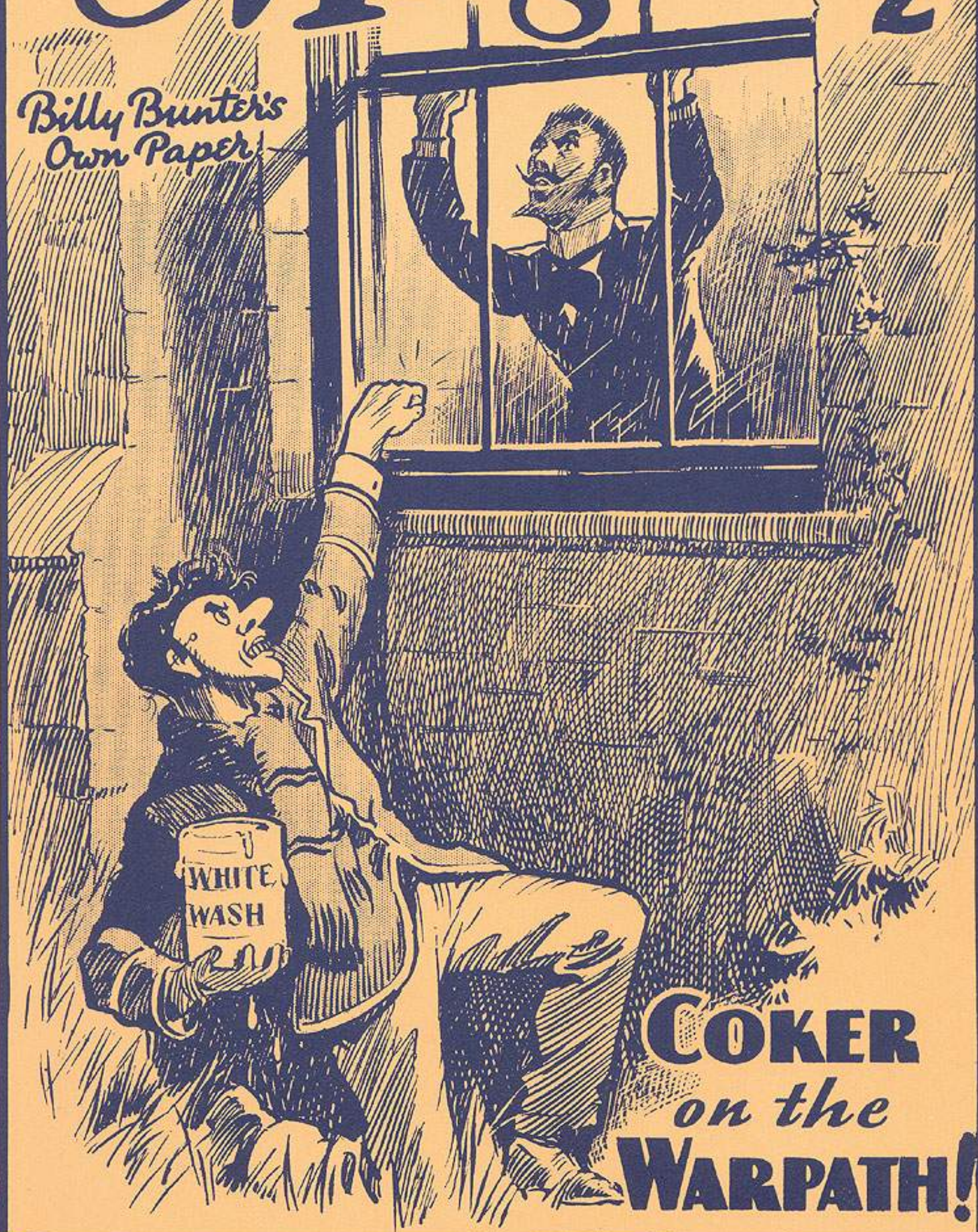


Harry Wharton & Co. In another exciting school adventure... "THE RUNAWAY SCHOOLBOY!"

The Magnet

2^d

Billy Bunter's
Own Paper



COKER
on the
WARPATH!

"STAY ON AT GREYFRIARS AND WAIT TO BE KICKED OUT? NOT ME!" says Skip,
the wail of the Greyfriars Remove.

The RUNAWAY SCHOOLBOY!



Sensational School Adventure Yarn, featuring HARRY WHARTON & CO., the Cheery Chums of
GREYFRIARS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER

The Foes of the Remove!

"WHAT a life!" sighed Bob Cherry.

Bob's views on life were generally cheerful—indeed, exuberant. It was seldom that his sunny face was overcast.

Now it was quite glum.

So were the faces of other Remove fellows, gathered at the door of No. 10 class-room at Greyfriars School.

"It was a 'detention' class, to be taken by Monsieur Charpentier, the French master.

Mossoo, probably, did not like taking a detention class. Still less did a detention class like to be taken!

Lessons were over, that November afternoon, but it was still light enough to punt a footer about in the quad before tea. Bob's pals were thus engaged, while Bob, with his French books under his arm, came lugubriously up the passage to No. 10.

There he found other victims waiting for Mossoo. Herbert Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars, stood leaning on the door, with a scowl on his face. The Bounder had detentions oftener than any other fellow in the Remove, and deserved them still more often.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! You for it, too, Smithy?" asked Bob. "You haven't been knocking anybody's tile off?"

Bob's detention was for knocking Coker's hat off in the quad—as if there were any harm in knocking off a Fifth Form man's hat, especially a fathead like Coker! His chums agreed with him that it was fearfully unjust.

"Oh, don't be a silly ass!" grunted the Bounder. When Smithy's temper

was bad nobody could speak to him without getting the benefit of it.

"Not at all, old chap!" answered Bob affably. "I'll leave that to you. More in your line."

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

Smithy scowled at Bob and scowled at Bunter.

"What are you here for, Skip?" asked Bob. "You're not often in detention."

Skip, the new fellow in the Remove, made a grimace.

"Mossoo ain't satisfied with my blooming French!" he answered. Skip had been more than half a term at Greyfriars, but he still used the adjectives of Slummock's Alley, where his early days had been spent. "He thinks I don't try 'ard enough, so I'm getting some hextra."

"Hard cheese!" said Bob sympathetically. "What's your jolly old crime, Skinner?"

Skinner gave a snort.

"Same as Smithy's!" he grunted.

"Copped smoking?" grinned Bob.

"No, fathead! Quelch heard us talking in the quad—"

"Gee-gees!" asked Bob. "Three to one on Nobbled Nick for the Swindlem Stakes—what?"

"No, ass! Smithy was talking about old Bullivant at Cliff House. I never said anything, really, but Quelch came down on both of us."

Bob Cherry looked rather puzzled.

Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, was rather a severe gentleman. He took what seemed to Bob an absurdly severe view of knocking off a senior man's hat in the quad. But if he was severe, he was just, so Skinner's statement was rather perplexing. Mentioning Miss Bullivant, the games-mistress

at Cliff House, hardly constituted a crime.

"He, he, he!" came again from Bunter. "You haven't told Cherry what you were saying about the Bull, Skinner. I heard you. He, he, he!"

"I never said anything!" growled Skinner. "Smithy said she was an old cat, and so she is, bother her!"

"Oh!" said Bob. "Serve you both jolly well right, then! She isn't a bad sort. Marjorie Hazeldene likes her."

The Bounder scowled round at him with one eye on Skip.

Skip's face was growing red, and his eyes gleaming. Skip was one of the few fellows in the Greyfriars Remove who saw something to like in the Cliff House games-mistress. Generally, that hefty and rather formidable lady inspired awe rather than regard.

But Skip had not forgotten that the Bull had done him a kind turn—intervening when Smithy and his pals were ragging him one half-holiday on Court-field Common.

"So she is a cat!" said Vernon-Smith, speaking to Bob Cherry, but for Skip's behoof. "The old fool laid her stick round me! Cheeky old cat!"

"Shut that!" said Skip. "Don't you call that there lady names when I can 'ear you, Smith!"

"I'll please myself about that," answered the Bounder contemptuously.

"You won't!" said Skip, coming a step nearer to Vernon-Smith. "You'll please me, see? I've smacked your 'ead once for calling that lady names, and I'll smack it again any time you like—and yours, too, Skinner!"

Skinner sneered, but made no rejoinder. He did not want trouble with the fellow who had knocked out Bolsover

major, and who could hold his own with Bob Cherry in the fistical line.

But the Bounder was made of sterner stuff. Three or four times since the waif of Slummock's Alley had been at Greyfriars Smithy had tackled him, and had been beaten. But he was always ready to try again.

Indeed, his bitter feud with Skip was founded as much upon those defects as upon his belief that the boy who had once been a pickpocket was at heart the same dishonest young rascal that he had been in Slummock's Alley.

His eyes flashed at Skip.

"You cheeky hooligan from a slum," he said. "Do you think you can give orders to me? That old fool is a cheeky old cat!" The Bounder repeated the words deliberately. "A cheeky old cat! And—"

He got no further, as Skip grabbed him. In a moment they were fighting.

"Chuck it, you duffers!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Mossoo will be along any minute now."

But neither the Bounder nor Skip heeded.

Vernon-Smith, his eyes gleaming rage, struck and struck again, and twice his blows landed in Skip's chubby face. Then, as the sinewy grasp of the boy from Slummock's Alley closed on him, he crumpled.

The Bounder was strong and sturdy, as good a fighting-man as almost any fellow in the Remove; but he was no match for the boy who had been through a life harder and tougher than any Greyfriars fellows dreamed of.

Skip gripped him by the collar and swung him helplessly off his feet, and the Bounder struggled savagely, but in vain, to free himself.

Then, with his left hand, Skip made a grab at Skinner's collar. Skinner rocked over in his powerful grasp.

Crack!

Two heads were brought together with a resounding concussion. There was a wild howl from Skinner, and a gasping cry of rage from Smithy.

Crack!

Their heads banged again. Both of them struggled furiously. But it made no difference; their heads banged, and banged hard!

"He, he, he!" chortled Billy Bunter, blinking at the startling scene with great entertainment through his big spectacles. "He, he, he!"

"Here comes Mossoo!" grinned Hazeldene.

"Cave!" gasped Peter Todd.

"Chuck it!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Froggy's coming!"

The dapper figure of Monsieur Charpentier came whispering up the passage.

Skip, about to crack the two heads together again, paused, and pitched the Bounder and Skinner away.

Bump, bump!

They sat down on the passage floor as Mossoo came whisking up.

"Vat is zis?" exclaimed Monsieur Charpentier. "Is it zat you have ze play of ze horse? Zat you stop zat at vunce!"

Skinner scrambled up, rubbing his head. Vernon-Smith bounded to his feet and made a spring at Skip.

Bob Cherry pushed him back. The Bounder, in his rage, would have carried on, under the astonished and wrathful eyes of the French master. Bob interposed in time.

"Chuck it, you silly ass!" he breathed.

"You fool, get out of the way!"

"Smeat!" almost shrieked Monsieur Charpentier. "You verree bad boy, Smeat! Zat you stop zis at vunce, or I take you to Meester Quelch! At vunce!"

Mon Dieu! Is it zat you vill fight in ze presence of ze master? Go into ze classroom, you verree bad boy, Smeat!"

And the Bounder, with an effort, controlled his fury and tramped into No. 10, the rest of the detention class following him in, grinning.

THE SECOND CHAPTER

Toffee for Coker!

"SEEN Potter or Greene?"

Harry Wharton laughed.

Really, he could not help it.

The captain of the Remove was punting a footer, after class, with his chums, Nugent and Johnny Bull and Hurree Singh. Bob Cherry, less fortunate, had had to go in to detention.

Exactly three minutes ago the juniors had noticed Potter and Greene of the Fifth Form come quickly out of the House and walk hurriedly away.

They had disappeared round a corner, walking as if for a wager.

Then Coker of the Fifth happened.

Coker came out, stared round with a frowning, rugged brow, called to Wharton, and inquired whether he had seen Potter and Greene.

Which question enlightened Harry as

ONE MINUTE AN OUTCAST —THE NEXT A JOLLY GOOD FELLOW!

Ever since he has been at Greyfriars, Skip, the waif from Slummock's Alley, has been "barred" by Vernon-Smith. Now comes the Bounder's chance to clear his enemy of an unjust suspicion.

Does he do it?

to the cause of the haste displayed by Potter and Greene in getting out of sight!

Evidently, Coker wanted his pals. Equally evidently, his pals did not want Coker. Plainly, they were dodging Horace Coker.

Which rather amused the captain of the Remove.

Coker of the Fifth was not amused. He stared at the Removite angrily.

"What are you cackling at, you young ass?" he demanded. "I asked you if you'd seen Potter or Greene. Have they come out of the House?"

"Yes; they came out of the House," answered Harry, smiling. "I can't see them about now, though."

Neither could Coker—which was really not surprising, as Potter and Greene, three minutes ago, had vanished round the corner of the library.

"The silly asses!" said Coker. "The footling chumps! I told them distinctly I wanted them in the study. I said: 'Go up to the study and wait for me!' I said it quite plainly. And now they've gone out. It's not ten minutes since I told them, and they've forgotten already!"

Harry Wharton had an impression that Potter and Greene hadn't forgotten, and that their disappearance was due to the fact that they hadn't. However, he did not say so.

"Hold on!" said Coker, as Wharton made a move to go back to his friends. "Look here, you're only a silly fag,

Wharton, but I dare say you could handle it."

Apparently, there was something to be handled in Coker's study, and he had been relying on his pals.

"You're pretty good at French, I believe," said Coker—"what?"

"French?" repeated Harry.

"Yes, French. I've got a translation to do for Mossoo, and, of course, I've no time for the rot!" said Coker crossly.

"Would you believe it—the little ass has given me a whole page of translation from Madame de What's-her-name's book about the French Thingummy!"

"Oh, my hat!" said Harry. Wharton was, in fact, one of Mossoo's best pupils in the French class, but he had never heard of Madame de What's-her-name, neither was he acquainted with the "French Thingummy."

"Look here, I believe you could do it!" said Coker. "I've got to see some fellows in the games study! I'm not going to stick about translating the tripe! I was going to ask Potter and Greene—they could have done it between them in half an hour—but the silly asses seem to have walked off somewhere. Look here, Wharton, you cut up to my study—see?"

"Not quite!" said Harry, laughing.

He could not quite "see" himself doing a page of French translation for Coker of the Fifth. He found impositions of his own quite enough bother without doing them for other fellows. Neither was Coker's way of asking a favour grateful or comforting.

"I'm not asking you to do it for nothing, you little ass!" snapped Coker. "I'll stand you some toffee."

"Wha-at?"

"I've got a tin of toffees in my study. You can help yourself. Now come on!" said Coker briskly. "You can get the bosh translated, and I'll copy it out afterwards; the little beast will have to see it in my fist! You can have all the toffees, if you like—there's nearly a pound."

The captain of the Remove gazed at Coker. He gazed at him as if he could hardly believe his ears. Indeed, he hardly could.

Fags of the Second and Third Forms could be bribed with toffee. Harry Wharton was in the Remove—he was captain of that Form; he was, in the Remove, quite a great man. The idea of being bribed with toffee, like Sammy Bunter of the Second Form, fairly made him blink. Wrath and indignation held him dumb as he gazed at Horace Coker.

Coker did not even know that he was indignant. To the great and lofty Coker, all juniors were merely inconsiderable microbes, miles below his notice. If he condescended to make use of a fag, it was an honour to that fag—quite a distinction, in fact.

"Come on!" he repeated.

"You—you—you—" gasped the captain of the Remove.

"What are you stuttering about, you young ass?" asked Coker impatiently. "Look here, you're wasting time! You can guzzle the toffee while you're doing the French; only don't make my study table all sticky!"

Harry Wharton gasped. Really, words were inadequate in reply to this. Coker was asking to be slaughtered. He was asking to be slain, slaughtered, and strewn in small sections all over the Greyfriars quadrangle. As he was too big and hefty for Wharton to do the slaying, slaughtering, and strewing all on his own, the captain of the Remove called to his friends:

"Here, you fellows!"

Johnny Bull, Frank Nugent, and

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Hurree Jamset Ram Singh came up, leaving other Remove fellows to punt the footer.

"What do you want those fags for?" asked Coker. "Do you mean that you want them to help you?" Coker was thinking of the French translation.

"Oh, yes! Exactly!" gasped Wharton. He was thinking of the slaying, slaughtering, and strewing of Horace Coker.

But as his three friends joined him, two masters came out of the House—Mr. Quelch, his own Form-master, and Mr. Prout, who was Coker's beak. They appeared, though they were quite unaware of it, just in time to save Horace Coker from being slain, slaughtered, and strewn.

"What's up?" asked Frank.

Wharton paused. Under the eyes of two beaks, his own and Coker's, the fathead of the Fifth could not be awarded what he had asked for. Coker explained:

"I'm tipping Wharton some toffees to do a translation for me, and he wants you kids to help him! Come on!"

Coker turned back into the House.

Wharton's three chums looked at him as he went, and then looked at Wharton.

"The cheeky ass!" said Nugent.

"The potty fathead!" said Johnny Bull.

"The esteemed and blithering idiot!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Tipping me toffee!" said the captain of the Remove. "He's warned me not to make his study table all sticky! Me! Come on! Let's go up to his study! I'll tip him toffee!"

Breathing wrath, the captain of the Remove followed Coker into the House. His friends followed him.

Coker, on the staircase, glanced back. He saw the four juniors following him, and was satisfied. It was clear—to Coker—that his lordly behests were going to be obeyed.

In the Fifth Form passage, Harry Wharton & Co. considered whether to close in on Coker and use him as a duster for dusting the passage. But there were other Fifth Form men about—Hilton and Price in the doorway of their study; Blundell and Fitzgerald standing by the games study—so they decided to let Coker live, as it were, a few minutes longer.

They followed the great Horace into his study.

There Wharton carefully closed the door. No other Fifth Form men were wanted to look in while the ineffable Horace was being dealt with.

"You needn't shut the door!" snapped Coker. "I'm not staying here! I'll just show you what you've got to do. There's the tin of toffees—you can help yourselves; only, as I've told you, don't make everything sticky! Here's the tripe for Mossoo!"

"Madame! What's-her-name," on closer inspection, turned out to be Madame de Staël; and the "French Thingummy" turned out to be that learned lady's "Considerations on the French Revolution."

"Here's the page," said Coker, pointing. "Begin at: 'On ne sait comment approcher,' and keep on till you get to—Yaroooooo!"

Coker was taken quite by surprise. He hardly knew how he got on the floor of his study.

But he knew that he got there, for he landed there with a terrific bump which almost shook the study.

"Yaroooop!" roared Coker. "What the—Yoo-hoooooop!"

"Scrag him!" gasped Harry Wharton.

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"Whoo-hoop!" spluttered Coker, struggling wildly. "Have you fags gone mad, or what? Why, I'll spifficate you! I'll smash you! I'll—Grooooooh!"

Coker was a hefty fellow. No Remove could have handled Coker on his own. But four Removes handled him quite easily.

They rolled Coker over; they hustled and hustled him; they tapped his head on his study carpet. They shoved the "Considerations sur la Revolution Francaise" down the back of his neck, cramming it well home. They followed it up with the contents of the tin of toffees.

Toffees—nearly a pound of toffees—were crammed down the back of Coker's neck after the "Considerations sur la Revolution Francaise." They felt rather sticky as they were crammed down.

"Ooooooh!" spluttered Coker, as he struggled and squirmed and wriggled and writhed. "Woooooh! Grooooooh! I'll—I'll—Grooooooh!"

"There!" gasped Harry. "I think that will do! Lots more, Coker, if you check the Remove again!"

"Urrrggh!" Coker struggled to a sitting position as the juniors released him at last. "I'll—urrgh—I'll—gurrgh—I tell you I'll—wurrgh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Wharton & Co., chuckling breathlessly, left Coker's study—and quitted the territory of the Fifth rather hastily.

Coker did not pursue them. Coker was boiling with wrath, but he was in no state for pursuit. He sat on his study floor, gasping and gurgling for breath—and when he had recovered his wind a little he was busy for quite a long time, extracting "Considerations on the French Revolution" and sticky toffees from the back of his neck!

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Swipes for Smithy!

"S M E E T!" snapped Monsieur Charpentier.

Mossoo was not in the best of tempers. A detention class was never a very cheerful function, and the detention-master enjoyed it no more than the class. And when the class included a fellow like Herbert Vernon-Smith, it was certain not to be very quiet or orderly.

In the course of a quarter of an hour, Smithy had banged his desk lid three or four times, dropped a book twice, and pinched Billy Bunter once, eliciting a loud and anguished yell from that fat youth.

Mossoo was a patient little gentleman; but his temper was rising. He picked up a pointer and glared at the Bounder.

"Smeect, if you vill not behave, I rap you ze knuckle!" he exclaimed. "You are one verree bad boy, Smeect—I zink you are ze baddest boy zat I ever deal viz! Attention!"

"Chuck it, Smithy, you ass!" whispered Bob Cherry. "Froggy's getting wild!"

"Sherry!" rapped Mossoo.

"Oh! Yes, sir!"

"You talk viz yourself in class, isn't it? You vill take vun hundred lines of ze Henriade, Sherry!"

Bob made a grimace, and the Bounder grinned.

That was Bob's reward for trying to restrain Smithy from further ragging. When Monsieur Charpentier was wrathful, his wrath fell like the hail and

the rain, alike on the just and the unjust!

"Now ve vill proceed!" said Monsieur Charpentier. "Skeep, zat you give me your attention! You zink zat you are so good French scholar zat you need not listen to ze master?"

This was sarcasm. Skip was the worst in the Remove at French, not even excluding Billy Bunter. A fellow whose French was worse than Bunter's was not likely to please Monsieur Charpentier.

Really, it was not poor Skip's fault; for until that term at Greyfriars he had never known a word of the language. It was much to his credit that he had made any progress at all in so short a time.

In the Remove Form Room, Mr. Quelch showed him special consideration, and gave him a good deal of separate tuition. So did Mossoo, when he was in a good temper; for he was a kind-hearted little gentleman, and he knew all about the wai's early disadvantages.

But there was no doubt that a fellow who was far behind every other fellow was a worry; and when Mossoo was annoyed, he did not always remember to be just.

Quelch was a man who went steadily on the path of duty, swerving neither to the right nor to the left. But Mossoo was temperamental—and with him, effusive kindness alternated with spasms of impatient irritation.

"I was listening, sir," said Skip. "I was jest picking up a book, sir."

"You should not drop ze book, Skeep!" snapped Mossoo. "Zere is too mooch of zat in zis class! Take vun hundred lines for dropping ze book!"

Skip breathed hard. He had not dropped the book—Skinner had leaned over from behind and pushed it off his desk. But he said nothing.

"Now zat you translate, Skeep!" snapped Mossoo.

He chalked a sentence on the blackboard. It was quite a simple sentence—"Avez vous l'argent de votre oncle?" But simple as it was, it was rather beyond Skip, and he stared at it, and was silent.

"They didn't learn much French in Slummock's Alley!" whispered the Bounder, and Skinner giggled.

"Don't be a cad, Smithy!" grunted Bob.

"You cannot translate zat so simple sentence, Skeep!" snapped the French master. "Buntair, you vill tell Skeep vat zat sentence mean."

"Oh, yes, sir, certainly!" said Bunter, blinking at the blackboard through his big spectacles. "Avez vous—have you—l'argent—let's see l'argent means silver, doesn't it, Toddy? Or is it copper? Or tin?"

"Tin!" murmured Skinner.

"Avez vous l'argent—have you the tin—" translated Bunter.

There was a chortle in the detention-class.

"Argent" undoubtedly meant "tin" in the slangy sense of that word, as it meant money. But Mossoo had no use for such a translation as that.

"Comment! Taisez-vous, Buntair!" he yapped. "Tin—vat you say—tin? In French tin is etain—vhy you say tin?"

"You beast, Skinner!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Avez vous—" began Bunter again. "Avez vous— Oh dear!"

"Have you ze money of your uncle?" hooted Mossoo, supplying the translation for the obtuse Owl of the Remove. Bunter blinked at him.

"No, sir!" he answered.

"Vat! Vat you mean, Buntair!"
 "I haven't, sir."
 "You have not vat?" shrieked Mossoo.
 "The money of my uncle, sir."
 "Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the class.
 Bunter, apparently, did not realise that Monsieur Charpentier was giving him the translation of the sentence on the blackboard. He fancied that Mossoo was asking him a question!
 "Mon Dieu!" gasped Monsieur Charpentier. "Zat garcon—zat Buntair—"
 "But I haven't, really, sir!" protested Bunter.

and he could easily have puzzled most of the class. But, with an eye on Skip, he preferred to write an easy sentence on the blackboard.
 Some of the juniors grinned, and some of them frowned as he chalked:
 "VOYEZ VOUS UN VOLEUR ICI?"
 "You rotter!" muttered Bob Cherry, his eyes gleaming at the Bounder.
 "Zat you translate, Skeep!" said Monsieur Charpentier, never even dreaming that that sentence was directed against the junior who had been a pickpocket in his dark days with Barney the Binger.

Monsieur Charpentier stared at Skip's burning face, and gave a little start. He looked at Vernon-Smith, and understood the mocking grin on the Bounder's face.
 It dawned on him that the malicious Bounder had deliberately written that unpleasant sentence as a taunt.
 "Mon Dieu!" exclaimed Mossoo. "Smeat, I zink you are ze verree baddest boy zat ever was. Take zat!"
 Mossoo had been annoyed with Skip. But now all his anger was transferred to the fellow who was making use of him, and his beautiful language, to convey a



"If you'll tell me wot you've lost, sir," said Skip, "p'r'aps I could 'elp you find it." "Mais oui!" exclaimed Monsieur Charpentier. "Zat is a good boy. It is a billet-de-banque, Skeep—" "A—a what, sir?" stuttered the wail of the Remove.

"I'm expecting a postal order, sir—" "Vat?"
 "I'm expecting a postal order from my Uncle George! But it hasn't come!" explained Bunter. "I haven't any money from my uncle, so far."
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! What are you fellows cackling at, I'd like to know?" hooted Bunter.
 "Silence in ze class! Zat you stop to laff!" exclaimed Monsieur Charpentier. "Buntair, you are vun stupid garcon! I ask you not if you have ze money of your uncle! I give you ze translation, n'est-ce-pas?"
 "Oh!" gasped Bunter.
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Zat zere be no more to laff!" rapped Mossoo. "Smeat! You laff viz yourself, isn't it? Zat you take two hundred lines of ze Henriade!"
 The Bounder shrugged his shoulders. Mossoo's eyes glinted at him.
 "Smeat, you take ze craic—ze chalk—and write on ze blackboard!" he yapped. "And if you write not ze good French, je vous frapper—I rap you ze knuckle viz zis pointair!"
 The Bounder lounged out before the class and took the chalk. As a matter of fact, Smithy was good at French,

"Yessir!" said Skip cheerfully. He did not know what a "voleur" was—but the other words in the sentence he knew. "Do you see a—a—a—What's a blooming voleur, Bob?" he whispered to Bob Cherry.
 Bob did not answer. He did not like to utter the word "thief." He reddened uncomfortably.
 "Zat you go on, Skeep!" snapped Mossoo.
 "Yessir! I—I dunno the word voleur, sir!" stammered Skip.
 "Mon Dieu! Zat verree simple noun, you do not know him!" exclaimed the French master. "You try not—you are oisif—you are lazy, Skeep! Ze voleur, he is a zief!"
 "Oh!" gasped Skip.
 He knew now why the Bounder had written that sentence on the blackboard, and why some of the fellows were grinning.
 His face grew scarlet.
 "Comprenez?" snapped Monsieur Charpentier. "Head of a pudding, is it zat you understand now?"
 Skip did not answer. With a burning face, he stood dumb, overwhelmed with confusion and humiliation. "Do you see a thief here?" was the sentence Smithy had written on the blackboard.

malicious taunt. The pointer was in his hand, and he brought it down across the Bounder's shoulders, with a crack that rang like a pistol-shot.
 "Oh!" roared Smithy, jumping almost clear of the floor.
 "Take zat—and zat—and zat!" roared Monsieur Charpentier, whacking away with the pointer with great energy.
 The Bounder, yelling, dodged round the blackboard and easel, and scuttled back to his place, Mossoo landing half a dozen with the pointer before he got clear. Mossoo glared at him with angry contempt.
 "Also you take zthree hundred lines of ze Henriade!" he hooted. "And if zose lines zey are not viz me on ze morrow, I report you to Meester Quelch, you verre bad boy Smeat!"
 The Bounder sat wriggling and scowling savagely. He had scored over Skip; but those swipes with the pointer had hurt.
 There was no more ragging from the Bounder in that detention class. He sat and wriggled, and scowled—all the more blackly because Mossoo, from that moment, displayed the greatest kindness and patience towards Skip. When the class was at last dismissed, Bob Cherry
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paused for a moment in the passage to speak a word to the Bounder.

"You worm! You ought to be jolly well booted!" he said.

And Bob stalked away, frowning, leaving the Bounder scowling almost like a demon in a pantomime.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER

Coker Knows How!

"GATED!" said Horace Coker bitterly.

"Rough luck, old man!" murmured Potter.

"Horrid!" agreed Greene.

They were careful not to smile. They were, indeed, sympathetic. It was rotten to be gated on a half-holiday.

But, really, they wondered what old Horace expected. A fellow who was a law unto himself, and who disregarded "beaks" as trifles light as air, might really have expected to be gated, if not whopped.

It was, in fact, fortunate for Coker that they did not "whop" in the Greyfriars Fifth. Otherwise, he certainly would have given Mr. Prout's cane a lot of exercise.

Coker, however, did not seem to have expected to be gated, though he really might have! Coker was deeply indignant.

"That cheeky little beast Mossoo reported me to Prout!" he said. "Just because I never did that translation of *Madame What-the-dickens-is-her-name*, you know! Nothing else—just that!"

"But why didn't you?" asked Potter.

"It was entirely your fault," explained Coker. "I was going to ask you and Greene to do that rotten translation for me yesterday, but, instead of turning up in the study, as I told you, you had to walk off and lose yourselves somewhere, like the pair of silly asses you are!"

"Oh!" said Potter and Greene.

"I tipped a Remove kid to do it for me as I couldn't find you," went on Coker. "Tipped him a tin of toffees. And, instead of doing the translation, he came to my study with a gang of other fags and ragged. Greyfriars is coming to something, with Remove fags ragging in a Fifth Form study—what? They jammed that French book down my neck, and the toffee after it—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you think that's funny—" roared Coker.

"Oh, no!" gasped Potter, while Greene gurgled. "Not at all, old chap! Awful cheek! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, the upshot was that that foul translation was never done," grunted Coker, "and then Froggy goes to Prout and reports me. Little beast! Prout jawed me for ten minutes. I wouldn't mind that so much—a man expects his beak to jaw—schoolmasters jaw, and jaw, and jaw—it's one of the things a fellow has to stand. I don't mind old Prout wagging his chin, so far as that goes. But he's gated me for this afternoon. That's too thick!"

Coker knitted his rugged brows.

"But if that little frog-eating blighter fancies that he's going to land me like this, and get by with it, he's got another guess coming!" added Coker darkly.

Thoughts of vengeance, it seemed, were running in Coker's mind.

"Look at him!" went on Coker, with a nod towards the French master, who was walking in the quad after dinner, reading a letter from la belle France as he walked with his mincing, jerky steps. "Whipper-snapper!" Coker snorted.

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"I could pick him up in one hand, and chuck him across the quad!"

"I—I wouldn't, old chap!" gasped Potter, in alarm.

Coker really looked like doing it!

No doubt he could have done it. Mossoo, small and slight and dapper, would have been like an infant in the powerful grasp of the big, burly, brawny Fifth Form man.

Coker was twice Mossoo's weight, and very nearly twice his size. And, like many fellows built on a large scale, Coker hated being ordered about by persons built on a smaller scale.

It was bad enough being hectoring by Prout. But Prout, anyhow, was large and ponderous, indeed, majestic.

Mossoo was, as Coker said, a whipper-snapper! There were fellows in the Remove as big as Mossoo. Fifth Form men, generally, towered over him—especially Coker, who was an out-size in Fifth Formers.

It got Coker's goat, as Fishy of the Remove would have expressed it, to be treated as a mere schoolboy, by a small gentleman whom he could have knocked off his feet with one swing of his hefty hand.

The fact that he could have picked Mossoo up and chucked him across the quad, seemed to Coker a reason for Mossoo to be very civil and tactful with him. That was the kind of intellect with which Nature had blessed Coker. He simply could not respect a master whom he could have chucked across the quad.

But so far from realising that Coker's beef and brawn entitled him to tactful treatment, Mossoo not only treated him like a mere schoolboy, but like a dense, unwilling, and fatheaded schoolboy with whom he had little patience.

"I've a jolly good mind," said Coker deliberately, "to walk over to him now and bump him over—right over on his cheeky neck!"

"Coker, old man—" breathed Greene.

"For goodness' sake—" gasped Potter.

"I'm not going to do it!" said Coker gloomily. "A fellow would get sacked for it—that's why!"

"Like a shot, old man!" said Potter. "After all, if Prout's gated you this afternoon, you'll have lots of time to do that translation."

"Don't be a fool, Potter, if you can help it!" said Coker. "I'm not bothering about that translation. You can do that for me!"

"Can I?" murmured Potter. He seemed to doubt it.

"Or Greene—"

"Oh!" said Greene, apparently as doubtful as Potter.

"Never mind that now," said Coker. "I'm not thinking about that mouldy translation. Bother that! I'm thinking about that frog-eating, twopenny-half-penny whipper-snapper! I've a jolly good mind to whop him for getting me gated—but, as I said, a fellow would get sacked for that! But I'm not letting him off!"

"I'd forget all about it, old chap!" said Potter soothingly.

"I'm gated!" said Coker, with dignity.

"Well, fellows have been gated before, and no bones broken!" Greene pointed out.

"Don't be a silly ass, Greene!"

"Oh!"

"I'm going to make the little beast sorry for himself, you see!" explained Coker. "That's up to me, now he's got me gated! It was bad enough, the little brute nagging me over that translation of *Madame Thingummy*—but getting me gated, too, is the limit! But I'm not going up to the Head! A

fellow can use strategy! I've got rather a brain for strategy!"

"Have you?" asked Potter, in surprise. It was news to him that Coker had any brains at all. He had not used them yet, so far as Potter knew, since he had been at Greyfriars.

"It's rather misty now, and it looks like getting thicker," said Coker, with a glance at the foggy November sky.

"Rotten for the footer, if it does," said Potter.

"Never mind the footer—I'm not playing!" said Coker impatiently. When Coker was not playing, Soccer was a matter of no moment whatever. "That fool Blundell has left me out as usual, even in a pick-up game. Keep to the subject. If it's thicker this afternoon, a fellow wouldn't be spotted. I mean to say, if a fellow tapped on Froggy's study window, and he opened it, and a fellow bunged a can of whitewash on his chivvy, it wouldn't do for a fellow to be spotted, you see that?"

"Oh!" gasped Potter. "Quite!"

"Coker, old man," almost groaned Greene, "don't—don't do it! Froggy would have you up before the Head in a jiffy—"

"It would be the sack, old man!" said Potter.

"Don't you worry," said Coker. "I'm not going to get sacked! I've got the school to think of, as well as myself."

"Oh!"

"Fellows like you might be bunked and no harm done," explained Coker. "But there are some men a school can't spare—fellows who give a school its tone, if you understand what I mean. I've got to remember that."

"Oh!"

"If it's foggy, and it looks like it, nobody will notice me at Mossoo's window," said Coker. "I shall be all right."

"But, Mossoo?" gasped Potter. "Think he won't notice if you bung a can of whitewash on his dial?"

"That's where my strategy comes in," Coker condescended to explain. "He won't see my face. I suppose you haven't forgotten that it was the Fifth of November a week or two ago. Lots of fags fixed themselves up in Guy Fawkes masks—must be lots of them still about. Well, I shall borrow one from some of the fags and put it on! See?"

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Potter.

"Oh crikey!" gurgled Greene.

"Neat idea—what?" said Coker complacently. "I think of these things, you know. You fellows would never have thought of that!"

Potter and Greene gazed at the great Horace. He was right there—they, most certainly, would never have thought of putting on Guy Fawkes masks, and bunging cans of whitewash at beaks. Coker of the Fifth was absolutely the only fellow at Greyfriars School capable of thinking of such things.

"That's the big idea," said Coker. "I know where to get a can of whitewash, in Gosling's shed. If the mist gets a bit thicker this afternoon, all right! I fancy that beastly little frog-chewer will be sorry for himself when he bags it—what? The only drawback is that I can't let him know I did it! But, of course, that wouldn't do, considering the Head!"

"Coker, old man—" groaned Potter.

"Coker, old chap!" moaned Greene.

"You fellows," continued Coker, unheeding, "can keep cove in the quad while I'm getting Froggy."

"We're playing football—"

"I suppose you're not going to let

(Continued on page 8.)

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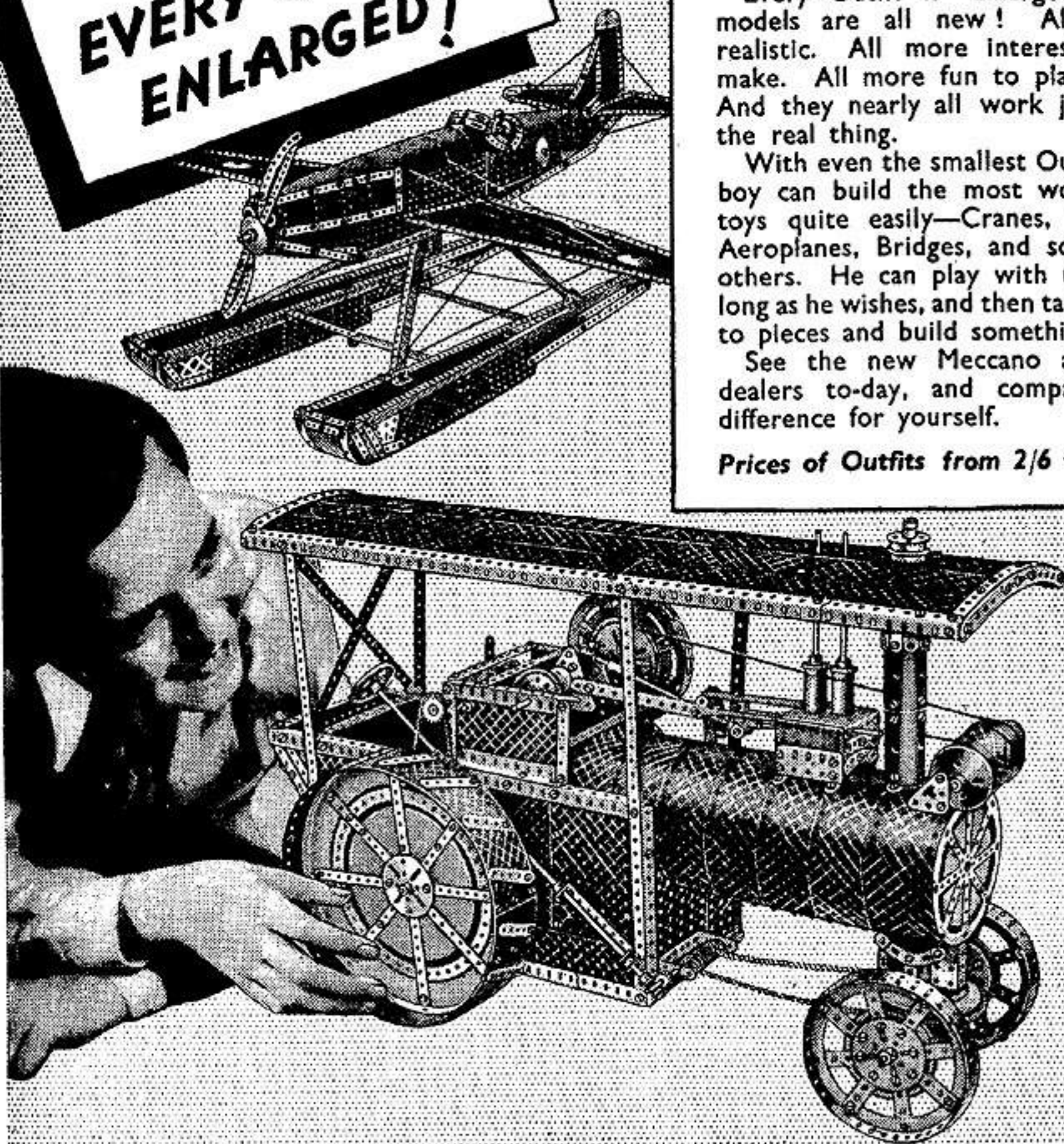
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football—what you call football—stand in the way of backing-up a pal!" said Coker.

"I can tell you this," said Potter—"if you're going to play the giddy ox, and ask for the sack, we shan't be anywhere near you when you do it—we shall be just as far off as we can get!"

"Farther, if possible," concurred Greene.

Coker looked at them.

"You're not backing me up?"

"No jolly fear!"

Coker lifted a large hand and clenched it into a fist that resembled a leg of mutton. He stepped closer to those unfaithful pals.

"Where will you have it?" he inquired.

Potter and Greene did not seem to want it anywhere. They retired hastily from the spot.

Coker snorted scornfully.

Backed up or not, Coker was going to carry on with that great idea—Mossoo was going to be sorry, deeply and fearfully sorry, that he had got Coker gated. Still, it was only cautious to have some fellow keeping "cave" when he carried out that great scheme, and as his pals in the Fifth had failed him Coker went to look for Skip of the Remove.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER

Skip is Wanted!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. had gone out of gates after dinner heedless of the misty weather and the promise of fog.

Skip would gladly have gone with his friends, but Skip had work on hand, half-holiday as it was.

He was in Study No. 1 in the Remove when Coker came to look for him.

In his keenness to catch up with the rest of the Form the waif of the Remove often put in an hour or two of swotting when other fellows were more agreeably occupied.

On the present occasion, Skip was working at French, which he found an even more troublesome language than Latin—which was troublesome enough.

Mossoo had been irritable the previous day, but, as was usual with him, good temper and kindness had supervened. Probably the Bounder's malicious taunt in the detention class had helped.

Monsieur Charpentier had his own opinion of the wisdom or otherwise of the headmaster in letting "un filou," a pickpocket, into the school. And he found Skip's ignorance a worry. But he compassionated the boy whose early life had been passed in such terrible surroundings, and, like everyone else except the implacable Bounder, he believed that the waif had reformed, and he thought it unfeeling and ungenerous to recall the dark and dismal past to his mind.

So Mossoo, in the kindness of his Gallic heart, had cancelled Skip's lines and set him a translation of the "Henriade," with instructions to bring it to his study when finished. Then Mossoo was going through it with him to point out the errors.

Which was really very kind of Mossoo, though it did not make Skip very happy, as the "Henriade" was a good deal beyond him, and he rather dreaded that his translation would consist chiefly of errors—which might have the effect of making Froggy irritable again.

However, there he was, grinding at that great poem of Voltaire's, which

was not so greatly admired by Mossoo's pupils.

Coker, looking in, beheld him, with bent head, ink on his fingers, a spot of ink on his nose, and a deep frown of thought on his brow.

Skip looked up and laid down his pen.

He did not want to be interrupted. Any other fellow, probably, he would have requested to buzz off. But he owed too much to Coker of the Fifth to think of requesting Horace to buzz off.

It was through Coker that he was at Greyfriars at all; Coker's Aunt Judy was paying his fees there. And with every week at the school Skip was more and more grateful for what Coker had done for him as he realised more and more clearly what a wonderful stroke of fortune it was.

In his dark days with Barney the Binger, and later with Jimmy the Rat, it had hardly crossed his mind that he was a young rascal, unfit for an honest boy to touch. His eyes had been opened at Greyfriars.

He had made friends in his Form—fellows who trusted him. Only the Bounder persisted in his belief that he was still what he had been before he came to the school.

Coker, having landed him at Greyfriars, had fully intended to keep an eye on him and bring him up in the way in which he should go. But Coker had so many important affairs of his own to think of that he sometimes forgot Skip for days together—even for weeks.

Probably he would not have remembered him now, but for the fact that he wanted some kid to keep cave while he whitewashed Mossoo.

"Hallo! Sticking to it, kid!" said Coker genially.

Coker approved of Skip working hard to make his way at Greyfriars. Swotting did not appeal to Coker himself, but he considered it good for Skip.

"Yes," said Skip.

"What is it—Latin?"

"No; French."

"That little beast given you an impot?" asked Coker, frowning.

"No, not exactly," said Skip. "He ain't a bad sort, Coker, though he do change a lot in his temper. I got to translate this 'ere and take it and my book to him to go through."

"I'd lend you a hand," said Coker kindly, "but I'm afraid I haven't time. I've been going to see a lot of you, Skip, but there's been one thing and another, you know. A Fifth Form man can't always be bothering about a fag."

"Course not," agreed Skip. In point of fact, grateful as he was to Coker, the less Coker bothered about him, the better he liked it. He liked Coker, but liked him better at a distance than near at hand.

"I haven't forgotten that you saved me from having my nut cracked that time," said Coker. "I shan't forget that, Skip."

"You done more than that for me," said Skip. "I own up I wasn't keen on it when you brought me 'ere, but I can tell you, now I know 'ow blokes like Wharton and Mauleverer look at pinching, it makes me sick to think of what I was when I was along of Jimmy the Rat."

"That's right," said Coker. "Stick to that! I had to give you a few thrashings, Skip, and I'm ready to give you some more, too, if they're needed. I told you I was going to make a decent chap of you. Well, I've done it!"

"You 'ave," agreed Skip.

He dipped his pen in the ink again. But if that was intended as a hint that

he was anxious to get on with his work, it was lost on Coker.

"I shall want you this afternoon, kid," said Coker.

"I got this to do," said Skip doubtfully. "I got to take it in to the French master."

"You can finish that," said Coker, "afterwards."

"I was going out to join up with the other blokes arter," said Skip. "Still, if you want me—"

"I've said so."

"Orlright!" said Skip. He was rather puzzled. Coker had never wanted him before, and he could not imagine why Coker wanted him now. "I'll do anything you want, of course."

"Of course!" assented Coker.

"But what is it?" asked Skip, a little restively. He felt bound to play up, if Coker wanted him, but he really did want to join his friends out of gates, when his task for Mossoo was done.

"First of all, I want a Guy Fawkes mask!" said Coker. "I dare say you've got one left over from the Fifth."

"Eh? Oh, yes!" gasped Skip, staring at Coker in blank astonishment. The idea of Coker larking in a Guy Fawkes mask was very surprising.

Still, if that was what Coker wanted, he was ready to oblige. There were several such articles left over from the great and glorious Fifth of November.

Skip rose from the table, rooted a Guy Fawkes mask out of the cupboard, and handed it to Coker.

Coker stepped to the glass, jammed the mask over his face, and grinned at the reflection. He turned towards Skip, his eyes, through the eye-holes, being the only portion of his countenance visible.

"I fancy nobody would know me, in this, what?" grinned Coker.

"No—'ardly!" gasped Skip, blinking at him. "But I say, Coker, you ain't going out with that there on, are you?"

"Just that!" said Coker.

"Oh, smoky 'addocks!" stuttered the amazed Skip.

Coker took off the mask, and thrust it into his pocket.

"That's all right for when the time comes," he said. "Now, you can finish that tripe, and take it to Froggy—I'm going to wait a bit for the fog to get a bit thicker. Can't be too careful, you know. I want to catch the frog-eating little beast when he's in his study, too! Make it three o'clock."

"But what—"

"Come out into the quad, and look for me by the windows of Masters' Studies. I shall be there at three—understand."

"Orlright, but what—"

"Then I'll tell you what you're to do. Mind, not a word to the other fags—especially about the Guy Fawkes mask. That's got to be kept awfully dark."

"I'm mum—but what—"

"They'll be hunting all over the school for a chap who had a Guy Fawkes mask on, later!" grinned Coker. "Froggy will be pretty wild when he gets the whitewash I fancy."

"The—the what?" gasped Skip. "I—I say—"

"Not a word, mind!" said Coker, and with a nod to his protege, he quitted the study.

Skip stared after him blankly. From his first acquaintance with Coker, he had observed that old Horace was a champion chump. But he really wondered now whether Coker was wandering in his mind a little.

However, he had his French to do; and as Coker did not want him till three o'clock, he resumed his labours at translation. Getting through at last, he

picked up what he had written, put the volume of the "Henriade" under his arm, and went down to Monsieur Charpentier's study.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER

Splash!

"ENTREZ!" said Monsieur Charpentier, as Skip tapped at his study door.

Skip entered.

The French master was seated at his study table, pen in hand, engaged in writing a letter.

As it was written in French, no doubt it was intended for his relatives in his native land.

Mossoo was rather a voluminous correspondent. Three or four written pages already lay on the table, beside him—but he was still going strong.

Among the written sheets lay an engraved slip of paper, at which Skip glanced with rather a curious eye. He had never seen a French banknote before, and it was a billet-de-banque for five hundred francs.

Skip was aware—like everyone else—that Mossoo had numerous relatives in his native land, with whom he was in constant and affectionate correspondence—and it was hardly a secret that a goodly portion of Mossoo's salary as French master at Greyfriars went over the Channel in remittance to those numerous relatives.

No doubt Mossoo had obtained that billet-de-banque to remit to his family in France, and was now writing the letter that was to accompany it.

"Ah! C'est le petit Skeep!" said Monsieur Charpentier, as the waif of the Remove came across to his table.

"You told me to come 'ere, when I'd finished it, sir!" said Skip.

"C'est ça!" admitted Monsieur Charpentier. "Oui, oui! Mais—but—" He tapped the letter on his blotting-pad. "But now I am press for time, my good Skip—anozzer time, mon cher garçon. Leave zem zere on my table and come back viz yourself after tea. At zis moment I write ze lettair to catch ze post."

"Yes, sir!" said Skip.

He was not sorry to get away, as a matter of fact. It was kind of Mossoo to give him "extra toot," but he was not keen on using up the brief daylight of a November afternoon on the same.

After tea, it would be dark. Moreover, it was now getting on towards three o'clock, the time Coker wanted him, and he did not want to keep Coker waiting if he could help it. And as soon as he could get away from Coker, he could cut out of gates and rejoin his friends.

He laid the sheets of translation on the study table, laid the volume of the "Henriade" on them, and left the study.

Mossoo's busy pen was racing across the paper again before the door had closed after him. Mossoo's relatives in la belle France liked to receive ample news from "l'oncle Henri"—at least, Mossoo was convinced that they did; though it was possible that they were more interested in Uncle Henri's remittances. Mossoo gave them plenty to peruse, at any rate.

Skip went cheerfully down the passage, and out into the quadrangle.

It was misty there—though it had not come over so foggy as Coker had hoped. On the football ground, the Fifth Form men were playing in a pick-up game—Potter and Greene with them. Potter and Greene were not only preferring football to backing up the great Coker,

but they had actually forgotten his existence for the time.

Skip made his way along the House to the Masters' Study windows. Under an old elm that grew near those windows, he found Coker.

To his surprise, Coker had a large tin can in his hand. Remembering Coker's allusion to whitewash, Skip could guess what was in it. He looked at the can, and looked at Coker uneasily.

"'Ere I am," he said. "But I—I say—"

"You needn't say anything," interrupted Coker. "Just listen! Stand here, and keep your eyes open, and if anybody comes along—I mean a master or a prefect—just whistle. Got that?"

"Yes," said Skip. "But I—I say. What are you going to do with that there whitewash?"

"Have you been to Froggy?"

"Yes, but what—"

"He's in his study?"

"Yes, but what—"

"Don't jaw!" said Coker. "I want you here to keep cave, not to jaw! Keep your eyes open, and whistle if a beak or a prefect comes along. I fancy it's all right—not so foggy as I hoped it would be, but pretty misty. Nobody's likely to notice a fellow."

Coker cast a cautious glance round.

No one was near at hand—and, in the distance, passing figures looked dim in the mist from the sea. Coker, in the circumstances, would have preferred a dense fog—still, it was misty enough to screen a fellow from general observation.

He set the can of whitewash on the ground, and drew the Guy Fawkes mask from his pocket. Carefully, he fastened it over his face.

Skip could only stare at him.

Had any fellow come suddenly on Coker, in the mist, thus adorned, that fellow certainly would have been very startled. Still, he would not have recognised Coker. Coker, masked, was quite unrecognisable.

He picked up the can again.

Through the eye-holes, he glanced at the row of windows. All of them were shut; even Prout, who was rather a fresh air fiend, did not have his window open that afternoon, to let in the damp mist. Mossoo's window, of course, was shut—even on fine and sunny days, it was not often open. Mossoo was no lover of fresh air at any time.

"All serene, what?" grinned Coker. "Even if a beak looks out, he won't know me—hardly! But I believe Quelch is in the quad—and Hacker, I fancy! Mind you keep a sharp lookout, and whistle if they come this way!"

"But what—" gasped Skip.

"Keep your eyes open, and don't jaw!"

Leaving Skip by the elm, to keep watch and warn him in case of danger, Coker crossed swiftly to the window of the French master's study.

Skip gazed after him.

He realised that that can of whitewash, in Coker's hand, was intended for the French master. Skip was far from desiring to join in a rag of Mossoo—especially such a ghastly rag as this.

But Coker, of course, would not have listened to any remonstrances from a junior—he was more likely to smack that junior's head for his cheek than to listen to him.

"The blooming idjit!" breathed Skip. "The potty fat'ed! The 'Ead would boot him out for this if he was copped! Oh, the blinking fat'ed!"

He peered cautiously round in the mist. He was anxious for Coker. It was Coker who had brought him to Greyfriars; Coker to whom he owed his

new chance in life. Coker was asking for the sack! Skip felt rather concerned about Mossoo—but he was chiefly concerned about his benefactor. There was no stopping Coker—all Skip could do was to keep wary watch and prevent him from being "copped."

Tap, tap, tap! came to his ears.

Coker was tapping at the French master's study window.

"Oh, the idjit!" mumbled Skip.

Tap, tap!

Mossoo, in his study, was doubtless surprised to hear someone tapping at the outside of his window. But there was no doubt that, sooner or later, he would open the window to see who and what it was.

Tap, tap!

Coker, with tremendous artfulness, ducked under the high stone sill of the window after each tapping. So, if Mossoo looked out through the glass, he would not be able to spot him. If Mossoo wanted to put a stop to that irritating tapping at his window he had to open it. Then Coker would have him where he wanted him.

Tap, tap!

Skip, in an anguish of apprehension for the forehead of the Fifth, peered round, in dread of that tapping reaching other ears and bringing danger. If Quelch, or Hacker, who were walking in the quad, heard it, and came—or if a Sixth Form prefect blew along—

"The blooming, blinking idjit!" groaned Skip.

Tap, tap!

There was a sudden sound of a sash being thrown violently up. At the open window of Mossoo's study an angry, excited face with a pointed black beard looked out. A shrill, angry voice reached Skip.

"Mais, qu'est-ce-que-c'est, cela! On frappe—on frappe toujours! Who zen is it zat knock at ze vindow—"

Mossoo, staring out, for a moment saw nobody. Then, from below the sill, a startling face dawned on him as Coker, who had ducked down, rose up.

Monsieur Charpentier gazed with distended eyes at that fearful apparition. He did not realise for the moment that it was a Guy Fawkes mask on the countenance of a Greyfriars fellow. He did not know what it was—he gazed at the grotesque visage in startled amazement and horror.

But he did not gaze long. Up went Coker's hand, with the can in it!

Splash!

About a gallon of whitewash smote Monsieur Charpentier in the middle of his features.

He gave a gasping, suffocated howl and staggered back in the study. A bump was audible as he sat down.

"Oh, smoky 'addocks!" gasped Skip.

Coker had done it. Having done it, Coker cut. Even Coker realised that it was not wise to linger after what he had done. He tore past the elm where Skip was standing, open-mouthed with horror.

"Hook it!" he panted, as he passed. "Cut, you little ass!"

Coker vanished in mist, jerking off the Guy Fawkes mask as he sped.

Skip vanished the next second.

Coker, once clear, dropped into a walk and strolled down to the football ground to give the pick-up a look-in. He grinned cheerfully as he went.

Skip, in a state of horrified dismay, was far from grinning—but he lost no time in getting clear. By the time Coker was on Big Side, watching the Soccer, Skip was out of gates, scudding.

Monsieur Charpentier, sitting on the

floor of his study, dabbed at streaming whitewash like a man in a dream, and wondered whether it was some awful nightmare.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Bounder Hits Back!

"THE old goat!" grunted Vernon-Smith. "Not here!"

Smithy scowled into Monsieur Charpentier's study.

He had a wedge of impot paper in his hands, covered with French. Ever since dinner Smithy had been in his study, labouring at lines.

Monsieur Charpentier had ordered him to bring those lines to him before tea that afternoon. And he had warned him that, if he failed to do so, a report to his Form-master would follow.

The black sheep of the Remove was anxious to get out of gates. He had an appointment that afternoon with Pon & Co., his pals at Highcliffe, at the Three Fishers. But he had to keep Pon & Co. waiting.

Often and often Mossoo handed out lines, in angry moments, and forgot to ask for them to be shown up. But he had made it clear that he was in deadly earnest this time. Smithy's ragging in the detention class, and his malicious act in chalking a taunt to Skip on the blackboard, had exasperated Mossoo. Either those lines had to be handed in, or Vernon-Smith had to go to Mr. Quelch—and Smithy chose the lesser evil. So Ponsonby looked for him in vain at that delectable resort, the Three Fishers, while Smithy sat in his study and wearily ground out lines.

They were finished at last, and the Bounder brought them down to Mossoo's study in the worst temper ever. At the moment he loathed Mossoo even more than he loathed Skip.

Having been hard at work in his study, Smithy was unaware that there was any excitement going on in the House. But for the last half-hour there had been considerable excitement.

In Common-room, beaks were discussing, almost with bated breath, the amazing outrage in the French master's study. The Head, already informed of that unheard-of outrage, had instructed the prefects to leave no stone unturned to discover the offender. Monsieur Charpentier, drenched with whitewash, had rushed away to a bath-room, where he was still busy, and likely to be busy for a long time to come.

Unaware of what had happened, Vernon-Smith was surprised to find both the door and the window open when he arrived at the French master's study.

As Mossoo was not there, he had to leave his lines on the study table, to be found when Mossoo came in, and he stepped into the study for that purpose.

Then he stared at a pool of whitewash on the floor under the open window. It was clear that something had happened in that study!

The Bounder grinned sourly. If somebody had been ragging Mossoo it was all to the good—Smithy would gladly have ragged him himself to any extent.

Somebody evidently had buzzed whitewash in at that window, and whitewash footprints on the carpet looked as if Mossoo had got it. Smithy hoped that he had, and lots of it.

He stepped to the table to lay down his lines there.

He grinned at the sight of the sheets of written paper and the unfinished letter lying on the blotter.

Evidently Mossoo had been inter-

rupted while writing that letter—he had left it just as it was, unfinished.

"The silly old ass!" muttered the Bounder, as he saw the banknote for five hundred francs lying on the table. "Leaving his money about—and he hasn't much of it!"

There was a contemptuous sneer on his face.

Mossoo was tenderly fond of those innumerable relatives of his in his own country. A crew of poor relations, sticking the old duffer for his salary, was the Bounder's contemptuous opinion of them.

He had no doubt that that billet-de-banque was going with the letter to France. Five hundred francs was not a large sum at the present rate of exchange—about four pounds—but it was only one of Mossoo's many remittances home. Those many remittances accounted for the fact that Mossoo's coat was shiny in places, and that it was whole terms since he had bought a new hat.

"Old ass!" grunted the Bounder.

He laid his lines on the table, and then, pausing, picked them up again. He had missed his appointment with Pon & Co. that afternoon, through that little beast Mossoo—the Highcliffe knuts would be leaving the Three Fishers before he could join them there. He was in a bitter, evil, and revengeful temper.

He picked up the billet-de-banque.

As likely as not, if Mossoo lost that billet-de-banque he would find it difficult to replace it. The wealthy Bounder had a supreme contempt for people who were short of money, and everyone knew that Mossoo was always short of money.

If that banknote were missing when Mossoo came back to finish his letter and post it he would be wildly excited and exasperated—the Bounder pictured him dancing like a hen on hot bricks, and grinned at the idea.

His first thought was to slip the banknote under the blotting-pad. But that was too easy. He did not want Mossoo to find it too soon.

He chuckled as he pushed it between the leaves of a book that lay on the table. He noticed that it was a copy of the "Henriade," but otherwise he gave it no attention at all. It happened to be lying there, and he put the French banknote between the leaves and shut the book.

It was such a trick as Billy Bunter might have played, from sheer fatuous stupidity. The Bounder played it with cool and deliberate malice, with the object of causing distress to the master who had spoiled his half-holiday.

Having hidden the French banknote, he did not linger in the study. He could not leave his lines now, for of course, any fellow known to have visited the study would be suspected at once of having played that trick with the banknote.

Nobody had seen him come, and nobody should see him go, and the lines could be brought along later.

With his impot in his hand, the Bounder stepped towards the door. But he paused before reaching it, at the sound of footsteps in the passage. A booming voice reached his ears:

"Scandalous! My dear Capper, unheard of! Whitewash—a large quantity, I understand! Hurled at Monsieur Charpentier—hurled—"

"Outrageous!" came the voice of the master of the Fourth.

"Some junior boy. Perhaps in your Form, Capper—"

"I am absolutely certain not, Prout!"

"Or the Remove—"

"Yes, the Remove, perhaps. Probably, in fact," agreed the Fourth Form master. "Quelch's boys—"

The Bounder breathed hard.

There was no escape unseen by the door, and in a few moments the two masters, who were coming up the passage as they talked, would be passing the open doorway.

He cut across the window—luckily still wide open. Swiftly he whipped out of the window, and dropped.

A few minutes later, with his impot under his jacket, he was strolling into the House. He grinned, an unpleasant grin, as he went to his study in the Remove passage, and laid his lines on the table there. He was not going to take in those lines till he was quite sure that Monsieur Charpentier was back in his study, and then, he hoped, he was going to see the French master doing the hen-on-hot-bricks act. Which Herbert Vernon-Smith found it very amusing to anticipate.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

A Surprise for Skip!

"SKIP!"

Skip came to a sudden halt as his name was called.

He was going down Friar-dale Lane at a rapid trot. He had left the school in a hurry—to get clear before the row started. And he kept on the trot, to join the Famous Five as soon as possible. They had walked to the cliffs that afternoon, and Skip was to join them there, if time allowed.

But he stopped as that husky voice called his name; and a man stepped from the misty hedge.

He knew that husky voice—a voice he had hoped never to hear again. He knew the evil, unpleasant face that looked at him under a bowler hat—the face of the man he had known as "Barney the Binger."

Skip halted, a little breathlessly, and faced the evil-eyed rascal. Time had been when he had shrunk under the buckled belt, wielded by Barney, in the days when the wretch had trained him to steal. But he did not fear him now. His eyes gleamed at the evil face.

"So you're still 'anging about 'ere, Barney," said Skip, setting his lips. "When I seed you before, I 'it you in the eye. You can't take it that you ain't wanted 'ere. You asking for some more?"

Barney the Binger slid his hand under his coat, and it reappeared with a loaded stick in it. Evidently the rascal had not forgotten his previous meeting with Skip, when the Greyfriars waif had knocked him right and left, as a very strong hint that his acquaintance was no longer desired.

"Hands off!" said Barney, hissing the words between his discoloured teeth. "You got the upper hand last time, Skip; but you lift a hand now, and I'll crack your nut as soon as look at you!"

Skip, with clenched hands, eyed him savagely.

"What do you want?" he snapped. "Can't you leave a bloke alone? Ain't I made it plain that I came with you, Barney?"

"I ain't done with you!" said Barney grimly. "Not by long chalks! I'm on the run, as you guessed when you saw me here a week or more ago, and I got to lie low; but now I've

found you, I ain't losing you again. I've been looking for you ever since our last meeting, Skip. P'raps you'd like me to come up to the school to see you?" added Barney, with a jeering grin.

"No," said Skip; "I wouldn't like that, Barney. There ain't nothing you can tell about me, because everybody knows, but I don't want the likes of you seen at Greyfriars. And if you 'op in, Barney, you won't be able to

'op out—you'll 'ave to be taken away on an ambulance. I'll alter your face for you, if I see it at Greyfriars. Take my tip!"

"You're on to a good thing there, Skip. You ain't at a school like Greyfriars without lining your pockets."

Skip laughed contemptuously. Barney the Binger did not believe—could not believe—that the boy he had trained as a pickpocket had changed his ways, and changed them so com-

pletely that not even to save his life would he have pinched again. Skip was at the school to feather his nest—that was Barney's fixed conviction. And his only object in turning down Barney was to keep the good thing entirely to himself—that was how Barney looked at it, and could not help looking at it.

"You fool!" said Skip. "I've told you I done with the pinching lay. (Continued on next page.)"

LEARN TO PLAY FOOTBALL!



HEAD OR TAIL?

ALL ready for the fray, lads? Good! Then let's get into action! We're not exactly expert footballers yet, but I hope we're getting on that way. Anyway, expert or not, we—you, I mean—do know more than when you started attending my classes, and doing the homework I set you; so you should be ready for the kick-off. Come on! Blow the whistle, and we'll play together in your first football match.

Oh, just a moment! The captains haven't tossed up yet. Have you elected your captain? There are lots of things I could tell you about the captain of a football side, but they will keep. You will probably want as your captain the fellow who looks as though he is better than the rest of you. And that's really quite right, because a chap can't be a good captain unless he knows how to play the game.

So to start right from the beginning. You have chosen your two sides, with clever players on each side, all playing in the positions which I helped them to choose last week. And you've chosen the two captains, who are just spinning the coin. Some people say that before a game starts captains have to toss for choice of ends. Really, they are wrong, and I can tell you a funny story about this.

Usually when the captains toss up, the one who wins decides which way he would like to play first. If you have seen a football match you will have noticed the two captains shake hands, toss a coin, and then very often one of them—the one who has won the toss—points either up or down the field. He is telling the other captain which way he is going to play.

There was a game, not so very long ago, between Chelsea and Preston North End, on Chelsea's ground, when this didn't happen. The Chelsea captain was Nils Middleboe, and he won the toss. "We'll kick off," he said. The famous Joe McCall, Preston's captain, had a bit of a shock. But, as a matter of fact, the Chelsea captain was right. Just a little thing to remember. The captain who wins the toss can choose which way he will kick, or can decide that he would prefer to kick-off, and let the other captain say which way he would like to kick.

Pheep!—goes the referee's whistle, and off we go in our first real game of football.

You understand, don't you? When a captain wins the toss, he usually chooses which way his side will play. Then the other side—the side which has lost the toss—kicks off when the game starts.

WINNING THE TOSS

JUST as a bit of advice to the fellows who are chosen to captain the sides in this game we are just going to play. I don't advise you to say: "We'll kick off" when you win the toss. There is much more advantage to be gained by choosing which way you would like to play. Of course, during the game your team has to play both ways, because you change over at half-time. But if there is a driving wind, or a slope in the pitch, or something like that, most footballers like to play the first half, when they are fresh, with the wind or the slope in their favour. So the captain who wins the toss does have an advantage, because he can get what he wants.

Right! Now we really can start. Our captain has lost the toss. The other captain did the usual thing, and decided he would like to play with the wind behind him, and so we are to kick-off. We all line up ready for the referee to blow his whistle for the start. The goalkeeper is in his goal. The full-backs should be standing on the edge of the penalty area; you'll see where that is by looking at the drawing of the field which should be in the book of rules which I hope you have all got.

In front of the full-backs, the half-backs are lined up, and in front of them, on the half-way line, are our forwards. The forwards of our side are on the half-way line, because we are kicking off. With the forwards of the other side it is not quite the same. Look at the drawing in your rule-book again. You see the circle in the centre of the field. The ball, ready for the kick-off,

is put in the middle of that circle, and our forwards are allowed to stand on the half-way line, which is on a level with the ball. But the other forwards must give us time to kick the ball off properly, and, so that we can be sure of doing that, they are not allowed to come inside the circle until we have kicked off.

THE KICK-OFF

SO long as the opposing forwards don't come inside the ring, it doesn't matter where they stand.

But it is usual for the centre-forward and the two inside forwards—the inside-right and the inside-left—of the side which is not kicking off to stand on the edge of the circle. The wing men stand on the half-way line by our wing men, and the other players take up their positions in about the same places as we do. So it's really all the same, except for the three forwards, who must keep in the outside of the circle so that we can get a free kick at the ball.

There is no rule about it, but the centre-forward is usually the man to kick-off, so our centre-forward is doing so. He can kick the ball anywhere he likes, provided he does not kick it backwards—that is, on to our side of the line. And once he has kicked it, he must not touch it again until it has been touched by another player.

There it goes! Our centre-forward has done the best thing, and just tapped the ball across to his inside-right. It would have been just as good to tap it to the inside-left; either inside forward will do.

But wait a minute! The referee has blown his whistle. What's that for? Oh, I see! The centre-forward of the other side, eager to get started, ran into the circle before we had kicked off. He mustn't do that, so the kick-off must be taken all over again. The ball is placed as before on the spot in the middle of the circle, and we go back to our positions. Once again our centre-forward passes it to one of his inside men.

At last we are off, and it has taken us all this time to get so far. But it's no use hurrying with these things, is it? There is plenty of time left for everybody to learn to be good footballers. We've only just kicked off in our first game, and we'll carry on next week.

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Believe it or not, as you like; but keep away from me, or you'll get 'urt—like you did before."

"You got plenty of chances there, Skip, and you ain't the covey to miss them," said Barney.

"Plenty," said Skip coolly. "There's a bloke made friends with me who's a lord, if you want to know, Barney, and he's got tons of oof, and I could get it off him as easy as I could knock you across that ditch. There's another bloke who's down on me, and thinks I'm looking for a chance to pinch. He's got lots of oof, too, and if I was what he thinks, I could touch it fast enough. There's plenty to be had for the taking, Barney—if I choose to take it."

"And a share for your old pal," said Barney. "Don't tell me lies, Skip. What's the good? Don't I know you? Didn't I teach you all I knew, and then you went off with Jimmy the Rat, and left me? Well, Jimmy's in chokey now, and I've found you agin, Skip, and I want my share. Halves, Skip."

Skip chuckled.

"Halves, would be 'arf a-crown, Barney," he said.

"What do you mean, you young fool?" snarled Barney.

"Jest what I says! I get five bob a week pocket-money from Coker's aunt, what pays my fees at the school, and that's more'n some of the blokes get. And that's the lot, Barney."

"And nothing missing since you been there?" sneered Barney.

"Nothing," answered Skip quietly.

"Keep that for your nobby friends, Skip; it won't do for me," said Barney savagely. "I'm in on this, or I'll queer the pitch for you, somehow. I've found out that they know your record there; but I fancy there's a few things I could tell the headmaster. What have you got to say to that?"

"This much," said Skip. "I 'it you in the eye when I saw you before, and told you I'd 'it you in the eye if I saw you again. Now I'm going to do it. And that stick won't 'elp you much, you boozy crock! 'Ere goes!"

And Skip, putting up his hands, advanced on Barney the Binger, who backed away across the lane, raising the loaded stick as he did so.

"Hands off!" he hissed. "Hands off, or—"

Skip made a rush.

The rascal struck at him with savage force. But Skip side-stepped swiftly, and the stick went down, missing him.

Before Barney could lift it again, Skip's clenched fist crashed in his evil face, and he tottered. Another jolt landed—the next second—and Barney went over, sitting down in a puddle with a heavy splash.

He sat spluttering.

Skip grinned down at him.

"I told you that there stick wouldn't 'elp you much," he said. "You ain't any use in a scrap, Barney, unless you leave the drink alone. Get on your feet, if you want some more."

The ruffian panted, making no motion to rise. Skip was ready to knock him down again if he did; and it did not seem good enough.

"Ad enough?" grinned Skip.

A savage oath was Barney's answer.

"Take my tip, and steer clear," said Skip. "I done with you, like I said, and if you 'ang on about 'ere, Barney, look out for my knuckles every time I come across you. I got plenty more if you want it."

With that, Skip turned his back on the scowling rascal, and went on his

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way. Barney scrambled to his feet as soon as the boy was gone.

He dabbed at his nose, which was streaming red. The rage of a demon was in his evil face. For a minute he stood looking after the schoolboy along the misty lane, and he noted that Skip did not look back. With set teeth and glinting eyes, and the loaded stick gripped in his hand, he followed on, running lightly, and soundlessly, on the grass verge beside the lane.

Skip, walking quickly, reached the stile, from which the footpath ran through Friardale Wood. He was about to step on it, and Barney, close behind him, was about to spring and lash out with the loaded stick at the back of his head, when a figure loomed up from the footpath, coming through the wood towards the stile.

Skip whipped off his cap as he recognised Miss Bullivant, the games mistress of Cliff House School.

Miss Bullivant, recognising him at the same moment, gave him a nod and a smile. But almost in the same second her eyes fell on the slinking figure behind him.

"Crake!" she exclaimed.

Barney jumped back. At the sight of Miss Bullivant he forgot all about vengeance on Skip!

The grim, tanned face of the games mistress of Cliff House seemed to have a terrifying effect on him. He gave her one look, turned, and bolted up the lane like a rabbit.

Skip stared.

Miss Bullivant had been about to stop and speak to him. But she did not stop now. She was over the stile in a twinkling, and cutting after Barney. Skip blinked after both of them in great astonishment as they disappeared in the mist in Friardale Lane—Barney running, as if for his life, and the Bull charging after him at great speed.

"My 'at!" gasped Skip.

He fairly blinked.

The games mistress of Cliff House evidently knew Barney. That was amazing in itself! What the games mistress of a girl's school could know of a slinking, thieving crook was a mystery to Skip. But evidently she knew him, for she had called him by a name that Skip knew was Barney's. And it was plain that she wanted to get hold of Barney—and that Barney very much did not want to be got hold of!

"Well, that beats it!" said the astonished Skip. "That beats it 'oller!" He chuckled. "I pity Barney if that there lady gets 'old of 'im. She's hefty, she is. Barney won't be much use in her 'ands!"

And Skip, grinning, clambered over the stile and trotted on his way to join Harry Wharton & Co. on the cliffs.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

A Little Excitement!

"I SAY, you fellows! Heard?" squeaked Billy Bunter.

"Heard which, and what?" asked Bob Cherry.

In the falling November dusk Harry Wharton & Co. came into the House—rather late for tea, and more than ready for the same. Skip had joined the Famous Five for that ramble on the cliffs, and he came back with them—the five in great spirits after a tramp in the keen sea air, but Skip not quite so merry and bright. Skip could not help thinking of what had happened that afternoon, and wondering whether

anything had yet happened to Coker in consequence.

"I say, about Mossoo!" chirruped Bunter. "He, he, he! I suppose it wasn't one of you fellows, as you've been out of gates?"

"Has anything happened, fathead?" asked Harry Wharton.

"He, he, he! Yes, rather! He, he, he!"

"Haven't you fellows heard?" drawled the Bounder.

"We've been out of gates all the afternoon," answered Harry. "What the dickens has happened?"

"He, he, he!" cackled Bunter. "Poor old Froggy! He, he, he!"

"What's up?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Mossoo seems to have got it in the neck," answered Vernon-Smith. "Some sportsman washed him—"

"Washed him?" exclaimed Frank Nugent.

"With whitewash—"

"Oh crumbs!"

"Got him at his study window!" chortled Skinner. "I say, he had a nerve, whoever he was! It's the sack, if he's copped, of course!"

"I say, was it you, Bob?" asked Billy Bunter.

"You fat chump!"

"Well, you're silly ass enough!" argued Bunter. "You can't deny that, old chap! I say, if it was you, keep it dark! He, he, he!"

"You blithering, blethering bloater!" roared Bob Cherry. "I've been out of gates ever since dinner—"

"It's rather thick, you fellows," said Peter Todd. "Some awful idiot seems to have got Mossoo to open his study window, somehow, and then bunged a can of whitewash right in his chivvy and—"

"The utter ass!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "He ought to be booted for it, whoever he is! What howling fathead—"

His eyes turned on the Bounder. If there was a fellow in the Remove capable of so wild and reckless a prank, it was Smithy.

Vernon-Smith laughed mockingly.

"Not guilty!" he said. "I never heard of it till long afterwards. I was in my study, grinding lines for the old ass when it happened. I was glad to hear of it, of course!"

"The gladfulness was probably terrific!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh dryly. "Let us hope that the excellent and ridiculous beaks will believe that you were in your study, doing absurd lines, my esteemed Smithy."

"Oh, they're done, all right!" grinned Smithy. "I've just taken them in to Mossoo; they had to be delivered before tea! I've had a happy half-holiday grinding French! Froggy's in his study now. He's had a wash—the first since he left France, I dare say, and—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But he still looks a bit whitewashy about the ears!" grinned the Bounder. "He seemed rather cross, too! The old ass seems to have lost something when he got the whitewash. He was dancing about his study, like a hen on hot bricks, when I took in my lines—"

"Lost something?" repeated Harry.

"Lost what?"

"Oh, I give that one up!" said the Bounder carelessly. "He was hopping about the study, looking under the table and chairs, and all over the shop, and chirping 'Ou, ou, ou!'"

"Oh, rot!" said Billy Bunter. "Mossoo speaks weird English, but he doesn't drop his aitches like Skip! He would say 'Who, who, who?'"



Bunter stepped to Skip's bedside, and one of his fat hands reached to the neatly folded clothes on the chair. At the same moment, a hand from the bed reached for Bunter and closed in a grip of steel on his fat neck. "Oooooogh!" gasped the startled Owl. "You fat-headed freak——" came Skip's voice.

"You fat idiot! 'Ou' is French for 'where'."

"Oh! Is it?" said Bunter. "Gammon! On is French for 'or,' Smithy! You don't know much French, old chap!"

"Fathead! It's French for 'where,' as well!" said Smithy. "He was rooting all over the study, spluttering 'Ou, ou, ou!' So I suppose he wanted to know where something was!"

"But don't they know who did the whitewash stunt?" asked Bob. "Didn't Mossoo see him when he got the whitewash?"

"Oh, yes; but from what I hear, the chap had a Guy Fawkes mask on, and Mossoo didn't know him from Adam."

"Oh crumbs!"

"Then they don't know——" exclaimed Harry. "Not the foggiest! It was a bit thick in the quad, and nobody seems to have noticed anybody near Froggy's window—and I fancy he cut off pretty quick after getting Mossoo. The prefects are rooting all over the place for the sportsman. They haven't got him yet!"

"It's the sack if they get him!" said Skinner. "I hope the chap will keep clear. Rather fun to whitewash Froggy!"

"I say, was it you, Skinner?"

"You fat Owl!"

"Well, it was somebody!" declared Bunter.

"Did you work that out in your head?" asked Peter Todd. "What a brain!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, I'm sorry for poor old Froggy," said Bob, "and sorrier still for that sportsman, if they get him! But what about tea, you men? Anybody hungry?"

"What-ho!"

The Famous Five headed for the stairs. They were interested in Froggy's disaster, but even more

interested in tea, after an afternoon in the sea breezes.

Skip, however, did not follow them up.

Harry Wharton glanced back over the banisters.

"Coming up to feed, Skip?"

"I think I'd better go and see Mossoo," answered Skip. "He told me to come to his study after tea. We ain't had tea yet, but it's past tea-time, so I think I'd better go."

"Buck up, then, and don't let him keep you too long. I dare say he won't be feeling fearfully keen on extra toot after the whitewash."

Skip made his way to Masters' Passage with a rather worried brow.

Only he knew the identity of the wild and reckless ragger who had whitewashed the French master—and it was a secret locked deep in his breast. Even to the Co. he had not breathed a word of it.

He was not to blame for Coker's wild and woolly proceedings. But he had been concerned in the rag, though unwillingly and unavoidably. It was a little on his conscience, and he would have preferred not to interview Monsieur Charpentier just then. However, he had to go, and he went.

"Mon Dieu! Mais ou—ou—ou?" he heard Mossoo muttering as he tapped and opened the door. "Comment? Je ne sais rien!"

Monsieur Charpentier was bending down, looking under his armchair, evidently, as the Bounder had said, in search of something. His coat-tails stuck out as he bent, giving him a queer resemblance to a parrot. He muttered and mumbled in distressful tones as he scanned the carpet under the armchair.

"If you please, sir——" said Skip. Mossoo had noticed neither the tap

nor the opening of the door. But he whisked round as Skip spoke.

"Mon Dieu! Vat is it?" he snapped irritably. Some worry, it was clear, was on Mossoo's mind, and when he was worried he snapped. "Vy for you come here, Skeep? Je vous demande, pourquoi?"

"You told me to come after tea, sir," said Skip meekly. Evidently, in his stress of mind, the French master had forgotten that. "You told me to leave my book 'ere, sir, and come back after tea; you was going over that there translation with me, sir——"

"Mais oui, oui, mais—non! Non! Take ze book and go, Skeep! Now I am worry—I lose somezing—je cherche I search—I hunt—go away viz you at vunce—anozzer time I go zrough zat book viz you—allez-vous-en!"

"Yessir!" gasped Skip.

He picked up his "Henriade" from the French master's table. With the volume in his hand, he stepped to the door—but he turned back.

"P'raps I could 'elp you, sir, if you've lost something," he said. It was really a kind offer, for Skip was hungry after his walk and anxious to get to Study No. 1 in the Remove to tea. "If you'll tell me wot you've lost, sir, p'raps I could 'elp you find it."

Monsieur Charpentier's frowning face cleared a little. He was fearfully worried and excited, and so far he had searched the study in vain for the "somezing" he had lost.

"Mais oui!" he said. "Zat is a good boy! It is a billet de banque, Skeep."

"A—a what, sir?"

"Un billet de banque—zat is to say, one banknote—one banknote of France. I have him on ze table, to put in ze lottaire when zat I finish to write him,

(Continued on page 16.)

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The RUNAWAY SCHOOLBOY!



(Continued from page 13.)

and zen zat coquin—zat scelerat—he zrow ze whitewash in at ze viindow, and I forget him, tout-a-fait!”

“Oh, I see, sir!” said Skip. He remembered the French banknote he had seen on the study table earlier in the afternoon.

“Ze viindow, he is leave open—ze door—he also is leave open—and ze vind blow zat billet-de-banque from ze table, I zink!” said Monsieur Charpentier. “Zen he lie around ze study, but I do not find him! You shall help me find zat billet-de-banque, mon garçon.”

“Certainly, sir!” said Skip.

He dropped the “Henriade” in his pocket—little dreaming that by so doing he made it impossible for the billet-de-banque to be found.

Then he set industriously to work to help the French master in the search for the missing article.

Mossoo had been engaged on that search for at least a quarter of an hour; but, as he took it for granted that the banknote had been whisked off the table by the draught between window and door, it had naturally never occurred to him to look into a book that lay on the table.

That book was now in Skip's jacket pocket, and out of the radius of the search.

For ten minutes or more Skip rooted about the study, his search a good deal more thorough than that of Mossoo—who was hopping about excitedly, and looking in some places three or four times, and in other places hardly at all.

But the result of that search was only to make it clear that the billet-de-banque was not lying about the study.

“It ain' here, sir!” said Skip at last. Mossoo gave an angry squeak.

“But it is here—it must be here!” he snapped. “Vere do you zink zat billet-de-banque he go, if he is not here?”

“Sure you didn't pick it up from the table, sir?” asked Skip. “P'r'aps—p'r'aps you did, and—and forgot it, sir.”

To Skip's mind that seemed very probable. It was true that there was a draught from a door to window when both were open, but the innumerable sheets of the unfinished letter still lay on Mossoo's blotting-pad undisturbed by that draught. True, the banknote was lighter in weight than notepaper. But it was clearly not lying about the study floor—and Skip was well aware that Mossoo was a forgetful gentleman.

But Mossoo, who knew that he had not picked up that banknote, and who was getting angrier and more excited every minute that the vain search lasted, did not receive the suggestion equably.

He glared at Skip.

“Vat!” he yapped. “Head of a pudding, vat you say! You zink zat I forget—you zink I am one fool! Vat?”

“Oh, no, sir!” gasped Skip. “But—but—”

“Bah! Allez-vous-en—go away viz

you!” snapped Monsieur Charpentier. “Go away viz you at vunce!”

Skip left the study, leaving Mossoo still hopping wildly about in vain search, doing his hen-on-hot-bricks act. He was glad enough to get away. He arrived in Study No. 1, where the Famous Five were already at tea, took the “Henriade” from his pocket, and dropped it on the bookshelf, and thankfully sat down to tea.

“I'm blooming 'ungry!” remarked Skip.

And he tucked in to tea and forgot all about Froggy.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Who Had It?

THUD!

“Yaroo!”

“Hallo, hallo, hallo!” exclaimed Bob Cherry in astonishment.

“Mauly!” exclaimed Harry Wharton.

Harry Wharton & Co. came into the Rag after tea. The sound of a boot thudding on tight trousers met their ears, accompanied by a fiendish yell from Billy Bunter.

Neither sound was surprising; it was not uncommon for Billy Bunter to be booted, and if booted he always yelled. But it was extremely surprising to see that it was Lord Mauleverer who had booted Bunter.

His lordship, generally the most placable of mortals, looked quite wrathful.

A dozen fellows in the Rag were grinning; the Famous Five stared. Billy Bunter dodged round the long table.

“Ow! Beast! Keep off!” he roared. “I say, you fellows, keep that beast off! Ow! Oh crikey! Ow!”

“My esteemed and idiotic Mauly,” exclaimed Hurree Janset Ram Singh, “have you lost your absurd temper for once?”

“That fat frump—” grunted Mauly.

“I say, you fellows, I was only saying that it might be Skip!” gasped Bunter. “I didn't say it was Skip; I only said it might be!”

“Do you want another kick?” roared Lord Mauleverer.

“Beast!”

“What might be Skip?” asked Harry Wharton in wonder.

“Me!” said Skip, who had come down with the Famous Five. “What about me, you fat lass? What might be me?”

“Haven't you heard?” called out Skinner, with a grinning face.

“Anything happened while we've been having tea?” asked Nugent.

“I say, you fellows, it's Mossoo—” gasped Bunter. “Mossoo, you know—old Froggy! I thought it might be Skip—Keep off, Mauly, you beast!” Bunter dodged again.

Skip gave a jump. He supposed for the moment that the fat Owl of the Remove was alluding to the affair of the whitewash. Skinner, whose sharp eye was on him, noticed that startled jump, and winked at Snoop. Several other fellows noticed it.

“You fat duffer!” said Skip. “I never chucked the whitewash at Froggy, if that's what you mean! I wouldn't!”

“Eh? Who said you did?” gasped Bunter. “Who's talking about whitewash? Will you keep off, Mauly, you fathead? I never said it was Skip pinched it, did I? I was only just wondering if he did.”

“Pinched it!” exclaimed Bob.

“Pinched what? Leave him to me, Mauly; I'll give him the next.”

“Gerraway!” gasped Bunter. “I never said—Yaroo!”

“Ha, ha, ha!”

“For goodness' sake, what's up now?” exclaimed Harry Wharton. “Can't you tell a fellow what's happened?”

“Nothin',” answered Lord Mauleverer quietly. “That old ass Froggy seems to have dropped something about his study when he was drenched with whitewash, and when he went back after gettin' clean he couldn't find it. That's all.”

“Smithy was saying so, I remember, when we came in,” said Bob Cherry. “But what was it he lost—as well as his temper?”

“He's dropped a banknote somewhere, the old duffer!” grunted Mauleverer. “Now I hear that he's gone to Quelch, yowlin' about it!”

“My hat! Does he want our beak to go over his study on his hands and knees, looking for it?”

“Ha, ha, ha!”

“I say, you fellows, a lot of fellows heard him yowling to Quelch!” gasped Bunter. “He can't find that billy-de-bong—”

“That what?” yelled Bob.

“Billy-de-bong! They call banknotes billy-de-bongs in France,” said Bunter. “Don't you remember when we went to France with Wun Lung in the hols we had billy-de-bongs—”

“Oh, a billet-de-banque!” said Bob. “He's lost a French banknote—is that it?”

“He thought he had lost it; but as he can't find it in his study, he thinks it's been pinched. Of course it has!” said Bunter. “Billy-de-bongs can't walk away, I suppose! I don't think you had it, Skip, old chap. But, I say, did you?”

“Ha, ha, ha!”

“You blithering idjit!” said Skip wrathfully.

“Well, I mean, you know, you were there, old chap—I heard Froggy say so. If you had it—”

Bunter did not complete the sentence. Lord Mauleverer came at him from one side, Bob Cherry from the other; and Bunter dodged in vain. Two boots clumped on the tightest trousers at Greyfriars, and Bunter roared.

“Now shut up!” said Bob.

“Ow! Beast! Wow! I never said Skip had it!” howled Bunter. “I was only asking him if he had! Can't a fellow ask a civil question?”

“Ha, ha, ha!”

“The blithering old ass!” exclaimed Harry Wharton wrathfully. “I hope Quelch shut him up, if he talked rot about pinching!”

“Quelch looked shirty!” grinned Skinner. “I saw his face. Froggy howled at him in his study doorway—dancing like a hen. Frightfully excited over his jolly old French banknote—worth about sixpence, I expect.”

“More'n that!” said Skip. “It was for five 'undred francs. I believe that's about four quid!”

“Oh! You know about it, do you?” grinned Skinner. “How do you happen to know about it, old bean?”

A good many fellows looked curiously at Skip. His face reddened.

“Course I know about it, as I seen it!” he snapped. “It was lying on his blooming table when I went to his study this arternoon, that's 'ow, and I see it there! I s'posed he was going to put it into the letter he was writing—but I 'appened to see it there.”

"That was before Froggy got the whitewash, I suppose?" asked Harry.

"Yes; he got the whitewash soon arter, though!" said Skip, his colour deepening. "And when I went to him, arter I come in with you blokes, he told me it had blowed off his table, and I 'elped him to look for it. But it wasn't in the study—and I dessay he'd picked it up and forgot it—like the old bass he is!"

"You helped him look for it?" exclaimed Skinner.

"Yes, I did!"

"I say, did you find it?" exclaimed Billy Bunter.

"You 'owling idjit!" roared Skip. "Wouldn't I 'ave 'anded it to 'im, if I'd found it?"

"Oh! Yes! Of course! But—"

"But what?" demanded Skip, taking a step towards the fat and fatuous Owl, with a gleam in his eyes.

"Oh, nothing!" gasped Bunter. "I don't think for a moment that you found it and put it in your pocket, old chap. The thought never crossed my mind at all."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, shut up, you fat'ead!" growled Skip.

He looked round, with a crimson face. All eyes in the Rag were on him.

"If you blokes think—" he began fiercely.

"Don't be an ass, old chap!" said Lord Mauleverer. "No body here fancies for a moment that you know anything about Froggy's rotten francs. I shouldn't wonder if the banknote's lying on his table all the time. He's ass enough to put a book on it and fancy it's lost!"

"He is that!" agreed Skip. "But I 'elped him to look, and I tell you it wasn't in his study, that I could see!"

"It will turn up all right, of course!" said Harry. "It's all the fault of that silly idiot who bunged the whitewash at him. The old ass wouldn't have left it lying about, but for that!"

"May have blown out into the passage, if the door was open!" suggested Johnny Bull.

"I say, you fellows, he thinks it was pinched—a dozen fellows heard him tell Quelch so—"

"Oh, shut up, Bunter!"

"I mean to say his going to Quelch shows that he thinks it was a Remove man had it! And I heard him say that Skip was in his study—"

"So did I!" said Bolsover major. "I know jolly well what Froggy thinks. But I'll bet you he finds the rotten thing all right!"

"Oh, of course!" grinned Skinner. "He wouldn't have the nerve to make out that there was a pincher in the Remove!"

"He, he, he!" from Bunter. And Snoop giggled.

"Oh, shut up, Skinner!" growled Bob.

"My dear chap, I'm only pointing out that nobody could possibly suspect that there was a pincher in the Remove. Surely you don't think so?"

"He, he, he!"

Lord Mauleverer crossed over to Skinner. His lordship's intention was so evident that Skinner hastily quitted the Rag.

But he grinned cheerfully, as he went up to the Remove. Skinner had not forgotten the banging of his head against Smithy's the day before; and he was enjoying this.

He looked into Study No. 4 in the Remove, where he found the Bounder.

Smithy hastily put a pink paper out of sight as the door opened—but it came

into view again as he saw that the visitor was only Skinner.

"Heard the latest?" asked Skinner, grinning.

"No. Have they got the whitewash sportsman?"

"Oh, that's ancient history! Mossco's on a fresh tack now," chuckled Skinner.

"I say, Smithy, old bean, I fancy that cad's landed at last! Froggy's lost a French banknote— What are you grinning at?"

"Oh, nothin'! Carry on!"

"The old ass seems to have had it on his table, ready to put into a letter, when he got the whitewash. After that, of course, he was only thinking of whitewash!" chortled Skinner. "He left the banknote there, and it's gone!"

"Not really?"

"Well, he says so—and, what do you think—that cad Skip helped him to look for it in his study. Of course, it's perfectly plain that he picked it up and stuck to it. It can't be found in the study."

The Bounder stared.

"What rot!" he said.

"Eh?" Skinner stared, too. "Don't you think so? Looks to me plain enough! He told us all in the Rag that he'd helped Froggy look for it—but, of course, he knew Froggy would shout that out! He had it all right! It's the boot for that slum rotter, Smithy, if it doesn't turn up!"

"If!" said Smithy.

"Do you think it will?"

"I shouldn't wonder."

"Well, I should—unless it turns up in Skip's trousers pocket!" said Skinner, and he went on up the passage, leaving the Bounder laughing.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Under Suspicion!

WINGATE of the Sixth, when he saw lights out for the Remove that night, was seen to give Skip a very keen and curious look.

Many Remove fellows were looking at him curiously, too.

Skip was very subdued.

Lord Mauleverer made it a point to speak to him in the dormitory. Harry Wharton & Co. followed his lordship's example.

But the waif of the Remove hardly answered.

He turned in silently, and the captain of Greyfriars put out the light, and left the Lower Fourth to repose.

There was a buzz of voices from bed to bed after the prefect was gone. But Skip's voice was not heard.

The hapless waif of the Remove was deeply disturbed and despondent.

He was under suspicion in his Form.

Thrice since he had been at the school suspicion had fallen on him—each time caused by his enemy, the Bounder, and each time proving to be a mistake. On the last occasion, Smithy had been given a flogging by his headmaster, as a severe hint to make no more such mistakes. Had the present affair been connected in any way with the Bounder, no fellow in the Remove would have heeded it—not even Skinner. It would have been taken for granted that Smithy had been playing the goat again.

But that was not the case. The Bounder—so far as anybody knew, at all events—had nothing whatever to do with the matter.

The accusation—for it amounted to one—came from Monsieur Charpentier,

who could not be supposed to have any ill-feeling for the waif of Greyfriars—who had, indeed, shown him kindness on many occasions.

Everybody knew, by this time, that Mossco had rushed to Mr. Quelch's study, in a state of great excitement, about that missing billet-de-banque. He had "yowled," as Mauly expressed it, in the hearing of many ears, before Quelch got him into the study and shut the door.

Many fellows expected that Skip would be sent for by his Form-master, or by the Head. But he had not been sent for.

Once, at least, Mr. Quelch's faith in him had been shaken. But it was not to be shaken again easily.

So far, nothing further had transpired; but it was known that Sixth Form prefects had been searching through the French master's study, and up and down the passage on which it opened—obviously for the billet-de-banque.

Equally obviously, they had not succeeded in finding it, or the fact would have been announced at once.

The French banknote was still missing!

That was how the matter stood when the juniors went to bed. It could not, of course, be left at that; and every fellow wondered what was going to happen on the morrow.

Skipper had no doubt who had had that French banknote. Other fellows wondered whether Skinner was right.

In such a case, it was inevitable that suspicion should turn upon the fellow who had been a pincher before he came to Greyfriars.

Skip knew that; he was too sensible to resent what was inevitable, and his heart was heavy.

But that was not all, for everyone knew that Skip had helped the French master look for the missing billet-de-banque.

Plainly Mossco suspected that he had found it.

But it seemed that Mr. Quelch did not agree, as he had taken no steps in the matter beyond requesting the prefects to make an extensive search, and had not even questioned Skip on the subject.

Neither did Skip's friends in the Remove agree. Froggy could think what he liked, like the old ass he was; but fellows who had come to know Skip well, and to trust him, were not going to lose faith in him.

Other fellows, however, doubted.

It was rather a surprise to the Form that the Bounder had nothing to say on the subject.

It was expected, as a matter of course, that he would jump with both feet, as it were, at a chance like this.

Instead of which Vernon-Smith expressed no opinion on the subject, though it was quite clear that he was amused.

"The old ass!" said Bob Cherry, for the umpteenth time, after lights out. "Everybody knows what an excitable old gander Froggy is. Just like him to go off at the deep end about nothing at all!"

"Five hundred francs isn't nothing to Froggy," remarked Skinner. "He could get a new coat with that. He needs one!"

"Oh, shut up, Skinner!"

"Well, it's a lot to him," argued Skinner. "His dear relations in France will miss it if they don't get it. That's where it was going, of course. He wouldn't have French money for any—"

thing else. He can't be expected to lose it and keep mum."

"It's not lost, fathead!" growled Johnny Bull. "The old ass has laid it somewhere and forgotten where."

"He's ass enough!" said Peter Todd.

"Might have done anything when he got that whitewash," said Tom Redwing.

"I don't suppose he knew what he did."

"It's sure to turn up," said Harry Wharton. "Bound to! But even if the old ass thinks it's pinched, it's like his cheek to start on the Remove."

"Is it?" asked Skinner.

"Yes, it is!" snapped Wharton. "From what I hear, he was two or three hours cleaning off that whitewash. It was just before tea when he went back to his study—when Smithy took in his lines. Well, if the French banknote was left lying there all that time anybody might have pinched it—if it's been pinched at all! Like his cheek to fancy it was a Remove man!"

"Wasn't it a Remove man helped him look for it?" chuckled Skinner. "That's the Remove man he's got his jolly old optic on!"

"If it doesn't turn up——" said Snoop.

"It will turn up!" snapped the captain of the Remove.

"Well, if it doesn't——"

"If it doesn't, every man at Greyfriars is as much under suspicion as any other man!" said Harry. "If I'd gone to his study I should have offered to help him look for it, the same as Skip did."

"So would any fellow," said Bob. "I know I should."

"And I," said Nugent.

"Oh, you fellows are above suspicion," said Skinner. "Mossoo wouldn't have fancied you had it. Circumstances alter cases, my beloved 'earers!"

"What do you think, Smithy?" asked Hazeldene.

But there was no reply from the Bounder. He had not joined in the discussion, and had apparently gone to sleep.

Smithy, as a matter of fact, was not asleep. He was grinning, in the darkness, as he listened to the talk of the Remove fellows.

It had not occurred to him, when he hid the billet-de-banque in the book on Mossoo's table, that Skip would come into the matter at all. He had been thinking of worrying and distressing Mossoo, and had, at the time, quite forgotten his enemy in the Remove.

But this unexpected outcome amused the Bounder.

He was not likely to back up Skinner's view, as he fully expected the search for the banknote to reveal it, sooner or later, in Mossoo's own study. Indeed, he had little doubt that it would be found that evening.

He was utterly unaware that the book in which he had placed it belonged to Skip, and that Skip had taken it away.

So far as Smithy knew, that book was still on Mossoo's study table, with the billet-de-banque in it, and he looked forward with enjoyment to the utter discomfort of Mossoo when his precious banknote was found in his own study, and he had to confess that he had caused all this tremendous fuss for absolutely nothing.

"What do you think, Skip?" went on Hazel, as there was no reply from the Bounder. "Where do you think they'll find that French banknote?"

Skip, like Smithy, remained silent.

Two or three fellows chuckled at Hazel's question, but there was no answer from Skip.

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"Oh, Skip doesn't know!" chortled Skinner. "He hasn't the foggiest idea on the subject, have you, Skip?"

No reply.

"I say, you gone to sleep, Skip?" squeaked Billy Bunter.

Silence from Skip. He was very far from sleep. He was not likely to sleep easily, in the circumstances. But that obvious fact did not occur to Billy Bunter's fat brain.

"I say, you fellows, now he's gone to sleep I'll tell you what," said the fat Owl, sitting up in bed. "Let's get that banknote."

"What?"

"I mean, he's got it in his pocket, you know," said Bunter. "I say, Skinner, you look in his pockets for it."

"You fat idiot!" howled Bob Cherry. "Shut up!"

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"You frowsy frump!" said Harry Wharton.

"You can call a fellow names," said Bunter, "but I think it's a jolly good idea! He may hide it to-morrow where it can't be found, now he knows that everybody knows he's got it. You fellows see that?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" howled Skinner.

"I say, don't make a row and wake him up, Skinner! I'm jolly well going to get that billy-de-bong while he's asleep."

There was a creak of a bed. Bunter was getting out.

"You blithering owl!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Quiet, old chap! You'll wake him up!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Nobody but Bunter supposed that Skip was asleep. Bunter, however, had no doubt about it. He rolled out, and stepped to Skip's bedside. Skip's clothes lay neatly folded on a chair, and a fat hand reached to them.

At the same moment a hand from the bed reached for Bunter. That hand closed in a grip of steel on his fat neck.

"Ooooooogh!" gasped the startled Owl.

"You fat-headed freak!" came Skip's voice.

"Oh crikey! He ain't asleep!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow! Yow! Leggo my neck! I—I say, Skip, old chap, leggo! I wasn't going to look for that billy-de-bong—yaroooh!"

Bang!

There was a sound of a fat head colliding with a bedstead. A fiendish howl rang through the Remove dormitory.

Bang, bang!

"Yow-ow-ow! Yoo-hoop! Leggo! I say, you fellows, make him leggo! I say, I—I never thought that billy-de-bong was in your—yooo-hoop!—pocket, Skip, old chap! I—I was only going to look to—to make sure it wasn't! I—I mean, I wasn't going to look at all! I say—yarooooop!"

Bang!

"Yoo-hooo-hoop!" roared Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bump!

Billy Bunter rolled on the floor.

"Ow! Wow! Beast! Yow-ow-ow! Oh crikey!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter crawled back into bed.

The discussion went on for some time before the juniors fell asleep; but Billy Bunter took no further part in it. Bunter was busy rubbing his damaged head, grunting and groaning, and his snore was unusually late in waking the echoes of the dormitory.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Up to Coker!

HORACE COKER of the Fifth Form walked in the quad in the morning with a frowning brow.

Several fellows noticed that deep frown on Coker's manly brow, and noticed, too, that he had a cricket stump under his arm. Something, it seemed, had stirred the wrath of the great Coker, and somebody was doomed to vengeance. Clearly it was for somebody's benefit that Horace had tucked that cricket stump under his arm.

He bore down on the Famous Five of the Remove when they came out after breakfast.

"Where is he?" demanded Coker.

Harry Wharton & Co., beholding Coker approach, with a frowning brow and a cricket stump, lined up, ready for war. But it appeared, from his question, that they were not the objects of Coker's wrath.

"He! Who?" asked Harry.

"That young rascal!" hooted Coker.

"Looking for a Fifth Form man?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Eh! No, you young ass! That young scoundrel Skip!" hooted Coker. "I'm going to thrash him!"

"You're going to thrash Skip?" ejaculated the captain of the Remove.

"Yes. Where is the young villain?"

"What the thump——" exclaimed Nugent.

The Famous Five regarded Coker with wonder. It was Coker who had brought Skip to the school, in the first place—Coker who was his benevolent protector, though it was true that he forgot his protegee oftener than he remembered him. Why the vials of Coker's wrath were to be poured out on Skip was quite a mystery to the chums of the Remove.

"Where is he?" demanded Coker. "Have they shoved him in punny?"

"Eh? No! Why——"

"He's not sacked yet, is he?"

"Sacked? No! What——"

"Well, where is he?" hooted Coker. "I warned him, fair and square, that I'd thrash him every time he started pinching. I see now that I haven't thrashed him enough! Where is he?"

"Oh!" gasped Harry. "You silly ass!"

"You howling chump!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Oh, there he is!" Skip came out of the House, and Coker spotted him. He rushed across to the waif of the Remove. "Oh, here you are!" he roared.

"Yes, 'ere I am!" said Skip, staring. "What—— Oh crikey! Leggo! Gone mad, you silly lass? Oh, my 'at!"

Coker, with his left, grasped Skip's collar. With his right, he laid on the cricket stump. It fairly rang.

Skip was a great fighting-man in his own Form. He had knocked out Bolsover major and beaten the Bounder. But he was of little use in the grasp of the big Fifth Former. He struggled, and roared.

Whop, whop, whop! Coker laid it on.

"You young rascal!" he gasped, as he whopped. "I warned you!" Whop! "I told you what to expect if you took to pinching again!" Whop! "I haven't thrashed you enough!" Whop! "I'll make up for it now!" Whop, whop. "Now, where's that banknote of Froggy's?"

Whop!

"Ow! Leggo!" yelled Skip. "You silly idjit! Wow! Leggo!"

Whop, whop, whop!

"You young rascal!" roared Coker,



Skip's face was burning as Trotter took up the French book and shook it. Next moment, there was a general gasp in the study as an engraved slip of paper dropped from the leaves. "What——" exclaimed the Head. Monsieur Charpentier gave almost a yell. "C'est ça ! C'est le billet-de-banque ! Volla !"

"Hand over that banknote at once, and I'll take it back to Froggy!" Whop! "I'll see if I can get him to let you off!" Whop! "I'll tell him I've thrashed you!" Whop! "Where's that banknote?"

Whop! "Yaroo! 'Elp!" yelled Skip. The Famous Five rushed up. They collared Coker, and by main force dragged him off Skip.

Coker sat down on the quad with a heavy thud.

"Ow! Yow! Wow!" gasped Skip, wriggling. "You silly lass! Who's got any old banknote, you blooming idjit? Wow! You silly fathead! Wow!"

"You've got it!" roared Coker.

"I ain't, you blooming howl!" yelled Skip. "I dunno anything about it, you blinking pudden-head! Wow!"

Coker struggled to his feet in the grasp of the Famous Five.

Bob Cherry jerked away the cricket stump.

"Coker, you fathead!" gasped Harry Wharton.

"Let go, will you?" roared Coker. "Gimme that stump! I'm going to thrash the young rascal for pinching! I promised him I would when I brought him here! It's up to me!"

"But Skip never——"

"Don't talk rot! Think I'm going to let him keep Froggy's francs, you young ass?" bawled Coker. "I brought him here, didn't I? Think I brought him here to pinch? I'm going to make him take that banknote back to Froggy, and thrash him for pinching it!"

"I ain't pinched it!" yelled Skip.

"I've warned you not to tell lies, you young rascal! I'll give you a few extra for that! Give me that stump, Cherry, you cheeky young sweep!"

"I'll give you the stump!" gasped Bob. "Roll him over, you men!"

"What-ho!" gasped Nugent.

Coker of the Fifth was flattened down in the quad. Four members of the Co. stood on him to keep him there. Then Bob Cherry gave him the stump.

He gave it to him hard.

Coker, pinned down under four pairs of boots, squirmed wildly. He roared. He yelled. He bawled. But the whacks of the cricket stump came down hard and fast on Coker's trousers.

"You silly ass!" said Bob Cherry.

Whop! "Skip doesn't know anything about Froggy's francs!" Whop! "If you had the sense of a bunny rabbit, you'd understand that!" Whop, whop!

"Take that, you frabjous ass!" Whop!

"And that, you burbling bandersnatch!"

Whop! "And that, you jabbering jabberwock!"

Whop, whop, whop, whop!

Coker roared as he took them.

Skip looked on, wriggling. He had had some severe whops before Coker was collared. But his whopping, compared with Coker's, was as moonlight unto sunlight, as water unto wine. Bob had a muscular arm, and he put all his muscle into that whopping.

Horace, in his role of guide, philosopher, and friend, to the wait of the Remove, felt that it was up to him to thrash his protege whenever he fell back into the ways of Slammock's Alley. It had not even occurred to Coker's powerful brain that there was a doubt to the subject. He was going to thrash Skip for his own good, as he had done before.

But by the time Bob Cherry had finished, Coker was no longer thinking of thrashing Skip for his own good. Coker was feeling too used-up to think of thrashing anybody.

"There!" gasped Bob breathlessly.

"I'm tired! If Coker wants any more, one of you fellows take a turn with the stump."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Do you want any more, Coker?"

"Yurrggh! Oh—ooooogh! I'll smash you! Grugggh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bob tossed the cricket stump away, and the Famous Five left Coker, squirming.

Skip lingered.

"Look 'ere, Coker——" he said.

"Urrgh! Wait till I get my breath!" gasped Coker.

"I never 'ad that blooming banknote of Froggy's!"

"Just you wait a minute! Where's that cricket stump?"

"Oh, you blooming hass!" growled Skip.

And he sagely decided not to wait a minute. He followed the Famous Five, and Coker of the Fifth was left to squirm and gasp.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Startling Discovery in Study No. 1.

MR. QUELCH had a grim brow in the Remove Form Room that morning.

His Form noted it, and were very wary.

Seldom had the Remove master looked so grim. Seldom, indeed, had he been so intensely annoyed.

The missing billet-de-banque had not been found. Meticulous search had proved only one thing definitely—that it was not in the French master's study.

Mosson that morning was in a state of jumping nerves and excitement. Mr. Quelch had a profound contempt for people who got nervy and excited. He had no use whatever for temperamental foreigners.

Neither did he believe for a single moment that the French banknote had been pinched. Nobody at Greyfriars

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was liable to stich an awful suspicion except the hapless boy who had been trained in Slummock's Alley by Barney the Binger.

But Mr. Quelch had come to trust that boy, and he was not going to withdraw his trust. Mr. Quelch took the view, and was determined to keep the view, that Skip was now an ordinary and normal member of his Form. He refused to listen to a charge of theft against one of his boys. Not without absolute proof would he admit even the possibility.

But the matter was now passing out of Mr. Quelch's hands.

Monsieur Charpentier knew that the billet-de-banque was gone. He wanted it back. Skip of the Remove had had ample opportunity to take it—and Skip had been a pincher before he came to the school. That made it all seem clear enough to Mossoo, and, as Mr. Quelch refused to act in the matter, the French master had gone to the Head.

It was intensely exasperating to Quelch.

Angry and irritated as he was, he made it a point that morning to be specially kind to Skip. That was intended to make it clear to the whole Form that he did not even remotely share the French master's distrust.

But even Mr. Quelch, though he refused for one moment to entertain the suggestion of theft, could not suggest what had otherwise become of the billet-de-banque. Undoubtedly it was gone.

The headmaster, of course, had no choice but to take up the matter when Mossoo placed it before him. Mossoo had demanded a search—which Mr. Quelch had angrily refused, but which the headmaster had conceded.

All that Quelch could do was to decline to have any part or parcel in that search, and to maintain an attitude of indignant disdain.

His obvious belief in Skip had an effect on the Remove. On the other hand, the question remained unanswered, where was that French banknote?

Skinner had no doubt! It was in Skip's pocket, and next half-holiday he was going over to Lantham to change it into English money there. And more fellows, now, were inclining to Skinner's opinion—though they were surprised that Vernon-Smith expressed no such opinion.

The Bounder, who had hitherto been amused, was growing puzzled. He had taken it for granted that such a search of Mossoo's study would reveal the French banknote in the book, and that Froggy in consequence, would be covered with confusion: held up to ridicule as an excitable old donkey who had howled out accusations of theft, on no grounds whatever.

But it had not been found yet—which rather perplexed the Bounder. Still, he had no doubt that it would be found sooner or later—and the longer this tremendous fuss went on, the bigger fool Froggy would look when it was found.

As for the fact that Skip was under suspicion, the Bounder cared nothing at all for that.

The fellow was, in his fixed belief, a pincher—as bad as he had ever been. If he was suspected, he was only suspected of being what he was—in Smithy's opinion. Besides, the suspicion would die away, of course, when that billet-de-banque turned up in the French master's study and it was known that it had never been pinched at all.

The Bounder had never expected the affair to go to this length, with the Head dragged into it. But he was not dis-

pleased. The more tremendous the fuss, the more overwhelming for Mossoo, when the facts were known.

When third school was over that morning in the Remove-room, the Form was not immediately dismissed.

All the fellows knew that there was something to follow: something evidently in connection with Froggy's banknote. Quelch's face, which had been grim all the morning, was now like a gorgon's.

The Form-room door opened after the Remove had been waiting and wondering for about five minutes.

The Form rose respectfully to their feet, as the headmaster entered.

There was a thrill all through the Remove at the sight of Dr. Locke. The climax was coming now.

Monsieur Charpentier stood at the doorway. He did not enter, but waited there.

Mr. Quelch elaborately took no notice of him, fixing his eyes upon his chief.

Dr. Locke coughed.

"Mr. Quelch!" He coughed again, "Monsieur Charpentier demands, and I cannot see how I can refuse, a search for the banknote missing from his study. You have no objection?"

"I have a very strong objection, sir!" said Mr. Quelch, distinctly. "I regard the suggestion as a slur upon my Form!"

"Hem! But in the circumstances—"

"In the circumstances, sir, having stated my objection, I have nothing more to say, except that I beg your permission to have nothing whatever to do with any such search."

"Quite so, Mr. Quelch, quite so!" said the Head. "I will conduct it personally. This matter cannot, unfortunately, rest where it is. Skip!"

"Yessir!" mumbled Skip.

"You will follow me to your study. Other boys who share the study with you had better come also."

Wharton and Nugent followed Skip from their places. Dr. Locke majestically left the Form-room: Mossoo whisked along with him, and the three juniors followed.

When they reached the Remove passage, Trotter was found, waiting at the door of Study No. 1. The House pogo was to make the search of that study under the headmaster's supervision.

Dr. Locke entered Study No. 1—Mossoo whisked in after him: Wharton and Nugent and Skip followed, and Trotter brought up the rear.

The captain of the Remove pressed Skip's arm.

"Buck up, old man!" he whispered.

"It's all right!"

"Right as rain, old fellow!" murmured Nugent.

Skip nodded. He could not speak.

"Skip!" said the Head, quietly and not unkindly, "I regret that you are under suspicion of having purloined a banknote from Monsieur Charpentier's study. Have you anything to say to me before a search is made here?"

"Only that I ain't touched it, sir!" mumbled Skip.

"I trust not, I trust not!" said Dr. Locke. "Monsieur Charpentier, you are still of the opinion that this boy purloined the banknote?"

It was clear that the whole matter was extremely distasteful to the Head.

Monsieur Charpentier made excited gestures.

"Vat can I zink, sare?" he exclaimed.

"Zat billet-de-banque, he is gone! He is in my study—but he is gone! Zat Skeep vas zere—no ozzar boy vas zere! Vunce he has been a zief! Vat can I zink?"

"Trotter, kindly search this boy's pockets."

"Yes, sir."

Skip's face was burning, as he was searched. Wharton and Nugent stood in silent distress. It was a painful scene for all concerned. Trotter, obviously did not like his task. But he did it carefully and thoroughly. The result was that it was clear that the billet-de-banque was not on Skip.

"Wharton!"

"Yes, sir!"

"Please point out to Trotter any receptable in this study that does not belong to you or Nugent."

"Only that desk of Skip's, sir—"

"Please examine the desk, Trotter."

The desk was examined, without result.

Monsieur Charpentier breathed hard through his nose. But the Head, unpalatable as his task was, was the man to go through it with thoroughness.

He glanced at the bookshelf.

"Whose books are these?" he asked.

"All three of us have some books there, sir!" said Nugent.

"No doubt! Wharton, kindly take any books belonging to Skip, and place them on the table."

Harry Wharton looked along the bookshelf. He selected three volumes—a geometry book, a "Henriade," and a "Modern Boy's Annual"—all that belonged to Skip. The three volumes were placed on the table.

"Kindly examine those books, Trotter."

Trotter shook the geometry book—with no result. He picked up the French book and shook it. And as he shook the "Henriade," there was a general gasp in the study, as an engraved slip of paper dropped from the leaves.

"What—" exclaimed the Head.

Monsieur Charpentier gave almost a yell.

"C'est ca! C'est le billet-de-banque! Voila!"

The French master grabbed the paper that had fallen from Skip's book. He held it up for all eyes to see. It was a French banknote for five hundred francs!

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Thunderbolt for Smithy!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

"What—"

The Remove were out of the Form-room, when Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent came into the quadrangle. There was a rush of the fellows to meet them—and all eyes noted at once their changed looks.

"What's up?" exclaimed Johnny Bull.

"For goodness' sake," exclaimed Bob, anxiously, "why are you fellows looking like that? What's happened?"

"Where's Skip?"

"What's the row?"

"I say, you fellows, have they copped him?" squeaked Billy Bunter, in great excitement. "I say, did they find it on him?"

"Copped, by gum!" said Skinner, with a deep breath. He could read the truth in the faces of Wharton and Nugent. "They've got him!"

"Will you fellows tell us what's happened up in the studies?" asked Lord Mauleverer, very quietly.

"They—they—" Wharton stammered. "They—they found the banknote—"

"Not in your study?"

"Yes!"

"Oh, great gad! But how—"

"In a book," said Frank Nugent, in halting tones. "In—in a book that belongs to Skip—one of his French books!"

Mauleverer stared blankly.

"You saw it?"

(Continued on page 22.)

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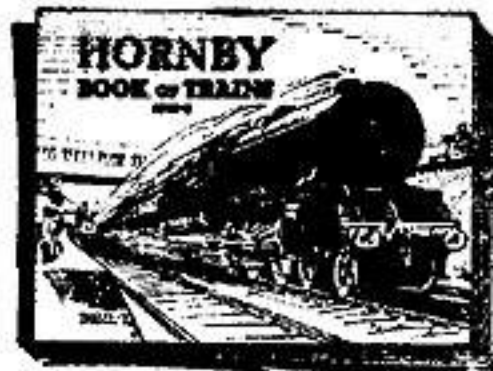
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"Yes, we saw it."

"Where's Skip?"

"Gone with the Head to his study, I believe," muttered Harry. "It—it's ghastly. I'd never have believed—"

"What did he have to say when they found it?" asked Peter Todd.

"He said he hadn't touched it."

"Oh!" said Toddy.

"It got into his French book without his touching it?" asked Skinner.

Wharton made no reply to that. He was utterly knocked over by the unexpected and startling discovery in his study.

"I say, you fellows, I jolly well knew it!" said Billy Bunter. "I say—"

"I fancy we all knew it, only some of us wouldn't admit that we did!" grinned Skinner.

"But—" said Bob Cherry helplessly. "In—in his French book, did you say? But how—unless he pinched it—"

"In his 'Henriade,'" said Harry, "and—and—it seems that he had that book with him yesterday, in Mossos's study, when he was helping Froggy look for the banknote."

"Oh!" gasped Bob.

"Pretty deep of him," said Skinner. "He picked up the note and parked it in the book. But what an ass to leave it there! I suppose he never guessed they'd go through his books."

"Couldn't have!" said Bolsover major.

"But what a little beast!" said Russell. "Why, I came jolly near punching Skinner's face for making out that Skip had it! And he had it all the time!"

"Had he?" said Lord Mauleverer.

"Hadn't he, fathead?" asked Hazeldene.

Mauleverer opened his lips—and shut them again. On previous occasions, when Skip had been under suspicion, Mauly had refused to be convinced—and it had been proved that Mauly was right.

But even Mauly did not know what to say now. This was no malicious suspicion of the Bouncer's—there was no suggestion of malice or enmity in the matter at all. It was a shock and a surprise for everybody concerned.

So far as appearance went, a banknote had been lying about Mossos's study. Skip had helped him look for it—and it had been found in a book that Skip had had in his possession while he was looking for it.

The facts spoke for themselves—or seemed to do so, at all events.

"What did the Head say?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Only told Skip to go with him," answered Harry. "I could see in his face what was coming, of course."

"The sack?" asked two or three voices.

"What else?"

"We don't want thieves here," said Skinner. "I wonder what Quelch will say to this? He was sticking up for that pincher."

"It will be a knock for old Quelch!" said Ogilvy.

"It's a knock for all of us, I think," said Harry. "I can hardly believe it now. I couldn't believe my eyes when I saw that rotten banknote—in Skip's book, in my study."

Lord Mauleverer drew a deep breath. "I can't believe it," he said—"I can't! And I jolly well won't! There must be some explanation—"

"Goodness knows, I'd like to hear it if there was!" said Harry. "The kid's been suspected before—if anything

happened, he was bound to be, in the circumstances. But he was cleared all right. But this—"

"I'm not goin' to believe that Skip bagged that mouldy thing, unless he tells me so himself!" said Lord Mauleverer. "It's rot, I tell you—rot! I won't believe anything of the kind!"

"Where's Smithy?" asked Skinner, looking round. "Smithy will be glad to hear this! It's what he's said all along!"

The Bouncer was not in the crowd that had surrounded Wharton and Nugent to ask questions. He was not interested in the outcome of the search in Study No. 1—knowing, as he fancied, that the billet-de-banque was in the French master's study all the time.

He was strolling under the elms, with a grin on his face, when Skinner spotted him, and rushed up with the news. Smithy was still amused by the "much ado about nothing" that was going on.

"Smithy!" Skinner came up breathlessly. "They've got it!"

"Got the missing goods?" grinned the Bouncer.

"Yes—hidden in a book!"

Vernon-Smith laughed. He supposed, for the moment, that the billet-de-banque had been found at last, where he had left it, in a book on the French-master's study table.

"They've been a long time spottin' it!" he remarked. "By gum! The Head will comb Froggy's hair for him, for makin' all this fuss!"

He laughed again. The prospect of Froggy getting his "hair combed" was entertaining.

Skinner stared.

"Eh—wharrer you mean?" he asked. "Froggy knew he had it. We all knew he had it!"

Smithy stared in his turn.

"What the dickens do you mean?" he snapped. "Who had it?"

"That pickpocket, Skip—"

"Mad?" asked the Bouncer blankly.

"Blessed if I understand you," said Skinner. "You've been making out, ever since that fellow was here, that he was still a pincher—"

"So he is!" sneered the Bouncer. "I haven't altered my opinion about that, though he never had Mossos's six-penny ha'penny banknote!"

"But he had!" gasped Skinner.

"What the dooce do you mean? If it's been found in the potty old donkey's own study—"

"It hasn't! It's been found in Wharton's study, you ass!"

The Bouncer jumped almost clear of the quad as if a thunderbolt had fallen at his feet.

"It was in one of the pickpocket's books," said Skinner. "It turns out that he had the book with him when he was in Froggy's study yesterday—"

"What book?" gasped the Bouncer.

"Blessed if I know— Oh, yes, a French book—he would have a French book with him, of course, going to see Froggy. Well, he had the book with him, and he picked up the banknote while he was pretending to help Froggy look for it, and shoved it in the book. See?"

The Bouncer stood rooted, looking at Skinner.

Many of the Remove fellows had been taken utterly aback by the discovery of Mossos's note in Study No. 1. But Herbert Vernon-Smith was more than taken aback. He was dumb-founded.

"What rot!" he gasped at last.

"They can't have—"

He broke off.

"Well, you beat me," said Skinner, in wonder. "It's what you've been saying all along, and now it's happened you don't seem to want to believe it. The young villain's with the Head now—he's finished here."

"Finished here?" repeated the Bouncer mechanically.

"What do you think?" grinned Skinner. "Think the old bean would let him stay, now it's proved that he's the same old pincher he always was? Bet you nobody sees him here again!"

"Oh!" gasped Vernon-Smith.

"It's the boot, short and sharp, of course!" said Skinner. "I dare say they'll go easy with him, on account of his upbringing, and all that? But he will have to go, of course! I'm jolly glad for one! Ain't you?"

Vernon-Smith did not answer that.

His brain was almost in a whirl. He could not understand how it had happened—indeed, he could hardly believe that it had.

Never for an instant had he dreamed of such an outcome as this. How could it have happened? He stared almost stupidly at Skinner.

"Ain't you glad they've got him at last?" asked the mystified Skinner.

"You've said all along—"

"Oh, don't be a fool!"

With that unexpected answer, the Bouncer turned away—leaving Skinner staring.

Heedless of Skinner and of everybody and everything else, Vernon-Smith tramped under the leafless elms, trying to think it out.

His face was pale and harassed when the bell rang and he came in to dinner. There was a vacant place at the Remove table. Mr. Quelch, at the head of that table, had a set face—and Skip's place was empty.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Going of Skip!

"YOU precious young rascal!" Coker of the Fifth fairly bawled.

Skip looked at him.

He was in the punishment-room. He was there, not for punishment, but to keep him away from the rest of the school, until he could be sent away from Greyfriars. Trotter had brought him some dinner there—but it lay almost untouched. Skip was moving restlessly about the room, with a dazed expression on his chubby face, when Coker blew in.

Everybody knew, by this time, what had happened. Coker had been looking for Skip since dinner, and, having learned that he was in punny, Coker had come there, disregarding the fact that no fellow was allowed to do so.

The door was not locked—Skip had been told to remain there, and he remained. He had no desire to face his Form. He knew what they must be thinking, and he shrank from facing a crowd of scornful eyes.

"You young rascal—rotter—idiot!" went on Coker. "Hadn't you sense enough to keep straight? I haven't thrashed you enough, I know! But—"

"I never touched it!" said Skip.

"Don't talk silly rot!" snapped Coker. "I've been to the Head. He says you've got to go. After I bothered my Aunt Judy to land you here—this is how you let me down. Ain't you jolly well ashamed of yourself?"

Skip's lip quivered.

"I s'pose you can't believe me!" he said wearily. "I can 'ardly believe it



"You will understand, I am sure, Skip," said the Head, gravely, "that after what has happened you must leave Greyfriars. I am sorry—deeply sorry. But a dishonest boy cannot be allowed to mingle with the other boys." "I ain't——" began Skip. "That is all!" exclaimed Dr. Locke.

myself, if it comes to that! I know I'm done for!"

"I've a jolly good mind," roared Coker, "to give you another good hiding, you beastly little scallawag!"

"I don't care much if you do," said Skip wretchedly. "I don't care much for anything now. The blokes believe that I pinched that blooming banknote from Froggy. Even Mauly, I expect——"

His voice faltered.

"You did pinch it!" roared Coker.

"I never did!"

"Oh, shut up!" exclaimed Coker, in disgust. "Thank goodness they got it back before you could change it, anyhow! Look here, you've got to go——"

"I know that!"

"But, mind," said Coker sternly, "you're not going back to picking pockets. No more of your Slummock's Alley games! When I took you up, I said I was going to make an honest kid of you——"

"You done it," said Skip—"you and the other coveys!"

"Looks like it, doesn't it?" hooted Coker. "I wish I'd given you a few more thrashings now. But mind what I say—no more pinching! You can't stay here now you've been fool enough and rotter enough to throw all your chances away. But you're not going back to Barney, if that's his name—you're not going back to sneak-thieving—see?"

"I wouldn't——"

"I'll take jolly good care you don't!" snorted Coker. "I'm going to get my Aunt Judy on the phone after class and see what can be done. You're going to be taken care of when you leave here. No more pinching for you, my beauty!" Skip's lip trembled.

"I never done it," he said. "I'd cut off my 'and sooner! I s'pose you can't believe that——"

"Likely!" hooted Coker.

"Well, if you can't—and I s'pose you can't—I don't want nothing more from you," said Skip, "and I won't take nothing, neither! You can leave me alone, Coker, see? I don't want nothing from you!"

Coker glared at him.

"You're going to be taken care of, and kept away from pinching!" he roared. "I've come here to tell you so. And if you give me any more check I'll jolly well whop you here and now!"

"Coker!"

"Oh!" Coker broke off and spun round at the Head's voice. "I—I—I—I came here to—to——"

"Leave this room immediately, Coker! Take a hundred lines for having come here without permission," said Dr. Locke. "Not a word, Coker—go at once!"

Horace Coker suppressed his feelings—and went.

The headmaster of Greyfriars turned to Skip. His kind old face expressed more of sorrow than of anger as he looked at the unhappy waif.

There was no doubt in his mind; in the circumstances doubt was impossible. Neither was he surprised, though he was disappointed and deeply troubled. He had hoped that a better training might eradicate from the boy's mind what he had learned in bad hands, but that hope had proved delusive. He had not changed his ways, and as he had not changed them he had to go—that was all.

"My boy," said the Head gravely, "I have only a few words to say to you. You will understand, I am sure, that after what has happened you cannot be allowed to mingle with Greyfriars boys again. But it is impossible to send you away at once, as I should do in the case of any other boy. You

have no home, and no relatives, and you must therefore remain here till arrangements are made——"

"I never did it, sir," mumbled Skip.

The Head did not seem to hear him.

"This is a deep disappointment to me and to your form-master," he went on. "It will be a deep disappointment to Miss Coker, who so kindly befriended you on account of your service to her nephew. Nevertheless, I have no doubt that Miss Coker will continue to befriend you——"

"I don't want nothing——"

"Please do not interrupt me! I am willing to believe," said Dr. Locke, "that you have made efforts since you have been here to cast from you the effects of your early training. If so, you have failed, and you must leave. Arrangements will be made as soon as possible. In the meantime, you must remain here——"

He paused a moment.

"You will not be confined to this room, Skip—you may leave it when the other boys are in class. But you must return to it before the school is dismissed from lessons. You understand me?"

"Yessir," muttered Skip.

"I am sorry, deeply sorry," said the Head. "But a dishonest boy cannot be allowed to mingle with the other boys!"

"I ain't——"

"That is all," said the Head. "If I find that you have disregarded my instructions you will be locked in—but I desire to avoid that if possible."

Dr. Locke left the punishment-room, leaving the door ajar.

Skip was left alone again—alone with his unhappy thoughts. A little later he heard the bell for classes.

Not till he was sure that all the school

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would be in the Form-rooms did he leave the punishment-room. He left it at last and went down the passage and down the stairs, and out into the quadrangle—deserted now. He was glad to get out into the fresh air.

For some time he wandered about in the quad.

What had happened had had almost a stunning effect on him. He could not begin to understand how it had happened—it seemed to him like an evil dream. But he understood only too clearly that he was "done for" at Greyfriars—that his new life, which had seemed too good to last, had indeed proved so.

He had to go, and he was thinking as he tramped in the November wind that if he had to go, the sooner the better.

Coker, and Coker's aunt, had befriended him, but he did not want their befriending. His cheeks burned at the idea of being handed over to Miss Coker as an unrepentant rascal who could not be trusted to keep straight. Never, at least, would he submit to that. Before the bell rang for the school to be dismissed he had to return to the punishment-room, segregated like a leper—or go!

It was better to go.

And when he had decided on that, Skip walked along the old Cloisters to a certain spot he knew—the spot where he had clambered in on the first day of the term, when Coker had brought him to the school, only a few weeks, but seeming long, long ago to him now. At that spot he climbed the Cloister wall and dropped out on the other side.

When the Greyfriars Forms were dismissed that afternoon no one saw Skip, and no one expected to see him. He was supposed to be in the punishment-room. But Skip was far from Greyfriars School!

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

Smithy Surprises the Co.

"GET out!"

Harry Wharton jumped up from the table in Study No 1, his eyes flashing, as Herbert Vernon-Smith looked in at the doorway.

The Famous Five were at tea in the study—a dismal tea. The happenings of that day had clouded even Bob Cherry's spirits.

When the Bounder looked in every fellow there gave him a hostile glare. He had, it seemed now, been right all along the line, but they liked him no better for it. He had always been the enemy of the fellow who was now so hopelessly down on his luck, and if Skip was guilty now he had not been guilty on other occasions when the Bounder had accused him.

Indeed, in spite of common sense, as it seemed, a doubt lingered in their heads as to whether he was guilty.

Old Mauly had been right before, when things looked black enough for Skip. Might he not be right again—though they had to admit that they did not see even a tiny loophole of hope.

Anyhow, they did not want any of the Bounder's jeering or sneering. And Harry Wharton made that plain as he almost shouted at the fellow in the doorway.

"Get out!" he repeated, his voice rising. "You're not wanted here, Vernon-Smith! Go and crow somewhere else, you cad!"

The Bounder did not stir. He stood in the doorway, his hands in his pockets, a sneer on his face.

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"Oh, let him crow!" said Bob Cherry contemptuously. "The chap's down now, Smithy—down and out! Jump on him!"

"Might a fellow speak?" drawled the Bounder.

"Nobody here wants to hear you," said Nugent, "and I warn you, Smithy, that if you can't let Skip alone now he's down and out, you're asking for trouble."

"And you'll get what you're asking for!" growled Johnny Bull. "The fellow's got the boot, and he's a better chap than you'd ever have been on the same training. Leave him alone."

"You think he did it?" queried the Bounder.

"Wh-a-at?"

That question so astonished the Famous Five that they almost gasped as they stared at Vernon-Smith.

"Don't you?" stammered Bob.

"Oh, my opinion isn't worth much!" jeered the Bounder. "I've always been down on him, as you say. I've always believed that he was the same old pincher that he used to be in his jolly old alley, and I haven't changed my belief. I believe he would have pinched that French banknote, or anything else, if he'd thought it safe. But—"

"Oh, there's a but!" snapped Wharton.

"Yes; I can't quite make out what's happened," said the Bounder. "As you fellows know all about it, you might put me wise. Certainly I never expected Froggy's francs to turn up in this study." He laughed. "I can tell you, I thought Skinner was pulling my leg when he told me so."

"Well, they did turn up here," said Harry, with a curious look at the Bounder. He could hardly make Smithy out.

But it was clear, at least, that Smithy had not, as they had at first supposed, come there to "rub it in" about Skip.

Indeed, he seemed to entertain a doubt of his guilt. That was about the last thing that the Famous Five would have expected of Skip's implacable enemy.

"In a book belonging to Skip?" asked Smithy.

"That's it—packed inside."

"What book?"

"One of his French books. He had it in Froggy's study at the time."

"We use more than one French book in the Remove. Which one?"

"The 'Henriade'!"

"Oh!" said the Bounder. He drew a deep, deep breath. "How did Skip come to have that book in Froggy's study? I saw him when he was going, after you fellows came in yesterday, and he went straight to the study—he had no book with him then."

"That's easily explained. He had done a translation for Mossoo, and took it to him—but Froggy was busy, and told him to leave it and the book, and he would go through it later, after tea."

"So he left his book in Froggy's study?"

"Yes."

"On the table?"

"I suppose so."

"And was it a 'Henriade'?"

"Yes."

"And when he went to Froggy at tea-time, he found him hunting for his jolly old billet-de-banque—so Froggy didn't go through the 'Henriade' with him, after all—"

"Not likely, when he was hunting for his mouldy francs."

"And Skip helped him hunt—and when he came away, he naturally brought the book with him!" said the Bounder musingly. "I see!"

He saw now, clearly—how it had happened.

By the merest, sheerest chance, he had fastened guilt on his enemy in the Remove, when he had only intended to play a malicious trick on the French master.

Knowing nothing of Skip's dealings with Mossoo, he had never dreamed for a moment that it was Skip's book on the French master's table. He had noticed that it was a copy of the "Henriade"—but Mossoo had several copies of that work, for use in the French sets, and he had naturally supposed that the one he saw there was one of them.

Had he looked at the title-page, no doubt he would have seen Skip's name written thereon; but it had not, of course, occurred to him to do so. He had simply opened the book and slipped the French banknote into it, and given it no further heed.

"What does Mauly think?" asked Vernon-Smith suddenly.

"He thinks Skip is O.K.—you know old Mauly. At least, he's trying his hardest to think so."

The Bounder laughed.

"They think old Mauly an ass, in the Remove," he said. "Old Mauly never thinks—he's got nothin' to do it with. I suppose it's intuition, or somethin'. He just can't turn a fellow down, once he's taken him up. He may be an ass—but he gets there all the same, doesn't he?"

"You don't mean to say that you agree with Mauly?" asked Harry, puzzled.

"Why not?" said the Bounder coolly. "Wasn't he right last time, when every other fellow believed that that pincher had pinched a watch from a Highcliffe man? Why shouldn't he be right this time?"

"I hope he is—hope and trust that he is!" said Harry. "But—I can't make it out! I—I'm sorry I jumped out at you as I did, Smithy—I—I never expected you to talk like this! Look here, do you think—"

"I think the fellow is a pincher—I've always said so."

"Never mind that. Do you think he pinched Froggy's francs?" asked Harry. "Never mind what he may be in general—stick to the particular!"

"No!" said Vernon-Smith. "I don't think he pinched Froggy's francs!"

"Well, my only summer hat!" ejaculated Bob Cherry, staring blankly at the Bounder. "Blessed if I should have expected that from you, Smithy."

"It's the unexpected that always happens, isn't it?" drawled the Bounder. "I don't like the fellow any more than I did; I mean, I loathe him just as much as I did; and I believe he's a pincher through and through. But I don't believe that he touched Froggy's francs—if you're interested in what I believe."

"But how do you account—"

"Oh, I don't account for anythin'. No good expectin' me to guess a thing that beats your mighty brains!"

With that, and a light laugh, the Bounder walked on up the Remove passage, leaving the Famous Five puzzled, but feeling much more amicable towards Smithy.

The Bounder went into his own study. In that study, he moved about restlessly, and then, standing at the window, stared down moodily into the dusky quad.

The fellow was going. That was what he wanted. It had come about by a strange unlooked-for chance—he had never intended it, never dreamed of it, yet his own act had caused it. What did it matter?

The fellow was a pincher—an unrepentant pickpocket—if he did not steal, it was only for his safety's sake, and that was not honesty, but cunning—he was the rascal he had always been—the Bounder refused to doubt that. Let him take what was coming to him.

What did it matter—whether he was turfed out now on an error, or turfed out later for actual theft—sure to happen sooner or later?

Chance had done this—let chance have its way! The Bounder set his lips hard! The temptation was too strong for him!

To speak out—to take a Head's flogging for what he had done—to save that rotter, that rascal, that pincher! Likely! Let him take what was coming—the sooner the school was rid of him, the better! Smithy had only to keep silent—and he was going to keep silent! Tempted, he fell!

Resolved on that, the Bounder determined to dismiss the whole matter from his mind. But he did not find it easy to dismiss.

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Friend in Need!

MISS BULLIVANT stopped. In the falling November dusk, the games mistress of Cliff House School was walking along the path over the cliffs, with vigorous strides. The Bull was always vigorous.

She had been on one of her long walks, and was going back to Cliff House, when she sighted a schoolboy on the cliffs.

Her first glance at him was casual. Her eyes, which were very keen, noted, even in the thickening dusk, that he had a Greyfriars cap; and as the gates at Greyfriars were shut at dark, she was surprised to see him three miles from his school.

Then, as she drew nearer to him, her eyes fixed on him with attention. She recognised the boy Skip. And she stopped, her gaze fixed on him with curious interest.

Apart from the fact that he was out of school bounds, there was something about the boy that struck her.

Skip was standing on the cliff path, leaning against a rugged boulder, and staring, not towards the sea, but inland—in the direction in which, before the dusk thickened, the old tower of Greyfriars School could be seen in the distance.

His face was dark and sombre—his gaze fixed. He did not see Miss Bullivant, though she had stopped quite near him.

Looking his last on the school he had left for ever, Skip was lost to all other things. In the last glimmer of the dim sunset, he had watched that grey old tower, dim and far away; and now it was lost in the dusk, he was still gazing—his face so utterly downcast that its expression might have touched a heart of stone.

Miss Bullivant watched him, curiously and compassionately. She knew a good deal of the strange story of the waif of Greyfriars. He had first come to her notice when he had saved Bessie Bunter from the Sark—and after that, she had intervened when Smithy and his Highcliffe pals were ragging him—and she had seen him once or twice since then.

She liked the boy, and felt an interest in him.

From what she had heard, he had been making good at Greyfriars, after an early training in the hands of some rascal who had taught him lawless and dishonest ways. If that was genuine, it

was much to his credit—and the fact that he had made friends with the best fellows in his Form, looked as if it was genuine—indeed, the fact that he was still at Greyfriars, was as good as proof of it. And good quality, undoubtedly, there must be, in a boy who had risked his life to save a schoolgirl.

That he was terribly down on his luck now, was clear at a glance. After regarding him for a minute or two with a keen and searching gaze, Miss Bullivant approached him.

"Skip!" she said quietly.

The Greyfriars junior gave a start. He stared round at Miss Bullivant, and hastily lifted his cap.

"Oh!" he stammered. "You, miss!"

"Is anything the matter?" asked Miss Bullivant.

"Oh, no! Yes! Nothin', miss!" mumbled Skip.

He had not expected to meet anyone on that lonely path over the cliffs, in the falling dusk. It had been his intention to disappear without being seen again by any eye that knew him. He had lingered, with a heavy heart, to look his last on that school where he had been, in spite of many trials, happy—but now he wished that he had hastened.

His eyes sank before the games mistress' keen, searching glance, and his face coloured painfully. They judged him, at Greyfriars, an unreformed thief—they would think the same at Cliff House, when they heard. Miss Bullivant would think so. Somehow, Skip felt a bitter pang at the idea of Miss Bullivant thinking so.

"Come, my boy!" said the Bull. Her voice was kind, even gentle. Her tanned, rather grim face, was kind.

Miss Bullivant was a hefty, sinewy young woman in the vigorous thirties, and at Cliff House she was considered a bit of a gorgon. Many respected her, but few liked her—and games slackers dreaded her. There was nothing soft about the Bull; she had strong muscles and strong sense, but little in the way of feminine grace. But her grim face was very kind now.

"Tell me what has happened," she said.

She thought that she could guess—knowing what she did of Skip. Either he had fallen into old bad ways, or was suspected of having done so.

"Oh, nothin'!" stammered Skip. "I mean— Oh, miss, don't you think it of me, when you 'ear! I got the boot, but I never did it! I wouldn't go for to tell you a lie, miss—I'd cut out my tongue sooner. I don't know 'ow it 'appened—but I never did it."

Skip's voice was deeply earnest; his eyes fixed pleadingly on the games mistress' face.

"There ain't nothin' to be done," he went on. "I got to go, and leave the blokes thinking me a rotten pincher—like I was, goodness knows, afore Coker took me up! I never knowed how rotten it was then, miss—I give you my davy, I never thought about it, and never knowed. I was jest a little nipper when Barney the Binger took me in 'and—'ow was I to know? Even arter I was at the school, I never rightly understood—it was jest to keep from being kicked out, that I chucked pinching! But I got to understand arter—and I tell you, miss, I'd sooner cut off my 'and than pinch now. I 'ope, miss, as you'll try to believe that, if you ever remember me!"

"I shall believe it!" said Miss Bullivant quietly. "I believe you now, Skip."

Skip's dark face brightened.

"That's good of you, miss," he said, in a quivering voice. "It's bad enough

for the blokes what has been friends with me to think as they do—but I should 'ate you to think me a pincher!"

"So you value my opinion, Skip?" asked Miss Bullivant, with a smile that made her hard features quite good-looking.

"Yes, miss, I does!" said Skip. "I 'ardly know why," he went on frankly. "I only see you a few times, and I dessay you 'ardly remember there's such a bloke at all as me. But, if you try to believe that I ain't a pincher no more, miss, it won't be so 'and on a covey."

"Very well; I do believe you, Skip!" said Miss Bullivant. "Now tell me what has happened. Why are you here so late?"

"I—I've left, miss!"

"You have been expelled?"

"Not exactly, miss, but I got to go. You see, miss, it was Coker's aunt put me at Greyfriars, and the 'Ead is going to 'and me over to 'er—I got nowhere to go. But I ain't going to Miss Coker! I ain't got no claim on 'er, 'cept that I stopped Jimmy the Rat from cracking Coker's 'ead for him—and that ain't nothing! Coker believes I done it, and I don't want no more from 'im."

Skip gave a gulp.

"I got to keep away from the other blokes 'cause I ain't fit for them to speak to," he muttered. "But I ain't staying on like that there, and I ain't going to be 'anded over to Coker's aunt—poor old lady, what'd she do with me, I'd like to know, thinking me a thief, too. I jest walked out, miss, and saved them all the trouble I got to look arter myself now, and I can do it, too, without pinching."

"What are you supposed to have done at your school, Skip?" asked Miss Bullivant. "Tell me the whole thing."

"It ain't no good, miss! I ain't blaming them, mind you; they can't 'elp thinking what they does. Even old Mauly—" Skip's voice broke. "I—I wonder! But they can't 'elp it, seeing 'ow it looks!"

"Tell me!" said Miss Bullivant. "I shall believe every word you say, Skip."

"I'm feared you won't, miss, when you 'ear!" said Skip drearily.

"Tell me all the same."

Skip told her. Miss Bullivant did not interrupt him once, as she listened with keen attention. Her face clouded a little. When Skip had told her all, she stood silent in deep thought.

"I knowed you couldn't believe me when you 'eard!" muttered Skip, breaking the silence. "'Ow could you? You see, miss, it was there, in my book. I 'ad the book there, in Froggy's study. The blokes was thinking that old Froggy might have shoved that banknote somewhere and forgot it; but he couldn't have put it in my book and forgot it. 'Ow did it come there? It's enough to make a bloke believe 'imself that he pinched it! But I never did, miss!"

In the deepening dusk, Miss Bullivant's eyes searched the boy's troubled, harassed face. She spoke at last.

"I believe you, Skip!" she said firmly.

"Reely, miss?" asked Skip.

"Yes, really! I cannot understand it, neither can I blame your headmaster for regarding such evidence as conclusive—it is, indeed, conclusive. Nothing could be clearer, in fact. But—"

"But—" mumbled Skip.

"But I believe you!"

"Thank you, miss!" said Skip humbly. "I don't reely see 'ow you can believe me, 'cause it looks—"

"I do believe you! Now," said Miss Bullivant briskly, "you have left Greyfriars. That is inevitable in the circumstances. But if there is an error in

this matter, as I believe, the facts may be discovered later. We must hope so, at least. In the meantime, what were you going to do?"

"I got my fare to London," said Skip. "I dessay I can get a job! I don't care what it is, so long—!" He paused. "I 'ope you'll believe me, miss, that it's got to be an honest job! I ain't going back to Barney the Binger."

"You are not going to London!" said Miss Bullivant decidedly. "In the first place, there is a possibility of the actual facts coming to light, in which case, you must not be out of touch with your headmaster. In the second place, you cannot face the world unfriended and without resources."

"But I got to go, miss!" said Skip. "There ain't nothing else for it."

"I shall consider that!" said Miss Bullivant. "In the meantime, you must be provided for. I shall see to that."

Skip's face became scarlet. "Oh, no, no, miss!" he gasped. "I ain't taking nothing from you, miss! That ain't what I want at all, miss! I can't—"

"You can," said Miss Bullivant calmly, "and will! For to-night, I shall arrange a lodging for you—that is quite easy. To-morrow I shall call on the headmaster of Greyfriars and discuss this matter with him, and ascertain whether anything can be done to clear up this extraordinary tangle. Come with me."

"But—" stammered Skip. "You will lodge to-night at a cottage in Pegg," said Miss Bullivant. "You will come with me, and I shall arrange that. Come!"

"But—" Skip stammered again. "Come!" said Miss Bullivant. "You are wasting time!"

Miss Bullivant was a masterful lady.

Skip gave up arguing, and walked along by her side.

THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Case of Conscience!

"SMITHY!"
"Leave me alone!"
"But—" "Will you leave me alone?" snarled the Bounder.

Harry Wharton peered at him in the dusk, startled.

Herbert Vernon-Smith was tramping to and fro under the old elms, his hands driven deep into his pockets, his brow black, his lips set. His face had a tormented look. What was the matter with Smithy, the captain of the Remove had no idea; but it was clear that something was very much the matter.

"It's lock-up, Smithy!" said Harry. "Leave me alone, hang you!"

Wharton shrugged his shoulders, and turned away towards the House. But he turned back again. That look on the Bounder's face haunted him.

"Look here, Smithy," he said quietly. "What's up? What are you looking like that for?"

"Find out!" "You look like a fellow up for the sack! It can't be as bad as that, surely!" Wharton was really concerned for the scapegrace of the Form; and he took no heed of the Bounder's offensive words. Smithy laughed—an unpleasant laugh.

"No! Skip's up for the sack! That's all! I'm glad, naturally—rejoicin' over it! Now shut up, and leave me to rejoice!"

Wharton looked at him in sheer wonder.

"You don't care about Skip!" he said.

"Of course not—don't I loathe the fellow? Let him take what's coming to him, and be hanged to him. He's a rotten pincher, and we don't want a pincher here! He ought never to have been let into the school, and now he's getting the boot, the better for everybody! Let him go back to his slum, and pick pockets!"

The Bounder's pale, tormented face gave the lie to that angry outburst.

Wharton could only stare at him.

"Didn't I say so all along?" went on Vernon-Smith, in the same savage tone. "He's a pincher, but playing cautious, that's all. He would have pinched that French banknote if he'd thought it safe. The will is as bad as the deed. Well, then, let him have it!"

"You don't know anything about it, do you, Smithy?" asked the captain of the Remove very quietly.

"What should I know about it, you fool?"

"Nothing, so far as I can see. But I don't understand you. Every fellow here believes he did it, except old Mauly, and—and I and my friends are trying to think the same as Mauly. But you—"

"I—I'm glad he's copped, of course,"

"You're not," said Harry, "and that what's beats me. Other times you've jumped at the merest shadow to fix something on him. Now it looks as clear as daylight, and you don't believe he did it. Smithy, old man, if you know something that the other fellows don't know—"

"What could I know?" sneered Smithy.

"I can't guess that; but it looks as if you do. For goodness' sake, Smithy, if you know anything that could help that chap out of this awful scrape, for

(Continued on next page.)

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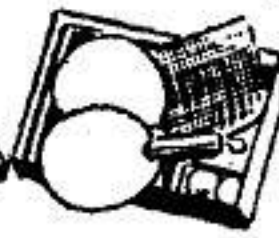


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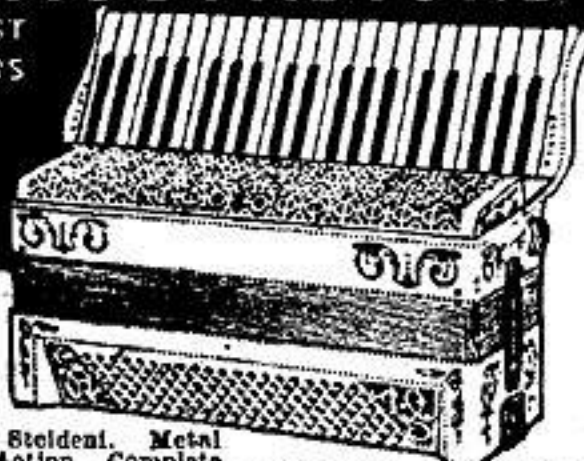
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goodness' sake, Smithy, cough it up! You're not speaking like a fellow who only believed he's innocent, you're speaking like a fellow who knows it!" Wharton's face paled a little. "You can't have had a hand in it—that's too beastly to think of. But—"

"Will you leave a fellow alone?"

"Yes; but one more word, Smithy. If you know anything that would help Skip, you're bound to speak out. Never mind your loathing him, never mind your opinion about him—all that doesn't matter. If you've found out anything, Smithy—"

"Nothing!"

Harry Wharton stood looking at the Bounder for a long moment, and then left him, and went to the House. His face was deeply disturbed as he went.

Vernon-Smith cast a savage glance after him, and then resumed his restless, weary pacing under the trees.

If ever a fellow was in a state of torment, the Bounder of Greyfriars was, as Wharton had plainly read in his face.

It had hardly ever occurred to the Bounder that he had a conscience. He had no great use for one. But it was his conscience that had unexpectedly taken him in its grip. And it was a grip that Herbert Vernon-Smith could not shake off.

He mocked himself as he realised it. But there it was. The hard case of Greyfriars, the fellow who prided himself on being as hard as nails through and through, was struggling with his conscience—wrestling with temptation.

He had worked it out in his mind to his own satisfaction. The fellow was a rascally thief. He ought to go. Well, he was going. What did it matter if he was going for something he hadn't done, when he would have done it a dozen times over, had it been safe to do it?

If a fellow was honest, he was honest as a matter of course. If he only refrained from stealing, because he was afraid of being found out, he was a thief at heart. Well, that was Skip's case—the Bounder was sure of that. And he would break out sooner or later. Smithy was sure of that, too. Much better for him to go before he did.

And yet—

Having argued the matter out and settled it, Smithy was exasperated to find that it was still unsettled.

The fact was that Smithy was no fool; and could not deceive himself with sophistry. After all his reasonings on the subject, he knew with bitter clearness that if he let Skip take the punishment for something that he had not done, he would be a rascal—a villain, as Wharton put it plainly.

Whether he was right or whether he was wrong about the waif of the Remove, he knew that Skip had not stolen the French master's banknote. He knew that, and he had to let others know.

He tramped savagely to the House at last. The doors were closing—he had just time to wedge into Hall for calling-over.

Harry Wharton looked at him, but he did not meet Wharton's eyes. He stood silent, savage, till his name was called, and almost snarled "adsum" when he heard it. Never had the Bounder been in a blacker and bitterer mood; but he knew what he had to do, and he was going to do it. Temptation had been strong—almost too strong for him—but he had got it down, and he was keeping it down!

THE NINETEENTH CHAPTER.

The Bounder Speaks Out!

"MR QUELCH!"

"Well?"

"I've something to tell you, sir."

Mr. Quelch had called the roll in Hall. He was about to dismiss the school, when the Bounder coolly left the ranks of the Remove and walked up the Hall and addressed him.

"I thought I ought to tell you, sir, that Skip never took that French banknote from Monsieur Charpentier's study, and I know it!"

"What!"

Quelch almost jumped. Other masters looked round at the Bounder. All eyes in the crowded Hall fixed on him, in keen interest and wonder.

Every fellow there heard his words. Remove fellows simply blinked at him. Fellows in other Forms stared. All the school knew what Skip was "up" for—all knew that he was going. Vernon-Smith's words, quiet but distinct, had rather an effect of a bombshell.

"Vernon-Smith!" Mr. Quelch was gasping. "Do you mean to say that you know anything of the affair for which Skip has been condemned to leave Greyfriars?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then speak, and lose no time!"

"Skip did not take the French banknote, sir! I mean by that, that he did not take it knowingly. He had no knowledge that it was in his book."

"If you are speaking seriously, Vernon-Smith—"

"Quite, sir."

"Then explain how you know—and why—"

"Mais ce billet-de-banque, le garçon Skip l'a pris!" exclaimed Monsieur Charpentier excitedly. "Monsieur Quelch, on l'a trouvé dans le livre—"

"Kindly allow Vernon-Smith to speak, Monsieur Charpentier! If this boy knows anything of the matter—"

"Rien! Rien de rien! Je vous dis—"

"Pack it up, Froggy!" came a voice from the back of the Hall, and there was a chuckle.

"Silence!" called out Wingate.

"Now, Vernon-Smith—" Mr. Quelch's face was quite eager. For once he almost beamed on the most troublesome member of his Form.

He had stood by Skip, up to the last. The discovery of the billet-de-banque in Study No. 1 had fairly floored him. But if there was the faintest hope that his faith in the boy was not, after all, justified, Mr. Quelch was ready to catch at it—to catch at any straw. He was eager to hear what the scapegrace of the Remove had to tell him.

"I will explain, sir." It was a bitter and unwelcome task to the Bounder. But he found some consolation in the fact that hundreds of eyes were fixed eagerly on him, that hundreds of ears were straining to catch every word he uttered. The Bounder loved the limelight. "Skip happened to leave that book—his copy of the 'Henriade'—in Froggy's—I mean, in Monsieur Charpentier's study yesterday afternoon. It was left on Mossoo's table—"

"C'est comme ça," yapped Monsieur Charpentier. "Mais—"

"Some silly ass—I mean, some fellow—bunged whitewash at Mossoo, sir, at his window, and he was away from his study for a long time afterwards. In that time, a fellow, who had lines to do for him, took the lines to his study."

"Je n'en sais rien—mais—"

"That fellow, sir," went on the Bounder, unheeding Mossoo, "saw the French banknote on the table, where

Mossoo left it when he cleared off to wash off the whitewash, and, being ratty with Mossoo for giving him lines, he put it out of sight."

"Wha-a-at?"

"It was a jape on Mossoo, sir—the idea was to give him a fright, making him think it was lost—blown away, or something—and to set him dancing."

"To—to—to what?"

"I mean, to make him excited, and set him going!" said the Bounder. "The fellow I'm speaking of stuck the French banknote inside a book that was lying on the table. He thought it was one of Mossoo's books—naturally. He never knew at the time that a Remove fellow had left a book there—or been there at all, for that matter. Thinking that it was one of Mossoo's books, he put the French banknote into it, supposing that Mossoo would find it next time he used the book in class."

"Vernon-Smith!" gasped Mr. Quelch.

"Mon Dieu!" breathed the French master.

Lord Mauleverer, in the Remove, drew a deep breath. He had been determined not to doubt—and now he was more than glad of it.

"The fellow," went on the Bounder coolly, "left it at that. He was quite knocked over when it came out to-day that the banknote had turned up in Study No. 1 in the Remove. He couldn't make it out. But later on, by asking some fellows questions, he found out how it had happened."

The Famous Five exchanged glances. They knew now why Smithy had asked those questions at tea-time in Study No. 1.

"He found," went on Smithy, amid a dead silence, "that Skip had left his 'Henriade' on Mossoo's table, and it was into Skip's book that he had stuck the banknote, thinking it was one of Mossoo's. When Skip took that book away, he took it without knowing that the banknote was in it."

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Quelch.

"An extraordinary story!" said Mr. Prout, staring at the Bounder.

"Est il possible?" gasped Monsieur Charpentier. "Heles! Ze pauvre Skeep—"

"Vernon-Smith, after what you have said, I need hardly ask you the name of the thoughtless, reckless, disrespectful boy who played this wretched prank in Monsieur Charpentier's study!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

"Hardly!" agreed the Bounder, with perfect coolness.

"You admit—"

"Certainly, sir!"

"You are quite aware that you will be flogged for this, Vernon-Smith?"

"Quite."

"There is one thing yet to explain," said Mr. Quelch sternly. "It was early in the day when the billet-de-banque was found in Skip's book in his study. You were aware that he had been condemned—that he was in the punishment-room, that he was to be sent away from the school. Why did you not speak out before?"

"I hadn't made up my mind to speak out at all," answered the Bounder, with icy coolness. "I think the fellow's a pincher, and I don't want him here—and I don't want a flogging from Dr. Locke, either. But—"

"But your conscience, I trust, forced you to speak," said Mr. Quelch.

"It seemed rather a dirty trick!" said the Bounder. "I never dreamed that he would get landed with it when I stuck that French banknote in the book, and—and—and I had to tell you. I've told you here, sir; so that all the fellows can hear. That's all."

"Ce pauvre Skeep—"

"The unfortunate boy!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "It appears, then, that the whole thing was nothing more than a foolish, unfeeling trick played by you on Monsieur Charpentier! You will be severely punished for this, Vernon-Smith!"

"I know that, sir."

"The only thing to be said in your favour in that you have spoken out before it was too late. Go back to your place, Vernon-Smith. I shall take you to the Head to be dealt with later."

The Bounder lounged back to the Remove.

Tom Redwing pressed his arm.

"You're a brick, Smithy!" he whispered.

"A fool, you mean!" sneered the Bounder.

"Both!" said Bob Cherry.

The school was dismissed—in a buzz of excitement.

Mr. Quelch hurried away at once to see the Head. They went together to the punishment-room, only to find it untenanted. Skip of the Remove was gone, and the anxious and hurried inquiry that followed only revealed that he was no longer within the walls of Greyfriars.

THE TWENTIETH CHAPTER.

Not Too Late!

Skip was gone!

All the school soon knew it.

The Bounder had spoken out—but he had spoken too late. The unhappy boy, condemned on all sides, was gone, leaving no word, leaving no trace.

He was cleared—the Bounder's amazing confession had done that. His friends had expected him to rejoin the Form at once—and they were ready to give him an uproarious welcome. And he was gone!

"He'll be found!" said Bob Cherry, in the Rag.

But he spoke doubtfully. Harry Wharton & Co. had little hope of seeing him again. Their faces were clouded.

The Bounder was in the Rag; but hardly a fellow there spoke to him. Smithy had done the right thing—at long last—but he could not undo the harm he had done. A few hours earlier, and all would have been well. Now, it had come too late. The Bounder had wrestled with his conscience too long.

"Vernon-Smith!"

Wingate of the Sixth looked in, and called.

"Here!" drawled Smithy.

"Head's study at once!"

"Right-ho!"

The Bounder made his way to the Head's study, tapped at the door, and entered.

Mr. Quelch was with the Head. Both masters turned grim, stern faces on the Bounder. He faced them calmly.

"You sent for me, sir?" he said.

"Yes, Vernon-Smith!" said the head, in a deep voice. "In view of your

voluntary statement to Mr. Quelch, I should be disposed to take a lenient view of the wretched trick you played on the French master, malicious and revengeful as it was. But it has led to that unfortunate boy, Skip, leaving the school in the belief that he was condemned, and was to be sent away in disgrace. In view of this—"

Buzzzzz!

The telephone-bell interrupted the Head. He broke off.

"Wait!" he snapped.

Dr. Locke picked up the receiver. He was annoyed by the interruption, and his voice was unusually sharp, as he spoke into the mouthpiece.

"Yes—Dr. Locke speaking! Who? Oh! Miss Bullivant! Yes, quite so! What—what did you say, Miss Bullivant?"

The powerful and rather strident voice of the games mistress of Cliff House came through clearly enough to reach the ears of Mr. Quelch and the Bounder, as well as Dr. Locke's.

"The boy Skip, sir—"

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"How very fortunate, Miss Bullivant! He was missed here a short time ago, and I have been very anxious—"

"I found the boy, sir, and dissuaded him from his intention of taking the train for London. He is with me now."

"I am glad—"

"He has told me what has occurred, sir, and it is my opinion that there is some error in the matter. It is my intention to find him a lodging in the village of Pegg for to-night, as he is excluded from Greyfriars—"

"But—"

"I should be glad to call and see you in the morning, sir, and discuss this matter, and ascertain—"

"My dear Miss Bullivant—"

"I repeat, sir, that I have a high opinion of this boy, and that I am convinced that there is some error in the matter, at present inexplicable. In any case, it is my intention to befriend him; and, with your permission—"

"Please let me speak!" gasped the Head. "The error has been discovered, Miss Bullivant—Skip is absolutely cleared of all suspicion—"

"Oh!"

"Will you have the great kindness to tell him so? Tell him at the same time to return to the school at once."

"Oh!"

"The matter has been entirely cleared up. I am anxious for the boy to return. Pray tell him so. I cannot say how thankful I am, dear Miss Bullivant, that—"

"I will send the boy back at once, sir!"

Miss Bullivant—a lady of few words—rang off.

The Head put up the receiver. He turned to the Remove master.

"My dear Quelch—"

"I heard Miss Bullivant's remarks, sir!" said Mr. Quelch. "How very fortunate—"

"Very fortunate indeed, Mr. Quelch. I cannot say how relieved I am. The boy will be here again soon. Vernon-Smith"—Dr. Locke fixed his eyes on the Bounder again—"in view of this—"

He paused. "I shall not administer a flogging, in the circumstances. I shall leave it to your Form-master to deal with you for your action in Monsieur Charpentier's study."

"You will take five hundred lines, Vernon-Smith!" said Mr. Quelch—after a pause.

"Very well, sir!"

The Bounder left the study. He strolled back into the Rag, with his hands in his pockets. All eyes were fixed on him there.

"I say, you fellows, he hasn't been whopped!" squeaked Billy Bunter.

"Haven't you?" demanded Bob.

The Bounder laughed.

"Sorry to disappoint you—no! Dear old Bullivant got me off! I'll never call her an old cat again—"

"Bullivant?"

"Yes; she phoned the Head while I was there," drawled the Bounder.

"She seems to have found Skip wandering, and taken him under her wing. He's coming back—"

"Skip coming back!" yelled a dozen voices.

"Yes! You'll see him soon! Three cheers!" said the Bounder sarcastically.

"Skip will be back here before prep!"

"Hurrah!" roared Bob Cherry.

It was an hour later that Skip came—with a bright and cheery face. Nearly all the Remove were waiting for him. The Famous Five collared him as soon as he appeared, and hoisted him on their shoulders. Skip, grinning, was carried up in triumph to the Remove passage—amid cheers that woke the echoes. Mr. Quelch, hurrying up to see what the row was about, only smiled, when he saw!

THE END.

(The final story in this popular series is entitled: "SKIP'S LUCKY BREAK!" Watch out for it in next Saturday's MAGNET. You'll vote it a real top-notch. —ED.)



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WHEN ANSWERING ADVERTISEMENTS

PLEASE MENTION THIS PAPER.

A BARONET'S BRAINWAVE!

A laugh a line in this week's sparkling spasm of Dicky Nugent's hilarious serial: "THE ST. SAM'S AMBULANCE!"

SIR FREDERICK'S GRATITUDE!

Crash! Bang! Wallop! Doctor Birchmell looked up with a start as that timid tapping sounded on the door of his study.

"Trot in, fathead!" he yelled cheerfully. The door opened and an elderly gentleman of refined and aristocratic appearance hobbled in. The Head's manner underwent a prompt and surprising change. He jumped to his feet and swept the carpet with his beard in a low, sweeping bow.

"Good-morning, Sir Frederick!" he cried in a cringing, fawning tone. "Fancy seeing your honour about so early as this! Is your eggshelliness sure he is quite recovered from the injuries received in yesterday's unforchunit accident?"

"Yaas, I'm glad to say I feel much better now, Birchmell!" replied Sir Frederick Funguss. "I have practically recovered from slippin' on that bananah skin—thanks to the prompt attenthun I received from your ambulance corps!"

Sir Frederick fixed his monocle in his eye and nodded graciously.

The Head was as pleased as a dog with two tails. He fairly purred. He failed to notice that behind the gleam in Sir Frederick's monocle there was another gleam—in Sir Frederick's eye.

"Really, Sir Frederick, it's awfully decent of you to praise our humble ambulance corps like this," he said with a smirk. "But, of course, I knew for a certainty that you'd be satisfied. Under my eggspert tuition, the corps has become simply topping at first aid. As to our charges, you have seen for yourself how modest they are!"

"Yaas, I certainly have!" said Sir Frederick, in a voice that combined a feint hint of sarcasm, had Doctor Birchmell only had the gumption to detect it. "A meer ten ginnies—with a ten-hillings discount for cash!"

"Dirt cheap at the price, as you'll readily agree, Sir Frederick!" grinned the Head. "But then, I'm a strong believer in bargain prices. My motto, as President of the Corps, is 'A satisfied customer always comes back.'"

"Grate gad!" ejaculated Sir Frederick. "Now that you are satisfied, you'll probably come back again and again!" said Doctor Birchmell cheerfully. "Probably it will be a broken leg next time, or a dislocated sholder or a twisted ankle!"

The chairman of the St. Sam's governors glared for a moment. Then he seemed to remember something. With an effort he conked his feelings.

"Hah! We will see about that!" he said, with a cough. "Meanwhile, my dear Birchmell, I should like my name linked up with this ambulance corps of yours. What about making me President? What—what?"

The Head's jaw dropped. "Ahem! Well, that's a little difficult at the moment, Sir Frederick. We've got a President already, you see—myself, as a matter of fact."

"What of it, my dear fellow?" asked the old baronet calmly. "You can easily resign from the presidency and become Vice-President instead, can't you?"

Doctor Birchmell eyed Sir Frederick dewbiously with his somewhat shifty eyes. His first thought was that a new President might want to poke his nose into the financial arrangements of the Corps. That was the last thing the Head wanted to happen.

But on second thoughts he decided that the risk of Sir Frederick concerning himself with the munny side of it was trivial. After all, he reflected, a gentleman of Sir Frederick's standing would hardly sit in judgment on the L.A.D. of the Corps. He would want to be the figger—head—not the head of the figgers! As Vice-President, Doctor Birchmell would be free to indulge in profiteering out of the accidents to his heart's content just as he had done in the past!

The Head stroked his beard thoughtfully for a few seconds. Then he grinned and nodded. "Sir Frederick, it gives me grate plezzure to resign in your favour!" he cried. "The St. Sam's Ambulance Corps will be honoured no end to have you as their President. I will post up an announcement on the notiss-board immediately!"

"Bai jove! That's really rippin' of you!" eggshlaimed Sir Frederick. "Thanks awfully, my dear Birchmell!"

"Don't mensh! What? Going already, your highness?" asked Doctor Birchmell, as the chairman of the governors hobbled over to the door again.

"Yaas. Eggscuse my haste, but I've some important bizzness to do!" eggshlaimed Sir Frederick. "Toodle-oo!"

And he limped out of the study. "Ha, ha!" chuckled Doctor Birchmell, gloatingly. "That's the kind of customer I like—plenty of munny and no brain! As to his becoming President, I shan't be a bit surprized if it does me quite a lot of good in the long run. Wouldn't he get a shock, though, if he knew that that banana-skin was one of the many I am strowing about to bring work to the St. Sam's Ambulance? Ha, ha, ha!"

And Doctor Birchmell larked till the tears ran down his cheeks.

But he mite not have larked so hartly had he known what Sir Frederick did after leaving his study.

The aged baronet was not quite such an idjit as the Head fondly imagined. From the moment when he had received first-aid from the Head's ambulance men, he had had his suspicions; and those suspicions were stronger than ever after his visit to the Head.

Sir Frederick never did things by halves; and now he went to the Sixth Form quarters. Burleigh was natchurally surprized to get such a distinguished visitor.

"Good-mornin', my dear Burleigh!" barked Sir Frederick. "I have called on you as kaptin of the skool to tell you that I have accepted the honnor of becoming President of the Ambulance Corps."

"S-sh! Mum's the w! my dear boys!" his the baronet, as he slunk stelhly into the passage with his fingers to his lips. "I have called on a secret mission!" "Grate pip!" "I am out to bring a real to heel—and not a sole must know I am here!" whispered Sir Frederick. "Can I trust you lads?" "Yes, rather, sir!" bethed Jolly. "You can trust for anything!" "They trust us for a least half-a-crown a week at truck-shop!" grinned Frank Fearless. "Good. Then in that case I can certainly trust you to set up a booby-trap for me in your cad-mastah's study!"

Jack Jolly & Co. jumped. "A—a booby-trap in the cad's study?" cried Jack Jolly garst. "Surely, sir, you must be joking?"

"Eggscactly, my dear lads! I am going in for a dig at the Head, but I can't do it myself, becaus it would be infra dig!"

"My hat!" "I want you lads to fix the biggest and bestliest booby-trap you have ever fixed up in your lives!" said Sir Frederick in a horse whisper. "And I will take 'neigh' for an answer!"

The chums of the Fourth gazed at the chairman of the St. Sam's governors in sheer, puzzled amazement.

"But what's the idea, sir?" gasped Jolly. "Why should a distinguished personage like yourself want to involve the Head in a booby-trap? You're the kaptin of the Guvvornors and the new President of the Ambulance Corps!"

"Aha! That's just it!" said Sir Frederick, with a grim chuckle. "The last President, Doctor Birchmell, has been arrangin' may accidents for the lennyft of the Corps, and I happened to be one of the viktim. Now the new President is gettin' his own back. Another accident is goin' to be arranged—with Doctah Birchmell as the viktim who will have to pay the bill!"

"Ye gods!" Jack Jolly grinned. Then they saw the yewmorous side of it and larked.

"Ha, ha, ha!" they roared. "S-sh!" his Sir Frederick, with an anxious glance over his sholder. "Remembah the need for secrecy, boys! Mum's the word! Are you willin' to help me in this little mattah?"

"What-ho!" chortled the chums of the Fourth. Now that they understood what was behind the baronet's mysterious behaviour, they were only too willing to help him.

"Rely on us, sir!" grinned Frank Fearless. "We'll do it with plezzure. But who'll look after the ambulance while we're gone?"

"Bai, Jove! I can do that," said Sir Frederick promptly. "As President of the Corps, I shall regard it as my dewty to remain here and wait for the alarm. I shall eggspert it as soon as your headmastah walks into the booby-trap!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "You had better go now," went on the baronet briskly. "Mind you make that booby-trap a grate success, my boys!"

"Yes, rather!" "Leave it to us, sir!" Jack Jolly & Co. fairly raced out of the garage. It was something new to them to fix up a booby-trap in the Head's study at the eggspress rekwest of the Chairman of the Guvvornors, and they meant to make the most of it.

They soon got to work on their congenial task. First they went up to the Fourth Form passidge and collected the materials of war. Red ink and black ink was collected from sundry studies, and a plentiful supply of soot was obtained from Jolly's study chimney. Fearless contributed a large bottle of liquid glue and Merry some whitewash, while Bright added a useful pot of paint. Then all the ingredients were mixed up in an old pail.

Finally, having found out that Doctor Birchmell was in the Hall with Mr. Lickham, the heroes of the Fourth carried the fearsome mixture along to the Head's study. Two minnits was all they wanted to fix up the pail over the door, and that brief period passed without interruption. Then Jack Jolly & Co., their task completed, went into hiding down the passidge and waited.

They had not long to wait. Very soon the clumping of the Head's hob-nailed boots was heard in the distance. Doctor Birchmell entered the passidge, with a cheerful grin on his face.

He stopped outside his sanctum, kicked open the door and walked in.

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SWOOOOOSH! Bang! Clatter! Crash!

"Yarooooo! Woooooop!" Down went the Head with the pail over his head, and the mixture streaming down him!

The next moment, Jack Jolly & Co. were galloping down the stairs like champions on the cinder-track. "Quick! Quick! The Head's had an accident!" they yelled. "TURN OUT THE AMBULANCE!"

(Don't miss the last rib-tickling instalment of this great serial in next week's "Herald"!)

PUZZLED PUGILIST'S PLAINT!

When Bolsover Major asked Wingate if he minded the Rag being used for boxing, Wingate replied: "Not a scrap!" Now Bolsover doesn't know whether he meant "Yes" or "No."

SCHOOL SUPPORTS NATIONAL FITNESS!

All Sections Back New Movement

The news that a National Fitness movement is starting has been received with cheers in every corner of Greyfriars.

Never before has an idea aroused such universal approval. From the Head down to Trotter, the School House page, every-

Greyfriars, with its splendid sporting history—"bunk!"—will rise as one man to the National Fitness movement. (Crash! Thud!) he told our interviewer. "My belief is summed up in the old Latin proverb"—wallop!—"Mens sana in corpore sano"—thwack!—"and to that I should like to add this—"

Unfortunately, our interviewer was unable to take down any more of his statement, as Larry's punchball shot out at an unexpected angle just then, catching him on the jaw and turning him into a catherinowheel.

Mr. Prout was equally enthusiastic in his own way, when approached on the subject in Masters' Common-room.

"Indubitably a movement calculated to stimulate the imagination of all sportsmen-patriots," he said. "I picture a race of Samsons, marching with heads erect, chests out, and shoulders well back—breathing the free air of our glorious native land!"

The effect of Mr. Prout's pleasing imaginative picture was slightly spoiled by the fact that he was curled up in an arm-chair with his head down, chest in, and shoulders hunched, and

ROLLER-FOOTER A GAME FOR SUPER-SPORTSMEN!

Says BOB CHERRY

For a he-man's half-hour, lads, try the new game of footer on roller-skates! It's simply great!

Up to the time of my first game, I'd always imagined that ordinary footer of the Lower School kind was fairly tough. Now I know better. Footer on rollers at forty miles an hour makes the ordinary game look like kiss-in-the-ring!

The wonder is that the Beak allowed us the gym for it. But Wingate, who told us he had played it himself at a country house party last Christmas, has a persuasive tongue and got the Head's permission without any trouble.

We lined up six-a-side after ten. The players were all Remove chaps, and Bolsover, also on skates, was ref. Spectators stayed in the doorway and on window-ledges owing to the risk of the gym being turned into a slaughter-house if they got in the way.

Speed! Ye gods, you should have been there to see it! Several times I covered the distance from goal to goal

in less than three seconds by Mauly's stop-watch.

I might mention that tactics in roller-footer are quite different from those in the parent game.

Charging, for instance, should be done with a certain amount of caution. The first time I charged Smithy, I made it a hearty affair on ordinary Soccer lines. I finished up on my back twenty yards away!

Kicking the ball is rather different, too. You lose your balance more easily. The first time I tried it, I sent in a regular smasher. Result, before the ball had reached the "net," I was spinning round like a blessed top on my neck!

All the same, it's voted a great game by those of us in the Remove who have played it. Already we have a team of potential world-beaters ready to take to the floor against any other team, junior or senior. The only trouble is that nobody else seems to have heard of roller-footer yet!

Mr. Prout has been seen cleaning and oiling his gun. It's time something was done about the mice in the Fifth Form quarters!



body agrees that the nation must become fit and that Greyfriars is going to lead the way! Interviewed in the gym between vicious jabs at a punchball, Mr. Larry Lasselles, leading stuff sportsman in the school, greeted the news with enthusiasm. "I am sure"—biff—that

that he was breathing the noxious fumes of a black torpedo-shaped cigar; but his words were well worth recording, anyway!

Coker of the Fifth felt that it was up to him to set the National Fitness on the road to success by giving an exhibition of exercises tending to promote good health. A large crowd turned up in the Fifth Form Room to watch him, and great interest was shown in Coker's display of handspings and somersaults, particular attention being given to a somersault in which Coker kicked a bottle of ink off the Form-master's desk and turned himself into a tolerable imitation of a Kafir. Coker was unable to listen to the vote of thanks owing to his hurried departure for the bath-room, but the crowd voted the display a great success.

National Fitness is now firmly established at Greyfriars. You can see it developing on all hands every day.

Not that it necessarily means the same thing to all people, of course. Apparently it doesn't to Dabney, of the Upper Fourth, for instance. As soon as Dab. heard about it, he rushed off and ordered a new suit. The poor fish thought that "fitness" meant getting a good fit from a tailor!

And there's always Bunter. We found the old porpoise doing his bit in the movement by tucking into the contents of somebody's hamper. He'd read the notice on the board rather hurriedly and thought we were all out for National FATNESS!