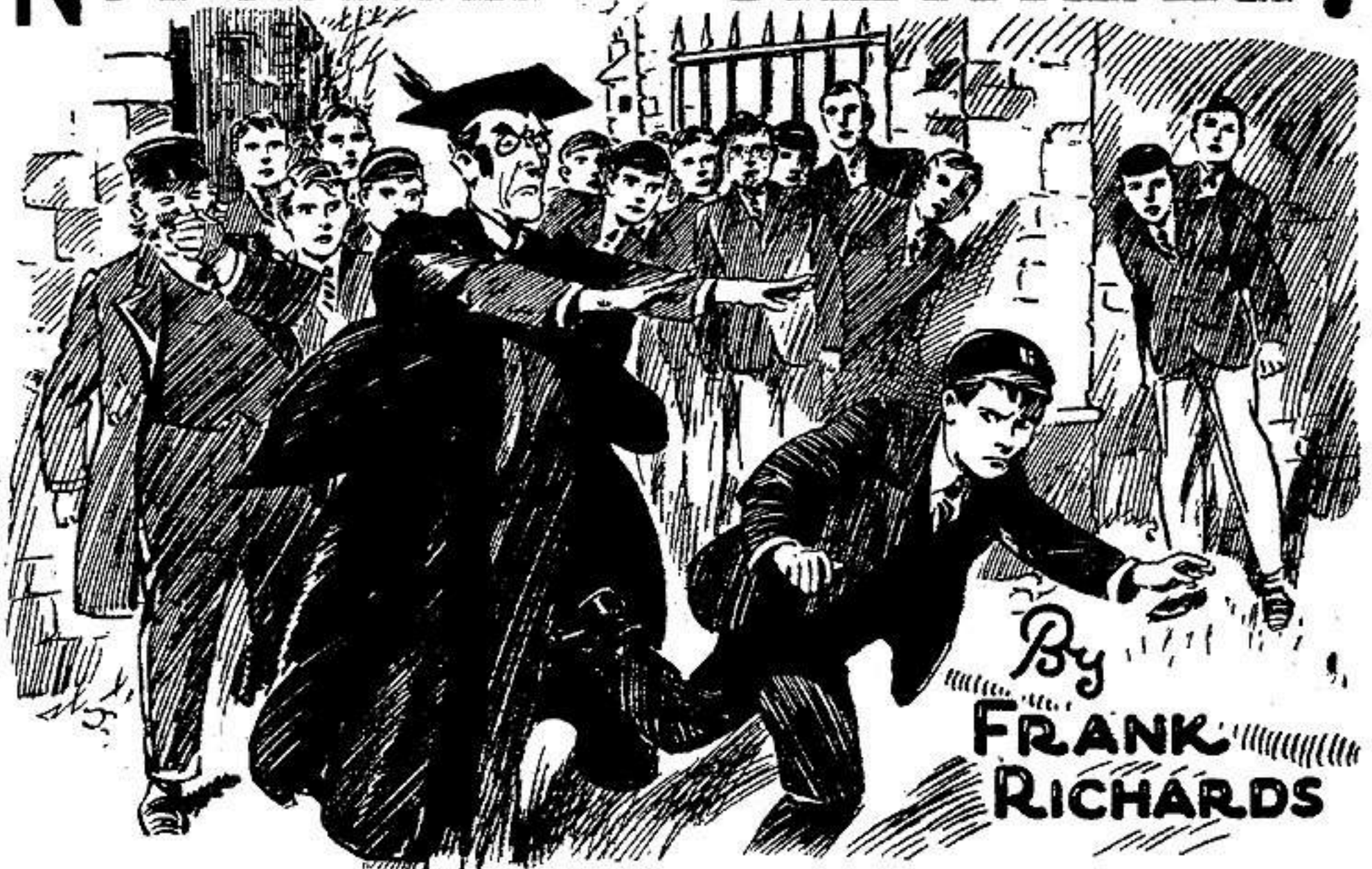


The Magnet 2nd



NOT WANTED *at* GREYFRIARS!



By
FRANK RICHARDS

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Waxy!

"HE, he, he!"

It was quite a startling sound—in the Remove Form Room during class.

Billy Bunter's fat cackle was heard often enough in the quad, in the passages, and in the studies. When Billy Bunter was moved to mirth, it was his way to explode rather like a cracker.

But there was, or, at any rate, should have been, nothing of a mirthful nature going on in the Form-room while class was on. Latin grammar was anything but mirthful.

Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, was serious—not to say solemn. Most of the fellows were serious.

Quelch had got on to deponent verbs. The happiest nature could hardly have found anything amusing in deponent verbs.

The Form-room was quite silent—till Bunter suddenly exploded. His sudden cackle had almost the effect of a bomb-shell.

Quelch, at his high desk, jumped. Many of the fellows jumped. All stared round at Bunter.

The Remove master had chalked on the blackboard some samples of those verbs which are passive in form, but active in meaning, and a worry, anyhow. The juniors were writing them down. It was not, in the general opinion, a laughing matter. Yet, all of a sudden, Billy Bunter went off like a cracker.

"He, he, he!"

"Bunter!" came a deep rumble from Mr. Quelch.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter, recalled to himself immediately by that deep rumble. "I—I wasn't laughing, sir!"

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"What?"

"I—I mean, I—I didn't mean to," stammered Bunter, evidently wishing that he hadn't.

Skinner, who was next to Bunter, hastily covered his blotter, on which he had been drawing a caricature of Mr. Quelch.

He gave Bunter a glare of fierce warning.

But the fat Owl of the Remove was serious enough now. With Mr. Quelch's gimlet eyes almost boring into him, he did not feel like cackling any more.

The Remove master came towards his class. He picked up his cane as he came—an action that made Billy Bunter feel still more serious.

"Bunter!"

"Yes, sir!"

"What were you laughing at?"

Bob Cherry winked at Harry Wharton, who grinned. Quelch, plainly, was very waxy. Only in very waxy moments was Quelch so far off his grammatical guard. His usual style was "At what were you laughing?"

"I—I wasn't!" gasped Bunter. "I mean, I—I didn't! That is, I never—Oh lor'!"

"Apparently," said Mr. Quelch, with almost ferocious sarcasm, "you find something entertaining in deponent verbs, Bunter."

"Yes, sir. I—I mean no, sir! Not at all, sir!" groaned Bunter. "The—fact is, sir, I—I—I—"

"Well?" rapped the Remove master.

"I—I—I—I—" stuttered Bunter.

"What do you mean, Bunter, by that incessant repetition of a personal pronoun?"

Billy Bunter blinked dismally through his big spectacles. Mr. Quelch came round the desks.

Skinner, with his Latin paper carefully placed over the comic picture he

had drawn on his blotter, tried to look as if butter would not melt in his mouth. Skinner could draw; and it was quite a good caricature of his Form-master, though not complimentary. Skinner fairly shuddered at the thought of that drawing meeting Quelch's gimlet eyes.

However, it was quite out of sight, and Harold Skinner hoped for the best.

Mr. Quelch examined Bunter's Latin paper, while the rest of the Remove looked on, wondering. He found the usual collection of mis-spellings, blots, and smears. A Latin paper for Bunter was, according to some fellows, enough to make a cat laugh. But it was not that paper that had made Bunter laugh. Quite well aware that something was "on," Henry Samuel Quelch was going to know what it was.

"Bunter!"

"Oh dear!"

"I insist," said Mr. Quelch, "upon being acquainted with the reason for your unseemly outbreak of merriment in class, Bunter!"

"Oh, nothing, sir! I never saw—"

"What?"

"Nothing, sir!" groaned Bunter. "I mean, anything! I—I was doing my vub-vub-verbs, sir, and never even looked at Skinner."

"Skinner!" repeated Mr. Quelch.

"Oh, no, sir!" gasped Bunter. "Skinner wasn't drawing anything on his blotter, sir; and I never saw it! You see, I wasn't looking."

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Bob Cherry.

Mr. Quelch's attention was transferred from Billy Bunter to Harold Skinner. That humorous youth, wishing that he had neglected art in favour of deponent verbs, hardly breathed.

"Skinner!" rumbled Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, sir!" gasped Skinner.

"Remove your Latin paper!"
 "There's nothing, sir—"
 "Remove your Latin paper!"

Skinner, with shaking fingers, removed the Latin paper. The entertaining sketch on the blotter was revealed.

Mr. Quelch's eyes fixed on it. Remove fellows stood up on all sides to look. They craned to stare at that picture. Everybody wanted a view. Fellows who were not near enough to get a "squint," asked other fellows, in eager whispers, what it was.

It was quite a good drawing of Mr. Quelch. But it exaggerated his striking features. Quelch's nose was rather long and thin. In Skinner's drawing it was longer and thinner. His chin was prominent. In Skinner's drawing, it jutted like a promontory. His mouth was firm. In Skinner's drawing it looked as if it was just going to bite.

There was an awful moment of silence while Mr. Quelch and a dozen Remove fellows looked at that drawing. The silence was broken by a suppressed chuckle. It was immediately suppressed; but it caught Quelch's ear. His gimlet eye gleamed round.

"Wilmot!"

"Oh, yes, sir!" gasped the new fellow in the Remove.

"You find this amusing?"

Wilmot was crimson.

"You will take a hundred lines, Wilmot."

"Yes, sir!"

"Bull!"

"Oh!" murmured Johnny Bull.

"You will take a hundred lines, also. And you, Vernon-Smith."

There was no more chuckling in the Remove. There was not the ghost of a grin on a single face.

Mr. Quelch turned back to Skinner.

"A very good drawing, Skinner," he said. "I commend your skill. But the Form-room is not the place for comic drawing; neither is your Form-master a proper subject for disrespectful caricature. You will stand out before the class, Skinner."

Skinner limped out before the class. Mr. Quelch followed him with a businesslike grip on his cane.

"Bend over that desk, Skinner!"

Skinner bent over the desk in the lowest of spirits. The cane swished in the air.

Whack!

"Ow!" gasped Skinner.

Whack!

"Yow-ow!" howled Skinner.

Whack!

"Whoop!" roared Skinner.

"You may now go back to your place," said Mr. Quelch. "I trust that, after this, Skinner, you will give your attention to the lesson, otherwise—"

Mr. Quelch did not complete the sentence. He left the rest to Harold Skinner's imagination. Skinner crawled back to his place, giving Bunter a look as he went that made the fat junior gasp with apprehension.

Deponent verbs resumed the even—or uneven—tenor of their way. There was no more merriment in the Remove Form Room. Nobody was feeling merry—least of all, Billy Bunter. Every now and then Skinner gave Bunter a look which was as good as a promise—the kind of promise that Skinner was the fellow to keep. Billy Bunter almost forgot the horrors of deponent verbs in his deep apprehension of what was to happen to him after class.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

A Fighting-man Wanted!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

"Run for your lives!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Wharton & Co. ran! Billy Bunter stared after them through his big spectacles in surprise and annoyance.

"I say—" he bawled.

But the Famous Five of the Remove, laughing, disappeared across the quad. Billy Bunter snorted angrily.

"Beasts!" he hooted.

Bunter was indignant.

He had been misjudged! Rolling up to the Famous Five in the quad after morning school, Bunter had not been about to say "What about the hols?"—as the juniors supposed.

It was not, for once, on the subject of making arrangements for the Easter holidays that Bunter had been going to speak.

Still, the chums of the Remove had naturally supposed that it was. It was Bunter's chief topic lately.

But, in point of fact, Bunter had, momentarily, forgotten that his arrangements for Easter were still unsettled. What he was thinking of was that sinister gleam in Harold Skinner's eye.

He had got Skinner a whopping! He had not meant to—but he had! A good-natured fellow would have made allowance for Bunter being such a howling

Crawley by name and crawly by nature is Eric Wilmot's enemy, who has come to Greyfriars from Topham School, bent on trading a miserable secret for a price!

ass! But Skinner was not good-natured. Skinner was malicious and vengeful; and though he had a short memory for benefits, he had a very long one for injuries. Skinner, it was clear, was going to "take it out" of Bunter after class. It was protection that Bunter wanted.

Had the Famous Five been aware of that, they would not have run for their lives, as Bob playfully expressed it. Wharton, or Bob, or Nugent, or Johnny Bull, or Hurree Singh would cheerfully have punched Skinner if he started punching the fat Owl. But they were not aware of it—and they vanished—leaving the hapless Owl on his lonely own.

Bunter blinked round apprehensively.

Skinner had been kept in a few minutes, when the class was dismissed, to destroy that picture on his blotter, by tearing it into the minutest fragments and dropping same into the wastepaper-basket. That necessary act had to be done in Skinner's own time, not in the time devoted to lessons. Which was fortunate for Bunter, as it gave him a chance of getting clear when the Form came out; and, he hoped, securing a defender all ready for Skinner!

Harry Wharton & Co. having disappeared, Bunter hurried over to where Herbert Vernon-Smith was strolling. The Bunder's glance was not encouraging. Still, he was a great fighting man, good for two or three Skinners, if the fat Owl succeeded in enlisting his services.

"I say, Smithy—" began Bunter,

hopefully. "You're not afraid of that cad Skinner, I know."

"Hardly!" agreed Smithy, with a grin. He guessed what was coming, and it seemed to amuse him.

"I say, if he pitches into me, you'll handle him, won't you, old chap?" asked Bunter anxiously.

"Not at all!"

"Oh, really, Smithy—"

"You shouldn't have given the chap away to Quelch, you fat Owl! Serve you right if he kicks you all round the quad!"

"I—I never meant to, you know! I—I can't understand how Quelch guessed it, really—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at! I say, Smithy, you'd jolly well handle Skinner, if you knew what he had been saying about you!"

The Bunder came to a sudden halt.

"What's that?" he snapped.

"He calls you awful names, old fellow!" said Bunter hopefully. "He says you're always swanking about your money that your father made diddling people on the Stock Exchange, you know, and—I say, wharrer you up to, Smithy? Leggo my collar, will you?" roared Bunter.

Having shaken Bunter, rather like a terrier shaking a rat, Vernon-Smith let go the collar as requested, and walked on.

"Oooogh!" gasped Bunter. "Beast! Oooogh!"

He blinked round as he gasped, in terror of seeing a vengeful Skinner emerge from the House.

Harry Wharton & Co. had proved useless; Smithy worse than useless. So far, in his search for a champion, Bunter had captured only a shaking. He was glad to spot Eric Wilmot, the new fellow in the Remove, and he rolled over to him hastily.

"I say, Wilmot, old fellow—"

"Don't bother!" Wilmot walked on.

"But I say—" howled Bunter, rolling after him.

Wilmot accelerated. So did Bunter. With the corner of his eye Bunter could see Skinner coming out of the House, looking about him in search of someone! Bunter did not need telling who that someone was!

He grabbed Wilmot by the sleeve.

"I say, do stop a minute!" he gasped.

"I say, don't be a beast, Wilmot, old chap."

"Leave me alone, you fat ass!" snapped Wilmot, jerking his sleeve away.

"I say, don't you be shirty, old chap!" pleaded Bunter. "You had a fight with Smithy when you first came, and you could handle Skinner as easy as anything—"

"Why the thump—"

"I say, Skinner's down on you, old chap!" said Bunter hurriedly. "He makes out that you were sacked from your last school—Topham, you know. You're quite mistaken in thinking that I looked at that letter of yours from that chap Crawley at Topham! I never did, you know! Besides, I never told anybody what I saw in it. Not a word! I wouldn't, you know."

"You fat idiot!"

"Oh, really, Wilmot! I can tell you, it was Skinner all the time!" said Bunter anxiously. "He's a noseyparker, and he nosed it all out somehow—that's how it got about! See? I'd jolly well whop Skinner, if I were you."

Wilmot gave the fat Owl a black look. It was owing to Bunter's spying and prying that he was the talk of his Form.

with all sorts of surmises going round as to why he had left his last school. Really, the fat Owl must have had a hopeful nature to appeal to Wilmot for protection.

"I say, here he comes!" gasped Bunter. "I say, you stand by me, old chap! If you know the awful things Skinner's been saying about you—"

He grabbed Wilmot's arm again. The new junior jerked it angrily away and walked on under the elms. Once more Billy Bunter was left minus a defender.

It was too late to look for another. Skinner had spotted him, and was bearing down on him at a run.

"Oh lor'!" gasped Bunter. He scudded off. After him scudded Skinner, with gleaming eyes and tight lips, overhauling him fast.

Three Fifth Form men were walking under the elms. In sheer desperation Bunter panted up to them.

"I say, Coker, old chap—" he gasped.

Horace Coker, of the Fifth, looked at him. He frowned portentously; Potter and Greene grinned. Coker did not like "old chap" from fags!

"What?" hooted Coker. "I say, old fellow— Yaroooooh!"

Smack! "Whooop!" Coker walked on, frowning, having smacked Bunter's head for his cheek. Evidently there was no help from Coker of the Fifth.

"Ow!" gasped Bunter, rubbing the place. "Wow! Oh lor'!" He rolled off again in flight; Skinner was close at hand now.

"Stop, you fat frog!" howled Skinner. "Urrrgh!" gasped Bunter. "Beast!" "I'm going to smash you!" "Oh crikey! Keep off, you rotter! Ow!"

Bunter barged on desperately. But he had no chance in a foot-race; he had altogether too much weight to carry.

Skinner ran him down under the elms, grasped him by the collar from behind, and jerked him to a halt; almost suffocating Bunter in the process.

"Gurrrrrggh!" gurgled the Owl of the Remove. "Urrgh! Leggo! You're chook—chook—chook—chuck—chick—choking me!"

"You got me a whopping from Quelch!" said Skinner grimly. "Now I'm going to twist your arm—like that—"

"Ooooooogh!" "And like that—" "Yaroooooh!" "And bang your head—like that!" "Yooop!"

Billy Bunter roared frantically as his fat head smote the trunk of an elm. He fairly bellowed.

"And—" Skinner was going on. He was not finished yet. But at that point he was interrupted. A strong hand grasped his shoulder and twisted him away from Bunter. He spun round with a gasp of pain and rage, and looked the new fellow in the Remove in the face.

"Stop that!" said Eric Wilmot curtly.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

A Row in the Remove!

KEEP him off!" yelled Billy Bunter. The fat Owl leaned on the elm, spluttering for breath and rubbing his head. There was a pain in it where it had banged on the tree.

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Wilmot stepped quietly between him and Skinner. The latter clenched his hands, his thin features working with rage. The handsome face of the fellow from Topham was cool and contemptuous.

"You cheeky rotter!" Skinner rubbed his shoulder where Wilmot's grasp had fallen. That strong, sinewy grip had rather hurt the weedy Skinner. "What are you barging in for, you cad?"

"Leave Bunter alone!" "What's it got to do with you?" howled Skinner. "You heard that fat cad sneak to Quelch; and give me away—"

"I didn't!" wailed Bunter. "I never—"

"Bunter can't help being a fool," said Wilmot, "and if he got you a whopping, you've given him enough for it. Now leave him alone."

"I won't!" yapped Skinner. "You will!" said Wilmot quietly.

Skinner, with clenched hands, came on. The Topham fellow faced him with a faintly disdainful smile. The fellow who had stood up to the Bunder in one of the toughest scraps in the history of the Remove was not likely to be afraid of anything that Skinner could do.

"Better chuck it," he said quietly; and Skinner, pausing in time, realised that it was good advice. "You can bully Bunter, but you can't handle me. Don't be an ass!"

"You're barging in to protect that fat rotter—the fellow who spied into your letters, and gave it away that you'd been sacked from your last school!" hissed Skinner.

"I didn't!" howled Bunter. "I never looked at the letter. And there was nothing about being sacked in it, either. All Crawley said was that Wilmot had done something he had to leave for."

"Shut up, you fat fool!" snapped Wilmot.

"I'm only telling you that I never looked at your letter, old chap!" gasped Bunter. "My belief is that Skinner must have seen it, or how does he know that you were bunked from Topham?"

"You hear him?" sneered Skinner. "Now perhaps you'll mind your own bizney, and let me give him what he's asked for."

Perhaps Wilmot for a moment regretted that he had intervened. The fat and fatuous Owl certainly had very small claim on him. But he shook his head.

"Leave Bunter alone!" he said. "I'm going to smash him!" "Then I'm going to stop you." "Keep him off!" howled Bunter. "Will you get out of the way, Wilmot?"

"No!" "You cheeky cad!" yelled Skinner. "Better language, please!" said Wilmot, with a glint in his eyes. "I don't allow anybody to call me names like that, Skinner."

"You!" howled Skinner. "A fellow who's been sacked from his school—sneaking into Greyfriars because you've got an uncle a master here to wangle it for you! What lies did Hacker tell the Head to get him to let you in here, you rotten outsider—"

Skinner broke off with a howl of anguish, as Wilmot made a stride at him and grabbed his nose with a finger and thumb.

Tweak! "He, he, he!" cackled Bunter. "Hallo, hallo, hallo!" came Bob Cherry's roar. "What's this game?"

The Famous Five came up, as well as a good many other fellows. The row

going on under the elms had attracted attention by that time.

"I say, you fellows, Wilmot's pulling Skinner's nose! He, he, he!" squeaked Billy Bunter.

Skinner got his nose away. He stood rubbing it, spluttering with rage. Like Marian's in the ballad, it looked red and raw.

"A fight!" shouted Vernon-Smith. "Go for him, Skinner! I'll hold your jacket!"

Skinner gave the Bunder a bitter and venomous look.

"Go it, Skinner!" bawled Bolsover major. "You can't let a fellow pull your nose! Pile in!"

"Somebody phone for an ambulance!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "There will be real damage done if Skinner's on the jolly old war-path!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "Go it, Skinner!"

Skinner did not "go it." He would have given a term's pocket-money to handle Wilmot as Smithy had once done.

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

"You shut up, you fat worm!" said Wilmot.

"Oh, really, Wilmot—"

"I'll make you sorry for this, you cur!" said Skinner, in a choking voice. "Wait till I find out why you were sacked from Topham! We'll see then whether your Uncle Hacker will be able to keep you here—"

"Do you want your nose pulled again?" asked Wilmot contemptuously. "If not, you'd better shut up!"

"You'd better shut up, anyhow, Skinner," said Harry Wharton. "There's old Hacker with an eye on you."

Mr. Hacker, the master of the Shell, was coming along the path under the elms. His frowning face was turned towards the crowd of juniors.

Wilmot breathed hard. Whether his uncle, Mr. Hacker, had heard anything of the talk in the Remove, he did not know, but he was very anxious for Hacker not to hear.

Unfortunately it was easy for Skinner to read as much in his face, and Skinner was not the man to lose such a chance. It was a sheer pleasure to Skinner to see the master of the Shell in the offing.

"Why did they boot you out of Topham, you cad?" shouted Skinner, putting on steam to make sure that Hacker, who was still at some distance, should hear. "What did you do at Topham to get the boot?"

"Shut up, Skinner!" breathed Frank Nugent.

"You know as well as I do that that fellow was turfed out of Topham at the beginning of the term!" retorted Skinner, still in very loud tones. "And they jolly well don't boot a man for nothing!"

Mr. Hacker was seen to come to a sudden halt.

Evidently he heard. "Skinner, you cad!" muttered Wharton.

"Everybody thought he had pinched that banknote that Prout lost the other day," went on Skinner. "The banknote turned up, but everybody thought—"

"Will you shut up?" snapped the captain of the Remove.

"No, I won't! Did you pinch anything at Topham, Wilmot? Was that what you were booted out for?" howled Skinner.

"That's enough, and a little over," said Bob Cherry, and he grabbed hold of Skinner and put an end to his

remarks by bumping him headlong on the ground.

Mr Hacker stood looking at the group of juniors for a moment or two with a startled face that darkened and darkened. Then he turned and walked towards the House.

Wilmot glanced after him. Then he walked away quietly, without a glance to right or left, apparently unconscious of the many curious eyes fixed on him.

"Will you let go, Cherry, you silly fathead?" came in gasping tones from Skinner, wriggling in Bob's grasp.

"Not till Hacker's gone," answered Bob. "You talk too much, Skinner, old man. If you say any more I shall tap your head on the ground—like that!"

Bang!

"Ow!" roared Skinner.

Skinner thinks you pinched something. Did you, old fellow?"

Eric Wilmot did not answer that question in words. He took hold of Billy Bunter's collar, jerked him off his feet, and sat him down on the earth with a bump that almost shook the old quadrangle of Greyfriars.

Bunter roared.

Wilmot walked on, and left him roaring.

"Ow!" gasped Bunter, as he staggered up. "Wow! He's a worse beast than Skinner—Wow! Pitching into a chap, just for asking him a friendly question—Ow! Beast! Wow!"

Bunter was still curious to know why Eric Wilmot had left Topham. But he sagely decided not to ask him any more friendly questions!

telling that it had come from that school.

Fellows who were not inquisitive like Bunter, or malicious like Skinner, could not help being a little curious about Wilmot and his former school.

All the Remove knew that Bunter had pried into a letter from a fellow there, in which, according to Bunter, that fellow had mentioned that Wilmot had done something at Topham, for which he had had to go.

Nobody, of course, would have dreamed of taking Bunter's word on any subject whatever. Bob Cherry had declared that if Bunter had said it was raining, a fellow would have to look out of the window before he believed him!

Still, it was fairly clear that Bunter



Skinner was banging Billy Bunter's fat head on the elm when he was suddenly interrupted. A pair of strong hands grasped his shoulders, and dragged him backwards. "Stop that!" It was Eric Wilmot, the new boy in the Remove, who had intervened.

"He, he, he!" cackled Bunter. "I say, Bob, old chap, give him a few more! The beast was pitching into me, you know when Wilmot stopped him. I say, if you'll hold him, I'll jolly well kick him—see?"

"Somebody boot that fat frog!" said Bob. And there was a roar from Bunter as Johnny Bull obliged.

Billy Bunter hastily retired from the spot. He preferred to be at a safe distance from Skinner, when Bob Cherry released him.

He overtook Wilmot. The dark look the new fellow gave him would have warned any other fellow off, but Billy Bunter was impervious to looks, however expressive.

"I say, Wilmot, old chap!" said Bunter. "I say, you can tell a pal, you know. What did they boot you out of Topham for?"

"What?" ejaculated Wilmot.

"I won't let it go any further, old fellow," said Bunter. "You can tell me. What did they sack you for?"

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

The Limit!

"O NE for you, Wilmot!" called out Hazeldene, with a laugh.

And some other fellows laughed.

It was morning break the following day, and some of the fellows had come along to look for letters in the rack. Billy Bunter, of course, was there, blinking over the letters through his big spectacles, in the vain hope of spotting one addressed to himself which might contain the celebrated postal order he had been so long expecting. But there was none for Bunter; that postal order was still delayed in transit.

Other fellows were taking down letters, and a good many glanced at one addressed to Eric Wilmot. It bore the postmark of Topham, the town near his old school—so fellows did not need

could hardly have invented such a story entirely out of his own fat head. Neither had Wilmot denied it. Injudicious fellows who had asked him blunt questions, had been told to mind their own business, or answered only with a stare.

That, of course, might be only disdainful pride; and Wilmot certainly was a rather proud and reserved fellow. But it was quite easy to think of another motive, quite different from pride, for refusing to make any explanation.

On the other hand, if Wilmot really had been "turfed" out of Topham, it was rather odd for a Topham man to be in correspondence with him at his new school. An expelled fellow was more likely to be dropped as dead as a doornail.

Wilmot, as he came along, was greeted by Hazel's remark and a laugh. His handsome face coloured a little.

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To a fellow who was proud and sensitive, it was not pleasant to be an object of curiosity and discussion.

But he answered quietly "Thanks, Hazeldene!" took the letter down and put it into his pocket. Clearly, he was not going to open it on the spot in the presence of other fellows. He walked out into the quad with it.

"I say, you fellows, that letter's from the same chap!" said Billy Bunter. "That chap Crawley, who wrote to him last week. I know the fist."

"And how do you know it, Bunter?" asked Lord Mauleverer quietly.

"Yes, how?" grinned Hazel. "You've told us that you never looked at Wilmot's letter last week, as well as what was in it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Hazel! I hope I'm not the fellow to look at a fellow's letter," said the fat Owl. "I told Wilmot I never looked at it, and he pitched into me with a ruler, all the same. They must be rather cads, at Topham, not to take a fellow's word!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Queer that. Wilmot's got a friend left at Topham, if he was bunked," remarked Peter Todd.

"He jolly well hasn't!" grinned Bunter. "That fellow Crawley is no friend of his, I can tell you. You should have heard the names Wilmot was calling him, when he was reading his letter the other day!"

"You fat ass!" said Peter. "He must be a pal or he wouldn't be writing!"

"His letter wasn't pally!" chuckled Bunter. "He jolly well said—Beast! Wharrer you kicking me for, Mauly, you rotter?"

"Tip to shut up!" explained his lordship.

"Beast!" roared Bunter.

"Oh, don't stop him!" chortled Bolsover major. "He's just going to tell us what was in the letter he never saw!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Wharton & Co. went out into the quad after Wilmot. The Famous Five were the only fellows in the Remove who knew Wilmot's secret. But, they knew, for a fact, what all the other fellows more or less suspected.

"I suppose that's another letter from that chap Crawley!" Bob Cherry remarked. "What the dickens does the fellow want to write for, when Wilmot's made it plain he doesn't want him to?"

"Rubbing it in, I suppose, because they were enemies at Topham!" said Harry, with a curl of the lip. "Must be an awful outsider!"

"Rotten toad!" said Johnny Bull.

"If he believes that Wilmot did what he was accused of, he has a right to cut him—but not to taunt him. And I suppose they all believe it at Topham."

They came in sight of Wilmot, standing under one of the elms, reading his letter. They exchanged uncomfortable glances as they saw him.

Wilmot's face was pale with intense anger; his lips moving, as if he was muttering to himself.

Obviously, that letter from Topham was disagreeable—so very much so that Wilmot, in his anger, had rather forgotten that he was in full view of any fellow who happened to pass.

"Oh, the cur!" he muttered aloud, as the juniors came along. "The toad!"

He glanced up, flushing crimson, as he saw the chums of the Remove. He

thrust the letter hastily into his pocket.

He made a movement to walk away, and then, changing his mind, joined the Famous Five.

"Anything up?" asked Bob Cherry—a rather superfluous question.

Wilmot nodded.

"Yes! I—I don't know what to do! You fellows—" He broke off, flushing again, a deep crimson. "But, never mind, I dare say you've heard quite enough of my rotten affairs!"

"Don't be an ass, old chap!" said Harry Wharton. "We're your friends—and if there's anything we can do—"

"Friends!" muttered Wilmot. "I had plenty of friends at Topham, and every one of them turned me down when the crash came. I've not had a word from one of them—not from a friend, only from an enemy!" He crumpled the letter savagely in his hand. "You fellows must be asses, to stand by me here, when you know why I was kicked out! What makes you believe in me?"

"Well, we do!" said Harry, with a smile. "Leave it at that! But, look here, Wilmot, can't you get that man Crawley to stop writing? Since Bunter started tattling, your letters from Topham keep the cackle alive—"

"I've tried! But—you don't know the man!" said Wilmot, bitterly. "At Topham, I wouldn't have touched him with a barge-pole! Now he has the upper hand. I was one of the gamesmen; he was a crawling toad, always up to some rotten game—breaking bounds after lights-out, backing horses with seedy bookmakers—that sort of toad! Goodness knows how he's got through so long without being found out and bunked. It will come some day—I shouldn't wonder if it's on the way now—from what he writes."

He breathed hard.

"Look at the letter," he said. "Tell me what to do! I can't go to Hacker for advice—it's not a matter I can put to him. Goodness knows what I can do! My uncle got me in here, and if it all came out, what would his position be—a Form-master at a Public school, whose nephew had been sacked from another school for theft? I can't risk that—Hacker's done too much for me."

"But what—" Wharton was puzzled. "What does the fellow want?"

"Money!" said Wilmot savagely.

The chums of the Remove blinked at him.

"You can't mean—" exclaimed Bob.

"He's got into a difficulty—not the first! He has three or four narrow escapes every term, I believe," said Wilmot bitterly. "This time it seems to be pretty serious, from what he says. I know at the beginning of the term—I was at Topham the first week, you know—he was pretty badly up against it—lots of the fellows knew he owed a man money from the term before, and was being dunned for it. He seems to have got out of that all right—now he's in another scrape of the same sort. Look!"

He shoved the crumpled letter into Harry Wharton's hand.

The Famous Five read it together. They did not wonder, when they had read it, that it had made Wilmot pale with anger. It ran:

"Dear Eric,—I've had your letter, and if you don't want to see me at Greyfriars, all right. But one good

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turn deserves another. When you were here, at the beginning of the term, I asked you for a loan. You refused then. I'm sure you won't refuse now. I'm pretty severely pushed for a five-pound note. That's not a lot to you. Can you manage it? I'd rather have it by post; but if you would rather I came over and talked it over, I'll drop in on Wednesday afternoon.

"Your old pal,

"CRAWLEY."

Harry Wharton drew a deep breath. From Wilmot's description, he had been able to form some idea of what Master Crawley, of the Fourth Form at Topham, was like, and he had doubted whether Wilmot's dislike had not misled him. But he knew now, beyond doubt, the kind of fellow Crawley was.

It was difficult to believe that any fellow could be base enough to trade on his knowledge of a miserable secret. But that, only too clearly, was what Crawley of Topham was doing!

"Well," said Bob, "of all the worms, that—"

"Of all the toads——" said Nugent.

"The wormfulness is as terrific as the toadfulness!" murmured Hurreo Jamsat Ram Singh.

"Let him come!" said Johnny Bull.

"What?"

"I'd let him come, and give him the biggest thrashing of his life when he gets here!" said Johnny Bull.

"Not a bad stunt!" said Bob.

Wilmot gave a harsh laugh.

"And hear him shouting it all out the minute afterwards!" he exclaimed. "I daren't touch him, and he knows it. I've kicked the cad at Topham—here, I don't know what I could do if he kicked me."

"Oh!" said Johnny. He had not thought of that. "You think he'd be mean enough to give you away——"

"You don't know him! That is what is called blackmail!" said Wilmot savagely. "If I don't send him five pounds he will come here—and show me up! That's what he means by talking it over."

"Could any fellow be such a rotter as that?" muttered Nugent.

"Not even Crawley, I think, unless he was pretty seriously up against it," said Wilmot. "That's why I think he's up for the sack this time, if he doesn't get clear. That letter's from a fellow who's desperate."

Harry Wharton nodded.

"Looks like it," he said. "He's expecting the crash, and he's catching at anything, even what amounts to blackmail, to save his neck. The sooner they kick him out the better. This kind of thing is the limit."

"He won't be kicked out if he can help it. I could manage the five pounds," said Wilmot. "But——"

He broke off, at the looks on the faces of his friends.

"You mean that you want our advice?" asked Harry.

"That's why I've shown you the letter. I don't know what to do! I've got my uncle to think of!" muttered Wilmot.

"I understand that, of course. But you can't do as this rotter asks. Even if you could stretch a point, with your conscience, to keep him quiet, it wouldn't be any use!" said the captain of the Remove. "If five pounds would get him out of this scrape, it wouldn't get him out of the next. Isn't he a fellow to get into another?"

"I've told you he's always up to the neck in some blackguardly row. I know he was up against it, just like

this, at the beginning of the term."

"Well, then, what would be the use? It would be only putting it off. You can depend on it, that if you let a rascal get money from you by threats, you will never get shut of him."

"That's solid common-sense!" agreed Johnny Bull. "It's never right to do what's wrong—and never sense, either."

"But—he will come here on Wednesday!" muttered Wilmot. "There will be no keeping him away."

"Won't there?" said Bob. "He will have to come by train, I suppose, from such a distance as Topham."

"What about that?" asked Wilmot, with a stare.

"It's a half-holiday here, on Wednesday!" said Bob, with a grin. "And there are lots of ways of persuading a fellow not to play a dirty trick. Dipping his head in a ditch is one way."

"Oh!" gasped Wilmot.

"After we've been persuading him a little while, I think very likely he will look on Greyfriars as the best spot on earth to keep away from!" said Bob. "I think very likely he will just hate the thought of dropping in again."

There was a chuckle from the Co.

Wilmot stood silent for a few moments. Then his clouded, harassed face broke into a grin.

"I never thought of that!" he said slowly. "It's not a bad stunt. If you fellows back me up——"

"To the last bean, old scout."

"Then it's a go!"

And a "go" it was!

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Dark Doubts!

MR. HACKER moved restlessly about his study.

A pile of Form papers awaited his attention on his table. But he did not glance at them.

His brow was deeply knitted, his lips set hard. Every now and then he glanced at the door, evidently in expectation of a visitor.

Mr. Hacker was not a good-tempered man, and he had a rather acid disposition. But he had a sense of duty, and he had stood by his nephew, who had been expelled from Topham School—to the extent of using his influence with Dr. Locke, to give the hapless boy another chance at Greyfriars. It was a big thing he had done, for if the facts came out at Wilmot's new school, it was a serious enough prospect for Mr. Hacker.

Now, it seemed, the facts were coming out.

Ever since he had overheard Skinner in the quad the day before, Mr. Hacker had been thinking and worrying about that. He hardly dared face the prospect of the school knowing that his nephew had been "sacked" in disgrace.

Neither was his belief in Wilmot so firm and unshaken as he hoped and believed that it was. He had not a trusting disposition, and he knew that, on the evidence, he would have condemned anyone but his own relative. As a logical man, he had to admit that it was illogical to persist in regarding a boy as innocent, simply because that boy happened to be his nephew!

There had always been a lingering, tormenting doubt at the back of Hacker's mind. He drove it away—but it would not quite go. The affair of Mr. Prout's lost banknote had been an overwhelming shock to him. True, that banknote had turned up again; it had been lost, not stolen. Wilmot, clearly,

had had nothing to do with it. Nevertheless, the effect of that shock remained on Hacker's mind.

Now, it seemed, his nephew's past was coming out—after all his warnings to the boy to be careful. What he had done for Wilmot, he had done with many doubts and many misgivings. And now——

There was a tap at the door, and Eric Wilmot entered. He shut the door after him, quietly, and stood facing his uncle.

His face was grave, and grew darker as he looked at Mr. Hacker. Wilmot was by no means ungrateful; he knew only too well what Hacker had done for him, and the risk involved for the master of the Shell in doing it. But all the kinder emotions were checked in the presence of a hard, cold man, whose sense of duty, strong as it was, was mingled with fussy petulance, and had little to do with personal affection.

"I sent for you some time ago, Eric!" snapped Mr. Hacker.

"I was out of gates, sir. I've only just heard——"

"Very well, very well, it does not matter, as you are here. What is all this I have heard?" said Mr. Hacker.

"You were cautioned over and over again to say nothing here of Topham—never even to mention that school. Yet I find that your misadventure there is the talk of the juniors."

"I never did mention Topham, sir!" said Wilmot quietly. "It came out by accident——"

"You should not have allowed it to come out by accident."

"I could not help it, sir! I played football for Topham at St. Jude's at the beginning of the term. That was where it—it happened, as you know. A St. Jude's fellow saw me about, and knew me, of course, by sight, and so——"

"And told the boys here?"

"Yes."

"Not about what happened in the dressing-room at St. Jude's on that occasion!" exclaimed Mr. Hacker.

Wilmot crimsoned.

"No! They don't know that at St. Jude's. It was kept dark there—only the Topham team knew."

Mr. Hacker grunted. He was prepared to blame his nephew, but he had to admit that this, at all events, was not Wilmot's fault.

"But even if it became known that you had been at Topham, which, perhaps, was unavoidable, from what you say, nothing else need have been known!" he snapped. "If the St. Jude's boys knew nothing——"

"Nothing at all!"

"Then nothing can have been learned here from that source; but something has been learned, from what the wretched boy Skinner was shouting in the quadrangle yesterday."

"I know," muttered Wilmot. "It wasn't my fault. A prying cad of a fellow looked at a letter I was reading, over my shoulder, and saw something in it; not the whole story, of course, but a reference to my having to leave Topham."

Mr. Hacker stared at him.

"You have been so injudicious, so thoughtless, so undutiful as to keep up correspondence with your former school!" he exclaimed. "You have let Topham boys know that you are at Greyfriars!"

"No! One fellow nosed it out, knowing that I had an uncle who was a Form-master here. You used to come to Topham sometimes, sir, and Crawley saw you and so he nosed it out——"

"Crawley! Who is Crawley?"

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"A fellow in the Topham Fourth."

"If he is a friend of yours, you should have warned him not to write to you here."

"He's not a friend; he's a rotten worm, and he likes rubbing it in!" said Wilmot bitterly.

"At all events, you should never have allowed a letter to be seen, even by a prying boy. You should have been more careful."

Wilmot was silent. It was not easy for the most careful fellow to keep his affairs from the knowledge of Billy Bunter.

"A letter with the Topham postmark should not even have been placed in the rack, to draw attention," muttered Mr. Hacker. "I am surprised that Quelch, who knows the facts, should—"

"He handed me the first letter in his study, sir, privately, for that reason. But after it became generally known that I had been at Topham letters were put in the rack with the others. But that was not the trouble. The fellow I've spoken of never took it out of the rack; he wouldn't dare. He spied over my shoulder—"

"You have been careless!"

Wilmot was silent again.

"Now, tell me," said Mr. Hacker harshly—"how much is known?"

"Nothing's known for certain, sir; only the fellows have a pretty clear idea that I had to get out of Topham for some reason."

"They do not know that you were expelled on the charge of having pilfered the boy Raleigh's notecase in the dressing-room at St. Jude's?"

Wilmot's face crimsoned again.

"No, sir," he said in a low voice.

"No one knows that?"

Wilmot hesitated.

"Five fellows know it, sir; I couldn't keep it from them, owing to circumstances. But they're my friends, and they believe in me and stick to me."

"Who are they?"

"Wharton and Nugent, who are in my study, and their friends Bull and Cherry and Hurree Singh."

"They know the facts—and still believe in you?"

"Yes."

"Oh!" said Mr. Hacker.

He seemed to derive some comfort from this. Perhaps the discovery that five schoolboys believed in Wilmot, regardless of appearances, helped to strengthen his own wavering faith. He remained silent for some time, moving restlessly about the study, Wilmot standing as still as a statue, waiting.

"It is unfortunate that anyone knows," said Mr. Hacker at last; "still more unfortunate that suspicion is abroad generally. You must know, Eric, that if the facts come to general knowledge you cannot remain here."

"I know," said Wilmot, wincing.

"I hoped that every connection with your past might be broken. It is clear that I hoped too much," muttered Mr. Hacker. "I had faith in you, Eric. What I did proved that I had faith in you."

"I hope you have not lost it, sir," said Wilmot. "I've done nothing here, at any rate, to make you change your opinion of me."

"That is true!" muttered Mr. Hacker. "I do you that justice. That is true. And yet—" He stopped his hurried, worried movements, stood facing his nephew, and fixed his eyes on the pale, handsome face with a penetrating, searching stare. "Yet I hope and believe, Eric, that you were innocent. And yet why has nothing of the truth, in that case, been discovered?"

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"The fellow who did it is not likely to own up, I suppose," said Wilmot wearily. "I've no chance unless he is found out."

"That is not the point. Do you suppose that I have been idle?" snapped Mr. Hacker. "Taking your word that you were innocent, I have, of course, taken what steps were practicable to prove you innocent. Nothing has come of it."

"I don't see what—"

"If you are guilty, Eric, the steps I have taken will bring home your guilt to you beyond the shadow of a doubt."

Wilmot's lip curled.

"I'm not afraid of that," he answered. "If you're afraid of it, sir, I can only say I'm sorry."

"I believe you," said Mr. Hacker—dubiously, however. "I certainly believe you, Eric—but—" He set his lips. "Nothing has come of the investigations that have been made—after all these weeks."

"But what—" asked Wilmot.

"It should be plain to you!" snapped Mr. Hacker. "The boy Raleigh's notecase was taken in the dressing-room during, or after, the football match at St. Jude's. The wallet itself was seen to drop from your pocket when you were putting on your jacket; the money was missing. According to your story, the empty wallet must have been placed there by the thief—no doubt, in such a manner that it would fall out when you handled the jacket."

"I suppose so."

"It is not a case for supposing. If you are innocent, you know it!" snapped Mr. Hacker. "There was certainly a thief—either you, or another Topham boy. If you are innocent, that boy deliberately extracted the money, and placed the wallet where it was found to secure himself by placing his guilt on your shoulders. A dreadful act, in which it is hard to believe."

"Hard or not, that's what must have happened, sir."

"I—I believe so. Was there any boy in the football team who disliked you very much?"

"They were all my friends—all good pals—every man of them. But there were other fellows who came over with us for the match, all decent chaps, except one fellow—that cad Crawley," said Wilmot. "But I don't see it's proved that the thief was a Topham fellow. Anyone might have slipped into the dressing-room and gone through the pockets and shoved Raleigh's notecase into another jacket to cover up his tracks."

"You seem very keen to speak up for the school that has turned you out in disgrace," said Mr. Hacker, with savage sarcasm. Unheeding the painful flush that dyed Wilmot's pale face, he went on: "The thief was a Topham boy. Only a Topham boy could have known where to look for a large sum of money. It was not customary, I presume, for a Topham boy to carry banknotes in his pocket."

"Old Raleigh always had a lot of money."

"His headmaster should not have permitted it!" snapped Mr. Hacker. "It is scandalous for a schoolboy to have the sum of ten pounds in his pockets! It was a temptation to a dishonest school-fellow—"

"No Topham fellow—" began Wilmot.

"Be silent! Some Topham boy certainly is a thief—you or another! You make me begin to doubt whether it may not be you," said Mr. Hacker harshly—"all the more because the note cannot be traced."

"Traced?" repeated Wilmot,

"I suppose you know that banknotes are numbered!" snapped Mr. Hacker. "Your headmaster at Topham was pleased to find my nephew guilty of theft. Do you imagine that I was willing to leave the matter there? Investigation has been going on, and I admit that your late headmaster has given me all the assistance in his power. The money taken was in the form of a five-pound note and currency notes. The latter cannot be traced; but the five-pound note certainly can if it is put into circulation. That is a matter for the police."

"The police!" gasped Wilmot.

"Most decidedly! What are the police for, except to clear the innocent and to punish the guilty? The number of that five-pound note—00002222—has been circulated. If it is found, the thief will—or, at least, may—be traced."

"Oh!" gasped Wilmot.

"Nothing has been heard of the note, after all these weeks," went on Mr. Hacker. "It cannot have been passed yet. That is what troubles and surprises me. Only a boy in desperate need of money could commit such a dreadful act; yet it appears that he has not spent the money."

"He might funk it," said Wilmot.

"He mightn't dare." "He must have intended to dare when he took the banknote," said Mr. Hacker. "Perhaps he has lost his nerve. But if the note! Yet it had not been passed! Investigation is futile. But—"

Again he looked at the junior searchingly, almost doubtfully.

"You must see how it looks, Eric," he said at last. "The wretched boy must have intended to use the five-pound note. If he was discovered as the thief he would not dare to do so; but, otherwise—"

"Oh heavens!" breathed Wilmot.

He could see now what was tormenting his uncle's troubled mind. A discovered thief would not dare to pass a stolen note. Undiscovered, he would take the risk, as he must have intended to do. If Wilmot was innocent the thief was still undiscovered—and would pass the note! Yet it had not been passed!

The colour drained from Wilmot's face, leaving it almost haggard. Mr. Hacker, almost as pale, watched him.

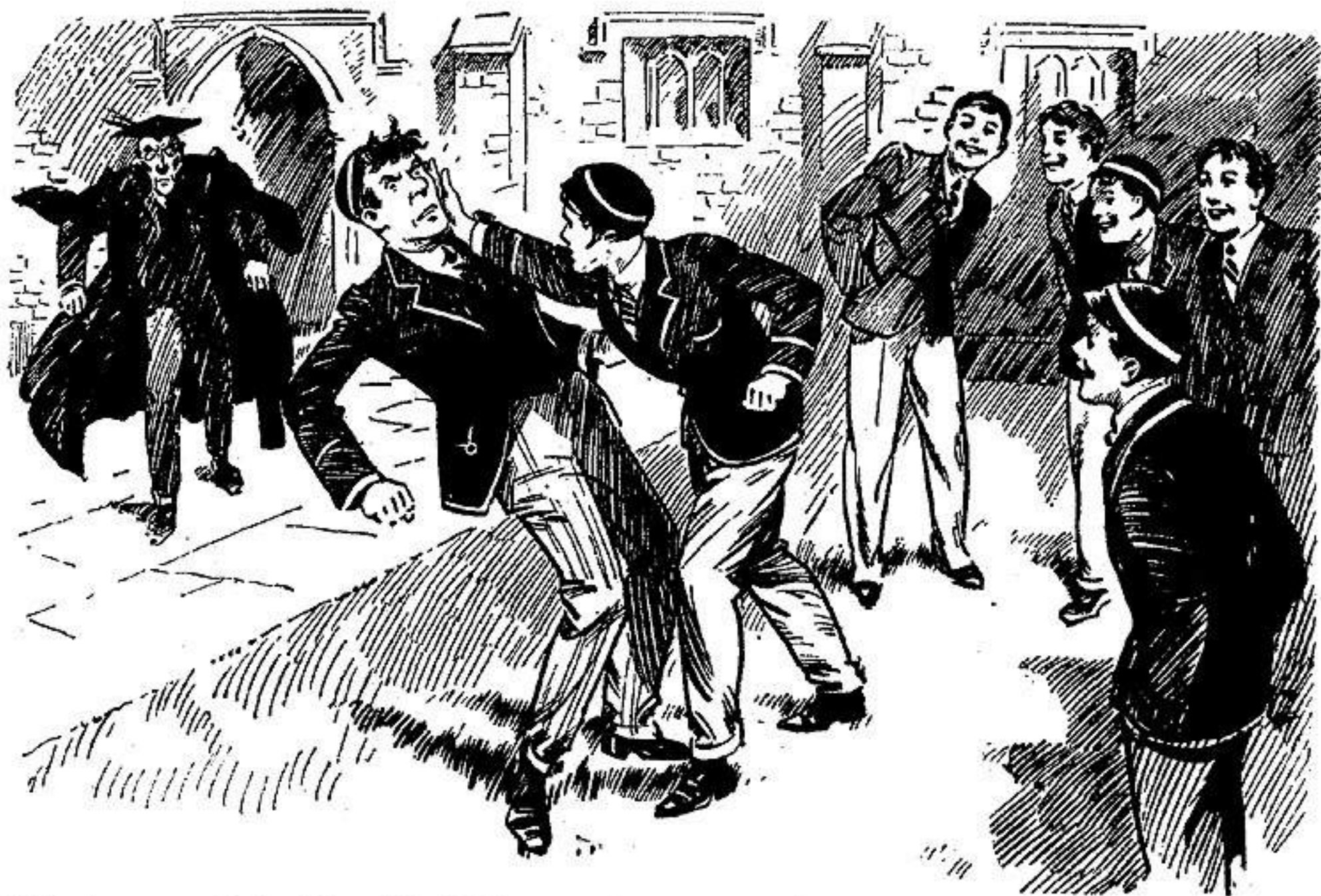
"Eric," he muttered at last, "if—if you have deluded me—if you have done this dreadful thing—"

"You think that?" muttered Wilmot huskily. "Yes, I know what it looks like! If you think that send me away from here. I wish I'd never come to Greyfriars; if you couldn't believe in me, right up to the hilt, you shouldn't have brought me here. Let me go away—"

"The term is near its end," said Mr. Hacker. "In a few days we break up for Easter. I shall have to consider whether you can return here after the holidays, Eric. After all my warnings your past has become the talk of the Form—whether it is your fault or not is immaterial, it does not alter the fact! No discovery has been made to clear you—and I had every reason to hope that—" He broke off. Hard as he was, worried as he was about his own position, Hacker could not help taking pity on the white misery in Wilmot's face. His voice was kinder as he went on: "Believe me, Eric, I still have faith in you, though I am sorely perplexed. Leave me now, my boy."

Wilmot was glad enough to go.

Left alone, Mr. Hacker resumed his restless pacing of the study. He believed, at least he tried his hardest to believe, in the boy from Topham, yet every step taken to prove the boy's



"Now, answer me, short and sharp!" said Coker. "Is it true that you were kicked out of your last school?" By way of answer, Wilmot stepped forward and smacked Coker fairly across the face with his open hand. Smack! "Oooogh!" gasped Coker, taken by surprise.

innocence seemed to blacken the shadow of guilt on him. The master of the Shell was, as he had said, sorely perplexed.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Smack!

"PRETTY thick!" said Coker of the Fifth.

It was the next morning that Horace Coker of the Fifth Form made that remark to his friends, Potter and Greene, in the quad after morning school.

To what Coker was alluding his friends did not know, though they could guess that it was probably something that was no concern of Coker. That, indeed, almost went without saying.

"If it's true," went on Coker, "the sooner he's turfed out the better."

"Who?" yawned Potter. "No bizney of yours, Coker, if Price smokes cigarettes in his study—"

"I'm not talking about Price! Blow Price! I'm talking about that kid—his name's Wilson, I think—or Wilkins—no, Wilmot."

Coker made a gesture towards a Remove junior who was in the quad at a little distance. Potter and Greene glanced at him without much interest.

"That's old Hacker's nephew, isn't it?" asked Greene.

"I believe so!" said Coker. "According to what I hear, he came here from another school after being bunked. I hear that his Form are full of it."

"Rot!" said Potter. "A beak's nephew! I shouldn't take any notice of fag tattle, Coker, old man."

"If you think I'm the man to take any notice of fag tattle, George Potter, I'll—"

"Aren't you?" asked Potter.

"Don't jaw!" said Coker crossly.

"What a fellow you are for jawing, Potter. I believe you'd jaw the hind leg off a mule." Coker frowned. "Greyfriars isn't a home for fellows sacked from other schools. If it's true he ought not to have come here—and he ought to be booted out, see?"

"Don't shout, old man!" advised Greene. "There's the kid's beak over yonder. He mightn't like to hear that you think one of his crew is a throw-out from another show."

Coker did not even glance towards Mr. Quelch, who was taking a walk in the quad before his lunch, which was the school dinner. Beaks had no terrors for Coker of the Fifth.

"I call it pretty thick," went on Coker. "If it's true I really don't know what the Head thinks he's up to."

"Might ask him!" suggested Potter, with a private wink at Greene.

"Well, a chap can't very well do that!" said Coker, who was never known to guess when his leg was being pulled. "Old Locke would most likely shut me up pretty sharp if I did."

Potter and Greene grinned. There was little doubt that, had Horace Coker inquired of the majestic Head of Greyfriars School what he was up to, Coker would have been shut up sharp—very sharp indeed!

"I'm going to ask the kid whether it's true or not," said Coker. "I'll get the truth out of him, you can bank on that! And if it's true—"

"You'll turf him out of Greyfriars?" asked Potter, with another wink at Greene with the eye that was farthest from Coker.

"Well, I can't exactly do that!" said Coker, still blind to leg-pulling. "You're rather an ass, Potter, if you don't mind my mentioning it. Still, something will have to be done. I don't think fellows ought to stand it—a man bunked from another school coming

here. It's too thick! I heard one of the Remove kids—that weedy rat Skinner—saying that it was a fact. He was speaking out loud where a lot of seniors could hear him—I noticed some of the Sixth heard him, one or two prefects! From what I make out it's getting to be the talk of the Lower School. It jolly well won't do."

Coker shook his head decidedly. Potter and Greene refrained from asking him what business it was of his. It was no use asking Coker questions like that.

They only smiled as Coker started towards Wilmot of the Remove, and walked away in another direction.

Coker walked across to Wilmot.

That junior, who hardly knew Coker, gave him no heed. He was thinking of what had been planned for the afternoon.

He had not answered Crawley's letter, and he had no doubt that the black sheep of Topham would keep his word and come over to see him.

There seemed to be no way of dealing with the unwelcome visitor except the way suggested by Bob Cherry, though Wilmot was not wholly easy in his mind about taking such drastic measures.

His reflections on the subject were interrupted by Coker.

"Here, you!" rapped out Coker. "Stop!"

Wilmot glanced at him in surprise.

"What the dickens do you want?" he snapped, not liking either Coker's tone or look. Except that he had once or twice lent Harry Wharton & Co. a hand in handling Coker in Horace's more obstreperous moments he had never had anything to do with the Fifth Former.

It did not occur to him that the rumours in the Remove had reached some of the seniors by this time, still

less that Coker of the Fifth felt impelled to barge into the matter.

Coker knitted his brows. If Wilmot did not like his look or tone, neither did he like Wilmot's.

"First of all, I don't want any cheek!" he said gruffly.

"I haven't asked you what you don't want, but what you do want," Wilmot pointed out. "Cut it short—I've no time to waste!"

This, from a Remove junior to a Fifth Form senior was sheer, unadulterated cheek! Especially when the senior was Horace Coker.

"If you're asking for a whopping I'll—" hooted Coker.

"Oh, don't be an ass!"

"Wha-at?"

"An ass!"

Coker breathed hard.

"Look here!" he gasped.

"Oh, buzz off!" snapped Wilmot.

"I've got a question to ask you. It's going the rounds that you came here after being sacked from another school."

"Oh!" gasped Wilmot.

"If it's true you're a pretty disgraceful young blackguard," said Coker.

"Now, answer me, short and sharp—is it true? Were you kicked out of your last show or not? And don't tell me any whoppers, see?"

Wilmot did not tell Coker any whoppers! He did not tell him anything! He made a swift step towards him and smacked him fairly across the face with his open hand.

Snack!

It was a hefty snack! It rang almost like a pistol-shot. It caused dozens of heads to turn, scores of eyes to stare.

"Ooogh!" gasped Coker.

Taken utterly by surprise, Coker staggered back, stumbled, and sat down in the quad. He sat with a heavy bump.

"Ooogh!" repeated Coker, gasping.

"Wilmot!" Mr. Quelch came towards the spot like an arrow. "Wilmot, are you out of your senses? What is the meaning of this?"

"Ooogh!" gurgled Coker, still in a state of great surprise.

"Wilmot! What—"

"The cheeky fool asked for it!" said Wilmot.

"Wh-what"—stuttered the Remove master—"what did you say?"

"I said that the cheeky fool asked for it."

Thunder gathered in Mr. Quelch's brow. Wilmot, in his angry excitement, was lacking in respect. Certainly he was not speaking as a junior should have spoken to his Form-master.

"Wilmot, how dare you! You have struck a senior boy—and now you answer me insolently! Go into the House at once! I will deal with you later!"

Wilmot, with a dark brow and gleaming eyes, walked away towards the House. Mr. Quelch, frowning, followed him there.

Coker—the cynosure of all eyes—stood rubbing his cheek, which was red as a newly boiled beetroot. Coker's face had been smacked, in open quad, by a fag of the Remove—smacked, knocking him over! It was incredible—one of those things that couldn't happen! Yet it had happened! It was time for the skies to fall!

The skies did not fall! They took absolutely no notice! Coker, dazed, rubbed his crimson cheek! He walked away, in a state of great astonishment—and a chuckle and a chortle followed him as he went. Awful as this occurrence was, it seemed to strike the fellows who had seen it, not as tragic, but as rather comic, and they chuckled and chortled.

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THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Meeting Master Crawley!

"ROTTEN!" said Bob Cherry.

"The rottenfulness is terrific!"

"Can't be helped!" said Johnny Bull. "We can carry on."

It could not be helped, that was certain. Harry Wharton & Co., after dinner, were ready to walk to Courtfield to wait for the train that would bring the fellow from Topham over.

Wilmot could not go. He was under detention. That was his punishment for the episode in the quadrangle.

"We don't know the chap by sight!" said Bob doubtfully.

"We'll spot him all right!" said Nugent.

"Bunter knows him by sight," said Harry slowly. "I've heard him say that he saw a Topham fellow named Crawley that day at St. Jude's. But—"

"Don't get Bunter mixed up in this!" said Wilmot hastily. "For goodness' sake, that tattling fool—"

"Quite!" agreed Harry. "We'll manage to spot the fellow, anyhow. Rotten luck your getting detention, though."

"Bit of an ass to ask for it, if you ask me!" said Johnny Bull. "I saw you across the quad, Wilmot. What the thump did you knock Coker down for—with Quelch right on the spot, too?"

"I didn't knock him down! The clumsy fool fell down when I smacked his cheeky face," grunted Wilmot.

"Well, it comes to the same thing! Rather fatheaded, with Quelch—"

"I didn't see Quelch! I should have smacked Coker's face, all the same, if I had, though!" added Wilmot savagely.

"Well, Coker's a barging ass, and I dare say he was cheeky," said Johnny. "But I don't see smacking his face. What on earth could he have said to make you go off the deep end like that?"

"Never mind what he said!" answered Wilmot curtly. "He asked for it, and got it, and that's enough."

"Well, I jolly well think—"

"Easy does it, Johnny, old bean!" said Bob hastily. "Look here, you men, Wilmot can't come; but that needn't make any difference. We shall pick out that Topham beauty easy enough."

"I jolly well think—" repeated Johnny Bull stolidly.

"Wilmot!" It was Mr. Quelch's voice from the doorway of the House. "Wilmot, you will go into the Form-room, and remain there till tea-time! I have prepared you a task!"

"Very well, sir!" said Wilmot, biting his lip; and, without another word to his friends, he went into the House.

"Bit of a wild-cat, that chap, it seems to me," said Johnny Bull. "Smacking a senior man's face in the middle of the quad—"

"Fathead!" said Harry. "It's pretty easy to guess what Coker said, though Wilmot doesn't like mentioning it. He's got hold of the yarn that Skinner's trying to spread all over the school, and ten to one he's barging in and meddling, as usual."

"Oh!" said Johnny. "In that case—" He shrugged his shoulders. "If Wilmot's going to smack every man's face who asks him why he left Topham, he will have a lot of smacking to do!"

"The smackfulness will be terrific!" grinned the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Let's get out!" said Harry.

The Famous Five walked out of gates.

They had little doubt that they would be able to spot the Topham fellow at the station, without Wilmot's assistance, if he came. It was not certain that he was coming; and if he came, they did not know by what train he would arrive. It meant hanging about the platform on Courtfield Station for a good part of the half-holiday—perhaps, after all, for nothing. However, they had made up their minds to that.

They walked away from the school by the road over Courtfield Common. Plenty of Greyfriars fellows were out of gates that sunny April afternoon. Vernon-Smith and Tom Redwing were taking a boat out on the Sark, and they called to the Famous Five to join up; but the chums of the Remove shook their heads and walked on. Peter Todd, Squiff, and Tom Brown were taking their bikes out, and they also hailed the five in vain.

Certainly, the chums would have preferred either a pull on the river, or a spin on a bike, to visiting a railway station that sunny afternoon; but it was not a matter of choice with them. Anyhow, it was a very pleasant walk across the green common, under a blue sky, which was so much to the good.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! There's jolly old Horace!" remarked Bob Cherry, half-way across the common to the town. "Looks as if he's lost something."

Coker of the Fifth was staring about him, apparently in search of something or somebody. As the juniors came nearer, they saw him tramp up a grassy knoll by the road, and scan the wide common on all sides. He had a perplexed and very annoyed expression on his face.

As the juniors came along, Coker descended from the knoll to the road, and called to them.

"Here, you kids! Have you seen a couple of silly fools wandering about?"

"Only one!" answered Bob.

"Oh! Potter, or Greene?"

"Neither, Coker!"

At which the juniors chuckled, and Coker stared, not being quick on the uptake. It was some moments before it dawned upon him that he was the "silly fool" to whom Bob alluded.

"Cheeky, as usual!" said Coker, knitting his brows. "Look here, you scrubby little ticks, I'm looking for Potter and Greene. Have you seen them?"

"Lost them?" grinned Nugent.

"Well, they can't be far away," said Coker, evidently puzzled. "We started to walk to Courtfield, to go to the pictures, and I changed my mind, and told them that we'd go for a walk along the river instead. I started across the common for the river, but I suppose they didn't understand—silly fools, you know—because when I looked back I couldn't see them."

He stared at the juniors.

"What are you sniggering at?" he demanded.

Coker was puzzled by that strange disappearance of Potter and Greene in broad daylight.

The juniors were not puzzled. They had a strong suspicion that Coker's friends—not having changed their minds, like Coker—had gone on to the pictures, leaving old Horace to take his walk on his lonely own.

That, evidently, had not occurred to Coker's powerful brain. It occurred to Harry Wharton & Co., and caused the sniggering of which Coker angrily inquired the reason.

"We haven't seen them, Coker!" said Harry, laughing. "Better squint into

the cinema at Courtfield. They might be there."

"Don't be a young ass!" said Coker irritably. "I told them plainly I had changed my mind about going to the pictures. They can't be there!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And if you snigger at me, I'll mop up this road with you!" roared Coker. "I've had enough cheek from the Remove to-day!"

"That reminds me," said Bob Cherry. "Old Wilmot's got a detention because Coker asked him to smack his face. Sit him down!"

"Good egg!"

Coker was considering at that moment whether to mop up the Courtfield road with the juniors. He was not given time to come to a decision. The juniors settled the matter by mopping up the Courtfield road with Coker.

They collared the Fifth Form man, up-ended him, rolled him in the dust, and left him to sort himself out, in a state of breathless fury.

Then they trotted on to Courtfield, leaving Horace Coker sitting by the roadside, dusty, and wildly enraged, and struggling spasmodically to get his second wind! It was quite a long time before Coker felt fit to resume his hopeless quest of Potter and Greene.

By that time the Famous Five were in Courtfield. They walked up the old High Street to the station, and, having taken platform tickets, went on the platform to wait for trains.

Trains came in, and they watched passengers alight. A long hour passed rather drearily.

They thought of Smithy and Redwing on the sunny Sark, and of Toddy & Co. on their bikes. But they also thought of the junior sitting in the Remove in detention, grinding at the task thoughtfully provided for him by Mr. Quelch. It was for Wilmot's sake that they were there, and though they were fed-up, they did not grouse.

"There's one fast train—at four," said Harry. "I looked it out in the timetable. Ten to one he'll come by the four train!"

"If he comes at all!" said Johnny Bull.

"Well, if he doesn't, so much the better!"

"I don't know about that," remarked Bob. "He's the sort of rat I should like to scrag. Anyhow, if he comes this once, bet you he won't come again!"

The four train came in at last. There were a good many passengers, and the Greyfriars fellows watched them keenly as they alighted. One of them was a fellow about their own age, with a pasty face, sharp, wary eyes, and a school cap. As soon as their eyes fell on that passenger, they had no doubt that he was the fellow they wanted.

He lingered on the platform, while the other passengers passed on their way, looking about him, as if half-expecting to be met. Harry Wharton stepped towards him.

"Crawley?" he asked.

The pasty fellow stared at him.

"My name's Crawley," he said. "Who are you, and what do you want?"

He returned their stare with sharp, suspicious eyes.

"I can see you're Greyfriars men," he said. "Friends of Wilmot's?"

"You've guessed that one!" said Bob, with a nod.

"Well, as you know my name and have turned up here to meet me, it wasn't hard to guess, as nobody at Greyfriars knows anything about me but Wilmot," said the Topham junior. "Did Wilmot send you here?"

"Not exactly! We've come!"

"Message from him, or what?" asked Crawley, evidently puzzled. "I rather thought he might be at the station himself; I never expected him to send anybody. I shouldn't have thought—"

He broke off abruptly.

"You wouldn't have thought he'd have mentioned you!" said Harry, finishing the remark for him. "No doubt."

Crawley's look grew more and more watchful. The Famous Five were strangers to him; but he knew now that they were friends of Wilmot; and he scented hostility. Their manners were civil enough, so far as that went; but the under-current of hostility was unmistakable.

"Well, if it's a message from Wilmot, what about coughing it up?" he asked.

"I haven't come here to stand about on a platform!"

"It isn't!"

"Then, what the dooce are you talking to me at all for?" said Crawley, showing plain signs of irritation.

"What do you mean?"

He made a movement to pass along the platform. The Greyfriars fellows quietly but firmly barred his way.

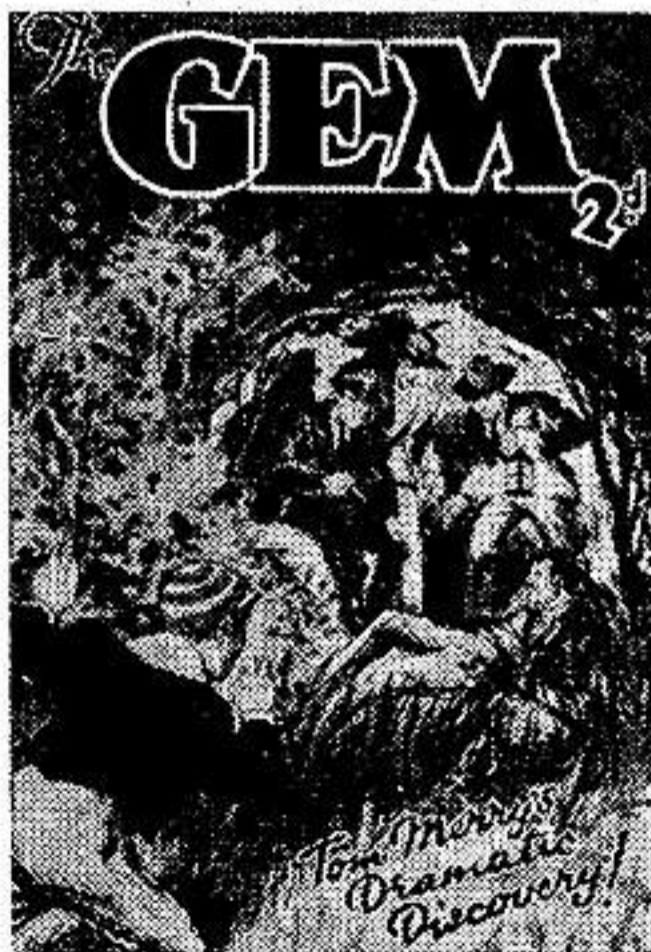
Crawley stopped, breathing rather hard.

"Is this a rag, or what?" he asked.

"I suppose Wilmot hasn't been fool enough—mad enough—to fix up a rag on me! By gum, if he has—" He stopped with the threat unuttered.

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"We've something to say to you, Crawley!" said Harry Wharton politely. "Will you step into the waiting-room? No need for all Courtfield to hear."

"No," answered Crawley, "I won't! I'm going on to Greyfriars. I've not got a lot of time to waste."

"Better waste a few minutes," said Harry. "It may save you all the trouble of going to Greyfriars at all."

"You're talking rot! I've come over to see Wilmot! If he's not here, I shall have to go on to the school."

"The point is, that Wilmot doesn't want to see you."

Crawley's narrow eyes glinted. "Has he said so?" he demanded.

"Yes; quite plain."

"Well, that's no bizney of yours, that I can see!" said Crawley, after a brief pause. "I've got a reason for seeing Wilmot, and I'm going on. May I advise you fellows to mind your own business?"

"As friends of Wilmot, we're making this our business!" explained Wharton, still quite polite. "Otherwise, we'd rather not see you, Crawley! You're not exactly the sort of chap we like to see."

"Hardly!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Not at all!" said Nugent.

"Is it Greyfriars style to mob a fellow and insult him?" asked Crawley, with a sneer on his thin lips.

"Not in the least!" said Harry. "If you're offended at anything we say, we're ready to take the consequences. If you're looking for a scrap, four of us will stand round and see fair play, while you handle any man you choose to pick out. Can't say fairer than that."

"The fairness is terrific!" declared Hurree Janset Ram Singh—a remark that made the Topham fellow stare at him for a moment.

"I haven't come over here for a scrap!" said Crawley.

"Quite!" agreed Wharton. "Nobody wants to scrap. I'm only pointing out that you're not being mobbed, as you've described it. Every fellow here would prefer to see the last of you, without any trouble."

"You can do that, by getting out of my way," suggested Crawley. "I shall be quite as glad to see the last of you!"

"While you go on to Greyfriars?"

"Yes!" snapped Crawley.

"That's where the rub comes in! You're not going on to Greyfriars," explained the captain of the Remove. "That's why we're here."

"Exactly!" said Johnny Bull.

Crawley stood silent, watching them with rat-like eyes. He was breathing very quickly.

It was clear that he was taken utterly by surprise by this unexpected meeting at the station; and, keen and cunning fellow as he was, he was rather at a loss. As he did not speak, Harry Wharton went on:

"If you like, we'll keep you company till the next down train, and see you off for Topham! What about that?"

"Thanks!" sneered Crawley. "I'm not going back to Topham, yet, and I don't care for your company."

"That's worse for us than for you—we don't care for yours!" said Harry. "And ours, at any rate, is decent!"

"And mine isn't?" asked Crawley, with set lips.

"No! I've told you you're not wanted at Greyfriars! Wilmot has told you so in his letter last week. Do you call it decent to barge in, after that?"

"That's my business—not yours."

"I've told you we're making this our business, as Wilmot's friends. He would

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

The Fellow from Topham!

"YOU'RE Crawley," said Bob Cherry.

The Famous Five looked at the fellow with interest. After the letter he had written to Wilmot, they had a natural curiosity to see what sort of a specimen he was.

have come himself, only he's got detention. We're representing him," explained the captain of the Remove.

"I'm going on to Greyfriars!"

"You're not."

"Who's going to stop me?" exclaimed Crawley, his voice growing loud and shrill.

"We are!"

The Topham fellow cast a hunted look up and down the platform. He was comforted by the sight of two or three porters in the offing.

"I warn you, that if you begin ragging here, I shall call for help!" he said, between his teeth. "You won't get away with that!"

"It's rather a long step to Greyfriars from here," said Harry. "We can't stop you from leaving the station. We can stop you afterwards—and we jolly well will, if you keep on!"

"Look here, what's the game?" exclaimed Crawley. "Has Wilmot told you—?" He broke off again.

"Every jolly old thing!" said Bob.

Crawley looked startled.

"Not why he left Topham!" he exclaimed.

"Yes!"

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Crawley. He seemed quite confounded by that reply, and he stood staring.

"We know the whole story, from beginning to end," said Harry quietly, "and we believe in Wilmot, and stand by him."

"A fellow who was expelled for pinching out of another fellow's pocket in a dressing-room!" said Crawley venomously.

"You see, we don't believe a word of it; we don't believe that Wilmot is that kind of chap at all."

"His headmaster at Topham did!" sneered Crawley.

"That's not the point. I dare say a beak has to act on the evidence, and it seemed pretty thick in Wilmot's case, from what he's told us. But we can't get it down, all the same; we believe that Wilmot is all right, and we're standing by him. But from what you say, you don't?"

"Nobody at Topham does!" sneered Crawley.

"According to that, you're going to visit a fellow you believe to be a thief!" said Wharton scornfully.

"I've got my reasons——" muttered Crawley.

"Exactly; and we know the reasons."

"Then—Wilmot's told you?" stammered Crawley.

"I've said so."

"More fool he! I should have fancied he'd have kept it all dark at his new school!" sneered Crawley. "If he's told you, he hasn't told the rest. He would have to get out if it was known; his Uncle Hacker couldn't keep him there if it all came out——"

"It's not all coming out."

"That doesn't depend on you."

"It does. If you won't go back quietly to Topham, you can have all the trouble you want before you go! But you're going, and we're going to see that you do!" said Harry Wharton.

Again the Topham fellow gave a hunted look round.

"Look here, Crawley," went on Harry, "I hear that you were enemies with Wilmot at his old school. But he's down and out; he's had as hard a knock as any enemy could want him to have. Can't you let him alone? He's got a chance of making a fresh start at Greyfriars if that rotten Topham business can only be washed out. There's been talk already through your letters coming to him, but it will be forgotten

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if there's nothing fresh. Give him a chance."

Crawley did not answer.

"If you think he really did that dirty trick at St. Jude's, you can't want to have anything to do with him," said Harry. "If you think it was another fellow planted it on him, you ought to feel sorry for him. In either case, it's up to you to leave him alone and give him a chance. Look here, why not do the decent thing and leave the chap alone?"

Wharton spoke in a quiet, conciliatory tone. His friends stood silent. It seemed to all of them that no fellow could resist an appeal that was put like that. Even Crawley seemed a little uneasy as he listened. There was, at least, some sign of shame in his face.

But his thin lips set obstinately.

"You don't understand!" he muttered.

"We do understand," said Harry. "Wilmot showed us your letter, and it was easy enough to understand."

Crawley's sallow face crimsoned.

"More fool he! Leave me alone, you meddling fools! I'm going to Greyfriars now, and you're not stopping me!"

He pushed past Harry Wharton, and almost ran towards the exit. Two or three porters looked round. Bob made a movement, but stopped. A "rag" was hardly practicable on the station platform.

"Come on!" said Harry, with a glint in his eyes.

And the Famous Five, with grim faces, followed Crawley of Topham from the station.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Taken for a Walk!

CRAWLEY cut across the pavement, and jumped on the motor-bus that was waiting outside, about to start. He panted with relief as he dropped into a seat.

A moment later five fellows came across from the station, and, one after another, jumped on the bus.

It roared away down Courtfield High Street.

Harry Wharton & Co. sat down, taking no notice of the furtive-eyed fellow who was watching them uneasily from farther along the seats.

The route of the Redclyffe motor-bus was by the road over Courtfield Common, where it passed within a quarter of a mile of Greyfriars School, stopping at the corner of Oak Lane.

Crawley, it was clear, knew that that was the motor-bus for Greyfriars, but probably did not know that there was a walk at the other end.

When the time came for that walk, the chums of the Remove were ready to join Crawley, walking. But they did not intend the walk to be in the direction of the school.

The bus rolled out of Courtfield and buzzed away across the green common.

Harry Wharton & Co. did not look at Crawley, but they were aware of a sneering grin on his face.

He had been taken quite by surprise, and he knew now that Wilmot's friends would prevent him from getting to Greyfriars if they could. But he flattered himself that he had put "paid" to that. He had intended to walk to the school; but by taking the motor-bus he fancied—so far—that he had made himself quite safe.

Wharton & Co. were chatting as the bus rolled on; and when a word or two reached Crawley's ears, through the buzz of the motor-bus, he was aware

that they were talking about the coming Easter holidays.

He had no doubt that, having failed to turn him back by warning words, they had given up the idea of stopping him at all. Having failed, they were going back to the school by bus—so it appeared to him.

He was to discover shortly that that was a mistake.

After a time he took no more notice of the juniors than they took of him. He had other matters to think of—more urgent and pressing matters. From his letter, and the veiled threats it contained, Wilmot had guessed that Crawley was in a scrape and "up against it." But he had not guessed how desperately up against it the black sheep of Topham was. But Crawley knew only too well, and he was thinking of it as the motor-bus thundered on.

Every now and then he looked out for a sight of the school. He had never seen Greyfriars before; he had made only one visit previously, and on that occasion Wilmot had met him on the road over the common and turned him back. Every minute now he expected to see Greyfriars.

When the bus stopped at the corner of the common, Greyfriars was not in sight; but Harry Wharton & Co., still taking no notice of Crawley, stepped off and walked up the road towards the school.

Crawley watched them, and spoke to the conductor.

"Don't you pass Greyfriars School?"

"No, sir; we turn off here for Redclyffe," answered the conductor. "It's that way, sir—the way those young gentlemen are going."

"Is it far?"

"Only a few minutes, and you'll see the tower, sir."

Crawley stepped off the bus.

The motor-bus roared on for Redclyffe, leaving him standing there. Harry Wharton & Co., without a backward glance, disappeared up the road, the wayside trees soon hiding them from sight.

Crawley waited a few minutes longer.

His idea was to give them plenty of time to get ahead; he did not want to overtake them on the road.

When he walked on at last he kept a wary and furtive eye open on the road in front of him, prepared to stop or to dodge, if necessary, if he sighted the Greyfriars fellows.

But when he did sight them he had no chance of dodging.

There was a sudden rustle in a hawthorn hedge beside the road, and five figures leaped out.

Before the Topham fellow quite knew what was happening he was surrounded by the Famous Five.

He panted, and made a spring to escape, and Bob Cherry's grasp closed on his arm like a vice.

"No, you don't!" said Bob grimly.

"Let me go!" yelled Crawley.

"My dear man, we've been waiting for you to blow along," said Bob. "You've kept us waiting a good ten minutes behind that hedge. Can't expect us to let you go now we've got you."

"You're so nice, you see!" grinned Nugent.

"I'll call for help!" panted Crawley.

"Go it!" said Bob. "Call all you like! Kick him every time he does, Johnny! You've got the biggest feet!"

"Well, I like that!" exclaimed Johnny Bull. "What are yours—fifteens or sixteens?"

"Help!" yelled Crawley desperately.

He yelled only once. A heavy boot landed on his trousers, and he squealed. It was borne in on his mind that the



"You can call for help as much as you like," said Bob Cherry. "And every time you do you'll be kicked!" "Help!" yelled Crawley desperately. He yelled only once. A heavy boot landed on his trousers, and he squealed. "Oooooop!" It was borne in on his mind that Harry Wharton & Co. did not intend to stand on ceremony with him.

Greyfriars fellows did not intend to stand on ceremony with him.

"Try again!" said Johnny Bull. "Lots more where that came from if you want any more!"

"Will you let me go?" yelled Crawley.

"No!" said Harry Wharton. "We'll let you go back to Topham! Nowhere else!"

"You rotter! You cad! You—you—" panted Crawley.

"Right about face!" said Bob. "You're walking back now! We're walking with you. I'll keep hold of your arm, if you don't mind! I've got an idea that you're tired of my company, and might cut if I let go."

"I won't go back! I—" "Well, I'm going," said Bob, "and your arm's coming with me! Please yourself about the rest of you!"

Bob started, holding Crawley's arm in a grasp that the weedy Topham fellow had no chance of loosening. Crawley's arm went with Bob, and the rest of him had to accompany the arm!

He resisted the pull fiercely, with the result that he was dragged off his feet and trailed along in the dust.

Bob looked down at him. "Do you prefer to travel that way?" he asked. "I'd rather walk myself. Still, if you like that better, every man to his choice."

Bob marched on, dragging. Crawley rolled headlong after him, gathering dust. Clearly he did not prefer to travel that way, for he scrambled furiously to his feet, and walked.

"If you don't let me go—" he panted.

"No 'if' about it," said Bob. "But let's know what awful thing is going to happen? I'd like to make my will in time."

"Ha, ha, ha!" "I shall complain to your headmaster."

"Yes," said Bob, with a chuckle; "I can see you telling my headmaster, or any headmaster, what you want to see old Wilmot for. I don't know what your beak at Topham is like; but I'm pretty certain that if he knew what you were up to, you'd be booted out so quick it would make your head swim."

Harry Wharton laughed. "If you'd like to see our headmaster first, and tell him why you want to see Wilmot, we'll let you go on to Greyfriars," he said.

That was not an offer that Crawley was likely to accept. The headmaster of Greyfriars was the last man in the world whom he desired to see.

With Bob Cherry holding his arm, and the other fellows walking behind, he walked back to the common, panting with rage. On the open road there was a chance of getting help; but as soon as they reached the common, the Famous Five turned off the road, and followed a track across the grassy expanse, among the furze and bushes and brambles.

"Where are you taking me?" hissed Crawley.

"Just for a walk," said Bob. "Lovely spring afternoon for a walk. We're going to do miles and miles and miles—"

"The milefulness is going to be terrific!" chuckled the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Like the prospect?" asked Nugent. "We've got some rather decent scenery round our school. You're going to see some of it. Not the more public places—nice secluded spots."

"Far from the madding crowd, as the jolly old poet puts it," said Johnny Bull. "Hope you're a good walker."

"Anyhow, you'll get a rest in the train back to Topham," said Harry. "We shall finish this walk at Courtfield, in time for your train, Crawley.

If you're late for calling-over at Topham, it's your own look-out. You shouldn't pay these visits without the formality of an invitation."

"This," said Bob, pausing to point to the pond on the common, "is an historic spot. It's historic because we once ducked a chap named Ponsonby there. A Highcliffe chap—rather like you, but not quite such a horrid toad. What about ducking this tick there, you men?"

"Not a bad idea," said Nugent. "Oh, you rotters!" groaned Crawley. He dragged at his arm.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! He's keen to get on," said Bob. "Glad you're enjoying the walk, old bean!"

The juniors walked on cheerfully. A long ramble till calling-over was quite agreeable to the Famous Five. It was not so agreeable to the fellow from Topham. He was slack and weedy, and shuddered at the thought of long miles over rugged common. And Greyfriars was getting farther and farther away.

He realised now what was going to happen. He was to be walked off his weary legs, and landed, finally, at the railway station, and bundled into a train. The best he could hope was that the Greyfriars fellows would land him there in time to get back to Topham for calling-over, otherwise trouble awaited him in his own school.

In a state of rage and bitterness, which no words could have expressed, the black sheep of Topham tramped wearily on.

He was prepared to yell for help at the sight of a passer-by; but the juniors, who knew every inch of the country round Greyfriars, chose unfrequented paths. Only by chance was he likely to sight any other face; but, as

NOT WANTED at GREYFRIARS!



(Continued from page 13.)

it happened, that chance was to turn up. Suddenly as the walkers passed a clump of trees, a burly fellow who was sitting there in the shade jumped up, and stared at them.

"What the thump's this game?" demanded Coker of the Fifth.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Coker Barges In!

HORACE COKER stared at the juniors.

The juniors stared at Horace Coker.

Crawley wrenched at his arm.

Coker, with a knitted brow, strode towards them. That Crawley, evidently a fellow who belonged to another school, was struggling to escape from the Greyfriars fellows, was clear—a sight that roused Coker's wrath. Probably Coker would have barged in, anyway. Earlier that same afternoon Coker had been rolled in the dust, and left gasping by these very juniors: Harry Wharton & Co., having more important matters to think of, had forgotten that trifling episode. Coker had not forgotten it. To him it was not trifling.

And Coker was in a bad temper.

Those two fatheads, Potter and Greene, having lost themselves, Coker had been looking for them all over Courtfield Common. He had not found them. Indeed, as they were sitting all the time in the picture palace at Courtfield, his chance of finding them was very remote.

Very much annoyed and tired, and rather warm in the bright April sunshine, Coker had sat down to rest under the clump of trees—rather unfortunately for the Famous Five and their plans.

"That fathead!" said Bob Cherry. He tightened his grip as Crawley wrenched. "Go away, Coker!"

"Yes, buzz off, old man!" said Harry Wharton. "We've no time to rag you now. Haven't you had enough for one day?"

Coker, with a grim brow, planted himself directly in the path of the Remove fellows. His rugged brow was corrugated by a deep frown.

"You cheeky young sweeps—" began Coker.

"Run away and play, Horace!" advised Bob.

Horace did not run away and play. He had not the remotest intention of running away and playing. His wrathful frown intensified.

"Who's that kid?" he demanded.

"Find out!" suggested Bob.

"Make them let me go!" panted Crawley. "I don't know these fellows. They've collared me, and made me—Yaroooh!"

A sudden application of Johnny Bull's boot caused the Topham fellow to break off with a howl.

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"Well, my hat!" gasped Coker. "You're a set of cheeky, unruly young sweeps, but this is the limit! Let that kid go at once!"

"We're taking him for a walk," explained Bob. "Showing him the sights, and all that. Look at that chap, Crawley; he's one of the sights of Greyfriars! Nobody has ever been able to make out whether he's got a Guy Fawkes' mask fixed on, or whether it is really his face."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker's rugged face crimsoned.

"Will you let that kid go?" he bawled.

"Look here, Coker, don't barge in!" said Harry. "We've got a reason for keeping this fellow out of mischief. He's up to a dirty trick, and we're stopping him. Now keep your distance!"

"Pass on, friend, and all's well!" said Bob.

"I'm rather glad to see you kids again," said Coker grimly. "I've got something in store for you for cheeking me an hour or two ago. Now I find you ragging a kid from another school. He looks rather a measly worm; but that's neither here nor there. Let him go at once!"

"Fathead!"

"Keep off, you ass!"

Instead of keeping off, Coker charged.

Coker's charge was rather like that of an escaped elephant. Harry Wharton reeled to the right, Nugent to the left. Johnny Bull and the nabob grabbed hold of Coker, and were dragged off their feet by the hefty Horace.

Crawley struggled frantically.

This unexpected chance was not likely to recur. He exerted himself to make the most of it.

His struggles would not have availed him much in Bob's grasp; but Coker, with Johnny Bull and Hurree Singh clinging to him, grabbed at Bob, and caught him by the collar.

"Now, then—" panted Coker.

"Leggo!" roared Bob, as he was dragged over.

Crawley, as he went, wrenched his arm loose, and sprang away.

Wharton and Nugent were on their feet at once. They made a dart at Crawley as he darted away.

But the instant he was free Crawley ran as if for his life. His feet seemed scarcely to touch the grass as he flew back towards the distant road.

Coker, mixed up with Bob and Johnny and the nabob, rolled on the ground, punching wildly. Wharton and Nugent ran to the aid of their comrades. Three Remove fellows might have handled Coker, but they would have collected a lot of damages in the process. Coker was big and brawny, and strong as a horse. He needed a lot of taking care of.

With five pairs of hands on him, however, the brawny Fifth Form man was soon in a gasping state.

For three or four minutes Coker of the Fifth put up a terrific shindy. He kept the Famous Five quite busy. But he was reduced at last to a state of gasping and gurgling breathlessness.

With more time at their disposal, the chums of the Remove would have given Coker a little more to remember them by. Now they had to think of Crawley. And, having put Coker out of action, they left him gurgling, and started in pursuit of the Topham fellow.

But Crawley, of Topham, had disappeared among the bushes and trees on the wide common. The pursuit was in vain.

When, half an hour later, the Famous Five came out on the Courtfield road, they saw no sign of him.

"That fool Coker!" breathed Bob.

"That howling ass!" said Johnny Bull.

"That cad Crawley may have had enough and cleared off!" suggested Nugent hopefully.

Harry Wharton nodded. It was possible that Crawley was fed-up with Greyfriars, after his experience that afternoon; and he might have decided to go while the going was good. The juniors hoped so, as they walked back to the school. But they doubted it. That ineffable ass, Coker, had spoiled everything; and they knew that it was almost certain that by that time Crawley of Topham was already at Greyfriars.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Coming of Crawley!

ERIC WILMOT came out of the Remove Form Room at five o'clock. At that hour he was released from detention. He was glad to get out into the fresh air and the spring sunshine.

It had been a weary afternoon to him. He walked round the quad, looking for his friends—wondering whether Harry Wharton & Co. had come back yet. He saw nothing of them—and did not care to ask other Remove fellows. Some of them were about—but plainly did not want him to speak to them. Lord Mauleverer gave him a nod, but did not stop; some other fellows affected not to see him. Skinner burst into a snigger as he passed, and whispered something to Snoop, which made Sidney James Snoop snigger also. Wilmot, taking no notice of them, walked on with burning cheeks.

With his friends out of gates, he was quite on his own. He felt the difference it made.

With all his pride, perhaps too disdainful a pride, it was bitter to feel himself something of an outcast in his Form. And that was what it was coming to. Plenty of fellows would have taken his word for it, that there was nothing in the story that had originated with Bunter, and that Skinner was industriously spreading all over Greyfriars. But Wilmot could hardly deny what was true; and his friends could not have stood by him in such a denial. He could only keep silent, or give curt answers; from which, as a matter of course, fellows drew their own conclusions.

There was hardly a fellow in the Form now who doubted that Hacker's nephew had been sacked from Topham, and owed his entrance at Greyfriars to his uncle's influence with the Head.

That, indeed, was exactly how the matter stood; it was the truth that was getting known, though not in exact detail.

Fellows took the view that Greyfriars was not a refuge for castouts kicked out of other schools; a very natural view to take. Excepting Skinner, and one or two fellows like him, nobody made himself unpleasant, but naturally the boy from Topham was left severely alone.

Wilmot did not wonder at it; indeed, he expected it; but it hurt, all the same. In his first days at Greyfriars he had adopted a disdainful, stand-offish attitude, which had made him generally disliked. He had thought it better to keep everybody at armslength, so that, at all events, he would not have to suffer being turned down if anything came out. He almost wished now that he had kept to that policy.

His friendship with Harry Wharton & Co. had changed it. For a time he had been a cheerful schoolboy like the rest, taking his part in the life of the Form, joining in the Form games—keeping the shadow of the past at the back of his mind, if he could not dismiss it altogether. Certainly he had been glad of the change—it had made an immense difference to him, and given him hope of the future.

All the time, however, he had known that the blow might fall—and now it had fallen. Crawley would not leave him in peace—Bunter's prying had revealed a part of the story—Skinner's enmity made the most of it. He was back in his old position now—alone among a crowd; but this time not by his own proud choice, but because the other fellows wanted to have nothing to do with him.

As he walked in the quad and noticed Hazeldene and two or three other fellows turn away as he came along, he felt a wish that Mr. Hacker would decide, after all, that he had better not come back after the Easter holidays.

There was, however, one fellow in the Remove who was willing to speak to the lonely junior. That one was Billy Bunter. Bunter spotted him, and rolled up to him, giving him a friendly blink through his big spectacles.

It was not gratitude for the service recently rendered by Wilmot, in rescuing him from Skinner's vengeance, that made Bunter award the new junior that friendly blink. Bunter had already forgotten that. What was worrying Bunter was that it was nearly tea-time, and he had been disappointed about a postal order.

"All on your own, old chap!" said Bunter, by way of an agreeable beginning. "Have those fellows gone out and left you on your own? That's the way they've treated me."

"Don't be a silly ass, Bunter!" was the curt reply.

"Oh, really, Wilmot—"

"Haven't Wharton and his friends come in yet?" Wilmot wanted to know, and as Bunter had barged in, he asked him.

"No! I've been keeping an eye open for them," said Bunter. "I shouldn't wonder if they're teeing out—without telling a chap, you know! That's the sort of thing they do to a pal! I say, don't walk off while a chap's talking."

As Wilmot did walk off, the fat junior rolled on by his side.

"I say, don't be shirty, you know," said Bunter. "There ain't a lot of fellows in the Remove keen to be seen speaking to you, I can tell you."

"You fat fool!"

"Look here, Wilmot—"

"Oh, clear off, and leave me alone!" snapped Wilmot. He was going down to the gates to look out into the road, and he did not want Bunter's fatuous company.

Bunter's eyes gleamed behind his spectacles. He was speaking to this outsider, to whom hardly another fellow would speak. And this was the outsider's gratitude!

Bunter came very near telling Wilmot what he thought of him! However, he checked that natural impulse.

"I say, old chap, do listen," he said. "I don't mind your being bunked from Topham, and all that! Why, Skinner would be bunked, if the Head found him out—as he knows jolly well! Fat lot of right Skinner has to talk about a fellow! You only happened to be found out, old chap, didn't you?"

Wilmot made no reply to that.

"But, I say," went on Bunter,

"Toddy's gone out on his bike, with some fellows, and I fancy he's not coming back to tea. When that chap teas out he doesn't care a brass button whether there's anything in the study for me—you'd hardly believe it, after all I've done for him—but there it is! I'm stranded just the same as you are."

"Do shut up!"

"What I mean is, we've both been let down," said Bunter. "Come in to tea with me, will you, in Study No. 7. I'm standing it, of course! You lend me five bob—"

"Go and eat coke!"

"I wish you wouldn't walk so fast, Wilmot! Walking a chap off his legs! I say, my postal order never came this morning, and— Will you listen to a chap, Wilmot? Hold on, I say!"

Wilmot walked so quickly that the fat Owl was left breathless behind. He glared wrathfully after the new junior through his big spectacles.

"Look here, Wilmot!" he bawled.

Wilmot did not turn his head.

"Yah!" roared Bunter. "Who was sacked from school? What did you do to be bunked for? Yah!"

Wilmot half turned; and Billy Bunter

did not wait for him to make a complete turn. He bolted, without waiting for an answer to his question.

With a flushed face, Wilmot went on. He noticed that Loder and Walker of the Sixth glanced at him very curiously—having heard Bunter's howl. Temple, Dabney, and Fry of the Fourth Form had heard it also, and they exchanged glances, and Cecil Reginald Temple came over to the new junior.

"Look here, what's this about you bein' sacked from another school, Wilmot?" he asked. "It seems to be all over the Remove!"

"Find out!" was Wilmot's terse reply.

"Well, if it's true, you oughtn't to be here!" said Temple warmly. "Looks to me as if it is! You can't give a civil answer—"

"I've no time to waste talking to fools!"

With that Wilmot walked on, leaving Cecil Reginald Temple with a complexion like a peony, and Fry and Dabney grinning.

"Oh, gad!" gasped Temple. "Did you hear him, you men? What the dooce was the Head up to, lettin' him

(Continued on next page.)

GREYFRIARS INTERVIEWS.

"This interviewing business is a thankless task!" says our clever Greyfriars Rhymester. We certainly agree with him when it comes to interviewing such a high personage as

HENRY SAMUEL QUELCH, M.A.,

the stand-no-nonsense Master of the Remove.

(1)

Dear Editor, I cannot mask
My feelings at the horrid task
That you are now compelled to ask,
I'd willingly avoid it!
I've been to visit Quelch before,
I've tapped upon his study door,
Then left his study sad and sore,
I've never yet enjoyed it.



(2)

The visit fills my mind with gloom,
I know I'm bound to meet my doom,
For well I know that in his room
There is a certain cupboard,
And in that cupboard there's a hook,
And on that hook—I dare not look!
We've seen it when we're brought to book,
And how we've yelled and blubbered!

(3)

I thought of all that I'd done wrong,
My sins came to me in a throng,
As to his room I went along,
My knees knocked together,
Upon his study door I tapped,
And felt that I was firmly trapped,
When, "Enter!" Quelch's accents snapped,
His voice like tearing leather!

(4)

So in I went, prepared to be
A martyr to my poetry.
Those gimlet optics glared at me,
That voice said, "Well, what is it?"
I felt no willingness to speak,
For trouble was not far to seek,
But finally I told the Beak
The object of my visit.

(5)

His glare grew more and more intense,
"Absurd! The boy's completely dense!
Have you no better common sense
Than putting such a question?
You want to write an interview?
Absurd! Ridiculous! If you
Have nothing better you can do,
I'll make you a suggestion!



(6)

"A hundred lines would occupy
Your leisure well. Suppose you try?
You will not waste my time when I
Am busy!" He was biting.
"I'm reading the absurd replies
You gave this morning's exercise,
And those of other boys as wise—
What is it you are writing?"



(7)

While Quelch was giving me the bird,
I'd taken down his every word,
And in my notebook all I heard
Was faithfully recorded.
I told him so to his surprise,
"I've got as far as 'boys as wise—'!"
What studies for an artist's eyes
His features then afforded.

(8)

"You understood me to refuse
To grant you any interviews,"
He roared, "and yet you calmly use
My words with that intention!"
The cupboard opened with a swing,
And on its hook I saw the Thing!
What happened then I cannot bring
Myself to even mention!

in here, I'd like to know! It's true enough—I can see that."

"Oh, rather!" agreed Dabney.

Wilmot's reply had left no doubt of it in Temple's mind, at all events!

Heedless of the dandy of the Fourth, and his deep indignation, Wilmot went down to the gates.

He was anxious to see the Famous Five, and to learn what had happened at Courtfield. If Crawley had arrived at the station, it was clear that they must have stopped him; otherwise, he would have been at Greyfriars before this. It would be an immense relief, to be sure, that Crawley was not coming.

He went out into the road and stood looking in the direction of Courtfield Common. From that direction a fellow came in sight, running.

Wilmot's heart gave a sickening throb.

Even at a distance, he could not doubt who it was; and as the running fellow came nearer, he recognised him. It was Crawley.

He looked rather dusty and flustered, and was clearly in a hurry. As he came nearer to the school gates, however, he dropped into a walk, panting for breath. Wilmot stood quite still.

Greyfriars fellows were going in at the gates. Many of them glanced at Wilmot—and at one another. Fellows of all Forms had heard that there was some strange story going the rounds about that particular junior in the Remove.

"That's him!" said Hobson of the Shell ungrammatically, in a low voice, as he passed with Hoskins and Stewart. "That's the Remove kid they're talking about! Sacked or something!"

Wilmot heard, but did not heed. He stood staring up the road, and the Shell fellows stared at him and went in. He saw Crawley's eyes fix on him and gleam. The fellow had seen him now.

Crawley was breathing hard as he came up. He had had a sharp run to get clear of the juniors on the common, and he had run most of the way to

Greyfriars since. His pasty face was spotted with perspiration.

"Oh, here you are, Eric!" he said in a loud voice that reached a good many ears.

Wilmot looked at him, and his hand clenched. He was near, at that moment, to planting his fist full in the sly, pasty, unpleasant face of his old enemy from his old school.

Crawley made a step back, watching him warily.

"Better not!" he said, in a low voice. "Do you want a row here, you fool?"

Wilmot knew only too well that he had better not. He unclenched his hand slowly.

"Aren't you asking me in?" sneered Crawley.

Wilmot did not answer. He turned and walked in at the gates, and the Topham junior walked in by his side. A dozen Greyfriars fellows saw him and wondered who he was. In the quad there was one fellow who saw him and did not wonder who he was—he knew!

"I say, you fellows, that's Crawley!" exclaimed Billy Bunter, in great excitement. "I know that chap!"

"Crawley!" repeated Skinner.

"I jolly well saw him the day Topham played football at St. Jude's!" said Bunter. "He wasn't playing footer—he came over with them. I remember he came after Wilmot—when Wilmot cleared off by himself—they'd had a row or something. That's Crawley."

Many eyes were on Wilmot and the fellow from his old school as they went to the House.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

No!

CRAWLEY smiled sarcastically as Wilmot took him into Study No. 1 in the Remove, and kicked the door shut. He did not need telling that his former school-fellow was anxious to get him out of sight of the Greyfriars fellows.

Clue

to a Fortune!

THE PIECE OF PAPER THAT WAS WORTH TWENTY THOUSAND POUNDS! Such was the value of the document which came into the hands of Tom Merry of St. Jim's! For it was the clue to a treasure hidden on a lonely isle in the Adriatic—a treasure that three stop-at-nothing crooks were desperately seeking!

Read how, in thrilling circumstances, the clue to a fortune came into the possession of Tom Merry, and the exciting events that followed it. This ace-high yarn is a story in a thousand! Don't miss it.

Ask now for THE

GEM

Twopence, every Wednesday, at all Newsagents.

He sat down, without waiting to be asked. Wilmot remained standing. The Topham fellow glanced round the study.

"Any tea going?" he asked.

"No!"

"I suppose they'd let you take a visitor to tea in Hall?"

"Yes; but I'm not going to."

Crawley shrugged his shoulders.

"You weren't so fearfully inhospitable at Topham!" he remarked. "Your study used to be crowded at tea-time."

"You were never one of the crowd!" said Wilmot bitterly. "No fellow who was a friend of mine would have touched you with a barge-pole!"

"Well, they wouldn't touch you with a barge-pole now!" sneered Crawley. "I haven't been sacked, at any rate!"

"Is that what you came here to say?"

"No. I suppose you know I was met at the station," said Crawley venomously. "That was your idea of keeping me away, was it?"

"Not my idea—but I was glad those fellows were willing to take it on. I wish they'd succeeded."

"They jolly nearly did!" sneered the Topham fellow. "They got hold of me on the common, and were going to keep me walking about till it was time to get back. They'd have me now, only some chap—a big, blustering fool, goodness knows who he was—butted in and I got away! I had to run for it."

He gave Wilmot a black and bitter look.

"So that was your game!" he said. "I never expected that! It hasn't done you any good, Eric Wilmot—I'm here!"

"And now you're here, what do you want?"

"Didn't you guess from my letter?"

"Easily! You've come for nothing!" said Wilmot quietly. "I won't tell you what I think of you, Crawley—I don't suppose that anything I could say would get through your thick hide! But I'll tell you this—you'll get nothing from me!"

Crawley leaned back in Harry Wharton's armchair, with his hands in his pockets, and looked fixedly at the junior standing in front of him.

There was silence in Study No. 1.

Wilmot broke it.

"Now you've got that clear, you'd better go!" he said. "Two of those fellows who met you at the station share this study with me, and I don't want them to find you here when they come in."

"I dare say they're still hunting for me on the common," said Crawley coolly. "Anyway, I don't care what you want, or what they want! I fancy they won't dare to lay hands on me here! As you seem to have told them the whole jolly story, they know what I might shout out for this school to hear, if they did."

"Will you clear?"

"No!"

Wilmot stood silent again. He could hardly choke down his impulse to grasp the sly-eyed, sneering fellow, bundle him neck and crop out of the study, and kick him out of Greyfriars. Only the knowledge that Crawley would not go silently held him back.

There were footsteps and voices in the Remove passage. Most of the Form were coming up to tea.

Billy Bunter's fat squeak was heard outside the door of Study No. 1.

"I say, you fellows, it's that man Crawley—Wilmot's got him in his study! I tell you I saw him that day



With Wharton and Nugent clinging on to him, Coker grabbed Bob Cherry by the collar. "Leggo!" roared Bob Cherry, as he was dragged over. Crawley, wrenching himself free from Bob's grasp, darted away as if his life depended on it.

at St. Jude's! He's the chap who wrote that letter—"

"The letter you never saw!" came another voice.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Ogilvy—"

"Shut up, Bunter!" came another voice.

"Oh, really, Mauly— I say, leggo my collar, you beast! I can go into Wharton's study if I like, can't I?" howled Bunter.

Apparently Bunter couldn't! There was a bumping sound in the Remove passage and a roar of laughter as Lord Maulverer led the fat Owl away—not, it seemed, gently!

Crawley, watching the changing expressions on Wilmot's face, laughed.

"You're not asking anybody in to see me!" he remarked, with sardonic banter. "I dare say some of them would like to hear about your old days at Topham."

Wilmot did not speak.

"Still, I'm not anxious to linger," went on Crawley. "I'd better explain to you how the matter stands—"

"I'm not interested."

"You will be. You're as deep in the mud as I am in the mire, as it happens!" sneered Crawley. "If you were a friend of mine, I'd ask you to lend me five pounds. You can do it easily enough—you've got plenty, and you know how to get more when you want it, I dare say."

Wilmot, his face flaming, made a step towards him, and the Topham junior shrank back in the armchair.

"Another word like that, and I'll smash you!" said Wilmot, in a low, tense voice. "You cur, you don't believe that I did that at St. Jude's that day! The other fellows do—you don't, or even you wouldn't come near me. But believe it or not, don't say

that again, or I'll give you what you're asking for."

Crawley laughed uneasily.

"Keep your wool on, Eric!" he said. "I didn't come here to row! As I said, if you were a friend, I'd ask you for a loan to tide me over. Why not treat me as a friend for once, and leave it at that?"

"You—a friend!" said Wilmot scornfully. "I'd rather make friends with a toad or a viper!"

"Thanks! You can have it which way you like!" said Crawley. "Only keep this in mind," he went on, in a low voice, with savage distinctness, "this isn't pleasant to me—I'd never have come here if I wasn't so hard up against it that I've got no other resource. But I'm in a scrape—and you've got to help me out of it—or take what's coming to you! I'm in such a fix that I can't be particular."

"The same as you were at the beginning of this term?" asked Wilmot bitterly. "I remember you wanted to borrow money the day the team came over to St. Jude's for the match. My answer's the same now as then."

"The circumstances have changed a bit, though," said Crawley. "Then you were Wilmot, the tremendous footballer—the fellow they all cheered, and were proud to be seen speaking to. What are you now?"

"Whatever I am, the answer's the same!"

"I got out of that, at the time!" said Crawley. "But, look here, Wilmot, I'll tell you how it is, and you'll see that—"

"I don't want to hear of your black-guardly business. Keep it to yourself."

"I'll tell you, all the same! I owed a man money then, and I was able, as it turned out, to give him a few pounds on account. That kept him quiet for a bit. But he's been dunning me all

through the term for the rest, and it's come to this now, that if I don't hand out something, he will give me away at Topham. You know what that means."

"Quite! It means the sack—and the sooner the better!"

"You may like the sack—used to it!" sneered Crawley. "No sack for me, if I can wangle out of it! If I don't let that man have five pounds before we break up for Easter, I'm done."

Wilmot's face set.

"If five shillings would do it, I wouldn't give you a single sixpence," he said. "I've been kicked out of Topham—but it's still my old school, and for the school's sake I'd be glad to see you booted out. Go back and take what you've asked for."

Crawley's thin lips set.

"I'm depending on you," he said. "I don't like doing this—but it's the only way! I can stave it off, by taking a lot of risk—never mind how! If I have to take that risk, I shall owe it to you—and, by gum, I'll make you pay for it."

He watched Wilmot's face.

"You can shell out a fiver quite easily," he said. "You always had plenty of money at Topham, though you weren't rolling it in like old Raleigh. If you say that you can't—"

"I say that I won't!"

Crawley sat silent. The curt refusal seemed to take him my surprise, coming from a fellow who, he felt, he held in the hollow of his hand. He scanned Eric Wilmot's face, only to read cold and quiet determination there. The blackest and bitterest animosity gathered in his own.

"You can't mean that!" he said, at last.

"Every word!"

"You'll be sorry for it! I've been handled by your precious friends—and

I've had this trip for nothing! I've got to go back and take a risk that may be the finish of me, for all I know! Do you think I'll go and leave you to carry on here—knowing what I do—"

There was a tramp of feet again in the Remove passage. A stentorian voice woke the echoes.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Is that Bunter, or an escaped balloon?"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

Crawley rose from the armchair. He knew that voice.

"That's your gang!" he said savagely. "They've got in! No time to waste now—make up your mind!"

"It's made up!"

"Mind," said Crawley, and his voice came in a hiss, "this means more to me than you can possibly guess! I'm right up against it! Will you—"

"No!"

"You've got till those fellows come in! Stick to that, and as soon as the door's open, your new school will know what you did at your old school! You've got a few seconds—"

Perhaps, at that moment, Wilmot wavered. If he did, it was too late. The door of Study No. 1 was thrown open, and Harry Wharton & Co. crowded into the study.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, as his eyes fell on Crawley. "He's here!"

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Getting Shut of Crawley!

BILLY BUNTER blinked into Study No. 1, his little round eyes gleaming with eagerness behind his big round spectacles.

Bunter was intensely curious about that visitor from Topham. But as he put his fat little nose in the doorway, that podgy proboscis had a rather narrow escape, the door slamming suddenly; and the fat Owl jumped back, just in time to save his nose.

Crawley had made a step towards the door. It was Bob Cherry who slammed it, and his next proceeding was to put his back to it.

"Here we are again!" said Bob. "You chucked us a bit suddenly on the common, Crawley. Don't rush off now, before we've had a chance to enjoy your company."

Crawley's thin lips set hard.

"If you begin ragging here," he said, "I'll yell loud enough to bring your beaks up."

"Do!" said Johnny Bull. "You'll get something to yell for, you worm, if you start yelling."

Crawley looked at Wilmot.

"I'm going!" he said. "Will you walk down to the gates with me?"

"No!" said Wilmot.

"I'm giving you a last chance!" breathed Crawley.

"You needn't!"

"All right! Leave it at that! I'm going!"

"Any hurry?" asked Bob, without moving from the door.

"You'd better let me pass!" said Crawley, between his teeth. "Do you think you can keep me in this study, you fool?"

"If I'm a fool," said Bob cheerfully, "I'd rather be a fool than a rogue. And I think I can keep you in this study as long as I jolly well like! If you think you can shift me from this door, get on with it."

Crawley looked at him with bitter rage. He did not undertake the task of shifting Bob Cherry from the door.

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Two or three of Crawley could hardly have done that.

"Let him go!" said Wilmot. "You don't want that cad here, surely?"

"Hardly!" said Bob. "The sooner he goes the better. But I don't like the look in his eye. I sort of guess that he's got some dirty trick in his mind. Isn't that so, Crawley?"

Crawley did not answer.

"There's a dozen fellows in the passage," went on Bob. "Dozens in the quad! Crawley doesn't know any of them, but he's not one of those shy chaps who can't speak to fellows they don't know. Are you, Crawley?"

"Wait till I get out of this study!" snarled Crawley. "You'll see whether I'll speak or not—and whether I'll let the fellows here know that they've got a chap here who was sacked from Topham for pinching—"

"I guessed that one!" said Bob. "And you're going to get out of this show, my pippin, without saying a word!"

"Am I?" sneered Crawley.

"You am!" assented Bob. "As Inky would say, the amfulness is terrific! Not a single syllable, you crawling Crawley!"

"It's no good having a shindy, you chaps!" said Wilmot uneasily. "If you'd stopped him coming, all right, but here—"

"Leave it to us!" said Harry Wharton. "I gather that he hasn't got away with what he came for—"

"No!"

"Then we know what he means to do—even if he hasn't told us! Wilmot's not going down to the gates with you, Crawley. We are!"

"Please yourselves!" said Crawley, with a sneer. "Open that door, and let me get out of this, or I'll shout for a master to come up."

"Shout as much as you like!" said Harry. "At the first shout, I shall knock you spinning! If that's what you want, shout away!"

Crawley did not shout.

"Now listen to me," went on the captain of the Remove, in tones of biting contempt, that brought a flush even to Crawley's face. "You're a dirty rascal, and you're here to play a dirty trick. We're stopping you. We're going to walk down to the gates with you, and see you off. You're not going to speak a single word to any chap here before you go."

"The minute I get out of this study, I'll—" hissed Crawley.

"You can't stop him!" muttered Wilmot. "Let the cad rip! A shindy's no good—"

"Leave it to us, old bean," said Harry. "Take my tip, Crawley—you're going to be kept quiet! Open your mouth while we're getting you away, and we'll shut it up for you, fast enough. We've got to take the chance of a beak butting in—and we're taking that chance. You'll take one of his fins, Bob, and I'll take the other. First time he opens his mouth, get him by the back of the neck and shut him up."

"You bet!" agreed Bob.

Crawley panted. In Study No. 1, in the presence of the Famous Five, he was rather in the position of Daniel in the lions' den. He clenched his hands as his arms were taken, but he unclenched them again. Bob and Wharton gripped his arms, tight and hard.

"Open the door, Franky," said Harry. "If Bunter's there, kick him!"

"What-ho!"

Wilmot stood silent, troubled, uncertain. All the fellows in the passage knew that Crawley had come over from

Topham to see him. What were they going to think of this?

But the alternative was to have the whole wretched story shouted out by the unscrupulous young blackguard before he went. If the chums of the Remove could stop that, Wilmot was not likely to object.

Frank Nugent threw the door open—and Billy Bunter nearly tumbled into the study. A clutch at his fat neck slewed him round, and Nugent's boot landed on his tight trousers.

Bunter rolled into the passage, yelling.

Nugent and Johnny and the nabob followed him out. Wilmot remained in the study; but Wharton and Bob, leading Crawley, followed their friends. Skinner pushed forward in the passage; a dozen other fellows stared curiously.

"That the chap from Topham?" grinned Skinner. "Let's have a word with him— Yaroooooh!"

Skinner, suddenly up-ended by Johnny Bull, went rolling. Snoop backed away very quickly.

Crawley opened his mouth.

Before he could utter a word Bob Cherry's grip was on the back of his neck, and his head was banged on the study door.

Bang!

"Yoo-hoop!" yelled Crawley.

"Come on!" said Harry. "Give him another if he wants it!"

"I'll give him all he wants, and a few over!" said Bob grimly. "Quick march!"

There was a buzz of excited voices in the Remove passage. The Bouncer shouted from his study:

"Is that the way you fellows see visitors off?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What the dickens are you men up to?" called out Ogilvy.

Without answering, the Famous Five hurried Crawley away to the stairs. They were anxious to get through as quickly as possible. They left almost a roar of excitement in the Remove passage behind them.

"Buck up!" breathed Harry.

They went quickly down the stairs. On the middle landing five or six fellows, coming up, stared at them.

Crawley would have spoken. At all events, Bob had the impression that he was going to speak. Taking no chances in the matter, he banged Crawley's head on the banisters with a heavy bang.

There was a fearful yell.

"Oh crumbs!" exclaimed two or three fellows. "What's the game?"

The Famous Five hurried down the lower stairs, leaving the fellows on the landing blinking after them in amazement.

Crawley panted with rage.

Once out of the junior quarters he had no doubt that this extraordinary process of seeing him off would be interrupted. He meant that it should be interrupted as soon as he was safe from another bang.

The Co. hoped that those hefty bangs would be a tip to him to keep quiet. But that was too much to hope.

They lost no time. A dozen fellows stared at them as they rushed Crawley out into the quad. Mr. Prout, master of the Fifth, saw them, and gave a snort. But they were very swift, and they came out into the quad with a rush and hurried in the direction of the gates.

"Help!" yelled Crawley.

The next instant Bob was twisting his collar, choking his voice. But one yell was enough—added to the fact that about a hundred pairs of eyes saw Bob twisting his collar.

There was a swarm of fellows round

them at once. That would not have mattered so much, but there were prefects among them. That mattered a good deal. Wingate of the Sixth strode in the way of the party.

"Stop! Do you hear? Stop! Who's that fellow and what are you up to?"

"I—" panted Crawley. He broke off with a gurgle as Bob twisted his collar with great energy.

"It's all right, Wingate!" said Harry. "This fellow has butted in where he's not wanted, and we're seeing him off the premises."

"Let him go at once, you young lunatic! Do you hear—let him go!" snapped the captain of Greyfriars. "Do you fancy you can kick up a shindy like this in the quad? Let that kid go. Who is he?"

"A sneaking worm that's crawled in here!" said Bob.

"Well, I'll see him off if he's got no business here. Take your hands off him at once!" said Wingate.

There was no help for it, and Crawley was released. He panted for breath, his eyes gleaming with venomous malice. This was the chance he wanted
(Continued on next page.)



COME INTO the OFFICE, BOYS - AND GIRLS!

Your Editor is always pleased to hear from his readers. Write to him: Editor of the "Magnet," The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. A stamped, addressed envelope will ensure a reply.

THEY say an Editor's life is a busy one! But what about the post-man? Each week my letter bag seems to get larger and larger. And what a cheery lot you fellows are. Believe me, chums, the amount of grumbles I get per month I could count on the fingers of one hand. That's saying something, isn't it? It just shows that the amount of work I put into the old paper—and, believe me, it's a real pleasure—is appreciated to the full by my vast army of readers.

I feel that at this juncture I must bring before your notice the vast number of

REQUESTS FROM LOYAL READERS

asking me to republish the stories dealing with the early adventures of Harry Wharton. Typical among these is a letter from John Cawfield, of Birmingham, who writes: "Dear Editor, you would be granting the wishes of many hundreds if not thousands of your readers if you would publish the very earliest stories of Greyfriars dealing with the coming of Harry Wharton and how Billy Bunter, the world's fattest and funniest laughter merchant, first found a footing in the Remove Form."

It is over twenty-eight years now since these famous Greyfriars characters were first introduced in the MAGNET by Frank Richards. And their merry pranks and schoolboy adventures have never failed to please the lover of school stories. "We don't get enough MAGNET stories," as another ardent reader states, truly sums up the situation.

I am now considering how I can give every MAGNET reader the opportunity of reading all about how Harry Wharton first came to Greyfriars, how he quarrelled with Frank Nugent, and the exciting events at Greyfriars that changed his whole character. It is quite evident that it is the dearest wish of every single MAGNET reader to read about Harry's early days at Greyfriars, and so I must think of some way to gratify it. Naturally, I shall not think of interfering with the magnificent week-to-week stories which Frank Richards is now writing. He has some real "smashers" just coming along! Keep your eye on the MAGNET and see if my words don't come true.

HAVING got that off my chest, I must now turn to another letter. This comes from a reader hailing from Berwick-on-Tweed, who asks me if I can tell him

HOW STEREOSCOPIC FILMS ARE MADE.

This is quite easy to explain to MAGNET readers, for I expect most of you have still got the magic spectacles which were given away by this paper a little while ago. Stereoscopic films—a selection of which have recently been shown in London—are based on exactly the same principle as those spectacles. To view them you must wear similar spectacles, with one eye-piece coloured green and the other red.

Stereoscopic films are taken with a camera which has two lenses, and the position of the lenses correspond to the positions of the human eyes. This means that one lens "shoots" a scene as the right eye sees it, while the other lens takes the scene as the left eye sees it. The two separate views are now merged on one print, one view being dyed green and the other red. The completed film, if viewed in the ordinary manner merely presents a very blurred outline. But when it is projected upon the screen, and the audience wear their "magic spectacles," the film is seen in relief in the same manner as the pictures which were presented to our readers.

So, you see, the MAGNET was well ahead with this latest development in the film world, for stereoscopic films had not been released until after our "magic spectacles" were in your possession. That's one up to the old paper, chums!

Talking about cinemas, they certainly are making great strides nowadays. Only the other day I had the opportunity of witnessing one of the

MOBILE CINEMA THEATRES

which are now a feature of the big L.N.E.R. express trains. Wonderful little cinemas they are, too, and they provide an excellent method of passing the time on a long railway journey. From the outside they look just like ordinary railway carriages, coupled on to the rear of the train. But inside they are perfect cinemas in miniature. The films are projected from the rear of the screen, and the tip-up chairs are arranged on an incline so that everyone can see the screen clearly.

The programmes consist of "talkie" news and variety films, and are changed frequently. Each performance lasts for about an hour, so that several performances can be given during each journey. A slight charge is made for admission to the mobile cinema, and these shows are proving popular to those who

travel long distances on the railway. A few years ago the idea of a travelling railway cinema would have been scoffed at. Nowadays, what with restaurant and sleeping cars, buffets, barber's shops, wireless, and cinemas the British railways are showing just what can be done to make even the longest journey one round of pleasure.

COCOCUB NEWS.

Children who insist on having the cocoa with the "toy in every tin" and who belong to the Cococubs now have a monthly magazine of their own, the "Cococub News," which records the adventure of the Cococub animals and many other interesting things. The first issue includes instructions for making a toy theatre in which the animals are the actors. This is sent free from Bourville to all Cococubs.

Now for three

REPLIES IN BRIEF.

Will you give some Details of the French Liner Normandie? Her gross tonnage is 79,283, and total displacement about 66,400 tons. Length 1,029 ft. 4 in. Beam 117 ft. 9 in. Officers and crew total 1,345, and she can carry nearly 2,000 passengers. Her highest recorded speed was 31.37 knots.

What was the Biggest Successful Salvage Job? The salvaging of gold bullion from the sunken liner "Egypt." About £1,183,000 worth of treasure was recovered. The Italian salvage ship Artiglio carried out the work.

What is the "Portland Vase"? A beautiful specimen of Greek art, preserved at the British Museum. It gets its name from the Duke of Portland, who deposited it there. Some years ago it was shattered by a madman, but was skilfully repaired.

As space is now running short, we must see what's in store for next week. First of all look out for another topping yarn of Harry Wharton & Co., entitled:

"HIS GUNMAN GUARDIAN!" By Frank Richards,

the first of a grand new series featuring Putnam van Duck, first introduced to you as the Millionaire Stowaway, whom the chums of Greyfriars met when on their way home from Brazil. According to Putnam van Duck's statement, he was threatened with kidnapping by gangsters in the United States and his millionaire "popper" sent him travelling in charge of a hired gunman known as Poker Pike. Not caring for the surveillance of Poker Pike, Van Duck dodges his gunman guardian and "hits the horizon." Excitement you'll find in plenty in this great yarn, boys. Be sure to read it.

You'll find further chapters of our adventure-thriller, another topical issue of the "Greyfriars Herald," and more snappy verses by the Greyfriars Rhymester. Take my tip, chums, and order next Saturday's MAGNET in good time.

YOUR EDITOR.
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—in the midst of a curious, staring crowd.

"Now, what do you want here, who ever you are?" asked Wingate.

"I came here to show up a fellow who—" began Crawley.

He got no further. Heedless of Wingate, Bob grabbed him by the collar and pitched him over, and he smote the quad with a heavy smite.

"Cherry!" shouted Wingate.

Still unheeding, Bob sat down on Crawley's head. The Topham fellow's features were gouged into the earth.

"Call Quelch!" panted Bob.

It was the only resource now. But Mr. Quelch did not need calling. He was already aware of that extraordinary scene in which boys of his Form were taking conspicuous parts. Quelch was already whisking up.

"Wharton—Cherry—what does this mean?" thundered the Remove master. "How dare you create such a disturbance?"

Wingate stepped back, leaving the matter in the hands of the Form-master. Bob retained his seat on Crawley's head. Crawley gurgled for breath.

"Cherry!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"Please let me explain, sir!" breathed Harry Wharton. "That fellow has come over from Topham—"

"Topham!" repeated Mr. Quelch, with a start. And a dozen fellows who caught the name of Wilmot's old school exchanged looks.

"He's come here to make trouble, sir—we're shutting him up—"

Mr. Quelch looked at his head boy blankly.

It was his first intimation that any boy in his Form knew anything of Wilmot's past. But fortunately Henry Samuel Quelch was very quick on the uptake.

"You understand, sir?" muttered Wharton. He had to explain to Mr. Quelch, but he was only too keenly conscious that other ears were hearing. "He wants to shout out. You understand, sir?"

Luckily Mr. Quelch understood at once.

"Quite so, Wharton!" he said between set lips. "Leave this boy to me. Cherry, release that boy at once!"

Mr. Quelch stooped as Bob rose and grasped Crawley by the collar. He jerked the Topham fellow to his feet.

"Come with me!" he said. "Wingate, please see that this disturbance ceases at once and that no boy follows this—this person while I see him off."

"Certainly, sir!" said Wingate.

Mr. Quelch walked away to the gates with his hand still on Crawley's collar. He walked very quickly, and the Topham fellow had almost to run to keep from falling.

A buzzing crowd was left behind. But Quelch's instructions to Wingate had effect, and nobody followed to the gates.

In the gateway Mr. Quelch released Crawley's collar and pushed him out into the road. Crawley stood there, panting.

"You had better go!" said Mr. Quelch with cold contempt.

Crawley struggled for breath.

"Do you know why I came?" he panted. "Why those rotters collared me? You've got a thief here—that fellow Wilmot—he was sacked from my school for pinching—"

"I am fully acquainted with Wilmot's unfortunate past," said Mr. Quelch, "and I have some hope that a mistake was made, as the boy has gained my good opinion by his conduct here. I cannot believe that your motive was good in coming here to betray him—it is clear to me that your motive is malicious. I shall write to your head-

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master and lay a complaint before him, and demand from him an assurance that this visit will not be repeated! Now go!"

Crawley gave him a look—and went! Mr. Quelch stood with a grim brow, watching him till he was out of sight.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Darkest Hour!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. had done their best.

And they had done a good deal, for Crawley's visit had passed off, after all, without the facts coming to light.

No Greyfriars fellow, except Wilmot's friends, knew why he had left Topham at the beginning of that term. Wilmot had been saved from that last and worst blow. Had it become known he could not have stayed another day in his new school—he knew only too well that he could not. To be pointed out as a fellow who had been sacked for "pinching," to be avoided like a leper, would have been more than flesh and blood could bear.

It had not come to that!

But, short of that, the affair of Crawley's visit put the lid on, so to speak. If any fellow had charitably doubted before that Wilmot had been expelled from Topham he could not doubt now.

The motive of the Famous Five in handling Crawley as they had done was unmistakable.

They had been "shutting him up."

He had intended to give Wilmot away and they had stopped him. Nobody could have any doubt on that point.

Why a fellow from Wilmot's old school should take the trouble to come a long distance to his new school to give him away was rather a puzzle, but the facts were plain enough.

That had been Crawley's intention, and he had been stopped. What he had had to say had remained unsaid. It was hardly necessary for Skinner to point out that Harry Wharton & Co. jolly well knew that Wilmot had been sacked, and why. That was clear to everyone.

Wilmot had been sacked. That was clear as noonday now. Why, was still unknown.

Because that was still unknown Wilmot was able to carry on, and the friendship of the Famous Five helped him.

Wilmot had been more or less avoided before; now he was barred by all the Remove, with the exception of the faithful five. They had believed in him while the matter was still secret, and they could hardly change their belief now that it had come out. It was extremely uncomfortable all round, but they were standing by the fellow they believed in.

Crawley, at all events, was not likely to come again. In his angry malice he had rather overlooked the possible consequences to himself. But Mr. Quelch's letter to his headmaster must have caused him an uncomfortable interview with his Beak at Topham. It was certain that he would not venture to come near Greyfriars again.

Neither was there any further letter from him. Any such letter would have been detained by Mr. Quelch and sent to the Topham headmaster, accompanied by another complaint. In such circumstances, Crawley was not likely to write.

He was done with.

Unluckily, the harm he had done could not be done with. Bunter's tattle and Skinner's industrious efforts to make the

most of it might have been forgotten, but Crawley's visit had blotted out all possibility of that. Wilmot was barred on all sides.

Not only his own Form, but fellows in other Forms, expressed the indignant opinion that Greyfriars was not a refuge for sacked outcasts from other schools. Coker of the Fifth was especially emphatic on the point—and, for once, Horace Coker's remarks were not generally regarded as brainless babblings.

Nice fellows left Wilmot severely alone; fellows who were not nice made themselves as unpleasant as possible.

It was a week after Crawley's visit that Mr. Hacker called his nephew into his study.

Since their last interview the junior had not had a word or a look from the master of the Shell. Hacker, of course, was aware of the present state of affairs, and Wilmot knew only too well what his feelings must be like.

He knew, too—at least, he felt—that doubt was growing in Hacker's mind. His heart sank as he faced the master of the Shell in his study.

Mr. Hacker's manner was cold and grim.

"I have only a few words to say, Eric," he said curtly. "Probably you are aware of the intolerable position in which I have been placed. I am scarcely able to face the other members of the staff in Common-room now that it is known that my nephew was expelled from another school."

"I know, sir," muttered Wilmot. "I'm sorry! I—"

"This cannot continue," said Mr. Hacker. "The point is that I was relying upon the truth being brought to light—what you assured me was the truth. I counted as a certainty upon the tracing of the five-pound note that was taken from the boy Raleigh in the St. Jude's dressing-room."

"And it has not—"

"It has not been traced. Obviously it had not been put into circulation. If it is in other hands than yours there is no accounting for it."

Wilmot's face whitened.

"It never was in my hands, sir."

"I believe you—I believe you!" said Mr. Hacker hastily. "Nevertheless, even if the pilferer was afraid at first to pass the note, it is extraordinary that he should have kept it back so long. I have had to relinquish the hope of tracing it. That means that your name cannot be cleared."

He gave the junior a sharp glance.

"You will remain here till the end of the term, Eric; I must not appear to have lost faith in my nephew. After the vacation, however, other arrangements must be made. You cannot return here."

"I know," muttered Wilmot. "I've made some good friends here, and I shall be sorry to leave them, but it can't go on."

"Some other school may be found; we shall see. I shall, of course, do my best for you. It will be a difficult matter, in view of the circumstances. Here I had some influence; elsewhere I have none. If you had been more careful, more judicious— But we will not go into that. You will leave quietly at the end of the term, Eric. That is all."

"Very well, sir."

Wilmot left the study. He passed Trotter in the passage bringing a telegram.

"Mr. 'Acker in his study, sir?" asked the House page.

"Yes!"

Trotter passed on.

Wilmot stood by the passage window looking out into the April sunshine in



With Bob Cherry's grasp on the back of his neck, Harold Skinner's face was used as a duster to wipe the inky message off the glass. It was quite a painful process. The glass grew less inky, but Skinner's face grew very inky indeed. "Urrrgh!" he gurgled.

the quad. His heart was heavy. Since Mr. Hacker had told him of the line that investigation was taking he had had a faint hope of something coming of it; but the only effect so far had been to shake his uncle's faith in him.

Trotter, coming away from Mr. Hacker's study after handing him the telegram, glanced curiously at the junior's moody face as he passed; Wilmot did not even see him.

He had to go!

He could not be sorry to go, as matters stood. He would have been glad if he could have gone back to his old school. That was not to be thought of. He had to make a fresh start somewhere—somehow. And without the cheery friendship of the fellows who had stood by him, which had meant so much to him in his dark days. The future looked black, hopeless, to him—and he did not remember at that gloomy moment that the darkest hour came before the dawn.

A sudden sound from his uncle's study startled him and he looked round. Mr. Hacker appeared in the doorway of his study.

Wilmot stared at him blankly.

A startling change had come over the master of the Shell; never had the hard, acid face looked so strangely bright.

"Trotter, send my nephew!" Mr. Hacker was calling.

Trotter was gone; but Wilmot was there. He made a quick step towards the master of the Shell. What did that look on Hacker's face mean?

"Uncle!" he exclaimed. It was the first time at Greyfriars that he had called Mr. Hacker "uncle," instead of "sir."

"Oh, you are there, Eric!" Mr. Hacker smiled genially. "My dear, dear boy, I have some news—some good news!"

The change in Hacker in those few

minutes was absolutely amazing. Wilmot could only stare at him, his heart beating almost to suffocation with a vague, undefined hope.

"This telegram—" Hacker waved it; he almost brandished it like a banner in his glee. "Eric, this telegram—" To Wilmot's dumbfounded astonishment, Hacker chuckled. He had never seen Hacker laugh before. "This telegram, Eric—The note has been traced!"

"Traced!" gasped Wilmot.

"Traced at last, my boy—"

"Raleigh's note—the five-pound note—has—"

"Yes, yes! It has been put into circulation at last! No doubt the wretch, the rascal, the—the—the miscreant was hard pushed, and had to take the risk. At all events, it has been traced, and is now in the possession of the police—"

"Oh!" gasped Wilmot.

"It has been traced in the neighbourhood of Topham School," Mr. Hacker almost chirruped. "My dear boy, you know what that means! It is a matter of hours—of days, at the most—before all will be known. I am thankful that I never lost faith in you, Eric!"

"Oh!" repeated Wilmot.

"I must take this to the Head!" said Mr. Hacker. "Dr. Locke will be glad to see it—he will be reassured—"

Hacker whisked away, the telegram in his hand. He almost rushed into Mr. Quelch, coming out of his study, lower down the passage.

"My dear sir—" exclaimed the surprised Remove master.

"My dear Quelch!" chirruped Hacker. "Look! Look at this telegram!"

Quelch looked at Hacker first. Hacker, whom all the Shell agreed in describing as a gloomy ass, and all Common-room regarded as an acid drop, was grinning—fairly grinning—with glee! For a moment Mr. Quelch had a dreadful

suspicion that Hacker had been drinking!

Then he looked at the telegram,

"Oh!" he ejaculated.

"You understand, sir?" grinned Mr. Hacker. "A five-pound note, Number 00002222, was taken from the boy Raleigh in the dressing-room at St. Jude's, in the first week of this term. My nephew has been here ever since. That note, sir, has been passed by someone at Topham—near his old school—recently, a hundred miles from here, sir! You understand, sir? What?"

Hacker whisked on. He almost danced.

"Dear me!" said Mr. Quelch.

He glanced at Wilmot.

"Wilmot, my dear boy, I congratulate you!" he said. "Since you have been here, I have formed the firm opinion that a mistake was made at your former school. I am glad—more glad than I can say—to be confirmed in that opinion. I congratulate you, my boy."

"Thank you, sir!" stammered Wilmot.

Mr. Quelch surprised him by shaking hands with him. Then he walked away—feeling a little dizzy, but with a light heart—walking as if he were walking on air!

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Light at Last!

"I SAY, you fellows!"
"You fat villain!"
"Oh, really, Wharton!"
"Scrag him!"

"I—I say—" stammered Bunter in alarm. "I say, keep off, you know! I—I came here as a pal, old chaps—"

Bunter was seated in the armchair of Study No. 1. It was tea-time, and the Famous Five were coming up to tea. They had looked for Wilmot, without THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,470.

finding him, and come up without him; and what they saw from the doorway of the study made them jump.

Across the looking-glass over the mantelpiece, in large letters in ink, was written:

"WHO WAS SAKKED FROM HIS SCHOOL?

**GET OWT OF GREYFRIARS!
SAKKED KADS NOT WANTED
HERE!"**

That that inscription had been inked there by Billy Bunter nobody, of course, could doubt for a moment. Nobody else in the Remove spelt like that!

The surprising thing was that Bunter, having put up that taunt to Wilmot in his study, had remained on the spot!

But there he was—sprawling in the armchair!

Harry Wharton & Co. came into the study with grim looks. Fellows could bar Wilmot, if they liked; but anyone who taunted him in his own study was booked for trouble.

Bunter blinked at them very uneasily through his big spectacles.

"I say, you fellows, no larks!" he squeaked. "I say, I really came as a pal. I've been disappointed about a postal order—I mean, I haven't come here because it's tea-time—what I mean is, I don't want to be down on that chap Wilmot. If you fellows stand by him, that's good enough for me! See? And—and I thought that—that I'd tea with the chap here, just—just to show him that I don't think he did what he did, you know—"

"You're not down on Wilmot, you fat frog?" said Harry Wharton. "What do you mean inking on the glass, then?"

"Eh! Who's inked on the glass? I haven't touched your ink, or your glass, either!"

"What?" roared Bob Cherry.

"Wharrer you mean?" demanded Bunter warmly. "I can't see anything on your glass. What's the matter with it?"

The fat Owl blinked at the glass through his big spectacles.

"Oh! It looks a bit inky!" he said. "Well, I never did it! What the thump should I want to chuck ink at your glass for?"

"You wrote that on the glass!" exclaimed Nugent.

"Is anything written there?" asked Bunter.

"Wha-a-at?"

The short-sighted Owl of the Remove heaved himself out of the armchair and took a closer view of the glass. Then he jumped.

"Oh crikey!" he gasped. "Who did that?"

"You did!" roared Johnny Bull.

"The didfulness is terrific, my esteemed Bunter."

"I didn't!" gasped Bunter. "I never noticed it before! Think I'd have stayed here, if I'd done it! What makes you think I did it?"

"The spelling, you fat fibber."

"What's the matter with the spelling?" asked Bunter, blinking at the inscription again. "I see—the word school! I don't spell like that! I know school has two K's in it."

"Oh crikey!"

"An H, too, I think," said Bunter. "I'm not certain about the H—but I jolly well know there are two K's—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Anyhow, I didn't do it!" said Bunter warmly. "I came here to tell you

fellows I was willing to tea with Wilmot, though he's barred by all the Form—"

"Is there anybody you wouldn't tea with?" asked Bob.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Scrag him!"

"Hold on," said Harry Wharton quickly. "Bunter never did that, you men! He came here on the make—and he was too blind to see it when he rolled in. If he hadn't been here, I should have thought—"

"Nobody else spells like that—"

"Unless it was some rotter who wanted to taunt Wilmot, and get by with it safely," said Harry. "Some fellow who might like to see Bunter get a ragging—some fellow, for instance, who was stopped whopping him, by Wilmot—"

"Skinner!" yelled Bob.

"Easy enough to imitate Bunter's spelling and pull our leg!" said Harry. "Skinner did that, and wanted us to think that Bunter had done it."

"Blessed if I see why you should think I'd done it!" granted Bunter. "What is there about it to make you think I'd done it, I'd like to know."

The juniors chuckled.

It was rather fortunate for the fat Owl that he was guilelessly on the spot at the moment! Otherwise, there was little doubt that he would have been found guilty! But it was clear that Bunter had been unaware of what was inked on the glass, though he had been sitting only two or three yards from it.

If it was not Bunter's handiwork, it was another's—and the Famous Five had little difficulty in guessing whose.

"Ask Skinner to step along here, Bob!" said Harry.

"What-ho!" said Bob.

He went along to Skinner's study. A few moments later there was a roar in the Remove passage.

Bob was asking Skinner to step along, by the simple process of heaving him along by his shoulders.

"Will you leggo?" roared Skinner frantically.

"This way!" said Bob cheerily. "Here he is, you men! Walk in, Skinner, dear man, and tell us why you left that kind message in the study."

"You silly ass!" howled Skinner. "I haven't been here! Looks to me like Bunter's work, from the spelling—"

"Oh, really, Skinner—I don't spell school with only one K—"

"You meant it to look like Bunter's work!" said Harry Wharton. "Own up that you did it!"

"I never—"

"Stick his head in the coal-locker—"

"Oh! Owl! Let me go!" yelled Skinner wildly. "It was only a joke—simply a joke! I'll rub it out, if you like!"

"You will!" agreed the captain of the Remove. "And you'll use your face to rub it out with. Take hold of the back of his neck, Bob. Waiting, Skinner."

"He, he, he!" cackled Bunter.

"I—I won't! I—I—" gasped Skinner.

"Help him get on with it, Bob, old bean!"

The next few minutes were horrid for Harold Skinner. With Bob Cherry's grasp on the back of his neck, his face was used as a duster to wipe the ink off the glass.

It was quite a painful process.

The glass grew less inky; and Skinner's face very inky indeed. The ink was dry, but hard rubbing got it off the smooth surface of the glass. By the time the cleaning process was through the glass was still rather grubby, but Skinner's face was awfully grubby—and

where it was not grubby it was flaming crimson.

"What on earth's this game?" asked a startled voice in the doorway.

Eric Wilmot looked in, laughing.

"Urrrrgh!" gurgled Skinner.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob, looking round. "You're looking fearfully bucked, old man."

Wilmot laughed.

"I'm feeling fearfully bucked," he answered.

"Well, that will do, Skinner," said Bob. "The glass isn't quite clean; but I don't think your face will do it any more good."

"Urrrrgh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Skinner spun to the door. He gave the laughing Wilmot a grubby glare as he gurgled for breath.

"Congratulate me, Skinner!" chuckled Wilmot.

"What do you mean, you fool?" snarled Skinner.

"I'm sure you'll be glad to hear the news. You've always wanted to know why I was sacked from Topham. I'm going to tell you. I was supposed to have pinched a five-pound note."

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

"Wilmot!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"All serene!" said Wilmot. "Skinner can shout it out all over Greyfriars now—all over the universe, if he likes! You see, my uncle's just had news that that note has been traced, and they're getting after the man who passed it. May have him by this time. They'll know already at Topham that I never touched it, and who did—see?"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Oh, ripping!" exclaimed Nugent.

"The ripfulness is terrific!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "And the esteemed gratters are preposterous!"

"Oh!" gasped Skinner.

And he went.

"What jolly luck!" said Harry Wharton, his face very bright. "You've had a tough term, Wilmot; but all's well that ends well. Why if they get the right man, that means that you're cleared."

"Quite!"

"Then you can go back to Topham, if you like."

"What-ho!"

"Gratters, old bean! Sorry to lose you, but it's ripping!"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"Shan't!" hooted Bunter. "I jolly well knew all along that Wilmot was all right! Haven't you heard me say so, lots of times?"

"Never!"

"Oh, really, Cherry! If I didn't exactly say so, I meant it," said Bunter. "Haven't I come here to tea to-day because—"

"Because you're a hungry cormorant."

"Beast! Because I'm standing by the chap like a pal!" said Bunter warmly. "And I think, in the circumstances, you fellows ought to make a spread of it—a real celebration. A cake, at least, and jam—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was a happy study tea to Eric Wilmot. So it was to Billy Bunter, for his suggestion was adopted, and there was a cake and jam.

* * * * *

"Crawley!"

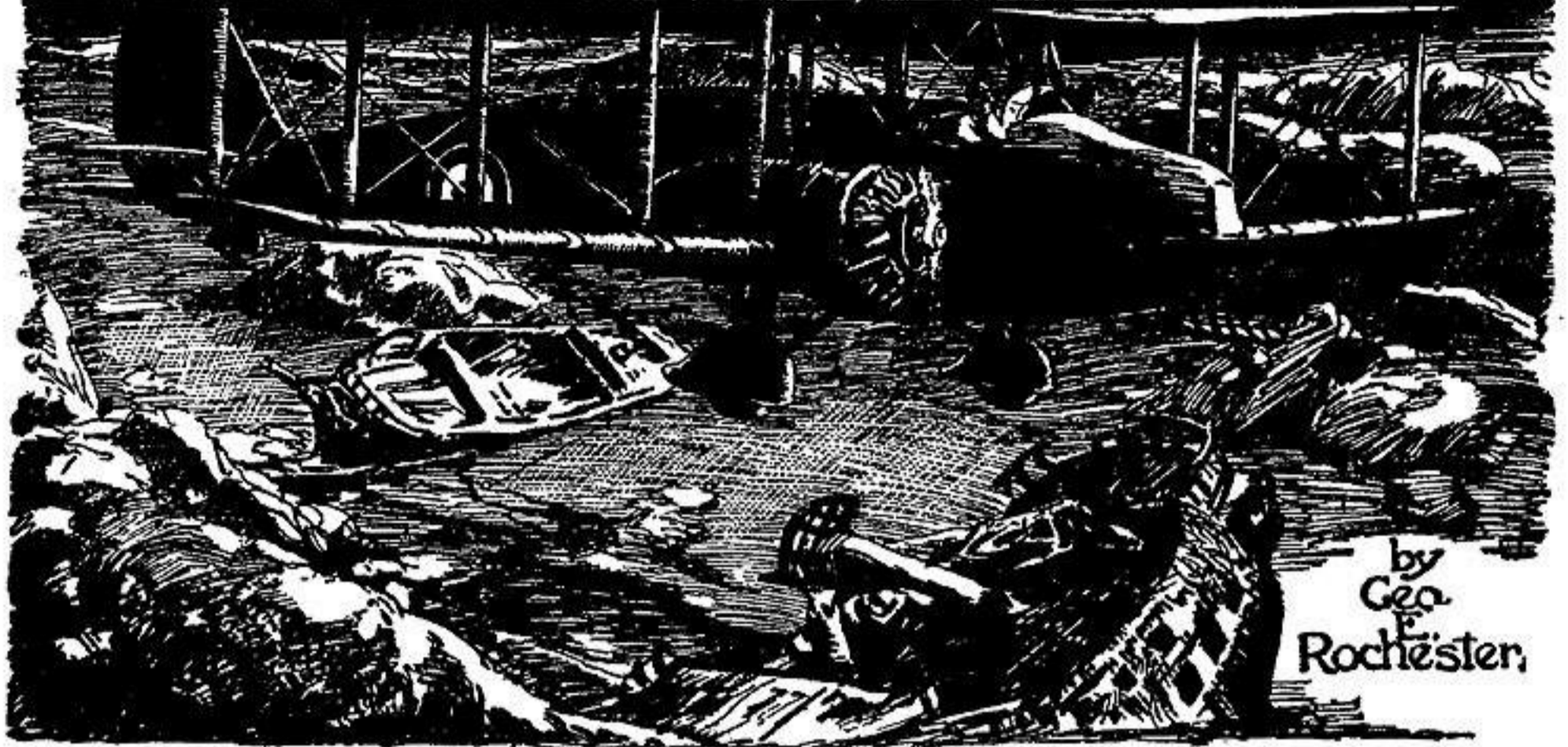
"Yes!"

The next day it was all known.

As soon as Hacker got the full story,

(Continued on page 23.)

THE LOST SQUADRON!



Done in the Dark!

CAST away on a strange, dead land of barren rock and sand, which has risen up as a result of a huge tidal wave, Squadron-Leader Akers and Flight-Lieutenant Ferris discover that England and Western Europe are submerged beneath the sea.

After a series of exciting adventures they meet more survivors, among whom are Coles, Huck, and a negro named Jim Crow, who have made a rich haul looting stranded derelicts.

Their signal fires are sighted at last by passing ships. Anxious to get clear with their ill-gotten gains Coles & Co. enlist the services of Larsen, Baines, and Crawley, and then set out under cover of darkness to seize one of the rescue ships—the Rosa. Taking the lead, the negro steals aboard, and fells one of the men on guard with a pile-driver to the jaw.

The noise awoke another man asleep on the bunk. His snoring ceased abruptly, and he sat up.

"Who'n thunder's making that blamed row?" he began angrily. Then the words died away as he took in the massive figure of Jim looming over him.

"Lissen, mate!" said Jim softly. "I should hate like pizen to have to hit you, so doan't make no fuss!"

"But—but what's the idea?" stammered the other.

"It's jest dat me and a few frien's are aiming to go for a li'l cruise in dis heah craf' of yo'res" Jim informed him. "Heah dey come, so you can see for yo'self dat if you start a rough house you'll only git hurt."

Apparently, the man thought so, too, for after eyeing Larsen, Baines, Crawley and Huck, who were crowding in through the fo'c'sle door, he said:

"O.K., feller, I don't know what your game is, but I ain't startin' nothing."

"That's real sens'ble of you," said Jim, glancing towards the man whom he had felled and who was beginning to stir into befuddled life.

Turning away from the bunk, he crossed to Larsen in the doorway.

"You, Baines, an' Crawley, tie these fellers up," he said. "Huck an' me'll

'tend to the gent down in de stokehole."

Leaving Larsen to carry out the order, he and Huck collected Coles, and the three of them made their way to the engine-room ladder. Descending the iron staircase to the dimly illumined stokehole, they found a solitary stoker on duty.

"Keeping steam up?" asked Jim pleasantly.

"What the blazes'd you want down here?" demanded the man. "Who are you, anyway?"

"We're jest a li'l visiting party makin' a tour of dis heah deep-sea tug-boat," responded Jim, "an' we like her so much dat we're gwyne for a cruise in her."

"I don't get you," said the other roughly. "You clear out of here, nigger, and take your two pals with you!"

"Lissen, chum," purred Jim, "you doan't understand. Us three gents an' three more up above am in possession of dis boat. We doan't wanna hurt you nor nobody else, but 'less you come up quiet an' peaceable to the fo'c'sle, things are goin' to be real bad for you."

"You're drunk!" said the other angrily, taking a fresh grip on his long-handled shovel. "Get out of here, or I'll smash that ugly head of yours!"

"Aw, guy," sighed Jim, advancing a pace. "Do git sense an' put down dat shovel—by golly!"

With the swiftness of a panther he leapt aside as the shovel whistled past his head in a murderous, cleaving swing. Simultaneously, his massive fist shot out, smashing with sickening force against the man's head, sending him reeling bemused and bewildered against the iron bulkhead.

Before the fellow could recover, Coles rushed at him and kicked him savagely, bringing him to the floor doubled-up and gasping in agony.

"Dere was no need for dat, Coles," said Jim. "But you always was handier wid yore feet dan yore fists. You're a low-down onery skunk, Coles, an' more'n once I've wunnered why you was reared. But dat doan't matter for de moment. Let's get dis feller up on deck."

Between them the trio got their captive up into the fo'c'sle, where Larsen dealt with him as he had dealt with the other two, effectively binding his wrists and ankles.

"Well, I reck'n dat's dat," said Jim. "An' now we'd better see about gittin' under way!"

Aboard the Tug!

ABRIEF council of war followed, and it was decided to slip the cable at once and stand slowly out for the open sea.

"What us have got to do," said Jim, "is to get away from heah an' be out of sight by mawnin'. We can talk den and fix up de watches and duties, and de best way of working de ship."

The Rosa had sufficient steam in her boilers for the engines, and after the cable had been slipped and gone overboard with a splash, Larsen mounted to the bridge and took the wheel.

A few moments later, as steam was quietly turned on by Jim Coles down in the engine-room, the tug began to quiver under the muffled thud of her powerful pistons. At her low stern appeared a creaming welter of foam, water rippled away from her sharp bows, and she began to glide away through the night, standing out for the open sea.

At first she had little more than steering way on her, but as the camp-fire lights of Camelot and the great red beacon which still burned on the hill above began to recede, Baines arrived down in the engine-room to report that Larsen required more steam.

"O.K.!" nodded Jim, his oily, black hand gripping the handle of the main steam-control. "But he can't have too much, Baines. No kinder miscalculated things."

"What do you mean?" demanded Baines, his latent fears that something would go wrong roused at once by the negro's words.

"I mean," replied Jim, "dat de coal-bunkers are blamed 'near empty! Dis craf' was never coaled for as long

a voyage as she's bin an' done. I'll jest come up wid you to de bridge and report same to Larsen."

"Yes; but what are we going to do if we've got no coal?" demanded Baines anxiously, as, giving the steam-control another fraction of a turn.

Jim wiped his hands on a piece of waste.

"Do?" repeated the negro. "Why, we'll either have to coal somewheres, or jest drift until we're picked up. An' you know what that'll mean."

"Yes, I know what it'll mean, all right!" said Baines, with an oath. "It'll mean arrest. Curse it, I wish I'd kept clear of this!"

"Aw, quit worryin'!" advised Jim, striding towards the engine-room ladder. "We ain't beat yet. Nossir, not by a mighty-long way!"

Followed by the apprehensive Baines he reached the deck, and, mounting to the bridge, he told Larsen of the almost empty coal-bunkers.

Larsen received the information with an outburst of terse profanity.

"Well, what d'you suggest we do?" he demanded. "How much coal have we got, anyway?"

"Enough for twelve hours steaming, and no more," replied Jim. "What we've gotta do, Larsen, is turn north, and steam as far as we can up de coast. We'll find some place where we can lie in shelter, an' we'll have to coal from one of de wrecks."

"Do you know what you're saying?" demanded Larsen roughly, visualising the heart-breaking and back-breaking work that coaling the tug from some derelict would entail.

"Yessir, I knows what I'm saying," replied Jim, unperturbed. "If you knows a better way out of dis jam, Larsen, you've jest gotta say it."

Larsen did not know a better way out. Or, at least, if he did, he kept it to himself. Wrathfully he agreed that it was a case of either coaling the ship as Jim suggested, or waiting for capture upon the high seas.

The bows of the Rosa were turned northwards, and throughout the night the tug ploughed her way steadily up the coast. With the dawn, Jim, after a consultation with Larsen, Coles, and Huck, went into the fo'c'sle to interview the three captives, who were still lying, bound and helpless, on their bunks.

"Now lissen to me, gents," said Jim amiably. "Dis ship is ours, an' you cain't do nuthin'. First, we're gonna coal her, and den we're gonna sail for America. If you cares to work for us, you'll be well treated, well fed, and well paid. If, on de other hand, you don't wanna work for us, you'll jest have to stay tied up like what you are until de end of de voyage. What it's to be, den?"

"Who are you, anyway?" demanded the man whom they had found down in the stokehole. "What's your game?"

"We ain't got no game," replied Jim. "We're jest six castaways who ain't craving to sail in company wid dem others from de camp at Camelot."

"Because you consider yourselves better'n them, I suppose?" sneered the other.

"Yes," grinned Jim.

The man laughed harshly.

"If you ask me," he said, "you're just a bunch of cheap crooks, and you've been up to something at the camp what has sent you on the run."

"Hard words ain't hurting me any,"

said Jim unperturbed, "nor doing you any good, either. Do you wanna stay tied up, or are you gonna work for us?"

"I'll work," out in one of the three. "But it's only because I'm being forced to, understand. I'm not in with you, whatever your game is."

The other two, also realising that freedom from their bonds could only be obtained by a promise to work, grudgingly assented.

After freeing them and giving them a warning about the consequences of any attempt at mutiny, Jim led them out on deck.

"You rustle some breakfast for all of us," he ordered, singling out one of the trio. "You other two take over down in de stoke hole and keep dem boilers going."

The men obeyed, and Jim joined Larsen on the bridge.

"There'll be a fine shemozzle going on back dere at Camelot," said Jim, "for by dis time dey'll have found dat de Rosa's gone."

"Yes; but they won't know where it's gone," responded Larsen. "I only hope we don't meet any shipping coming this way, that's all!"

That was Jim's fervent hope, also, for he knew by now that the Texan's wireless would be sending out word concerning the missing tug, and asking vessels to report if they sighted it.

Until mid-morning as they cruised up the desolate coast of rock and sand, a sharp look-out ahead was kept, but never a spar, sail, or hull broke the horizon line.

It was nearing the forenoon watch, while Jim had gone below to see how the coal supply was holding out, when Baines joined Larsen on the bridge.

"Look here, Larsen," he burst out, "this coaling is a mad idea. Even if we find a derelict near enough to the coast to handle her coal, it's going to take us days, and maybe weeks, to fill these bunkers!"

"I know," nodded Larsen; "but the nigger's dead set on coaling. He reckons it's the only way to get clear with his swag."

"And d'you reckon it's the only way?" demanded Baines.

Larsen's bearded lips twitched in a grin.

"No, I don't," he answered. "It might be the only way of getting clear for them, but it isn't for us."

"What do you mean?" asked Baines eagerly.

"I mean," answered Larsen, "that to-night we're going to collar as much of the swag as we can carry in our belts and pockets, and then we're going to skip the ship. There's no one can connect us with this seizing of the Rosa, because it was all done under cover of darkness, and it won't be suspected either that we've got money and jewellery on us. We'll get a ship somewhere to give us passage across to America, even if it means us having to go back to Camelot. Anyway, if we do have to go back there, Akers will have sailed. He's supposed to be leaving this morning aboard the Texan."

"And a cursed good job, too," said Baines venomously. "But how do you intend getting hold of the loot to-night? The nigger's no fool!"

"I know that," answered Larsen.

"But he and his two mates have got to sleep some time or other, and even if only one of them turns in, it leaves the odds three to two in our favour, because we'll keep awake to-night."

"You're forgetting the three seamen belonging to the tug," said Baines. "If they see us and the nigger scrapping among ourselves, they'll join in on their own account."

"They won't," answered Larsen. "Long before night comes we'll be anchored offshore, and them fellers'll be locked in the fo'c'sle. The nigger daren't risk letting them walk about loose in case one of them goes overboard in the night and swims ashore and spills the beans to somebody about what's happened."

He nudged Baines with his elbow.

"Here's the nigger coming now," he said. "Clear off, and I'll talk to you and Crawley later."

Obediently Baines sauntered away to the starboard rail of the bridge, as, mounting the ladder, Jim joined Larsen at the wheel.

"We've gotta find an anchorage mighty soon, Larsen," said Jim. "Dem bunkers is about empty now. Keep her closer inshore."

For another hour the tug cruised slowly northwards, while Jim, with glasses pressed to his eyes, scanned the desolate coast for some derelict which gave promise of providing the necessary coal.

"Dere we are," he exclaimed suddenly, handing the glasses to Larsen. "What about dat?"

Taking the glasses, Larsen focused them on a big, rusty-hulled freighter of some 6,000 tons burden lying high and dry on the rocks within a stone's throw of the water's edge. What was more, a long, curving line of rock running out into the sea to form a small bay gave promise of an ideal anchorage.

"It couldn't be better," said Larsen, handing the glasses back to Jim.

With a leadsman in the bows, the tug nosed her way into the bay. The remaining port anchor ran out with a rattle and splash, and as Jim signalled down to the engine-room: "Finished with engines," the Rosa lay riding close inshore, rising lazily to the swell.

The port davits were slung out, a boat lowered, and Larsen, Coles, and one of the tugboat hands went ashore to examine the derelict and see what coal she had in her bunkers.

They were gone less than half an hour, and when they returned Larsen clumped up the bridge ladder to report to Jim.

"Her bunkers are almost full," he informed the negro. "She must have been outward bound from some British port."

"What ship is she?" inquired Jim.

"The s.s. Sycamore," answered Larsen, "under water ballast."

"O.K.!" nodded Jim. "We'll be able to fit ourselves out wid stores as well as coal. We'll start coaling right away, using potato and store sacks."

He turned to Coles.

"Take Baines and Crawley ashore wid you, and start getting de bunker hatches off!" he ordered.

"Wait a minute!" growled Larsen. "We don't have to start coaling now. Not one of us turned in all last night. We'll start to-morrow morning."

"Us'll start now, Larsen," said Jim firmly. "We can't git dis ol' tub coaled quick enuff. Ebery hour of daylight is precious. Go on, Coles, git goin', an' take Baines an' Crawley wid you."

Larsen took a step forward.

"Listen, nigger," he growled. "I've taken orders from you ever since we

come aboard. I've got something to say now. This coaling doesn't start until the morning, as far as me, Baines, and Crawley are concerned."

"Any'ting more to say?" drawled Jim.

"That's all at the moment!" snapped Larsen.

"O.K., den!" nodded Jim. "Now let me tell you somethin', Larsen. Whiles you're aboard dis heah ship you'll take orders from me an' obey dem on de jump, see?"

"No, I don't see," shouted Larsen. "I'll obey no orders given by a dirty nigger—"

Like a black piston Jim's arm shot out, his clenched fist taking Larsen full on the side of his bearded face, sending him staggering back against the port rail of the bridge.

"You talk to me dat way again, Larsen," he said grimly, "an' you'll git some more!"

Larsen made no reply. Instead, gathering himself together, eyes blazing with berserk rage, and fists clenched, he charged forward at Jim, his right arm swinging murderously.

The nigger avoided the blow, and, straightening up, smashed home a right full to Larsen's bearded lips, sending him reeling back against the wheelhouse.

Again Larsen recovered himself, and, spitting blood, he tore in at Jim, aiming a savage kick at him with his heavy sea-boot.

Sensing what was coming, the negro twisted to avoid the kick. But he was not quick enough, and Larsen's boot chucked cruelly into his thigh.

With a snort of pain, Jim swung his black fists smashing like pile-drivers into Larsen's face.

Cursing and panting, Larsen brought his knee viciously up into the pit of the negro's stomach.

Jim doubled up, but only for a moment. Then a savage elbow jab in the kidneys made Larsen croak in agony, and a smashing right, crunching sickeningly against his nose, flattened it into a squat caricature of its former shape, and sent him staggering back against the wheelhouse.

Larsen pulled himself together. With head down he charged in again at Jim, who side-stepped and smashed home such a terrific blow to the throat that Larsen went headlong into the star-board rails, where he lay moaning and groaning.

"Get up!" grated Jim.

Larsen got up. Wounded in the shoulder as he had been in the attack on Anstruther's camp, his stamina was amazing.

It was not pluck which kept him going. It was bestial, unreasoning passion, and a blind and murderous lust to kill.

Jim, also, was in a towering and merciless rage. His sledgehammer fists crashed again and again on Larsen's jaw, reducing the man's bruised and bleeding features to red and quivering pulp.

Baines, Crawley, Coles, and Huck, on the bridge, looked on in tense silence, as did the three tugboat hands from the deck below. No one interfered, no one spoke a word, for to Baines and Crawley, and to Coles and Huck, this was a fight between their leaders to prove who would in future be top dog aboard the Rosa.

All four knew that there was something else at stake, for it would be the top dog and his two companions who would get the hundred thousand



The negro charged, his sledgehammer fist crashing mercilessly on the point of Larsen's jaw!

pounds' worth of loot which was aboard.

The hearts of Coles and Huck rejoiced exceedingly as they saw Jim slam Larsen up against the wheelhouse again, and, holding him there, batter his face unmercifully, until Larsen suddenly sagged at the knees and slid to the deck, where he rolled over on his face, to lie a limp and unconscious heap.

Stepping back, with hands on hips, Jim stood staring grimly down at Larsen.

"I see'd dis coming, Larsen, when you brought two men along wid you last night instead of one," he said. "I ain't never trusted you, but you've played yore cards wrong, Larsen. You should have waited an' knocked me over de head when I wasn't looking!"

Which is precisely what Baines thought, as disgustedly he muttered to Crawley:

"The fool said he was going to wait until to-night. Instead of that, he goes and loses his temper, and, by the look of him, he'll not be able to move for days."

He broke off as Jim turned on him.

"Git Larsen below into one of the cabin bunks!" growled the negro. "He wants seein' to!"

Assisted by two of the tugboat hands, Baines and Crawley carried their fallen leader below, and, after bathing his bruised and battered face, they bandaged it as best they could,

and set about attending to his other hurts.

"The fool!" burst out Baines again. "If only he'd waited till to-night, as he suggested, this wouldn't have happened!"

"What exactly was he going to do to-night?" asked Crawley.

"His idea was to wait until either the nigger or his two pals had turned in, then grab as much of the loot as we could carry, and skip the ship," explained Baines. He went on surveying the unconscious form of Larsen. "He'll not skip a ship this side of next week!"

He broke off as there came the sound of running down the companion ladder and Huck poked his head into the cabin.

"Come on!" grinned Huck. "You're wanted on deck!"

"What for?" demanded Baines.

"We're going to start coaling," replied Huck.

And start they did, under the supervision of Jim, who, after a wash-down, seemed little the worse for his fight with Larsen.

It was heartbreaking and killing work, filling sacks of coal from the bunkers of the Sycamore, carrying them to the Rosa's boat, ferrying them to the tug, hauling them up the side and emptying them into the tug's bunkers.

But throughout the afternoon, and until dusk was creeping in from out the sea, Jim kept them at it, lending his

own herculean strength to the task and doing the work of two men.

At length, however, he called a halt for the day. Worn out by the back-breaking toil, all hands discarded their grimy clothes and, after a cold sluice down, donned fresh clobber from the lockers in the fo'c'sle and sat down to a meal cooked by Jim.

It was Jim who took the first long watch, the rest wearily seeking their bunks to fall into sound and instant slumber. There was no talk that night between Baines and Crawley about skipping the ship, nor by the tug hands of attempting to escape.

All that was wanted by everyone was sleep, and when eventually Jim roused Coles and Huck to take over guard in the middle watch the pair of them wondered greatly how he had managed to keep awake so long.

"I don't think there'll be much stirring," said Jim, preparing to depart below. "De main thing what you've got to watch is dat dem three hands for'ard doan't try to slop off!"

The remainder of the night passed uneventfully enough, and soon after dawn the coaling of the tug was resumed.

Knowing the need for haste, Jim worked the men mercilessly, and in such great respect did they hold the negro's fists that protest was only uttered in surly undertones when he was out of carshot.

Larsen was still too weak to move, and had he not been so badly battered, Baines and Crawley could have envied him having nothing to do but lie in his bunk whilst they toiled, sweated, and cursed in the grime and dust of the Sycamore's bunkers.

With the dusk, work ended for the day, and after a sluice and an evening meal, Jim set the watches as on the previous night. He was to take first watch, and Coles and Huck the second. Jim had no intention of letting himself, Coles, and Huck, be asleep at the same time, leaving the ship to either the mercy of Baines and Crawley, or else to that of the three seamen.

Baines, however, seemed loath to turn in that night, and darkness found him and Crawley seated, smoking, on the fo'c'sle head.

"What's biting you, Baines?" asked Crawley curiously, after a few efforts at conversation had brought nothing but a surly grunt from Baines. "You got something on your mind, or what?"

Baines laughed shortly.

"I've got this on my mind," he said savagely. "I'm through with coaling. I'm not doing it to-morrow, not for that nigger nor nobody."

"No?" said Crawley, glancing through the darkness in the direction

of the bridge on which he knew the giant figure of Jim was lounging.

"I've been thinking, Crawley," said Baines, lowering his voice. "You know that idea of Larsen's to grab some of the loot and clear off the ship altogether?"

"Yes," nodded Crawley.

"Well, I reckon we can still do it," went on Baines in low guarded tones. "I've been thinking it out all evening. The first thing we've got to do is to get possession of the ship."

"Which is impossible," cut in Crawley.

"No, it isn't," retorted Baines. "You listen to me. Those three seamen what we captured know that you and me and Larsen ain't friendly with the nigger and his two mates."

"Yes, go on," encouraged Crawley.

"You and me," proceeded Baines, "can tell the three of them that now that Larsen's out of it we're kind of sorry we ever stood in on this game. Got the wind up, see? We'll tell them the truth, tell them all about the loot and everything, and we'll say that we've talked it over and come to the conclusion that we're bound to be captured, so we're prepared to help them retake the ship and sail it back to Camelot."

"And you think they'll swallow that?" exclaimed Crawley contemptuously.

"It doesn't matter whether they swallow it or not," retorted Baines. "All that'll matter to them will be our offer to help them retake the ship. We'll help them retake it when Huck and Coles are standing the second watch and the nigger's asleep."

"You really mean to help them?" said Crawley in amaze.

"That's my idea," nodded Baines. "The five of us'll rush Huck and Coles on the bridge and once we've overpowered them we can handle the nigger easy. Now," he lowered his voice to a whisper, "Coles has got a gun what he brought with him from a ship called the Boston. I saw it to-night when he was cleaning it. You and me'll get that gun, grab a few pocketfuls of the swag, and skip the ship. The three hands won't be able to stop us because they're unarmed. D'you get the idea?"

Crawley was silent a moment.

"Yes," he said softly, "I get it. But what about Larsen?"

"Larsen," retorted Baines, "can go to blazes. I'm not worrying about him."

(Baines seems pretty confident of getting away safe with the booty, doesn't he? But Jim Crow is no fool, as you will discover when you read next week's exciting chapters of this powerful adventure yarn. Be sure to order your copy of the MAGNET in good time!)

NOT WANTED AT GREYFRIARS!

(Continued from page 24.)

it was told, and it lasted Greyfriars as a topic till the school broke up for Easter.

It was a dismal story. Raleigh's five-pound note had been passed in the town of Topham, and identified there. And a racing man, who had passed it, had had to explain whence he received it. He had received it from Crawley.

Only too well now Wilmot understood the urgent need that had brought the wretched Crawley to Greyfriars; and the risk he had said that he had to run, if Wilmot failed him. That risk was the passing of the banknote, which uneasy fears had led him to keep back so long. He had been driven to part with it at last. And, doubtless, after such a lapse of time, it had seemed safe to him—unaware of the investigations set on foot by Hacker.

"It shows," said Johnny Bull oracularly, "that a fellow should always do the straight thing."

"Quite!" agreed Wilmot.

"Gratters, old bean!" said the Bounder, looking into the study. "I don't think you can blame any man for barring you, Wilmot, in the circus."

"Not at all."

"But gratters all the same!"

"Thanks!"

And the Bounder voiced the general sentiment of the Remove. A wrong had been done, and it had been set right; the wretched Crawley making a full confession, when he was expelled from Topham—glad to escape with nothing worse. Every fellow in the Remove offered Wilmot his "gratters"—even Skinner.

On the last day but one of the term, Wilmot showed his friends a letter from his old headmaster at Topham. It contained a cordial invitation to take his old place in his old school, and to come at once. He was to go back as if nothing had happened. And though his Greyfriars friends were sorry to lose him, they were glad of his good fortune. And when Mr. Hacker took him to the station, the Famous Five went to see him off—Hacker, for once, glowing with good humour, and giving the Remove fellows the impression that he really was a human being, after all.

THE END.



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BRONCO-BUSTING BIRCHEMALL

By **DICKY NUGENT**

"Going in for the bronco-busting kontest, you fellows?" asked Jack Jolly, as he and his pals sat in General Jolly's magnificent Rolls-Rice on their way to a circus and Wild West show they were patronising on Bank Hollerday Monday. "There's a prize of five pounds for the chap that can stay on the bronco's back for half-a-minnit."

"Not in these trowsis!" answered Frank Fearless, with a larf. "They say that nobody has yet lasted longer than five seconds on that fiery mustang—and I'm sure I don't want to start my Easter hollerdays with a broken neck!"

"Same here!" corussed Merry and Bright. "All screen! I'm not keen myself, while the hollerday's so yung!" grinned the kaptein of the Fourth. Then he broke off suddenly and gave a wiesle. "Few! See who's walking along the road, you chaps? Stop the car, Steer!"

Steer, the shover, saluted and shoved on his brakes, and the grate car, with a defening roar, came to a dead stop. As it did so there was a mermer of serprize from Jack Jolly's pals.

"The Head!" The wayfarer Jolly had spotted was none other than Doctor Alfred Birchermall, the venerable headmaster of St. Sam's! He glanced round curiously, as the Rolls-Rice pulled up beside him. Then, when he reckernised the okkupants, a strangely guilty look appeared on his skollerly fizz.

"Jolly! Fearless! Merry! Bright! What are you doing of, gallivanting about in this part of the world?" he phaltered.

"We're making for Slangor's Circus and Wild West Show, sir."

The Head started violently.

"The dickens you are!"

"No objection, sir, have you?"

Doctor Birchermall culered. "Numno; none whatever, of course! But why don't you go further afield, with a magnificent car like this at your disposal? You could easily take a trip to Merry Margate or Breezy Brighton, or—"

"Nothing doing, sir!" chuckled Frank Fearless. "It's the Bronco-busting Kontest we want to see!"

"I will be frank with you, boys," said the Head. "The truth is that I also am on my way to Slangor's Circus—with the intention of going in for the

bronco-busting kontest myself!"

"My hat! If you really mean that, sir, you've got some nerve!" eggscclaimed Merry, admiringly. "Why, an old fogey like you won't stay on that bronco's back for a couple of jiffies!"

"Pardon me, Merry, but I object to the term 'old fogey,'" said the Head, sharply. "In any case, I've made up my mind to succeed. Come what may, I must hang on to that mustang."

"Well, we all wish you the best of luck, I'm sure, sir!" grinned Jack Jolly.

"What about a lift as you're coming our way?"

The Head seemed to hezzitate; but his doubts were soon sot at rest when Fearless opened the door and yanked him in by his beard!

"Yaroooooo!" "Sit down, sir, and make yourself comfy!" said Jolly, hospitably. "Steer on, Steer!"

The shover saluted and got bizzy, and the Rolls-Rice started off again with a defening report. The Head, gratefully to the juniors' serprize, remained standing.

"If you don't mind, Jolly, I'll stand up," he said. "Unless I do so now, I may get tired of sitting down later on, when I'm riding that horse at the circus!"

"My hat!" It struck Jack Jolly & Co. as very pekuliar that the Head should be so hoapful about his chances. They couldn't help wondering what it was that had made him so optimistick.

"When they arrived at the circus, they notissed another pekuliarity about the Head. The seat of his trowsis seemed to be awfully shiny, as though he had been recently sitting in a pool of grease! But they had no time to call his attentshun to that before they found themselves in the grate circus tent: There they soon forgot all about the Head's trowsis.

At last came the turn they were all awaiting—so eagerly—the bronco-busting kontest. The grate ring was cleared; and when a savidge-looking pony charged in, Jack Jolly & Co. yelled themselves horse!



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STRANGE SCENES AT MAULEVERER TOWERS

By **H. VERNON-SMITH**

Hearing that Bob Cherry was spending a couple of days of the vac. with Mauly at Maul-overer Towers, I thought I'd look in to see how such an oddly assorted couple were getting on with each other. Imagine my amazement to discover Mauly feverishly punting a footer about one of the lawns.

"Mauly, old bean!" I gasped. "What the merry dickens—"

"Can't stop, dear man! Make yourself at home!" panted Mauly. "You'll find plenty to do—swimmin' an' tennis an' runnin', y' know; an' there's the gym indoors!"

"But, you howling ass, what's wrong?" I hooted. "You're not yourself!"

Then Mauly stopped booting the ball and broke down completely! Crawling over to where I stood, he wept on my shoulder.

"You're right, dear man; I'm not myself!" he sobbed. "It's dear ol' Bob, you know—his

frightful energy and what-not! He's made me into somethin' different—somethin' I was never intended to be!"

"Great Scott! This is serious! Let's come along and see him!" I said.

We went. I nearly collapsed in a lifeless heap when we found Bob Cherry, the most violently energetic chap at Greyfriars, snoozing in a hammock.

I grabbed him by the hair and Bob opened his eyes with a yelp.

"My dear chap, you're not yourself!" I said; and then, would you believe it, Bob Cherry broke down, too!

"You've said it, Smithy; I'm not!" he sobbed. "It's this sleepy ass here that's done it; being with him for two days has mesmerised me or something!"

Goodness knows what sort of a state they'd have got into if I hadn't turned up when I did!



Nothing Overlooked—Says G. BULSTRODE WHEN TEMPLE & Co. Go HIKING

Brownly and I had the shock of our lives when we were hiking in Hampshire at the start of the vac. We came across the last fellows on earth we should have expected to find on the road—Temple & Co., of the Upper Fourth!

"Don't mean to say you're hiking?" I gasped. Temple raised his immaculate eyebrows.

"Why not?" "Because I didn't imagine that three swanking tailors' dummies like you chaps would descend to it!" Temple glared.

"Cheeky, eh? Well, if you're lookin' for trouble—"

"Pax! It's holiday-time!" chipped in Brownly. And pax it was, and we all hiked along together and

found Temple and his pals quite human in spite of their looks!

So there you are. Temple & Co. are hikers right enough and nobody can deny it now.

But I ought to add that they're not common or garden hikers like Brownly and me. Oh, dear, no! They put up for the night at swell hotels and take their meals at the most expensive restaurants en route. As to carrying rucksacks, they wouldn't dream of it!

They cover a hundred miles a day and put on dress-suits every evening; and that's got Brownly and me well beaten!

How do they do it? That's soon answered. Temple's car follows them everywhere at a distance of about a hundred yards with all their kit on board. And when they get tired of hiking (which is usually after about an hour) they jump aboard the car and finish the day's "hiking" on wheels.

Trust Temple & Co.

"Ladies and gentlemen!" cride the ring-master. "I now have the honnor to invite any brave horseman who is willing to defy doth on the back of this untamed mustang to step into the ring! The first gentleman to remain on the pony's back for half-a-minnit will receive the stependous prize of a five-pound note!"

For a few seconds there was a deadly silence; and then, amid a buzz of egg-sitement, Doctor Birchermall, who had been standing at the ringside, vaulted over the barrier.

Half-a-duzen tuff-looking cowboys held down the foam-flecked colt with ropes while the Head mounted him. But as soon as Doctor Birchermall had fixed himself firmly in the saddle, they released the mustang and jumped aside.

Like litening, the pony galloped right across the ring, then pulled up with a terrific jerk. Jack Jolly & Co. rubbed their eyes. They had fully eggsppected to see the Head fly over the head of his steed right into the middle of the audience; but instead of that, he remained stuck in the saddle as though he was glued there!

That first serprize was soon followed by others.

The mustang tried one trick after another to dislodge the Head, and each trick was more eggstreme than the one before it. Yet he didn't make the slightest impression on the bronco-buster from St. Sam's. He reared up on his hind legs, then danced on his four-paws, then twisted round in dizzy circles, then bucked all round the ring. And still the Head remained in the saddle, grinning from ear to ear!

Other cowboys came to the rescue, and in the end the entire six were tugging at Doctor Birchermall for all they were worth. Mean-while, the ring-master, whose opinion of the Head seemed to be changing rapidly, fixed on Doctor Birchermall a kind of noddick look that made the Head turn as red as a pony!

"So that's how you did it!" cride the ring-master, when he found his "eo."

"You put glue on the seat of your trowsis so that you'd stick to the saddle. By gum!" Then Jack Jolly & Co. remembered that shiny look about the Head's trowsis and his refusal to sit down in the Rolls-Rice—and they realised that the

the most amazing display of horsemanship I have seen for many a long day. Here you are, sir!"

A crisp, russling five changed hands, and the crowd cheered wildly.

Then a remarkable thing happened. One of the cowboys tried to help the Head off the mustang; and it was promptly and that the Head couldn't budge an inch. He was stuck in the saddle just as firmly as if he had been stuck there with glue!

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Forchunily, Steer was still at the wheel of the Rolls-Rice, and in a couple of jiffies they were all inside and the grate car was clattering away, bearing them all to safety.

"Thank you, my boys!" gasped the Head, when he had regained his breath. "Quite a neat bit of work, what?"

"Personally, sir," said Frank Fearless, in his usual frank and fearless way, "I prefer to call it a neat bit of swindling!"

"Pshaw! Likewise, tut-tut!" grinned Doctor Birchermall. "They offered the five to anyone who stuck in the saddle for half-a-minnit and I did it—with the loss of nothing more than the seat of my Sunday worst trowsis! It was all perfectly fair, square, and above-board!"

And, as the Head seemed satisfied, there was nothing more to be said about it!



QUITE LOGICAL

Gosling, the School porter, has just secured an extra soap allowance of £1 a year because of the dirty work he does.

Skinner, of the Remove, is thinking of asking for £10 a year extra for the same reason!

WOULD YOU BELIEVE IT?



Billy Bunter began collecting for an Easter egg fund, saying a percentage of the amount would go to charity. It turned out that Bunter was allotting a penny in the pound to charity—the rest going to buy Easter eggs for himself. Harry Wharton & Co. gave him a severe bumping—which "cracked" even Bunter's thick "shell"!



Much excitement was caused by a huge Easter egg arriving at Greyfriars addressed to Harry Wharton. Suspecting a Highcliffe "jape," Wharton opened it with care—dodging the smoke bomb which it contained. Ponsonby & Co. received their egg back—this time containing a "guy" of Pon, wearing a cap of his, captured in a "rag"!



Mr. Prout kept the Fifth in late the other afternoon, recalling that it was at Easter 1896 that he last ate an Easter egg. It was sent to him from England while he was in the Rockies, shocking grizzly bears. Hilton was heard to murmur it was a pity the "grizzlies" hadn't eaten Prouty—Easter egg and all!



This Easter, Bob Cherry has planned a 20-mile route over the Kentish downs, which he and the rest of the famous Five intend to "hike." The only reason Bunter has decided not to attach himself to the party is that Bob says there will be no stopping to rest, wet or fine. Bob, unlike Bunter, keeps in perfect training!



Horace Coker still blushes at the recollection of last Easter—when his dotting Aunt Judy sent him an Easter egg tied with a big blue bow. Fifth Form men are above such things—but the rest of the Fifth got Coker quite "down under" with their chipping. Coker found his Easter egg a heavy "yoke" for weeks!



Dicky Nugent hit upon the idea of presenting an Easter egg to his Form-master, Mr. Twigg, on behalf of the Second. All went well till Gatty clumsily nudged Nugent, causing him to drop the egg. Mr. Twigg's face, when he read the humorous motto it contained, was thunderous. It read: "We egg-spect you are a lot older than you 'crack' on!"

SECRETS OF A SPRING POET

By **SQUIFF**

"Is it true," I asked of Horace Coker, "that you have recently become a great Spring poet?"

Coker nodded gravely. "Quite true, young Field. Anything I can do for you?"

"Yes, what about giving our readers some idea of the way you go to work?"

"Quite a pleasure," answered Coker, genially. "There's a certain amount of work behind the finished product of the poet."

"Most people fail to appreciate that. They read some sonorous sonnet or liting limerick and imagine that it just comes to the poet in a flash of inspiration."

"Far from it! The poet has his work to do just as any other kind of artist, and finding rhymes is no light job sometimes, believe me!"

"Some poets start from the last line and work

back. But my method is the plain, straightforward one of starting from the beginning and working right through. For instance, take the poem I'm on now. I started with the line 'Hurrah! It's good old spring, spring!'

"There aren't many words that rhyme with 'Spring.' I could only think of about forty, and most of those didn't fit in. Here they are, the first four lines:

"Hurrah! It's good old spring, spring, spring! The birds are on the wing, wing, wing; The hikers gaily sing, sing, sing; The cyclists ting-a-ling-ting-ting."

I grabbed my cap and made for the door.

"Half a jiffy!" said Coker. "I've written ten more lines all ending in '-ing'!"

"Thanks, old chap, but I've just remembered an urgent appointment!" I gasped.

We newspaper reporters are a hard-boiled lot, I know; but we have our limits!