolly old code has done the trick! Loder can get hold of the message if he likes, and make his jolly old napper ache over it, but he'll never read it without the key."

"Walker's got hold of a good many copies," grinned Johnny Bull. "We saw him picking them up. I suppose he will guess that it's in code—but reading it is another matter!"

"Smithy's a jolly old genius!" said Bob. "I suppose he's been watching all day for some fellow to get a word with him, and found that there was nothing doing. Then he thought of this. I suppose he's chucked dozens of these from the window. Loder can make a collection of them if he likes and be none the wiser."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But some fellow who knew was bound to get hold of one sooner or later," said Nugent. "Lucky we got it in time, though! The meeting's booked for five—and it's a quarter to now."

"Time to warn the fellows," said Harry.

"Yes, rather!"

There was a tramp in the passage, and Hobson of the Shell came into the study. He had a rather excited look.

"Here, look here, you men!" said Hobby. "I picked this up in the quad. It was blowing about, and I picked it up and looked at it. Somebody's been writing in our code!"

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Hobby laid a paper on the table. It was a leaf torn from a Latin grammar, and on the margin was written the now familiar message.

[G] NYOAU JIY5E FAAVWIG
SNRQA WE VXA UAFY7A
BYIUYYF.

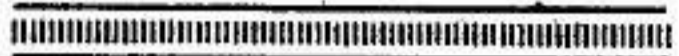
"I haven't worked it out yet," said Hobson. "But——"

"But we have!" grinned Bob Cherry. "It's a tip in time from Smithy. Here's the jolly old construe!"

"Loder knows meeting-place is the Remove box-room," repeated Hobson. "Oh, my hat! Why, I was just going up there!"

"Get word round to all the fellows," said Harry Wharton. "The meeting's off! For goodness' sake, don't let a man go near the box-room!"

The juniors hurried out of the study. There was no time to be lost, with the meeting of the secret society booked to take place in less than a quarter of an



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G. MITCHELL, 3, Cecil Grove, Edinburgh Street, Hesse Road, Hull, Yorks.—Fountain Pen.
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hour, and—as they could not doubt—Loder on the watch.

Some of the members were already on their way. Cecil Reginald Temple of the Fourth was coming up the Remove staircase. Stewart of the Shell was met on the lower landing.

But there was time—and the juniors made the best use of it. In a very few minutes every member of the Greyfriars Secret Society was warned of danger and tipped that the meeting was "off."

Nobody went near the stairs leading up to the Remove box-room. Every member of the secret society was careful to give that quarter a wide berth.

But for the code message, the Remove box-room would have been crowded at five o'clock. Now, when five chimed from the clock-tower, that room remained in its usual silent and deserted state.

If Loder was keeping watch on the meeting-place, he was welcome to go on doing so as long as he liked.

As a matter of fact, he was.

Loder considered it quite likely that the young rascals would hold their meeting after the football match that afternoon. And before the match ended he

was ensconced in the garret adjoining the box-room.

There he could not fail to hear them if they came up—and once gathered at that meeting, they would be in the hollow of his hand.

He waited—and listened for footsteps. He went on waiting!

He had cigarettes, and a racing paper to keep him company. But after an hour or two he was tired and bored and extremely bad-tempered.

And he wanted his tea.

But Loder was a stickler—and he waited another hour—in the hope of hearing footsteps of surreptitious young rascals coming to a meeting in the box-room.

He did not hear a sound!

He wondered savagely whether, in spite of all his precautions, that young villain, Vernon-Smith, had somehow succeeded in getting a warning to his associates! Anyhow, he realised at last that there was going to be no meeting that day—and he left the garret at last, tired and disappointed, and in the worst temper that ever was! And the meeting, in a distant spot, had met—and was over, by that time!

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

Brought to Book!

JAMES WALKER grinned. Coming along the Sixth Form passage to Loder's study, he heard a loud howl from that apartment. The howl was followed by Tubb of the Third whizzing out into the passage as if he had been shot from a cannon.

A boot appeared for a moment astern of Tubb, showing what had been the means of propulsion.

Tubb bumped in the passage and roared.

Evidently Loder was at home, after a rather long absence. Equally evidently, he was not in a good temper, and his hapless fag had had the benefit of it.

Tubb of the Third picked himself up and wriggled away. Walker, grinning, went into the study.

Loder was at the table at tea—a very late tea! Tubb had got that late tea ready for him—and had been rewarded with a kick. Loder scowled at James Walker's grinning face.

"Where have you been?" asked Walker. "I've looked in two or three times."

"Keeping an eye on the Remove box-room," grunted Loder. "The young scoundrels never turned up, as I expected they would!"

"Not much use now," grinned Walker. "That young rogue, Vernon-Smith, has done you, Gerald! I've been trying to find you, to tell you."

Loder gave a snarl.

"You've let him get word, you fool, to——"

"Steady on!" said Walker. "Not my fault! Look at that!" He drew a handful of crumpled papers from his pocket and threw them on the table.

Loder stared at them. They were leaves torn from school books, more than two dozen of them. And each had a sentence written on the margin—the mysterious sentence that had already given Loder a headache that day!

[G] NYOAU JIY5E FAAVWIG
SNRQA WE VXA UAFY7A
BYIUYYF.

"What the thump!" exclaimed the astonished Loder.

"The young villain's been scattering these from the window of punny," explained Walker. He seemed rather



"What nonsense is this?" snapped Prout. "Look at it! If Vernon-Smith wrote this utter nonsense and allowed it to fall into your hands, he must have been making a fool of you, Loder! Look at it!" Loder's eyes almost bulged from his head as he read the meaningless succession of letters and figures. It was enough to astonish any fellow!

amused. "Chuckling them out in showers. I picked up that lot—but a lot more blew away, all over the shop. I saw five or six fags with them in the quad—puzzling over them! See the idea? If that rigmarole is a secret message, as you fancied—"

"I know it was, you idiot!"

"Well, if it was, he got the tip through by that dodge!" grinned Walker. "You can bet that some of his confederates got hold of some of the papers he scattered all over the school."

Loder sat and stared at the crumpled heap.

His face was pale with rage.

He realised now why he had had his long and weary wait in the garret adjoining the box-room in vain! No meeting had been held there—no meeting was going to be held there! Carefully watched as he was, the Bounder had succeeded in getting the news through!

"You silly ass!" he hissed. "Why didn't you bag all the papers the young scoundrel threw out?"

"Dozens of them—blowing all over the place!" Walker shrugged his shoulders. "How could I? I got a lot of them—and then gave it up. I tell you I've seen them in the hands of a lot of the fags. Coker of the Fifth had one. And a lot of juniors—"

Loder rose from the table, heedless of his unfinished tea.

The Bounder had "done" him, there was no mistake about that! Not only had he had his weary vigil in vain, but it was useless to keep watch on the box-room at all—for now that they were "put wise," the Secret Seven were quite certain not to go near that apartment. When they held a meeting again, it might be anywhere—except in the Remove box-room!

Loder's rage was too deep for words! He still could not make head or tail of that cryptic message—but he knew that the Secret Seven could! If he could have decoded it, he knew that it would be proof enough to sack the Bounder on—but he could not decode it! The secret society of Greyfriars had beaten him all along the line!

He picked up his ashplant.

"What are you going to do?" asked Walker. "You can't whop the whole Lower School on suspicion, old bean!"

Loder gritted his teeth.

"I can whop that young scoundrel, Vernon-Smith, for diddling me like this!" he said, in a choking voice. "I'm going to the punishment-room now, and I'm going to take the skin off him!"

He took a big iron key from his desk. It was the key of the punishment-room, also of the corridor leading thereto—the locks being similar. The key was left in Loder's charge by Prout, now that punny was occupied, though Prout would certainly never have dreamed for what reason Loder was now going to use it.

He slipped the key into his pocket, put his ashplant under his arm, and stamped out of the study, leaving Walker grinning.

A back staircase led to the long corridor that gave access to the secluded punishment-room. Loder tramped up that staircase, his eyes gleaming, and his teeth set.

He could not deal with the secret society of Greyfriars—the code message had prevented that. But he could deal with the imprisoned Bounder—and he was going to deal with him—hard!

The long punishment-room was dark. It was now long after nightfall. November gloom hung thickly over

Greyfriars. But Loder knew where the switch was, and he groped for it.

As he did so, a sound in the darkness of the corridor caught his ears. Groping for the switch, his hand came in contact with a human form in the darkness.

He gave a violent start.

The next instant, hands were on him on all sides, and he was down on his back on the floor.

One hand was clasped over his mouth, shutting off the yell he would have uttered in his startled terror.

He struggled desperately, realising what it meant. He was in the hands of the Secret Seven again! It flashed into his mind that they had guessed that he would be on Smithy's track as soon as he learned how the sagacious Bounder had "done" him.

It looked like it, at all events, for here they were, evidently on the watch for him in the dark. His ashplant clattered on the floor, and he struggled wildly in many hands.

But he had not the ghost of a chance. His arms and legs, his hair and neck, were held, and he felt his handkerchief jerked from his pocket, and stuffed into his mouth. He felt a box-ropes wound round him again and again, and knotted in many places. In that dark corridor, a distance from the occupied part of the House, there was no chance of the scuffling being heard. He had fairly delivered himself into the hands of the enemy by coming there!

A pocket flash-lamp gleamed. It gleamed on Loder's infuriated face and blazing eyes.

He had a glimpse of seven dim figures and of seven Guy Fawkes masks that covered seven faces. Then a bag was drawn over his head.

The light was shut off at once. He knew that it had only been turned on to make sure that the captured man was the man they wanted.

He heard a faint chuckle; but no word was spoken.

Unable to stir a limb, unable to utter a sound, Loder of the Sixth felt himself picked up and carried away.

Where he was carried he had no remote idea. There were stairs and passages on the way, and there were several long halts, during which, he could guess, his bearers kept in cover, to watch for the coast to be clear. Obviously, they had to take care not to be spotted with their peculiar burden!

He heard a window opened. The bag over his head completely cut off his vision, but he felt himself lowered to the ground outside.

He was in the open air! They had got him out of the House—why, he could not begin to guess.

Then he was carried again!

There was another halt, and he felt himself lifted through a window again! He was dumped on a floor!

He was inside the House again! He was in a room on the ground floor—that was all he could tell!

The bag was jerked from his head.

He blinked round.

Dim as it was, with only a glimmer of wintry starlight coming in at the window, he could make out where he was.

It was Prout's old study—the one the master had occupied before becoming temporary headmaster of Greyfriars, and moving into Dr. Locke's.

Since that time, Prout's old study had been unoccupied. It was occupied now—by Loder of the Sixth and the Secret Seven! But what it all meant was a dizzy mystery to Loder.

He glared at the masked faces in silent fury. Seven pairs of eyes twinkled at him from the eye-holes of the masks.

Loder chewed hard on the gag. The very next room on either side was occupied by a Form-master. If he could have shouted—

But he could not even whisper!

The door was shut, and, he could guess, locked. One of the masked juniors closed the window. Then he bent over Loder.

"Loder!" It was a deep bass voice, disguised, unrecognisable. "Loder! You know where you are—in the hands of the Secret Seven—the Brotherhood of Justice. Loder, you are sentenced to punishment for having a Remove man shut up in 'punny'! The sentence is that you shall have all your hair shaved off, leaving you as bald as a crew. Brother No. 2, you have the scissors!"

Brother No. 2 nodded and produced a pair of scissors. Loder shuddered. His eyes dilated with rage and horror.

"Brother No. 3, you have the shaving-brush and the razor?"

Brother No. 3 produced a shaving-brush, a safety-razor, and a stick of soap! Loder wriggled with horror! What was he going to look like when his hair was cut off and all the remnants shaved clean?

The mental picture of himself with head as bald as a billiards ball, caused horrified shivers to run through Loder. He could not believe that the young villains were in earnest!

"Are you ready, Loder?"

Snip! A chunk of hair fell from Loder's head! Brother No. 2 had started with the scissors!

Loder strove frantically to speak! He would have promised anything, done anything, agreed to anything, to save

himself from this awful fate! But he could not speak.

"Loder!" came the deep voice again. "If you wish to escape your just punishment, you have one chance—and one only! There is a telephone in this study—that's why we've got you here! Get through to Prout and beg him as a favour to let off the chap in 'punny'! Put it how you like—say anything you jolly well please—Prout's pretty easy to stuff, and you've had a lot of practice at stuffing him! Get me?"

Loder nodded.

"If you get away with it, we let you off! Fail, and you lose every hair on your head, and you'll be a sight for gods, and men, and little fishes, for weeks to come! You agree?"

Loder nodded again with frantic eagerness.

"Mind! You give one howl, one yelp, when we take the gag away, and you're for it! You won't get a second chance—we're not taking risks! Keep ready, you men and gag him again if he yelps—and then he gets it!"

Loder was lifted and placed in a chair at the telephone. The gag was taken from his mouth.

But he dared not yell. Mr. Capper on one side, Mr. Trigg on the other, would doubtless have heard him, if they were in their studies. But they could not have got through a locked door in time to save him. Loder had to toe the line—and he toed it! Almost choking with rage, but not even dreaming of resistance, Loder of the Sixth took the receiver from Prout's telephone, and gave the Head's number!

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

Let Off!

MR. PROUT waved a plump hand at Mr. Woose.

"Not at all!" he said decidedly.

"But, sir—" squeaked little Mr. Woose. "The boy has already been a whole day in the punishment-room—"

"Quite so, and he will remain there another day!" said Mr. Prout firmly. "Discipline must be enforced, Mr. Woose! I quite understand that you are concerned for a member of your Form, sir—but on this subject I can hear nothing—nothing, sir!"

Mr. Woose sighed. He had come to the Head's study to speak a word for the member of his Form who was shut up in "punny"—booked for another dreary night there, and a dreary day to follow. But he had spoken that word in vain! A word from his trusted head prefect would have been enough for Prout—but any number of words from Mr. Woose he passed by like the idle wind which he regarded not.

"No, sir!" boomed Prout. "No, sir! I—"

Buzz!

Prout was interrupted—not by Woose, but by the telephone bell. He gave a grunt and picked the receiver off the Head's telephone.

"Mr. Prout—" came through.

"Dear me! That is Loder's voice!" exclaimed Mr. Prout in astonishment. "For what reason can Loder possibly be telephoning to me? Is that you, Loder?"

"Yes, sir!"

"This is very singular, Loder! Why are you calling me on the telephone?" exclaimed the astonished Prout.

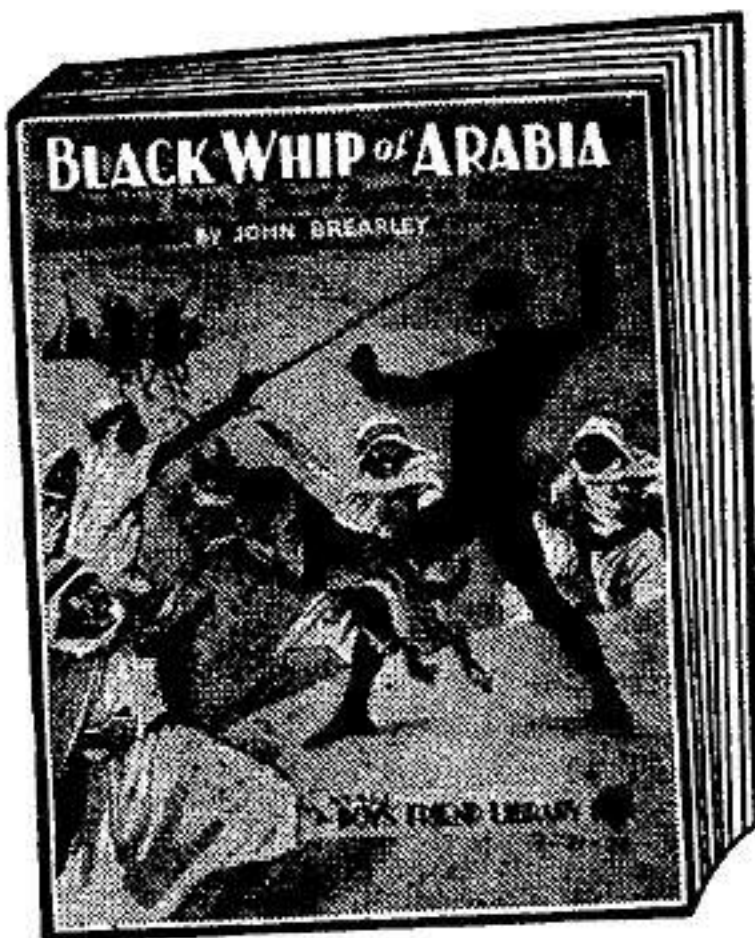
"The—the fact is, sir—"

"What?"

"I—I—I—"

"I did not catch that, Loder! What

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"In a little while," said El Kut, the rebel Arab sheik, "I shall have money and guns. Then will I sweep these cursed British into the sea, and there's not a man who can stop me."

But he was wrong. A dark figure dropped from a tree that overhung El Kut's castle wall. It was a man dressed in black from head to toe and from whose hand dangled a long coiled whip. He moved away into the desert and two figures joined him—an Alsatian hound and an Arab urchin. It was Black Whip, the Gang Buster, and his pals. "And this," said Black Whip, grimly, "is where we get busy!"

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did you say? From where are you speaking?" yapped Prout. "I fail to understand—"

"The fact is, I've been delayed in—Courtfield, sir—"

"In Courtfield! I was not aware that you were out of the school! But why have you rung me up from Courtfield, Loder?"

"The fact is—"

"Please explain yourself, Loder! I entirely fail—"

"The fact is, sir, I—I am a little worried about—about Vernon-Smith, the Remove boy in the punishment-room, sir! I—I saw him this afternoon, and—and it seemed to me, sir, that—that he was—was penitent, that he was sorry for—for having done wrong, sir, and—and I should like to suggest, sir, that he might be released—"

"Bless my soul!"

"It is my—my opinion, sir, that he has—has come to a better frame of mind, and—and that being so—"

"You feel sure of that, Loder?"

"Oh! Quite, sir! I—I should have spoken to you about it, but—but I thought I—I would think over it! I—I've thought over it, sir, and—and I'm sure that the boy has been sufficiently punished, and I thought it my duty to tell you so, sir! I—I felt this so strongly that I've rung you up, sir, instead of waiting till I got back to the school!"

Prout smiled genially over the telephone.

"My dear Loder, say no more! I am glad you have formed this opinion of the boy, and still more glad to see you so conscientious—so very conscientious in your sense of duty! I shall certainly act on your suggestion, Loder! I am obliged to you for making it, Loder."

"Thank you, sir!"

Mr. Prout replaced the receiver. He turned to Mr. Woose, who was blinking at him. Mr. Woose had caught some of Loder's words on the phone, and had been greatly surprised thereby. He had not expected this of Loder!

"Mr. Woose, Loder has requested me to release the boy of your Form now locked in the punishment-room," said Mr. Prout. "He is convinced that Vernon-Smith is in a properly penitent frame of mind! I have one of the keys here, Loder has the other. Perhaps, Mr. Woose, you will be kind enough to take this key, and proceed to the punishment-room, and release Vernon-Smith."

Mr. Woose jumped up.

"Very gladly, sir!" he squeaked.

Key in hand, Mr. Woose left the Head's study. Prout was left in a very pleased frame of mind. He liked conscientiousness in his prefects—and what could be more conscientious than Loder's present conduct?

Prout, no doubt, would have been less pleased, had he been aware that that telephone call had not come from the town of Courtfield, but from one of the school telephones in Greyfriars itself! He would have been still less pleased, no doubt, if he had known that his trusted head prefect had been frightened into making that call by a gang of fags!

But Prout did not know that!

Prout never was going to know all that, for it was certain that Loder of the Sixth would never dare to tell him!

Prout was pleased! Mr. Woose was pleased as he trotted away with the key to release that incarcerated member of his Form! And Herbert Vernon-Smith was most pleased of all when he was thus unexpectedly let out of "punny."

And seven masked juniors, standing round Gerald Loder, in Prout's old

study, were also pleased! Loder was not! The expression on Loder's face indicated that, whatever he was feeling, it was nothing at all like pleasure! He looked, indeed, as if he could have found pleasure in slaughtering the seven fellows who stood round him!

"Now let me go!" he hissed, when the receiver was back on the phone.

The next moment he gurgled, as the gag was shoved back into his mouth. He glared apprehensively at his captors.

"All serene, Loder!" said Brother No. 1 cheerfully. "You've done your part—the Brotherhood of Justice lets you off! You've had the narrowest shave of your life—a close shave of getting a close shave—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Quiet! Loosen those knots a bit—give him about an hour's job to wriggle out of it! That will be plenty of time for us."

The Secret Seven fumbled with the knotted cords. Then they dropped, one by one, from the window.

Loder was left alone in Prout's old study.

He was left to wriggle.

It was more than an hour—nearer two, in fact—when the bully of the Sixth was free at last.

He was tired out. He was breathless and perspiring. He was in such a rage that no words in any known language could have expressed it! And he was beaten all along the line!

He let himself out of Prout's study, and walked to the Sixth Form passage, to his own! He found Walker and Carne there, wondering what had become of him.

"What—?" began the two together.

But they got no further. The look on Loder's face was enough for them. They left the study, and left Loder to himself!

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Smithy, old bean!"

"The esteemed and ludicrous Smithy!"

"Out of clink!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Bounder was in the Remove passage when seven juniors came up. The Famous Five and Redwing and Peter Todd came up the Remove staircase with smiling faces. There were no Guy Fawkes masks on their faces now! The Secret Seven had disappeared from existence once more!

The Bounder looked at them curiously.

"Woose came and let me out," he said. "It's a bit of a puzzle. He said that Loder had asked Prout to let me off!"

"So he did!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

"He did?" ejaculated Smithy.

"The didfulness was terrific!" chuckled the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But why?"

"We asked him to!" said Harry Wharton, laughing. "You see, old bean, we got your tip in code, and the meeting wasn't held in the box-room—it was held in Gosling's wood-shed, and a jolly old scheme was planned, and carried out! Come into the study and we'll tell you."

Fellows coming up to prep heard roars of laughter in Study No. 1. That study, evidently, was in possession of a good joke!

The next day Loder of the Sixth was like unto a bear with a sore head. But there were a lot of Greyfriars fellows who were feeling quite pleased with themselves!

THE END.

(Make a note of the title of the next yarn in this popular series, chums: "A TRAITOR IN THE CAMP!" and then see that you order your copy of the MAGNET in good time!)

COME INTO THE OFFICE, BOYS!

W G. S., of London, W., asks me a question which I imagined everyone would know. He wants to know

WHAT DOES "S.S." MEAN

when it appears in front of a ship's name? The letters are short for "Steam Ship," and were first used to distinguish steam vessels from sailing vessels. Sailing craft had, in front of their names, their particular rig, such as: Barque Mary, Brigantine Ceres, Schooner Hesperus, and Ship Wayfarer. "Ship" was only used for a four-masted vessel which was square-rigged on all masts.

Other initials used at sea are the following:

- H.M.S. .. His Majesty's Ship.
- H.M.T. .. His Majesty's Transport.
- U.S.S. .. United States Ship.
- T.S.S. .. Turbine Steam Ship.
- M.V. .. Motor Vessel.
- R.M.S. .. Royal Mail Steamer.
- R.Y.S. .. Royal Yacht Squadron.

Different countries have different initials for their warships, such as H.S.M.S., which stands for His Serene Majesty's Ship, and was used by the pre-war German Navy.

HERE is an interesting question from Lionel Plummer, of Teddington.

WILL SALT WATER FISH LIVE IN FRESH WATER?

In the majority of cases a fish dies instantly if it is taken from its proper

element—thus salt water fish die immediately they are placed in fresh water, and vice versa. But this is not the case with certain fish that can—and do—live in both fresh and salt water. Such a fish is the salmon, which, although it is a sea fish, enters rivers at different times during the year. The sturgeon also frequents both sea and rivers, although some of them confine themselves exclusively to fresh water. It would take up too much of my space to give a full list of fish which will live in both salt and fresh water, so I suggest my reader consults a good encyclopedia, which will tell him what fish will live in both varieties of water.

NEXT WEEK'S BUMPER PROGRAMME!

The piece-de-resistance is:

"A TRAITOR IN THE CAMP!"

the next story in our tip-top new series of school and adventure yarns

By Frank Richards,

dealing with the feud between Gerald Loder and Harry Wharton & Co., of the Greyfriars Remove. Then come further thrilling chapters of our nerve-tingling story of the Olden Times:

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More topical information concerning Harry Wharton & Co. in the

"GREYFRIARS HERALD"

and a collection of answers to readers' Soccer queries, by "LINESMAN."

YOUR EDITOR.

MORE AMAZING ADVENTURES IN OUR THRILL-PACKED OLD-TIME STORY!

CAPTAIN CRIMSON!

By
MORTON PIKE.

WHAT'S GONE BEFORE.

Having warned Squire Dashwood, a Jacobite agent, that Excise-officer Hickerman is hot on his trail, young Jack Lennard, a Grammar School boy, is forced to flee to Paris. By a strange coincidence, he meets his uncle, Donald Murray, an exiled Jacobite officer who is attending a council of war at the lodging of Major O'Donnell. The conspirators are betrayed, however, by one of the King's spies. Levelling his revolver, Captain Smith, who in reality is Captain Crimson, a mysterious highwayman, shoots the betrayer dead, and then warns the conspirators to escape while there is time.

(Now read on.)

Parted Pals!

AN urgent rapping came on the door, and, followed by Jack Lennard and his chum, Pierre Lerolle, Major O'Donnell entered without ceremony, echoing Captain Crimson's words.

"Fly, your Highness!" he cried. "The French Guard are halting outside the house. It may be too late now."

He had nearly tripped over the body on the floor, and, as he started back at sight of it, Jack cried across the table to the dragoon officer:

"Uncle Don, we can save all these gentlemen yet, if they will only trust to us, but there is not an instant to be lost!"

"Too late!" gasped the major. "Listen to that!"

Someone had clanged the bell from the outer door under the archway, and a loud voice called:

"Open, in the name of the King!" "Speak, boy! What is your plan?" demanded Captain Crimson. "Unfortunately this house has but one door."

"But this room has a window," said Pierre Lerolle, pointing to it. "Hark!" The heavy tramp of marching men could be heard on the stone flags outside. "That is the half-company on its way to close the other end of the passage. In a moment they will have turned the corner, and we must follow them."

"The youngster is demented!" exclaimed the Earl of Trimmingham. "Does he think we can cut our way through a half-company of the Garde Francaise?"

"No; but you can follow us in single file to a place of safety," cried Jack, stretching a pair of imploring arms out to his uncle. "Oh, tell them we are to be trusted—that we are risking our own liberty to help you, Uncle Don! Pierre's grandmother has a house three doors from where those men will be halted, and there is a way to it through a side alley. Do you hear? They are breaking the door down already."

The crash of a halberd splintering the



The old gentleman in the chimney-corner, apparently sleeping, saw through his closed lashes that the netted purse held several guineas!

stout panel brought the conspirators to their senses, and the prince was the first to find his tongue.

"My lords, this is folly! We must put our pride in our pockets!" he said. "Come, young gentleman! I, for one, will take the risk! 'Twill be greater if we stay here!"

As Donald Murray unbarred the shutter and opened the low casement, Captain Crimson drew out his empty pistol, and laid it by the dead man's hand.

"Let them think their informer blew out his own brains when he found there were no conspirators here, after all, sir," he whispered quickly to the old officer. "It will save you from prison."

The next moment he dropped noiselessly into the darkness.

The fugitives stole on tiptoe round the little square which had such strange memories for Jack and Uncle Don; glided like phantoms past the swinging lantern, and entered the passage beyond the angle, hugging the deeper shadow of the wall with bated breath. Scarcely more than eighty paces off, where another lantern dangled overhead, they could see the light shining on the laced hats and fixed bayonets of the soldiers drawn up in the street at the end of the narrow lane.

Then, as a whispered word was passed back, each took hold of the coat-skirt of the man in front of him, while Pierre piloted that strange procession into the

mouth of the alley-way to safety, for the moment.

It was none too soon at that, for, as Captain Crimson brought up the rear, he heard a haughty voice call out:

"Sergeant, go back and post yourself under the lamp yonder, that you may give us warning. 'Tis more than likely some of the English rats will scuttle this way!"

Late as was the hour, a large crowd had gathered in the street round the detachment at the entrance of the Passage of the Black Cats, and, one at a time, the prince and the conspirators left madame's hospitable dwelling to steal away unseen.

"Egad!" muttered Uncle Don, drawing his cloak about him. "My nephew here tells me that I have been marked out for the Bastille, so 'tis no use rejoining my regiment. But, hang me, if I know where to hide myself in this country of secret agents, and police spies! Tell me, Christopher, before we part—how came you to hear of Borden's treachery, and to arrive in the very nick of time?"

"That story had best keep for the present, old comrade," smiled the man of mystery. "You must not be here when they make a house to house search; and I can help you to a hiding-place, if you will. I took the precaution of obtaining three passports when I came to France, and one of them is at your disposal. I am going back to

Dunkirk, where a young smuggler of Widewater awaits me. You had planned the invasion of England with an armed force. What say you to invading it alone, in my company? You will be safe there, and we can pass the gates of Paris in a post-chaise."

Jack Lennard plucked his sleeve, his eyes dancing with excitement and hope as he told the story of his father's letter of recall.

"Egad, my brave boy! I had meant to get Squire Dashwood out of the city with that third passport, but he has bolted with the others," smiled Captain Crimson. "Yes, you shall come with us, and though my name does not figure on the list of those to whom King Louis would offer the hospitality of his prison cells, the sooner we leave this good lady's house, the better. Peep you round the door, and see how things are going."

As they did so, a murmur rose from the watching crowd, and a sharp command rang out above it.

"The soldiers are, all of them, running back into the passage," whispered Jack, over his shoulder.

"Then now is our time," said Captain Crimson, with a low bow to the frightened old lady whose quiet dwelling had been put to so strange a use. "No harm will come to you, madame. And a thousand thanks for your help in a moment of great peril!"

Pierre Lerolle stood with very misty eyes, watching a four-horse chaise pass under the Porte St. Denis as the clocks of Paris struck midnight; and only when the barrier had reclosed with an iron clang, and the sleepy sergeant had gone back into the guard-house, did he wrench himself away from the spot for the long walk that would bring him to his lonely attic.

A Midnight Mission!

"**J**ACK," said Dr. Lennard, coming into the room where his son was poring restlessly over a medical book. "I am called away to a serious case, and may not be back before the small hours. Step over to the Black Boar and tell Mr. Falcon that I shall not have the pleasure of that game of chess with him to-night."

Jack closed his book with a bang and grinned delightedly, and as the doctor rode away, he crossed the village street to the inn.

His mission with the old East India merchant would not take a moment, and his chum, Billy Jepp, was sure to be in the stables wondering whether he could make an excuse to join him. But things do not always happen as planned, and Master Jack Lennard was destined to run into an unexpected adventure.

Mr. Falcon sat in his usual corner by the bright fire, talking to a strange gentleman, whose riding-boots were very muddy. The only other occupant of the snug parlour was Dan Hickerman, the Excise-officer, who was reading the news sheet at another table.

"Ah, Jack, my lad, something tells me your good father is not going to give me my revenge to-night, eh?" said Mr. Falcon, with one of his genial smiles, as he pointed to the chess-board already set out beside him.

"That's so, sir!" answered Jack. "He's been called away, and sent me over to tell you."

"Never mind. Business is business, and our pleasures must wait," said the East India merchant. He turned to Mr. Percival. "This is the son of our surgeon, Mr. Percival, with whom I play a game six nights out of the seven,

as a rule. Mr. Percival is from the East India House, Jack, and though he has not lived in that marvellous land, like myself, we may have interests in common."

"My duty to you, sir!" said Jack, with a bow, and Mr. Percival nodded his head.

Before he could speak, however, Mr. Falcon made a sign with his hand in the direction of Dan Hickerman and lowered his own voice.

"When is Tom Roke, our smuggling friend, expected home?" he asked.

Jack cast a side glance at the stranger. "Oh, Mr. Percival is quite safe. In fact, his visit to these parts concerns Tom very particularly. It is important that they meet as soon as he arrives."

"He will be in to-night, sir," said Jack, in a whisper. "At any rate, early in the morning. High water is at four o'clock, which means he should pick up his moorings about two."

"Nothing could be better!" ejaculated Mr. Percival, hauling a huge silver watch from his fob. "I confess the ride from London has tired me. Not so young as one was once, eh, Mr. Falcon? If these good people can give me a bed I will turn in for a few hours."

"Tell Mrs. Jepp as you go through, Jack," said Mr. Falcon. "While they are getting your room ready, Mr. Percival, we'll have another magnum of Jepp's excellent port. What say you?" "I'll prove a capital night-cap."

The gentleman from the East India House rubbed his fat hands, and as Jack went into the kitchen Dan Hickerman left the parlour by the opposite door.

Half an hour later Mr. Percival was snoring above stairs, and, their recent conversation having thrown the retired merchant into a thoughtful mood, he ordered yet another magnum. As he was sipping it the latch lifted, and two strangers entered the parlour.

Mr. Falcon felt his heartbeats quicken.

The port had loosened Mr. Percival's tongue, and the secret he had imparted suddenly gained in importance as Mr. Falcon saw that the newcomers were Asiatics.

They made straight for the fire, like men who were very cold, but started at sight of him, salaamed humbly, and one of them addressed him in Hindustani, to which Mr. Falcon replied with a shake of his head, although he understood the question perfectly well.

The speaker made a gesture of disappointment, but as Jepp loomed up at the sound of the opening door he ordered hot drinks in very tolerable English, and the pair cowered down over the fire, warming their thin hands at the cheerful blaze.

As the warmth thawed them they began to talk in their native tongue, at first in a whisper, but presently in an ordinary tone, while Mr. Falcon nodded in his corner. As luck would have it, a rainstorm keeping the usual habitués of the Black Boar indoors that night, there was nothing to interfere with his listening undisturbed to a very remarkable conversation.

One of the Indians, who was called Jung, was lean almost to emaciation, the other, being a round ball of a man, who rolled his eyes and showed a set of dazzling white teeth every time he smiled.

The listener gathered that his name was Mozuffur, and it was Mozuffur who spoke English. When he had paid his score the amiable old gentleman in the chimney corner, apparently sleeping so peacefully, saw through his closed lashes that the netted purse held several guineas.

At the end of an hour, the rain having ceased, the pair rose to their feet, glided noiselessly to the door by which they had entered, and went out into the darkness. It was then that Mr. Falcon opened his eyes.

"Sink me if there are not good goings on, and as black a brace of villains as one could wish to meet!" he murmured, staring for some minutes into the heart of the fire before he took his cane from its corner and limped slowly to the kitchen.

Meanwhile, Jack Lennard, having gone the rounds of all the horses in the posting-stable, was seated beside his chum, Billy, on the table, in the harness-room, swinging his long legs. A sudden step outside made both lads turn their heads, to see the East India merchant with a finger pressed to his lips and a quite unusual expression on his clean-shaven face.

"Find me something to sit upon," said Mr. Falcon, closing the door behind him. "I want you two to help me out of a difficulty. Odds life, 'tis the most amazing thing in the world, and so you will say when I have told you!"

Billy dusted a crazy chair that had one short leg, and the old gentleman dropped heavily into it.

"Talk about your 'Captain Crimson'!" he said. "I only trust that rascal has not heard what Tom Roke is bringing from Dunkirk to-night. Are you sure we are safe from eavesdroppers here?"

"Towler knew your step, sir, but he'll give us warning if any stranger comes," said Billy Jepp. "I'll shut the stable door if your honour would feel more at ease."

"Yes, do, Billy," nodded Mr. Falcon. "This is no ordinary business, and after the highwayman 'the worst finger in the pie' would be Dan Hickerman, who, I rather suspect, has an inkling that something out of the common is going forward."

Billy took a lantern, made a quick search of the stable, and returned; all eagerness, for Mr. Falcon's story.

"Now listen!" said the East India merchant. "Six years ago a Persian robber chief named Nadir Shah sacked the city of Delhi, and among the treasures he carried away was a famous diamond known as the Ghandar Noor, which means 'The Light of the Moon.' It is one of the most brilliant stones in the world, and it is said to be worth half a million of our money. It was stolen from Nadir Shah just before he himself was murdered, stolen again before its recoverer could restore it to the King of Delhi, and, by some mysterious means—which do not concern us in the least—it came into the possession of the East India Company about a year since. Far too valuable to remain in India, the company placed it on board a merchantman bound for London.

"But the adventures of this marvellous stone are not yet over. The merchantman was captured by a French privateer and taken to Dunkirk, where her cargo was duly sold by auction. Three months ago the diamond was found hidden in a bale of goods by an agent of the company, who informed the gentlemen in Leadenhall Street of his discovery. So far, so good!"

Mr. Falcon took a pinch of snuff with a hand that trembled with excitement. "Tom Roke is bringing the packet over with him," continued Mr. Falcon, "and Mr. Percival, whom you saw to-night, Jack, has come down to Widewater to receive it."

"Then you want us to put Hickerman off the scent!" cried Jack and Billy Jepp in unison.

"No, I want you to do more than that. There are others on the watch for The Light of the Moon to-night." And Mr. Falcon told them about the two Indians. "When Mr. Percival has rested a little, you and he must ride to Bradwell Point, intercept Tom, by hook or by crook, and take charge of the stone. You know Roke's signals—what do you say?"

The glad laugh that passed between his listeners was sufficient reply.

"You may consider it as good as done already, sir!" cried Jack.

"Hush, do you hear that?"

Billy Jepp held up his hand, for old Towler in the yard had given a low bark of warning!

Billy Jepp left the harness-room on tiptoe, leaving the stable door ajar.

He was back again in a moment with the news that Hickerman's dragoons were saddling up.

"Hang the fellow! 'Tis a thousand pities he should be on the alert to-night," said Mr. Falcon. "Now you will have two dangers to watch—the Excise party, and the natives. I wish we knew where those black scoundrels are lurking, for they might be clapped into the cage as rogues and vagabonds."

Billy chuckled, as he opened a cupboard and produced a pair of huge brass-mounted pistols.

"We'll ride armed, anyway, sir, in case we meet Captain Crimson on the road," he said.

"Which I trust will not be on your return journey," said the old gentleman gravely. "Though," he added, "nothing has been heard of the highwayman for nearly a month past. And even if he be still about, there is nobody worth robbing on the Bradwell road after dark."

"Mount!" came a gruff voice from the inn yard, followed by "March!" and the clatter of iron hoofs sounded on the cobbles, as forty cloaked horsemen filed out under the archway into the street.

"Poor old Hickerman, who was going to do such wonders when he came here. He's not been able to catch Tom yet, for all his trying," grinned Billy, as they peered round the doorpost, and saw the troop turn off to the left. "They've gone Munden way, though, which means five miles farther for us."

"All the better," laughed his chum joyously. "We'll have a rare ride to-night!"

Eleven of the clock was striking, and the stars shone brightly after the rain.

Mr. Percival, thanks to his long journey, and that excellent port, had taken no little getting out of his warm bed. But, once in the saddle of the old grey post-horse, he grasped a rein in each hand, and sallied valiantly forth on that important mission.

There were a couple of troopers on the bridge, but the trio passed them at a steady trot. They had agreed to keep silent until they were clear of the town.

"We'll turn off here, sir, and drop back into the road at Latchingdon," said Jack. "The riding-officer has got his men strung out along the river wall no doubt; we don't want him to know that anyone is abroad to-night."

They broke into a canter through a stretch of very lonely country.

When they had covered a couple of miles the boys pulled up suddenly.

The unmistakable click of a hoof against a loose stone not far ahead had brought the same thought to the minds of both, and without any ceremony beyond a whispered "Hist!" Billy seized Mr. Percival's bridle and led the grey aside into the bushes where they crouched over their horses' necks, listening anxiously.

They thought they had made no noise in the grass, but as the oncoming rider came abreast of them in the darkness, the stern, familiar voice of Dr. Lennard, Jack's father, reached their ears.

"Beware, you skulking dogs," he cried threateningly. "I can see you, and I am armed!"

Jack's face went as long as a fiddle, but the rider passed by at a walking

pace until he was twenty yards beyond them. Then, as he urged his horse into a gallop in the direction of Widewater, the boys gasped with relief.

"What a blessing your father did not see us," said Billy. "Egad, the doctor must have eyes like a hawk!"

"Rather say the ears of a fox, old fellow," laughed Jack. "I should be riding back with him had he done so, and you going on alone!"

Folk went to bed early in those days and everyone in the villages through which they rode was asleep.

The only sound the trio heard was the distant bark of a fox, or the scurry of a rabbit across their path, until they reached the shore beyond Bradwell Point.

By this time Mr. Percival had grown sleepy again, and was inclined to be rather cross.

At the tiny Saxon church of St. Peter-on-the-Wall, turned into a barn, they dismounted, tied their nags to a moss-grown railing, and walked down the slope of a cornfield to the water's edge, carrying the lantern, and the blue light they had brought with them.

"Is this the end of the earth?" grunted the tired gentleman.

"You would think so in daylight," smiled Billy. "It is the mouth of the Widewater, and the open sea is before us. Many a rich cargo have Tom Roke and Ben Quy landed on this spot. We are after The Light of the Moon, but I wish there were some of the real-thing showing to-night. Tom may hug the opposite bank and slip by before we see him."

"Little fear of that, Billy," said Jack stoutly. "He makes few runs without dropping something at the quay round the point, and to do that he keeps in-shore here. Let us find a shelter from the breeze where we can sit down, for I wager a crown we shall not set eyes on the lugger for an hour or more."

(Watch out for further thrilling chapters of this amazing story in next week's issue of the MAGNET, chums!)

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THE NEW Greyfriars Herald



No. 112 (New Series).

EDITED BY HARRY WHARTON.

November 24th, 1934.

KRISMASS IS KOMING!

How would you like to spend it in the luxurious surroundings of Bunter Court? Fine? Then send 2s. 6d. to-day for a ticket in the Bunter Court Krissmass Hollerday Raffle, and hope for the best!—W. G. BUNTER, Study No. 7, Remove.

MAKING UP TO TUBBY!

By DICKY NUGENT.

"Barrell!"
Dr. Birchmall, the revered and majestic headmaster of St. Sam's, stood in the doorway of the Junior Kommon-room and bawled out the name in his faultless Oxbridge accent.

Tubby Barrell, the fattest boy in the Fourth, promptly began to shake and quake with fear, for he had a guilty conscience at the best of times.

"Pip-pip-please, sir, I never did it!" he stammered.

Grately to Tubby's relief, the Head smiled.

"It is bad grammar to say 'I never did it,' my dear Barrell," he corrected jently. "What you should say is, 'I never DONE it.' But I didn't come to talk about grammar.

What I really came for was to invite you to tea."

"What!" yelled Tubby Barrell.

"I have noticed in the past what a nice, refined yung

fellow you are, and it has often been my intention to ask you to step along and feed your face at my eggspense," said Dr. Birchmall, eyeing Barrell with a strangely shifty eggspression on his dile. "Now I propose to remedy the omission. What about a spot of tea with me in five minnits' time?"

"G-g-grate pip!" mormered Tubby, while an ordible gasp went up from the Fourth.

For the Head to ask a meer Fourth Former to tea with him was unherd of. Occasionally he would entertain Fossil, the porter, or Binding, the page; but a Fourth Former never!

"You'll be along then, Barrell?" asked Dr. Birchmall, anxiously.

"Sus-sus-certainly, sir!" gasped Tubby, inwardly wondering whether the Head had taken leave of his senses. Then, deciding that he mite be safer with friends, he added: "Kik-kik-could I bring Jolly and Merry and Bright along with me, too, sir?"

For a moment Dr. Birchmall frowned, but he manngidged to smile again. "I should prefer to have your charming company to myself, my dear lad," he said. "However, one has

to respect the wishes of such a fascinating yung gentleman as you, so if you wish to bring your friends, by all means do so!"

"Grate pip!" breathed Tubby, pinching his own arm to assure himself that he wasn't dreeming. "All right, then, sir, I'll be along!"

"Good! I shall count the ticks till your gracious presence is adorning my festiv board!" cried Dr. Birchmall. "Don't be late!"



And he hastened away, leaving the Fourth almost parralised with serprize.

Five minnits later, Tubby Barrell walked nervously into the Head's study, followed by Jack Jolly & Co.

Dr. Birchmall greeted them with a most effusive smile. "Ah! You have come!" he cried. "Squatty-vo, Barrell, my dear lad! Give Barrell the chair of honner, Jolly! Help yourself to the tuck, my dear Barrell, while I pore out the tea!"

Tubby didn't need a second invitation! He sat down and waded in with a right good will.

Jack Jolly & Co. couldn't help noticing throughout the meal that while Dr. Birchmall frequently gave Tubby a helping hand, he only gave them the cold shoulder. For

some reason, he seemed to have decided to start making up to Tubby. Why, was an intreeging mistery.

At last, Jack Jolly's curiosity would no longer be denied.

"Eggscuse me, sir," he said. "If I mite make so bold as to ask, why have you suddenly decided to be so pally to Barrell?"

A crafty look seemed to flit across the Head's fizz before he replied.

"The answer is simple, Jolly," he said. "I have discovered that Barrell is an eggseptionally fine carrickter, and I am determined that henceforth he shall look on me not as a headmaster, but as a friend!"

"Oh, crums!"

"If you think," added the Head, "that my friendship to Barrell is connected in any way with the fortune he has been left, you're jolly well mistaken!"

"Eh?"

"My feelings towards Barrell would be unchanged even if he were a pawper instead of a millionaire. Besides, I don't even know he has been left a fortune. I haven't read anything about it in the papers, I assure you. As a matter of fact, I can't read at all!"

"Grate pip!" mormered Jack Jolly & Co. As for Tubby, he looked awfully relieved.

"I'm glad to lern that, sir," he said. "I read in the paper about that chap who has come into a fortune. He's nothing to do with me."

A very pekuliar eggspression seemed to come into the Head's face.

"Nothing to do with you, Barrell?" he asked in a voice as cold as steel. "What are you a-saying?"

"The name of the chap who has come into a fortune is Tommy Barrell, not Tubby

Barrell," explained the fat Fourth Former. "His surname happens to be the same as mine, that's all, sir. He's not even a relation. I say, sir, these cakes are prime. I'll have some more."

And Tubby reached across the table to help himself.

Before he could do so, however, a firm hand grabbed him by the snuff of the neck and yanked him clean out of his seat.

"No you an't!" hissed Dr. Birchmall; then he went on with a leer: "So you thought you'd eat my tuck under false pmisses, did you? You thought you'd trick me into standing you a feed! I'll lern you!"

"But I told you as soon as I could," growled Tubby.

"Bah! likewise pah!" snorted the Head, furiously.

"The more eggscuses you make, Barrell, the worse it will be for you. Bend over!"

Jack Jolly & Co. came to the conclusion that it was time they withdrew. Taking advantage of the Head's attention being occupied by the problem of which birch to use on the unchunitt Tubby, they sneaked silently away.

They were followed by howls of agney from within the study as the Head's birch began to descend on Tubby's fat anatemt.

It was prey obvious that the Head was no longer making up to Tubby!

YOUNG FIENCHMAN

Offers his services as Master of Ceremonies revolver and sword duels. Fee, including hire of dueling weapons, coffee for one and an ambulance, Ten shillings. Ver' cheap, is not it, mes enfants? —NAPOLEON DUPONT, Study No. 10, Remove.

BOB CHERRY on—



Coker's at it again, lads! You can always rely on dear old Coker to provide at least one good sensation a week, and this time it's something really new in the way of sensations.

Fags for the Fifth—that's the latest!

Ever since the time when Henry the Eighth, as a Fifth Former, absent-mindedly slew his fag for burning the toast, only the Sixth have been allowed fags at Greyfriars.

Coker has long hankered after making an alteration in this rule. As he has frequently put it in the Fifth Games Study, a Fifth man is as good as a Sixth man any dashed day, and if the Sixth have fags, why the dickens shouldn't the Fifth? The unanswerable logic of this has frequently left the Fifth dumb with admiration—or something, anyway!

Last week Coker decided to put his views to Loder. Eye-witnesses state that five minutes after his entrance into Loder's study, an unrecognisable bundle was seen being hurled out of Loder's study. Closer investigation showed that this bundle was Coker. Apparently Coker's views on fags for the Fifth hadn't exactly coincided with Loder's!

Was Coker dismayed? Ask yourselves, lads! When you

FAGS FOR THE FIFTH

find Coker dismayed about anything you can look to see the skies falling! Having proved to his satisfaction that Fags for the Fifth didn't meet with official approval, Coker set out to inaugurate Fags for the Fifth WITHOUT official approval!

With the aid of generous bribes, he secured volunteers from the Third, and Second, and founded the Volunteer Fag Service. Just to go one better than the Sixth, he provided them with a uniform of pill-box hats and Browne belts, and cheerfully offered the services of the corps to his fellow Fifth Formers.

Strange to relate, the only man to take advantage of Coker's Volunteer Fags so far has been Coker himself. The service, however, seems to be working with delightful smoothness.

Of course, it's not quite perfect yet. The toast they're serving up is like charred wood blocks, their tea seems to be made from siftings of dust from the window-sill, and they smash an average of two cups out of three in washing up. Still, they do it all with delightful smoothness.

Cynics are saying Coker will get tired of it in a couple of days, but I, for one, refuse to believe it.

I give him three days at least—possibly four!

LORD MAULEVERER IN A HURRY

You've always imagined Lord Mauleverer as a languid sort of chap who moves through life at a snail's pace, occasionally, in a violent emergency, increasing it to the speed of a sloth. Gosh! You should have seen him last Wednesday!

He dashed up from the playing-fields like a champion on the cinder-track. Perspiration was streaming from his noble brow as he raced up the School House steps.

Fellows inside the House scattered wildly at his approach, for Mauly looked as if he was going to stop for nobody.

Somebody did stop him eventually, though. It happened to be Mr. Woose, and he stopped him (quite inadvertently) by standing at the foot of the stairs and receiving the full force of his charge.

There was a crash and a yell. Mr. Woose collapsed on the stairs and Mauly rebounded to the wall.

Fellows crowded round in a state of great curiosity as Mr. Woose got up again. They were most anxious to find out what had stimulated Mauly to this unprecedented activity. After Mr. Woose had poured forth the vials of his wrath on Mauly's head for about five minutes, it occurred to him to ask the reason for Mauly's hurry. He did so.

And this was Mauly's answer: "Awfully sorry, sir. You see, I was just goin' to start compulsory footer practice, an' I remembered I hadn't had my forty winks this afternoon!"

So now you know!

TO OUR CORRESPONDENTS.

Please refrain from writing to say you're on the rocks and can we lend you five bob? You touch us considerably—but not for the needful!

INKY'S BIRTHDAY GUIDE

This week: FRANK NUGENT

Looking up the esteemed Frank Nugent's horoscope pryfully in one of the books of my learned and ridiculous native soothsayers of Bhanipur, I found the following: "The esteemed son of these stars shall be well versed artfully. He shall findfully discover his joyful happiness in life rather in the pursuits of the crafts of the esteemed and preposterous poet and painter than in those of the honoured and absurd soldier."

Now this is trufully correct. At the same time, I begfully implore my esteemed readers not to concludefully jump to the idea that the honoured Franky will grow longful hair and a learned and impossible beard and wear baggy trousers legfully and a velvet jacket trunkfully! The matter factfully is that, despite his artistic nature, he has in him a strainful streak of common sense that will always keep him normal!

Still, without any chance of doubtful error, the esteemed Franky's birth-date pointfully indicates a fondness for art, literature, and music which will in all probability unmitakefully guide him into one or other of these spheres when he takes up a workful career.

With his artistic outlook he will combinefully mix a friendly disposition, sincere habits, and a heart full of esteemed courage.

He may lackfully fail to become an esteemed and idiotic leading light in the land; but he will always be held in regardful esteem by those who know him.

SHOULD PREFECTS HAVE ASHPLANTS?

If you're one of those juniors who have started objecting, come along and talk it over with me. You'll be "struck" by the force of my argument!—GERALD LODER, Sixth Form.

TOM BROWN asks—

WHAT'S WRONG WITH SQUIFF?

Squiff's reluctance to take a seat during the last two days has caused quite a lot of comment in the Remove. What on earth is the matter with the chap?

Dash it all, when a fellow walks into a chap's study and the chap asks the fellow to sit down, it's a bit thick when he just stares blankly and continues to stand up. Bordering on rudeness really, isn't it? But that's the sort of thing Squiff has been doing during the last forty-eight hours.

Bolsover has suggested he's doing it to strengthen his leg muscles and perhaps add a few inches to his height. If that's so, he's choosing a most awkward way of doing it.

Skinner has a more startling theory. He thinks Squiff may have joined the ranks of those Eastern mystics who take vows to do something uncomfortable such as sitting on a bed of spikes for the rest of their lives. The idea is that Squiff may have taken a vow never to sit down again. Takes a bit of swallowing to my mind!

It's equally hard to believe that Squiff has become rude in his old age. Without featuring the manners that stamp the cast of Vere de Vere, Squiff is quite a polite lad in the ordinary way, and we can't believe he has changed completely in this respect in such a violent fashion.

Really, there seems absolutely nothing to explain it. Apart from the fact that he received a Head's swishing two days ago, not a single incident of note has cropped up to disturb the placid serenity of his young life.

I give it up!

WOULD YOU BELIEVE IT?



Coker of the Fifth defied authority by attempting to paddle a canoe across the Channel, starting from Pegg Bay. He was lucky to be picked up in a rough sea by a fishing smack—but Coker still protested that he was capable of "paddling his own canoe!"

Mr. "Larry" Lascelles, the popular maths master, finds log-telling a good way of keeping fit. Every morning before breakfast he puts in a spell on one of Sir Hilton Popper's plantations—and "Larry" is just as much a "slogger" later in class!

Micky Desmond has a large and varied collection of stamps gathered from all over the world. He often spends time arranging them which ought to be devoted to "prop"—which makes his Form-master fume and "stamp" next morning! Micky "stabs" it, thought!

A complaint from Mrs. Kebble that her pet cat was being tortured turned out foundationless. The awful screams were made by Claude Hoskins, the musical genius of the Shell, who was learning some new scales on his violin! Hoskins practises hours a day!

Wun Lung still adheres to the Oriental custom of wearing his hair in a pigtail. When he first came to Greyfriars, Bolsover major delighted in pulling it, but Bob Cherry soon persuaded Bolsover not to be a "pig." Bolsover turned "tail" before Bob!

Lying on his back and "bicycling" with his legs in mid-air, Bob Cherry works up to a terrific speed. Bob says "cycle" training is one of the best ways of acquiring speed and agility for the footer field. Bob is certainly "double value" at "half-back".