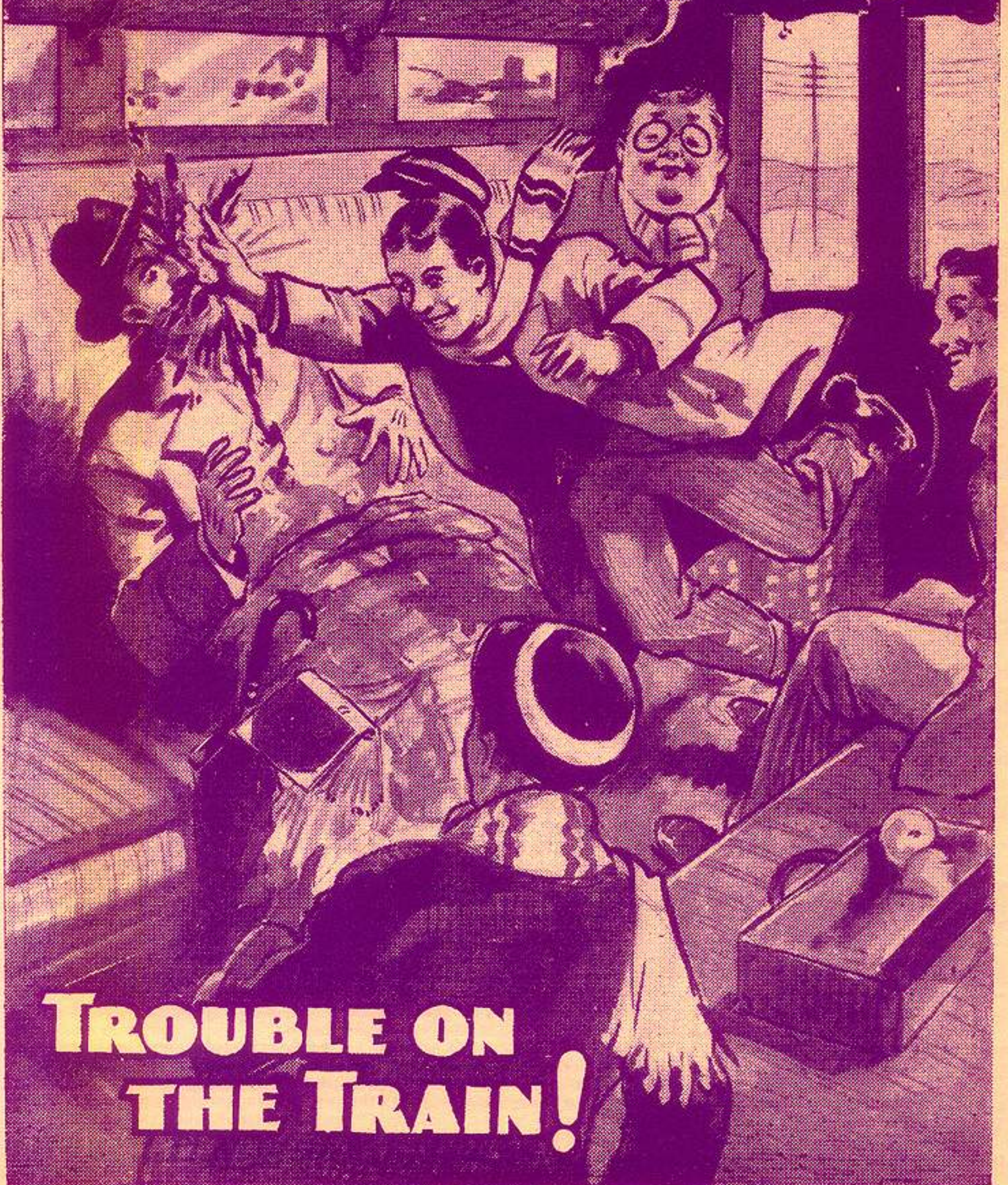


**THE  
MAGNET**

**“ SMITHY’S SECRET WEAPON ! ”** Exciting School-Adventure Yarn  
of HARRY WHARTON & CO.

# The Magnet

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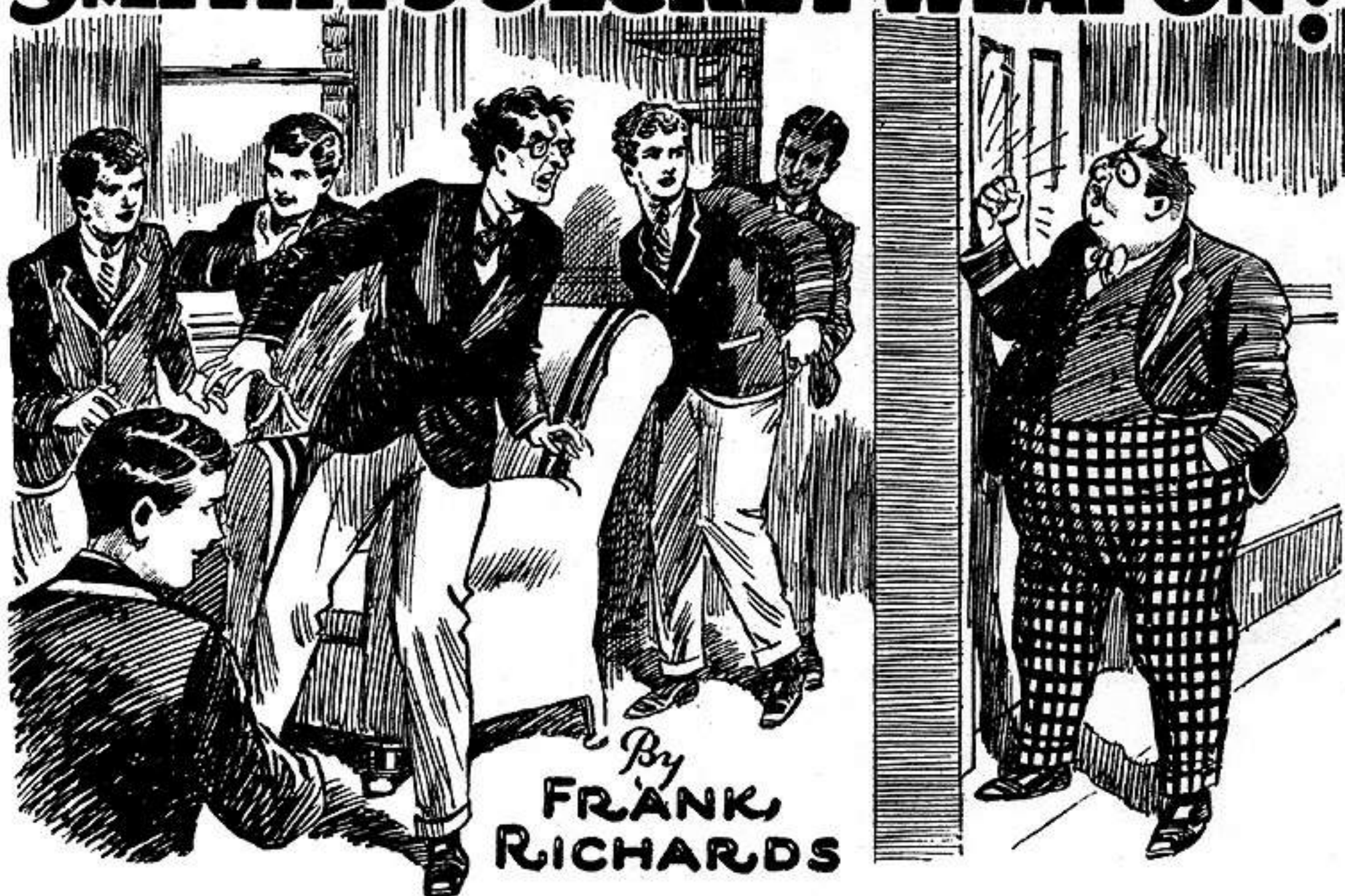


**TROUBLE ON  
THE TRAIN!**



NOBODY CAN SMACK VERNON-SMITH'S HEAD AND GET AWAY WITH IT! MR. LAMB, THE NEW MASTER OF THE GREYFRIARS REMOVE, THOUGHT HE COULD! BUT HE MADE THE BIGGEST MISTAKE OF HIS LIFE!

# SMITHY'S SECRET WEAPON!



## FIRST DAY OF TERM!

**H**ERBERT VERNON-SMITH chuckled.

"Let's have him in!" he said, with a mischievous grin.

"No room!" said Bob Cherry.

"I'm surprised at you, Cherry! Can't we make room for a beak—nice respectful boys like us?"

"I say, you fellows, there's too many in this carriage already!" squeaked Billy Bunter. "Don't you let any more in! I can hardly breathe as it is!"

"No need for you to go on breathing, Bunter—"

"Eh?"

"In fact, the sooner you stop, the better—"

"You silly ass!" howled Bunter. "Look here, Smithy—"

"We're having him in!" said Vernon-Smith; and he pushed the carriage door open and called: "This way, sir!"

Really, that carriage was sufficiently full already. Greyfriars fellows crowded Lantham Junction on the first day of term, and everybody wanted to go in the first train.

In that carriage were packed Harry Wharton & Co.—five of them; Billy Bunter, who, being double-width, counted as two, Herbert Vernon-Smith, and Tom Redwing and Peter Todd.

There were nine of them, or counting Bunter as two, ten!

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The knock on the study door was followed by the well-known bark of Mr. Quelch: "Is Mr. Lamb here?" The unexpected voice threw the new master off his balance, and a look of rage flashed over his face.

Getting another passenger into that carriage was really rather like cramming an extra sardine into a full tin.

There were plenty of fellows left on the platform. Some of them looked into that carriage and passed on. If any fellow tried to open the door, the Bounder held it on the inside. Smithy agreed with Bunter that the carriage was full enough—till he spotted Mr. Lamb on the platform. Then he discovered all of a sudden that there was room for one more.

"Look here, Smithy, don't play the goat!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "There's no room for the Lamb in here—"

"Oh, lots!" said Smithy.

"Smithy only wants to rag him!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Guessed it!" agreed the Bounder. "What a brain!"

"Chuck it, Smithy!" said Frank Nugent.

"Rats!"

"Look here, Smithy, old man—" began Redwing.

"Rats to you, too!" said the Bounder.

He leaned from the doorway, and waved his hand. Smithy was an obstinate fellow, and he was going to

have his way. It was half an hour's run from Lantham to Courtfield; and Smithy anticipated some entertainment from the Pet Lamb to enliven the run.

Mr. Lamb, the art master of Greyfriars, was coming along the platform, blinking at the train windows over his gold-rimmed glasses.

He had a bag in one hand, a rug over the other arm, and an umbrella under that arm. Fellows on the platform playfully barged him—by accident, of course. Mr. Lamb, who was called the Pet Lamb for his docile ways, could be ragged to almost any extent.

Coker of the Fifth, winking at his pals, Potter and Greene, backed into Mr. Lamb, putting his weight into it, and the little gentleman staggered, and dropped his bag, his rug, and his umbrella.

"Goodness gracious!" bleated the Lamb.

Coker looked round at him. He was taller, bigger, and broader than the art master, and he looked down at the staggering Lamb.

"Dear me!" said Coker. "Did I barge you, sir? So sorry! Help me pick up his things, you chaps!"

Coker picked up Mr. Lamb's bag.



He immediately dropped it again, on Mr. Lamb's foot.

"Oh, my goodness!" ejaculated the Pet Lamb.

The carriageful of juniors grinned. Lamb seemed not to have the faintest suspicion that Coker had backed into him on purpose, and that he had intentionally dropped the bag on his foot.

"It's rotten to rag a chap like that!" said Bob Cherry. "He's too jolly innocent!"

"The innocence is terrific!" remarked Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh. "Let him rip, my esteemed Smithy!"

"Rot!" answered the Bounder.

He jumped out of the carriage and, with a sudden barge, sent Coker of the Fifth spinning. Then he grabbed up bag, umbrella, and rug.

"Please get into our carriage, sir!" said Smithy.

The Lamb blinked at him.

"Thank you very much, Vernon-Smith!" he bleated. "I shall be very glad, if there is room!"

"Tons of room, sir! Push up, you fellows!"

Harry Wharton & Co. dutifully pushed up, to make room.

The Lamb was so unsuspecting, and so docile, that they felt quite kindly towards him. Really, there was no room in that carriage, but they made room somehow. On their own account, they would have allowed the Lamb to wander past that carriage; but now that he was coming in, there was nothing for well-mannered fellows to do, but to make the best of it politely.

There was an indignant squeak from Billy Bunter, as he was shoved, pressed, and squeezed into hardly more than room for one.

The fat ornament of the Greyfriars Remove required space; moreover, Bunter had a jam tart in his overcoat pocket, to devour on the journey; and it seemed probable that all this pushing, pressing, and squeezing would have a deteriorating effect on that jam tart.

But Bunter's squeaks passed unheeded.

Pushing, shoving, and squeezing, the juniors made room for Mr. Lamb—Redwing and Bob Cherry standing.

Mr. Lamb got in, and sat down.

The Bounder was following him in, when Coker, having finished spinning across the platform, came back with a rush. He grabbed Vernon-Smith by the shoulder.

"You barged me!" roared Coker. "By gum, I'll let you know whether a Remove fag can barge a Fifth Form man! I'll jolly well—Whoop!"

Mr. Lamb's bag, in Smithy's hand, swung round, and interrupted Coker, banging on the spot where Horace Coker had packed away a good breakfast that morning.

Coker spluttered, staggered back, and sat on the platform.

"Man down!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Vernon-Smith clambered in, jammed the bag on the rack over Mr. Lamb's head, and lifted the rug, as if to place it with the bag. Instead of which, he let it fall on the Lamb's

head, enveloping him suddenly, and causing him to disappear almost completely from sight.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Stop it, Smithy, you ass!"

"Oooogh!" came gurgling from under the rug. "My goodness! Woogh! What is happening? I am—oogh—suffocating—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Lamb struggled wildly under the enveloping rug.

Vernon-Smith rendered immediate assistance, but as his assistance took the form of holding the rug jammed down over Lamb's head, it was not of much use to the art master.

"Ooogh! Woogh! Urrggh!" came from the gasping, wriggling Lamb.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Chuck it, Smithy!"

"Cheese it, you ass!"

"'Nuff's as good as a feast, Smithy! Stop it!"

"My esteemed Smithy—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors could not help laughing. There was something absurd in the hapless Lamb struggling and wriggling under that enveloping rug, unaware that Smithy was baffling all his efforts to get it off. Still, most of the fellows in the carriage thought that it was rather rough on the

### SENSATIONAL SCHOOL STORY TELLING OF HARRY WHAR- TON & CO.'S EXCITING FIRST DAY OF TERM AT GREY- FRIARS.

innocent Lamb, and they called on Smithy to chuck it.

"Oh dear! Oh, my goodness! Please help me!" bleated the Lamb, under the rug. "This is very, very uncomfortable! Dear me! I do not seem to be able to get this rug off!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The enveloping rug tossed like a stormy sea, as the Lamb struggled to get it off. One arm suddenly flew out from under it, and the hand on that arm came into sudden and violent contact with the Bounder's grinning face.

Smack!

"Yoo-hoop!" yelled the Bounder, taken quite by surprise, and he went over, headlong, among a jungle of legs and feet.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the crowd of juniors in the carriage. That unexpected outcome of Smithy's rag struck them as the funniest part of it. They yelled.

No longer assisted by Smithy, Mr. Lamb got the rug off his head. With a crimson face, and his gold-rimmed glasses askant on his nose, he blinked breathlessly at the laughing juniors.

"Oh, my goodness!" he exclaimed.

"I am quite out of breath. I think I knocked my hand on something—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I have hurt my palm—I think I struck something hard—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked the Removites.

There was no doubt that the Lamb had struck something hard. Whether his palm was hurt or not, there was no doubt that Smithy's nose was.

Vernon-Smith sat up dizzily amid countless feet, gasped, and clapped his hand to his nose, which felt as if it had been driven into his head like a nail.

"Ow!" he gasped. "Oh gad! Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The carriage door slammed, and the train rolled out of Lantham Junction.

Mr. Lamb folded his rug over his knees, and settled down comfortably in his corner seat.

Smithy scrambled to his feet, his hand still to his nose. The Bounder had rather a prominent nose, and it had caught that sudden smack fair and square. It was red as a peony, fairly glowing, and it had a pain in it. The crowd of juniors were grinning; but Smithy, as he squeezed into a seat, did not grin. Smithy, who had started it, was the only fellow now who was not amused by that rag on the Pet Lamb!

### TROUBLE ON THE TRAIN!

"I SAY, you fellows—"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"Shan't!" roared Bunter.

"Give a fellow room! I've got to get something out of my pocket!"

The fat Owl of the Remove squirmed.

He was wedged between Johnny Bull and Peter Todd. He had, as he had stated, hardly room to breathe, and no room at all to get anything out of his overcoat pocket. He could not even get his podgy paw into the pocket, let alone extract the jam tart therefrom.

The train was approaching Redclyffe Station, where it was going to stop. That was half-way to Greyfriars—and Bunter wanted to get going on that jam tart. It was the last item in a sticky supply he had brought from home. But he squirmed in vain.

"Will you give a fellow room?" he hooted.

"Better stand up to it, old fat man!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Stop sticking your silly elbow into my ribs!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Beast!" gasped Bunter.

Bunter did not want to stand up to it. When Billy Bunter was sitting down he never wanted to stand up. He did not see why other fellows could not stand up and give him the sea-room he needed. However, the other fellows did not stand up, so the fat Owl jerked himself to his feet.

Then, at long last, he was able to extract the jam tart.

Bunter had feared that all the squeezing and shoving might have deleterious effects on his last tart. His fears were well founded. He blinked in deep wrath and dismay at the object he dragged out of his overcoat pocket.

Sticky lining came out—and stick-



ing to the sticky lining was what had once been a jam tart. There had been paper round it, but the paper had squeezed off. Most of the jam had squeezed off, too, and the tart itself was reduced to pulp—in which was mixed and mingled all the dust and fluff that had accumulated in Bunter's pocket ever since he had been the possessor of that overcoat.

"Oh crikey!" ejaculated Bunter, as he blinked at the squashed, dusty, unrecognisable tart through his big spectacles.

"What on earth's that?" asked Frank Nugent, staring at the horrible object.

"It's my tart!" howled Bunter.

"Oh, my hat! Is that a tart?" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "Don't offer it to me, old chap!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's my last tart—the only one I had left!" howled the fat Owl. "Now look at it! I can't eat it now!"

"Chuck it out of the window!" said Harry Wharton, laughing. "Even you couldn't scoff that, Bunter! Sure it ever was a tart?"

"It was a lovely tart!" wailed Bunter. "A scrumptious jam tart! Now I can't eat it! I say, Toddy, you've got some toffee—I saw you get it out of the machine at Lantham! I say, I'll swop this tart for your toffee."

"Will you?" gasped Peter Todd.

"I will, old chap——"

"I hardly think so," contradicted Peter. "My idea is that you won't."

"I say, you fellows, it was a jolly good tart!" said Bunter, blinking round at the juniors. "It's got a bit squashed, but it's all right, really, and if any fellow would like it, I'll swop it."

"Don't all speak at once!" said Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Perhaps Bunter did not quite expect to bag a swop for that tart! Certainly, there was no fellow in the carriage who would have taken it as a gift. The mere sight of it, in its present state, produced qualms. Nobody would have swopped an aniseed ball for that tart! But, quite unexpectedly, Herbert Vernon-Smith gave a nod as Bunter's blink came round to him.

"Take a packet of butterscotch for it, Bunter?" he asked.

"Yes—yes, rather!" said the fat Owl eagerly. "It's yours, Smithy, old man! Where's the butterscotch?"

The Bouncer produced a packet of butterscotch. The juniors simply stared at him. That Smithy had the remotest, faintest intention of eating that tart was impossible. It made a fellow almost ill to look at it. Even Bunter, who could eat almost anything, jibbed at it.

So what Smithy wanted it for was rather a mystery.

But it seemed that he did, for he handed over a packet of butterscotch to the fat Owl in exchange for the dilapidated tart.

He took it in rather a gingerly manner. Clearly, he did not like handling that ghastly lump of sticky pulp. But he took it.

Billy Bunter wedged himself back

in his seat, happily, with a large mouth packed to capacity with butterscotch.

Vernon-Smith sat holding the tart, regarding it with a thoughtful look, the other fellows watching him curiously. It was plain that the Bouncer was up to something, though they did not know what—for assuredly he was not going to eat that tart.

"Too far gone, I'm afraid," he remarked at last. "I'd better chuck it out of the window, I think."

"Much better!" said Harry Wharton.

"The betterfulness is terrific, my esteemed Smithy!" said Hurree Janset Ram Singh. "And the soonerfulness the quicker!"

Vernon-Smith rose to his feet and moved towards the window—the window beside which Mr. Lamb sat.

Then the juniors guessed why he had swopped butterscotch for that tart—it was intended for the Pet Lamb!

Smithy's nose was red and sore. Smithy did not like a joke turning against himself; he disliked it very much. He was going to get his own back now—with Bunter's dilapidated tart.

"Smithy!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "Look here——"

Lamb might be an ass, but he was a master, and it was expected that he would be taking the Remove again that term, as Mr. Quelch was still away from the school. So he was, for the time, Smithy's Form-master. And bunging a sticky chunk of jammy pulp on a Form-master was altogether too thick—in the opinion of the captain of the Remove.

Smithy did not heed his remonstrance; Smithy never heeded when his wilful mind was made up.

He reached the window, contrived to stumble over Nugent's feet, and fell against Mr. Lamb.

Squash!

His hand, with the tart in it, slapped fairly in the middle of the Pet Lamb's features! That horrible, sticky mass was plastered over the face of the art master.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Oh, my hat!"

"So sorry, sir!" exclaimed Smithy, as he righted himself. "My foot slipped! Can't you keep your feet out of a fellow's way, Nugent?"

The juniors gazed at Mr. Lamb. If he took this, and allowed it to pass as an accident, he was not merely an innocent Lamb, but a blithering idiot, in the opinion of the Removites. All the fellows thought that the reckless Bouncer had gone too far this time—no fellow could expect to get by with this.

For a moment the Lamb clawed at jam and pulpy pastry plastered on his face and his glasses, the juniors watching him breathlessly. Then he leaped up, crimson with rage under the stickiness on his face.

Sticky plaster could not hide that expression. It was quite startling and alarming. The Remove fellows remembered that last term the docile Lamb had shown one or two flashes of a fierce temper, quite out of keeping with his usual lamb-like

ways. It was evident that Smithy had overdone it this time.

In a moment the Lamb's grasp was on Vernon-Smith. Holding him by the collar with his left, the Lamb smacked his head with his right—again and again, and with such force that the smacks rang through the carriage like pistol-shots.

Smack, smack, smack!

"Oh! Stoppit!" roared Vernon-Smith, in rage and amazement, struggling in the Lamb's grasp. "Stoppit, will you?"

Smack, smack, smack, smack!

The Bouncer struggled savagely. Up to that moment, Smithy would have said unhesitatingly that he was as strong as the Lamb, and that the man could not have handled him. But he found out his mistake now! The grip that was on his collar was like iron—and the Bouncer, who was muscular enough, struggled in vain to break away. In amazement, he realised that he was a mere infant in the art master's hands.

Smack, smack, smack!

"Mr. Lamb!" exclaimed Harry Wharton breathlessly.

Smithy had asked for it—begged for it! But smacking a fellow's head, especially in that savage way, was unknown at Greyfriars, and it almost horrified the other fellows in the carriage. The captain of the Remove felt bound to intervene.

Lamb did not heed him. He smacked and smacked and smacked, his eyes glinting rage over his sticky glasses.

"Leave go, will you!" yelled the Bouncer. "I'll hack your shins!"

Smack, smack, smack!

With a jerk and a jolt, the train stopped in Redclyffe Station. Then, as if recalled to himself, Mr. Lamb ceased to smack the yelling Bouncer's head. He threw Vernon-Smith away from him—again with unexpected strength.

The Bouncer sprawled over Wharton and Bob Cherry's knees, and they caught him, to keep him from rolling to the floor.

Mr. Lamb did not speak. He caught up his rug and umbrella, grabbed his bag down from the rack, and stepped out of the carriage to the platform. Perhaps he was going to get a much-needed wash before he continued on his way to Greyfriars. Anyhow, he went, and a porter shut the door again.

Vernon-Smith tottered to a seat and almost collapsed into it. He was dizzy, dazed, his head spinning.

Tom Redwing caught his arm and steadied him. The train rolled out of Redclyffe—the Bouncer panting and panting and panting, his eyes flaming.

"By gum!" said Bob Cherry. "What a little tiger! The Lamb's got a temper, you men, when he lets it rip!"

"The brute!" said Redwing indignantly. "He had no right to pitch into Smithy like that!"

"It was over the limit and no mistake!" said Harry Wharton. "Quelch would take a fellow's skin off for a jape like that—but smacking a fellow's head in that style——"



"I'll make him sorry for it!" breathed the Bounder.

The other fellows did not answer that. Neither did Vernon-Smith speak again. Till the train ran into Courtfield, he sat rubbing a dizzy and aching head, with a black and bitter brow, in the blackest temper ever.

### TAXI!

"WHAT about a taxi?" asked Billy Bunter.

"Fine!" agreed Bob Cherry heartily. "You standing it?" "Oh! Yes! If—"

"Come on, then!" The Famous Five, grinning, walked along the platform at Courtfield towards the exit. Billy Bunter rolled after them.

Most of the fellows were heading for the other platform, to take the local train to Friardale, where the school omnibus waited to convey them on to Greyfriars. Fellows with money to burn sometimes got out at Courtfield to take a taxi, instead of going on in the local train. Billy Bunter vastly preferred a taxi.

Harry Wharton & Co. had no money to burn, and certainly had no idea of expending their supplies of that necessary article, cash, in taxicabs. It was a fine, frosty day, and they were going to walk from Courtfield, across the common, to the school. Still, if Billy Bunter stood a taxi, they were ready to pack into it—if Bunter wanted them to! They doubted very much whether Bunter was going to. It was much more probable that Bunter would discover a sudden and unexpected shortage of cash when it came to taking that taxi.

The Famous Five emerged into Courtfield High Street, with the fat Owl of the Remove rolling on behind.

There was no taxi to be seen on the rank; taxicabs were fewer, in days of petrol rationing, and any that had been available had already been snapped up by wealthier fellows than the Famous Five. That, however, did not matter much to the chums of the Remove, as they had no intention whatever of taking a taxi—unless in the extremely unlikely event of William George Bunter standing the same.

A car stood by the pavement, with a chauffeur standing by it like a ramrod.

The Famous Five glanced at the car, and, rather curiously, at the chauffeur.

They knew Dr. Locke's car. But they did not know the chauffeur. It seemed that their headmaster had engaged a new chauffeur since they had left Greyfriars for the Christmas holidays.

He was a rather lean man, with black hair and a somewhat olive-tinted complexion, which gave him a slightly foreign look. He stood by the car, looking towards the station entrance, and taking no notice of the juniors—though his eyes rested on them for a moment.

"This way, you fellows!" said Bunter.

"Eh?"

"Here's a taxi!"

"Oh, my hat!"

At the distance, across the pavement, the Head's car was a taxi to the short-sighted Owl of the Remove.

Bunter rolled across to it, the Famous Five staring after him.

He gave the lean, ramrod-like chauffeur a poke in the ribs.

The chauffeur gave a gasp at that sudden and unexpected assault, and stared round—and down—at Bunter.

"What—" he began.

"Greyfriars School!" said Bunter.

"Eh?"

"Greyfriars School! I say, you fellows, come on—I've bagged a taxi—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Famous Five.

A slow grin dawned on the face of the lean chauffeur, who was staring blankly at Bunter.

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at!" yapped Bunter. "Come on—or somebody else will bag this taxi!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I believe old Prout's coming out, and ten to one he will want a taxi!" exclaimed Bunter. "This is the only one here—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Will you shut up cackling, and get in?" hooted Bunter. "We shall lose this taxi, at this rate. I'm standing it, if that's what you're worrying about. It's only five bob to the school. You fellows can lend me a bob each, till we get in—I can't ask the driver to change a five-pound note."

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked the Famous Five.

Even yet it did not seem to have dawned upon the fat Owl that the Head's car was not a taxicab, and that the Head's new chauffeur was not a taxi-driver. The chums of the Remove wondered how long Bunter would be in making that discovery.

"I say, you fellows, are you getting in or not?" howled Bunter.

"Not!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

"The notfulness is terrific!" grinned Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"I suppose you can lend me a bob each!" snorted Bunter. "The man wouldn't be able to change a fiver for me."

"Oh, we'll change it for you, old chap, before we start!" said Bob. "Cough it up!"

"Oh, I—I forgot—I left my wallet at home!" said Bunter hastily. "Just before I came away, I went into the blue drawing-room, and left it on the grand piano, and—forgot to pick it up again. I suppose you can lend me a bob all the same, can't you?"

Bob shook his head.

"Can't be done!" he answered. "I left all my banknotes in the pink boudoir—"

"Oh, don't be an ass! Haven't you got a ten-shilling note?"

"I left all my ten-shilling notes in the terra-cotta dining-room."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly idiot! Look here, Wharton, you—"

"Sorry!" said the captain of the Remove, shaking his head. "I left all my gold and notes in the mauve music-room."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, Prout will be out in a minute, and he will want this taxi—it's the only one here!" howled Bunter. "Tumble in, and I'll settle at the school. I remember now, I've got a few half-crowns in my—my waistcoat pocket, but I can't get at them with this coat on! Come on! Jump in!"

"We'll jump in, if the driver will let us!" grinned Bob.

"Eh? I suppose he wants a fare, as he's hanging about here. Don't be an ass! He's not engaged!"

"How do you know? He may be engaged, or married, for all you know!"

"You silly chump!" yelled Bunter. "Get in, before old Pompous comes rolling out and bags this taxi!"

"Better ask the driver first!" chortled Bob. "Will you take us to Greyfriars, my man?"

The lean chauffeur seemed to have a rather wooden and expressionless face. He had been standing like a graven image before the Remove fellows arrived. But he seemed to be deriving entertainment from this little scene, and his wooden face had relaxed into a grin.

"Sorry, sir, can't be done!" he answered.

"Look here, that's rot!" exclaimed Bunter hotly. "You're bound to take passengers. You fellows get in, and he'll jolly well have to take us! I'm jolly well getting in, I know that!"

"You howling ass!" roared Bob. "Can't you see that that's the Head's car?"

"Eh?"

"Dr. Locke's car, you fathead!"

"Tain't!" hooted Bunter. "If it was the Head's car, it would be the Head's chauffeur, and I've never seen that chap before!"

"Looks like a new one," said Bob. "Perhaps the Head got him in a Christmas cracker. Anyhow, it's the Big Beak's car!"

Billy Bunter turned his big spectacles on the car. On a close inspection, even the Owl of the Remove discerned that it was not a taxicab.

"Oh!" he ejaculated. "Blow!" He blinked at the lean man. "You the old bean's chauffeur?" he asked.

"I am Dr. Locke's chauffeur, sir," answered the lean man quietly.

"What's your name?"

"John Robinson, sir!"

"You weren't at Greyfriars last term?" said Bunter, blinking at him.

"No, sir. Williams was called up, and I have taken his place."

"Well, look here, if you're going back, you can give me a lift!" said Bunter. "I'll stand you half-a-crown! I say, you fellows, one of you can lend me half-a-crown!"

Mr. Prout, the master of the Fifth Form, came out of the station. He had a puzzled and rather annoyed look on his face. At the sight of the



group of juniors he called to them. "Wharton, have you seen Mr. Lamb? You remember Mr. Lamb, the new drawing master? I think he took the Remove for a week or two last term in Mr. Quelch's absence. You would know him?"

"Oh, yes, sir!"

"He was to come by this train," said Mr. Prout. "I cannot find him on the platform, and the Head's car is waiting. Have you seen him?"

"He got out at Redclyffe, sir."

"Bless my soul! Why should he get out at Redclyffe?" exclaimed Mr. Prout crossly. "Are you sure he got out at Redclyffe, Wharton?"

"Yes, sir; he was in our carriage."

"Extraordinary!" said Mr. Prout. "Well, if Mr. Lamb got out at Redclyffe, it is useless to wait for him!" Prout rolled across the pavement. "Dear me! I have not seen you before, my man!"

"I am Dr. Locke's new chauffeur, sir. My name is Robinson!"

"Dear me! I was unaware that Dr. Locke had engaged a new chauffeur. Mr. Lamb will not be coming now till the next train. That will be half an hour. You had better drive to the school!"

Prout rolled into the car and sat down. That car, evidently, was at the station to meet Mr. Prout and Mr. Lamb, and convey them to Greyfriars.

"Very good, sir!" said John Robinson.

Billy Bunter blinked in exasperation after that car as the Head's new chauffeur drove away up Courtfield High Street. Then he blinked round at the Famous Five—and had a view of five backs. The chums of the Remove were starting.

"I say, you fellows," howled Bunter, "hold on! We shall get a taxi if we wait long enough!"

Bob Cherry looked round.

"Still standing that taxi?" he asked.

"Eh? Oh, yes!"

Billy Bunter was quite prepared to stand the taxi, if he could get Harry Wharton & Co. into one! When the taxi arrived at the school, somebody would have to pay the driver. It couldn't be Bunter, because Bunter hadn't any money! So it would have to be somebody else. Bunter did not mind who else it was. All Bunter was particular about was getting a taxi!

"Well, that's a good offer, you men," said Bob. "If Bunter's going to stand a taxi, why shouldn't we have a lift?"

"Oh, don't be a goat!" grunted Johnny Bull. "Bunter's not going to stick me for a taxi fare. I know that!"

"That's all right. Bunter's standing the taxi!" said Bob cheerily. "We'll start walking, Bunter!"

"Eh?"

"You'll overtake us in your taxi."

"What?"

"And we'll hop in! Don't forget to give us a hail when you pass us in the road. Come on, you men!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Famous Five went off at a brisk pace.

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Billy Bunter glared after them with a glare that almost endangered his spectacles.

"Beasts!" he roared.

The Famous Five chuckled, and disappeared. They did not quite expect to be overtaken by Bunter in a taxi. Billy Bunter was not likely to engage that taxi on his lonely own—and face the driver at Greyfriars.

Harry Wharton & Co. walked away cheerily by the road over the common, and, as they expected, they arrived at the school without being overtaken by a fat Owl in a taxi!

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### A SPOT OF VENTRILOQUISM!

"**B**EAST!" murmured Billy Bunter.

Mr. Lamb came out of Courtfield Station.

More than half an hour had passed since Harry Wharton & Co. had departed.

Bunter was still there.

The fat Owl had rather landed himself in a scrape. Having lost the local train to Friardale, he could not go on by train. He could not walk—not if he could help it, at all events. Two or three empty taxis came back to the rank, and the fat Owl eyed them longingly; but he did not venture to call one. It was rather too risky on his own. Billy Bunter knew how unpleasant a taxi-driver could be when his fare was not forthcoming—Bunter had been there before, so to speak.

But there was always a chance of picking up a lift from some wealthier fellow who was cabbing it.

Coker, Potter, and Greene of the Fifth came out and took a taxi, passing unheeded a fat, appealing squeak from Bunter. Temple, Dabney, and Fry of the Fourth did the same, but they only smiled when Bunter requested a lift; Fry, however, promising him a lift if ever he travelled in a ten-ton lorry, which he stated might bear Bunter's weight at a pinch! The fat Owl was left disconsolate.

Then, at length, another train having come in, Mr. Lamb appeared in the offing.

Bunter blinked at him without much hope.

The Head's car having long since gone, Lamb had to take a taxi, or walk from Courtfield to the school.

Bunter had neck enough to ask a master to give him a lift, but he doubted the result. Lamb had been in a terrific rage when he got out at Redclyffe, owing to the Bounder's reckless jape with the squashed jam tart; moreover, Lamb was a beast, anyhow, according to Bunter. Bunter had had a sample of his uncertain temper last term.

Mr. Lamb had taken up his post as art master at Greyfriars on the same day that Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove had disappeared. The Head had been very pleased and relieved to find that Lamb was capable of taking a Form as Form-master, and Lamb had

taken the Remove in Quelch's absence.

But, docile as the Lamb seemed—numerically as he was ragged, and easy-going as he was in comparison with Quelch—he had twice allowed his uncertain temper to get the upper hand, and Skinner and Billy Bunter had both had the benefit of it in the shape of extremely severe whoppings.

Skinner's whopping did not matter much, but Bunter's did—at least, from the fat Owl's point of view. Bunter had not forgotten that terrific whopping, and he regarded Lamb with a doubtful and distrustful eye.

Nine times in ten, Lamb could be imposed on to any extent; but the tenth time he might cut up unexpectedly rusty. Really, old Quelch himself was preferable; a fellow, at least, knew what to expect from Quelch.

Mr. Lamb was not looking very amiable as he came out. Perhaps he had not quite recovered from the Bounder's jape, or—though it did not occur to Bunter—perhaps he was not so careful to keep up his outward aspect of docile amiability when there were no Greyfriars fellows about to see him.

He did not notice the fat junior hanging about, as he crossed the pavement from the station entrance and signed to a taxi.

"Beast!" murmured Bunter, for the second time.

He hesitated. But, after all, Lamb could not eat him. He could only say no, at the worst, if Bunter asked him for a lift.

So the fat junior rolled after Lamb, and squeaked:

"I say, sir—excuse me, sir——"

The Pet Lamb glanced round at him. His brows contracted a little. He really did not seem to like Bunter—or to be pleased to see him. His look was not encouraging. However, Bunter squeaked on:

"I—I—I've lost the train, sir——"

"Indeed!" said Mr. Lamb. "There are later trains, I think, Bunter! You had better go into the station."

"I—I—I thought perhaps you'd give me a lift to the school in—in your taxi, sir!" ventured Bunter.

Mr. Lamb gave him a look. He did not answer, but turned his back on the fat junior, and took no further notice of him.

Billy Bunter was not quick on the uptake; but he was able to gather from this that Lamb did not intend to give him a lift in his taxi.

He glared at the art master's back through his big spectacles. Bunter would have enjoyed barging him off the pavement into the slush in the road at that moment. The Bounder was quite reckless enough to have done so; but Billy Bunter was not. He only glared.

Then the fat junior gave a little fat cough. Any Remove fellow who had heard Bunter give that fat gurgle would have guessed that some of Bunter's ventriloquism was coming.

But Mr. Lamb, being new to Greyfriars, had no knowledge of that peculiar gift of the fat Owl of the





“I have looked in with a message from Quelch——” exclaimed Mr. Prout. The art master gave an emphatic start. “What did you say?” he exclaimed. “Are you mad? Mr. Quelch is not in the school!”

Remove. Certainly, from his knowledge of Bunter, he would not have supposed him capable of ventriloquism or of anything else.

Billy Bunter's little round eyes gleamed vengefully through his big, round spectacles. He hadn't the nerve to barge Lamb as the Bounder might have done; but he had his own ways of getting his own back.

Often and often had Billy Bunter made himself obnoxious with his peculiar ventriloquial gift, and Lamb, who knew nothing about it, was an easy victim.

“Gurrrrrgh!” came a sudden, startling growl, almost under Mr. Lamb's feet. Bunter put up that life-like imitation of a savage dog's angry growl in a really remarkable way.

Mr. Lamb jumped.

He jumped a good yard. Then he stared round, over his gold-rimmed glasses, for the growling dog upon which he fancied that he must have almost stepped.

Billy Bunter backed away a pace or two, grinning.

Lamb was alarmed and astonished. He had heard that alarming growl; but he could not see the dog that had uttered it. That, really, was not surprising, as no dog was there.

He stared, startled and puzzled, and then glanced at Bunter.

“Did you see that dog, Bunter?” he asked.

Bunter blinked at him.

“What dog, sir?” he asked.

“A dog growled, almost under my feet!”

“Did it, sir? I'm rather short-sighted,” said Bunter cheerfully. “I didn't see the dog, sir!”

The taxi drew up to the kerb, and the driver opened the door.

Mr. Lamb, evidently greatly puzzled about that mysterious dog, stepped towards it.

Gurrrrrr!

A growling snarl came from the interior of the taxicab.

Mr. Lamb, lifting a foot to step in, started back so suddenly that he slipped on the pavement and stumbled over—the taximan catching him as he went.

“Steady on, sir!” said the taximan, in surprise. He seemed to have an impression that his fare had been drinking.

“Take that dog out of the cab!” snapped Mr. Lamb angrily. As usual, when Mr. Lamb's temper was excited, his outward amiability dropped from him like a cloak.

“Wot dog, sir?”

“There is a dog in the cab——”

“There ain't, sir!” said the astonished driver. “No dogs in my cab, sir!”

“Are you deaf?” snapped Mr. Lamb. “Did you not hear him growl?”

“I 'eard a growl, sir; but it wasn't in my cab——”

“It was! Look!”

The taxi-driver, convinced by this time that the little gentleman in the glasses had been drinking, bent inside the taxi and looked. He knew that there was no dog there, what-

ever Mr. Lamb might choose to say. However, he looked.

“There ain't no dog there, sir!” he said, as he emerged. “It's all right, sir. You step in, sir! I'll give you a 'and!”

“I do not require assistance in stepping into a cab!” snapped Mr. Lamb. “What do you mean?”

“Oh! Nothing, sir! Jest step in, then, sir,” said the taximan gruffly.

Mr. Lamb scanned the interior of the cab suspiciously. But there was no dog to be seen inside, and he put a foot in.

“Silly old donkey!” came a voice that was so exactly like the gruff tones of the taximan that Mr. Lamb could not have the slightest doubt that it was the driver who had spoken.

The driver himself stared round, wondering whether it was Bunter who had uttered that uncomplimentary remark, as there was no one else close at hand.

But Mr. Lamb did not wonder. He whirled round at the taximan with an angry glare.

“What did you say?” he exclaimed. “How dare you?”

“Eh? I didn't say nothing, sir!” said the man, staring at him. “This 'ere young cove, I think——”

Mr. Lamb was not likely to believe that, as the voice had been exactly like the taximan's, and nothing at all like Bunter's.

“Do not talk nonsense!” he snapped.

“Look 'ere, sir, are you taking this



ere cab or not?" demanded the man. "If you are, you get in."

"Gurrrrg!" came a deep, savage growl from the cab, behind Mr. Lamb, as he stared round at the driver.

Mr. Lamb made a hurried jump away from the door.

"Take that dog out of your cab!" he roared.

"There ain't no dog in the blooming cab, as you could see for yourself, if you was sober!" roared back the taximan. "It was some dog in the road—"

"Fool!"

"Look 'ere, you taking this 'ere cab or not? I'll pick up another fare easy enough, if you ain't, with nobody else on the rank. Yes or no?"

"You stupid blackguard, take that dog out of the cab!" hooted Mr. Lamb, quite out of temper now.

"That does it!" said the taximan, and he slammed the door of the cab, got into his seat, and drove away.

Mr. Lamb glared after him. But he did not want that cab—with a vicious dog hidden somewhere inside it.

There was no other taxi on the rank.

Breathing hard, Mr. Lamb started to walk.

Billy Bunter grinned.

Bunter had enjoyed this little scene, if Mr. Lamb had not. Having thus landed the Lamb with a walk to the school, the fat ventriloquist went back into the station to wait for a train to Friardale. He had to wait

half an hour—and it was cold and windy; but there was comfort in reflecting that he had made that beast, Lamb, sit up!

#### BACK AT GREYFRIARS!

"SAY, big boys, I'm sure glad to see you back!"

Fisher T. Fish of the Remove made that remark as he inserted his bony face and long, thin nose into Study No. 1 in the Remove.

Five fellows were in that study. Study No. 1 belonged to Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent; but all the Famous Five had gathered there, to dispose of roasted chestnuts.

The January day was sharp and cold and windy—a bitter wind from the sea swept the old quadrangle, howled round the ancient red chimney-pots, and rattled the leafless branches of the elms. A glowing fire and baked chestnuts in the study were very welcome on that freezing day.

"Trot in, Fishy, and help yourself!" said the captain of the Remove hospitably.

Fisher T. Fish was not, as a rule, persona grata in that study. But it was the first day of term, and as the chums of the Remove knew, Fishy passed his holidays at the school. Fishy's chief occupation during the hols was longing for the fellows to come back and make things a little more lively.

Fishy jerked into the study, enconced his bony person on a corner of the table, and helped himself to

chestnuts. He was, as he had said, glad to see the Famous Five. It was a great relief to Fishy to hear the buzz of voices, the slamming of trunks and boxes, and the tramp of feet in the passages.

"Had good hols, you guys?" he asked, with his mouth full.

"Oh, pretty fair!" said Harry Wharton. "How did you get on, Fishy?"

Fisher T. Fish grunted.

"I'll say it was no catch!" he answered. "Noo Yark's a bit too far for the hols, especially with them pesky submarines rooting about, with no respect for nootals! I'm telling you, that galoot Hitler does want his pants kicked, for letting off his fireworks at nootral ships. Why, a nootral guy might as well be in the pesky war as out of it, if nootals are going to be sunk all over the pesky Atlantic."

The juniors grinned.

As their own country was landed in a war, they did not, naturally, feel fearfully concerned about people who were carefully keeping outside it! But Fisher T. Fish evidently regarded it as a very great grievance that "nootals" could not carry on as usual while belligerents were knocking the stuffing out of one another!

"I guess my voice has been getting rusty," went on Fisher T. Fish. "Hardly a yooman face about the shebang, while all the guys are away. I figured that there would be somebody to talk to when that guy Lamb horned in for a few days—Lamb was here for a time in the holidays—you remember that guy Lamb, who came last term?"

"Yes, we saw him in the hols, in Surrey!" answered Harry Wharton. "He mentioned that he had put in some time at the school! Didn't you find him good company?"

Snort from Fisher T. Fish.

"I'm telling you, he shoed a guy off like a chicken!" he answered. "I'll mention that I was that hard up for a galoot to chew the rag with I went round to the garage sometimes to chin with that chauffeur guy Robinson—"

"The Head's new shover!" said Bob. "We saw him to-day at Court-field Station. Looks a decent chap—bit foreign-looking."

"The dog-goned, all-fired, pesky scallawag!" grunted Fisher T. Fish. "He shoed me off from his garage, jest like Lamb did from his study! I'll say he was a stand-offish guy!"

The Famous Five chuckled. They were not surprised to learn that neither Mr. Lamb nor John Robinson had had any yearning for the conversation that was bottled up in the American junior in the holidays. If they had given Fishy his head, his conversation would probably have been like the little brook in the poem, going on for ever.

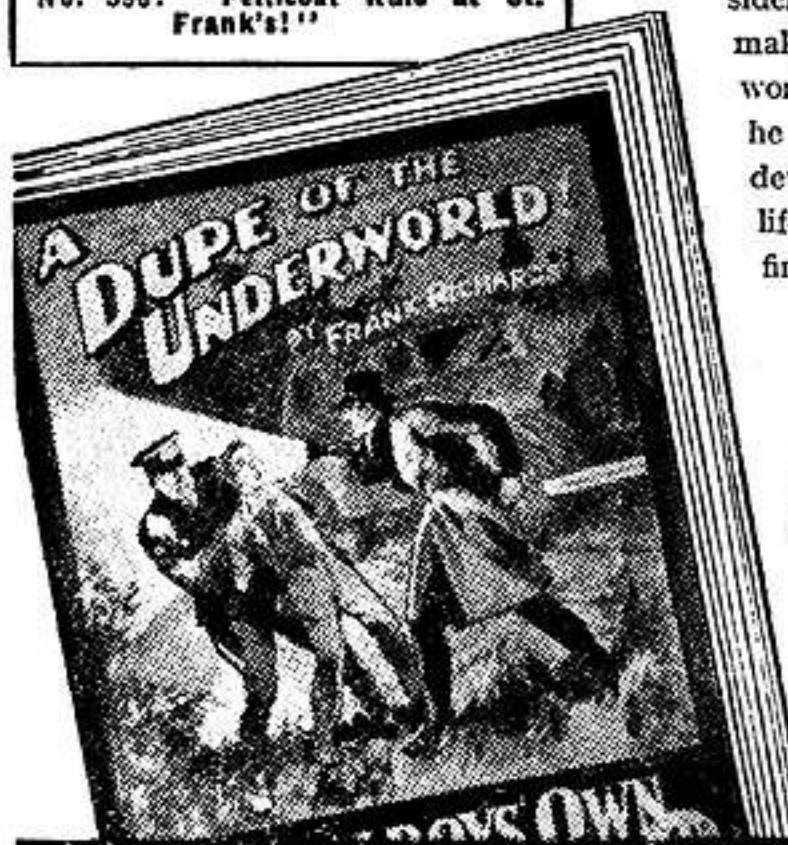
"Well, fire away now, old bony bean!" said Bob Cherry. "Tell us all the news, if any! Heard anything about that jolly old cracksman who was making things lively in these parts when we broke up for Christmas?"

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"Slim Jim!" said Fishy. "Jest a few! There was a burglary in Courtfield in the vac, and I guess it was the same guy!"

"So he's been sticking to business in the hols?" said Frank Nugent. "When did that happen, Fishy?"

"Middle of the vac," answered Fisher T. Fish. "I heard Gosling and Trotter chewing the rag about it, so I went to Lamb's study to ask him if he'd heard—I guessed mebbe he'd like to hear. But would he chew the rag for even a minute or two? Nope! He sure told me to go away and not bother!" said Fisher T. Fish indignantly.

"And so the poor dog had none!" said Bob Cherry sympathetically.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, a guy wants to exercise his chin a few, with all the pesky caboodle away!" grunted Fisher T. Fish. "I opined that Lamb would be interested."

"It happened while Lamb was here, then?"

"Yep! Jeweller's shop in Courtfield High Street, so I heered," answered Fisher T. Fish. "I'll say it's time they laid that hoodlum, Slim Jim, by the heels. They sure want an Amurrican detective over here to help! I guess Slim Jim wouldn't run on like he's doing, on the other side of the pond! Nope!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob Cherry, as two Remove fellows passed the doorway. "Trickle in, Smithy—totter in, Reddy—chestnuts going!"

Vernon-Smith and Tom Redwing stopped and looked in. The Bounder was not looking good-tempered—probably not having yet quite recovered from that emphatic smacking of his head on the train. But he nodded, and came in with his chum.

"Quelch back?" he asked.

"No!"

"Then they haven't found the old bean!" said the Bounder. His eyes glinted. "That means that Lamb will take the Remove again this term till old Quelch blows in."

"I suppose so!" said Harry, with a rather uneasy look at the Bounder of Greyfriars. "Don't start a feud with the Pet Lamb, Smithy, because of that row on the train. He was rather a brute, but you really did ask for it, you know!"

"I know!" said the Bounder, between his teeth. "But I never asked Lamb to play at being a tame rabbit, when he's got a temper like a tiger! I'll give him something to rouse that temper of his again, before long."

"I'd let it drop, Smithy," said Redwing.

"I know you would! I shan't, though!" said the Bounder. "I'll make that tricky rotter glad to have done with the Remove, by the time old Quelch blows in again. I don't know what his game is, making out that he's a soft, silly noodle that can have his leg pulled to any extent—when he's nothing of the kind, really. I believe he's as sharp as a razor under all that humbug."

"The Lamb sharp?" grinned Bob Cherry. "My dear man, you're

dreaming! The biggest ass going is——"

"All spoof!" grunted the Bounder. "He's no fool, as I jolly well know now. And he's got a temper like a hooligan!"

"Well, what you did, you know, was——"

"Oh, rats!" growled Vernon-Smith.

"I say, you fellows!" came a fat squeak, and Billy Bunter rolled into the study. "I say, I'll have some of those chestnuts!"

Gobble, gobble, gobble!

"I say, has Lamb trickled in yet?" asked Bunter, in a muffled voice, when he had packed a large mouth to capacity.

"Haven't seen him about yet."

"He, he, he!" cachinnated Bunter. "Groogh! Hoooh! Ooogh!" The fat Owl choked a little; his large mouth, perhaps, being a little too well packed. "Groogh! I say, you fellows—Ogh! I mean, I was going to say—Yurrrggh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! Woooooch! I say, you fellows, that beast Lamb had to walk from Courtfield! He, he, he!"

"You saw him there?" asked the Bounder.

"He, he, he! I jolly well pulled his leg!" chortled Bunter. "I say, you fellows, I made him believe there was a savage dog in the taxi, and he wouldn't get in! He, he, he! My wonderful ventriloquism, you know. He, he, he!"

"You've been springing your potty ventriloquism on Lamb?" exclaimed Bob.

"I've been springing my wonderful ventriloquism on the beast, if that's what you mean!" answered the fat Owl. "You should have seen him jump! He thought he had trodden on a dog, you know, and it was going to bite! He, he, he!"

The juniors laughed.

"By gum!" said the Bounder. "Bunter's ventriloquial stunts are a new one on Lamb!" His eyes gleamed. "By gum! That's how!"

"Rot!" said Harry Wharton. "Let the Lamb alone, Smithy! He's all right when he's left alone!"

"I'll leave him alone when I've paid him out for hammering at my head, the brute!" said Herbert Vernon-Smith. "Not before. And Bunter's going to help! That fat ass can't do anything else, but he can do ventriloquism——"

"Oh, really, Smithy——"

"And Lamb isn't wise to it, as Quelch was!" said Smithy. "We——"

There was a clang of a bell.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, that's for roll!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Come on!"

It was the bell for second calling-over that day.

The Remove fellows crowded out of the study to scamper down to Hall and answer to their names—with one exception.

Billy Bunter missed that roll. There were still some chestnuts left in the study, so, naturally, Bunter was left, too!

## STARTLING!

"QUELCH back?"

That question was asked by every Remove fellow.

Mr. Quelch, the Remove master, was not back for the term. Greyfriars, for once, gathered for the new term without Henry Samuel Quelch appearing in his accustomed place.

That Quelch was not back and was not expected back was officially notified by a paper on the board in the Head's fist, which announced that, for the time being, the Remove would be taken by Mr. Lamb.

That was not bad news to the Removites. Plenty of them felt a sympathetic concern for their old Form-master who had been mysteriously kidnapped a couple of weeks before the end of the previous term. But there was no doubt that his substitute, Lamb, had ruled in the Remove Form room with a lighter hand than Quelch's.

A good many fellows looked forward to an easy time, with plentiful ragging to relieve the monotony of lessons, with the Pet Lamb in charge.

Except for an occasional outbreak, the Lamb was the easiest master going. Skinner and Bunter, who had both got on his wrong side last term, eyed him with suspicious distrust; and it was known that the Bounder had a feud on, with Lamb as its object. The rest of the Remove liked him, more or less.

The fact that they rather liked him, however, did not deter the enterprising spirits in the Form from planning rags. Rags, to the rather unreflecting junior mind, were more entertaining than the acquisition of knowledge.

In the morning, when the bell for classes summoned the Greyfriars fellows to their Form-rooms, the Remove gathered at their door, waiting for Lamb to come along and admit them.

Mr. Quelch had always been as punctual as clockwork. The Lamb was not so punctual. Being an art master, perhaps the Lamb had artistic tendencies, which did not make for methodical precision. He was known to do pen-and-ink drawings in his study and had sometimes been so deeply occupied with the same that he had disregarded the sound of the bell. It was rumoured in the Remove that he sold drawings to the Press and received cheques for the same.

On the first morning of term he was late.

Other Forms had all gone in, but after ten minutes the Remove were still waiting at their door, and Mr. Lamb had not arrived.

As it was an immemorial rule at Greyfriars that no class was bound to wait more than fifteen minutes for a master, the Removites were beginning to hope that they were going to have a free hour, when Mr. Lamb came trotting up the corridor at last.

The Bounder eyed him with a sarcastic grin as he came. Perhaps Smithy knew better than the other fellows why Mr. Lamb was so late.

"Good-morning, good-morning, my



boys!" bleated the Lamb. "Is the Form-room door unlocked, Wharton?"

The head boy of the Remove tried the handle.

"No, sir!" he answered.

"Has any boy here taken the key from my study?"

No answer. But there were grins on many faces. Evidently the key was missing and the Lamb had been looking for it; that was why he was so late that morning.

The Lamb blinked at the juniors over his gold-rimmed glasses. The Lamb always seemed to look over his glasses, not through them. Perhaps he required them only for close-range work.

"Someone has taken away the key!" he bleated. When the Lamb was in his usual amiable mood, his voice was soft and propitious, and rather reminded the fellows of the bleat of a lamb. "Come, come! If this is a thoughtless joke, I will excuse the boy if the key is given up immediately—after all, this is our first day. Come, come!"

Some of the juniors looked at Smithy. They had a suspicion that the Bounder could have told what had become of that key.

Nobody answered, however.

The Lamb looked quite distressed. He had to get his Form into the Form-room, and he could not get them in through a locked door.

"Come, come!" repeated the Lamb. "We are losing time. We are going to work this term, my boys—we are going to work hard—"

"Are we?" murmured Bolsover major.

"And we must not lose time," went on the Lamb. "I am sure such tricks were not played on Mr. Quelch when he was here."

The juniors grinned at the idea. Henry Samuel Quelch had not been the kind of master to have his leg pulled.

Herbert Vernon-Smith gave the fat Owl of the Remove a nudge.

Billy Bunter replied with a fat wink, and gave a little, gurgling cough.

Bob Cherry gave the fat Owl a warning look. He knew what that gurgle meant—some of Bunter's ventriloquism was coming.

The next moment every fellow in the corridor gave a jump as a well-known voice came—or appeared to come—from the locked Form-room.

It was weeks since the Remove had seen their Form-master. But they had not forgotten Quelch—or his voice!

Mr. Quelch's voice was distinctive. Some of the fellows likened it to the grinding of a particularly rusty saw. Some thought it was more like the bark of a rather savage mastiff. Anyhow, it was easily recognisable. And now, most amazingly, it proceeded from the locked Form-room.

"Open that door at once! How dare you lock me in the Form-room! Do you hear me?"

There was a gasp of astonishment from the Remove.

"Quelch!" stuttered Peter Todd.

"He's come back!" gasped Skinner.

"That's Quelch!"

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"He's in the Form-room!"

"Great pip!"

One or two fellows, who were near Bunter, suspected what it really was. Many a time had the fat ventriloquist startled his Form-fellows by imitating the bark of the Remove master, which he could do to perfection.

But to most of the Remove crowd, who had forgotten all about the fat Owl's ventriloquial trickery, it was the voice of their missing Form-master.

They stared in blank amazement at the oaken door of the Remove room. Quelch was there—they had no doubt that he was there, and it was utterly amazing—in fact, astounding.

"When did he come back?" gasped Nugent.

"Nobody's seen him—"

"I say, you fellows, it's Quelch all right!" chuckled Billy Bunter. "He, he, he! It's old Quelch!"

Mr. Lamb stood as if rooted to the floor.

Astonished as the Remove fellows were, Mr. Lamb seemed more than astonished. The colour was wavering in his face.

"Mr. Quelch—here!" The words dropped in a gasp from his lips. His eyes popped at the door of the Remove room.

Harry Wharton glanced round at him curiously. So far as he knew, Lamb had never met Mr. Quelch. Yet he seemed to know that that voice from the Form-room was Quelch's, as well as the Removites did.

That the Lamb was startled—strangely startled—was clear at a glance. But Wharton had time for only one glance at his startled face. Mr. Lamb turned and walked down the corridor and disappeared round the nearest corner.

The Remove fellows were left in a buzzing crowd at the locked door.

Harry Wharton tapped on the door.

"Mr. Quelch!" he called out.

"He, he, he!"—from Bunter.

"We can't open the door, Mr. Quelch!" called out the captain of the Remove. "The key is missing!"

No answer from the Form-room. The bark from within was not heard again.

Billy Bunter, almost doubled up with merriment, gurgled till the tears exuded over his spectacles.

"Why doesn't he answer?" exclaimed Wharton. He knocked on the door again. "Can you hear me, Mr. Quelch?"

"He, he, he!"

"Quelch won't hear you in a hurry!" drawled the Bounder. "Quelch hasn't come back, my beloved 'earers! But what has the Lamb bolted for? Is he afraid to meet Quelch, or what?"

"Fathead! Why should he be afraid to meet Quelch?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Blessed if I know—he's cleared off mighty quick! I expected to hear a dialogue through the door when Bunter started—but Lamb has spoiled it all by clearing off like that—"

"Bunter!" yelled Wharton.

"He, he, he!" chortled Bunter.

"That fat ass!" gasped Lord Mauleverer. "It was Bunter—"

"Was that Bunter's ventriloquism?" howled Johnny Bull.

"He, he, he!" gurgled Bunter. "I say, I've pulled the Lamb's leg a treat! He, he, he! I say, you fellows—he, he, he!"

"You—you fat chump!" exclaimed Squiff.

"He, he, he!"

The Bounder looked at his watch. "Time's up!" he said. "Over fifteen minutes! If Lamb doesn't choose to come and take his class, we're free for the hour! I'm off!"

"Hear, hear!" grinned Skinner.

"But—" began Harry Wharton.

"Blow your butts! I'm off!" said the Bounder. "Lamb can't do anything—if he doesn't know the rule, you can explain it to him, as his giddy head boy. I'm off, I know that!"

Smithy drew a key from his pocket—the Form-room key—and pushed it into the lock of the door! Then he walked away, whistling, and went out into the quad.

Skinner and Bolsover major, Bunter and Fisher T. Fish followed him at once. The other fellows exchanged glances, and then they, too, followed.

First lesson for the Remove was going to be a free hour for that fortunate Form!

#### A SURPRISE FOR THE HEAD!

DR. LOCKE glanced from his study window—and then stared from the same. He was puzzled.

The headmaster was making some little preparations for taking the Sixth Form in second lesson that morning. He had not expected to hear the cheery buzz of voices from the quad during first school. But that was what he did hear; and when he looked out, he was quite surprised to see a mob of juniors disporting themselves in the frosty sunshine.

Harry Wharton & Co. were punting a footer, with the cheery assistance of Squiff, Tom Brown, Mark Linley, Wibley, and several other fellows. Others were playing leap-frog. Vernon-Smith, Skinner, Snoop, Bolsover major, and some others stood in a grinning, chuckling group, apparently in enjoyment of some jest.

Billy Bunter leaped to the eye, standing under one of the leafless old elms, with a large paper bag in a fat hand, from which the other fat hand was drawing one jam tart after another. Bunter's fat face was happy and sticky. The fat Owl, in fact, was disposing of the reward for his ventriloquial performance at the door of the Remove Form Room.

Smithy, who had heaps of that useful article—cash—was the founder of that happy feast. Bunter was looking happily forward to repetitions thereof, so long as the present game of pulling the Lamb's leg lasted. So long as Smithy weighed-in with jam tarts, there was no doubt that Billy Bunter would be ready and eager to weigh-in with ventriloquism.

The Remove, that frosty morning, seemed to be enjoying life. Which.



**GRAND SHEERLUCK JONES DRAMA****A Thrill in Every Line****THE RUFFSTUFF RHYTHM BOYS!**By **PETER TODD**

"**W**HAT ever are you doing, Jones?"

Dr. Spotson asked that question as he joined his revered friend at breakfast. A frugal kipper lay unheeded on the table, for Sheerluck Jones had his ear glued to a large brown-paper parcel which had arrived by post. With some difficulty, he unglued his ear and quickly seized the best part of the kipper.

"I was listening, Spotson. I thought I might hear a ticking inside the parcel. I am expecting a bomb from Basil the Bombster, as I have been on his track lately, and he will doubtless do his best to eliminate me."

Dr. Spotson rose hurriedly and murmured something about an urgent appointment, but Jones waved him back to his chair.

"This is not a bomb, Spotson. Probably it is nothing more serious than poison gas or a death adder, or some trifle of that kind. However, we will see."

With a careless air and a knife, he cut the string and undid the wrappings. A handsome box of cigars was exposed. With it was an unsigned note: "In gratitude for all what you have done for me!"

"Well, well, well!" exclaimed the great detective. "Most gratifying, I'm sure. Seeing that the parcel is addressed in a disguised hand, and written in a disguised ink, with a forged stamp stuck on it, I thought it must be from Basil. But, evidently, it is from some grateful client. I don't care for cigars as a rule—I prefer my pipe—but still—"

He broke off suddenly, as there was a tap at the door.

Dr. Spotson turned pale.

"It's the man to empty the gas-meter, Jones," he whispered. "And we have already emptied it for him—with a chisel. What shall we do?"

The great detective applied his eye to the keyhole, and then called out, with a smile:

"Come in, my dear Codseye!"

Inspector Codseye entered with haggard face and laggard feet.

"Marvellous, Mr. Jones! How did you know it was me?"

"I deduced it. Sit down, my dear Codseye, and tell us your trouble."

"Mr. Jones," groaned the inspector, "there has been an outbreak of pocket-picking and purse-purloining in the gilded halls of Mayfair. Fashionable society is in a ferment. At all the gay balls and dances they have held this season, one of the guests has been snooping gold watches and other valuables from the dancers. We have failed to spot him. After

Get lists of the guests at every ball. If you find that one name is in every list, that's your man."

"We have done that, Mr. Jones. Here are the lists. Some of the names are in some of the lists, others are in others, but none is in all the lists, and none is in none of the lists. What do you make of that, Mr. Jones?"

The great detective seized the lists and brooded over them for several hours. Codseye and Spotson sat silent, waiting for him to come round.

Suddenly, Jones sprang up with a wild cry.

"The Ruffstuff Rhythm Boys!" he shouted. "Are you aware, Codseye, that the same dance-band was at every one of these dances? Take it from me, the purse-purloiner is one of these Ruffstuff Rhythm Boys."

"Marvellous, Jones!" murmured Spotson, as per usual.

"But how are we to spot which one, Mr. Jones?" asked the inspector. "There seems to be ten of them. We can't search them all, and if we could, you can be sure this sportsman parks the stuff away safely when he's got it."

Sheerluck Jones smiled placidly.

"Codseye, there is a dance to-night—the Baron Bootle's Ball. We will be there, and so will the Ruffstuffers. Go and fetch your best shirt and return here."

When Codseye returned in evening togs, he saw Sheerluck Jones putting valuables into his pockets.

"This gold watch," said the great detective, "was presented to me by the Amalgamated Union of Bootblacks. This jewelled tiepin I found in the Strand. This gold cigar-case—I might as well fill it with cigars instead of fag-ends—was given to me by a burglar who I defended on a charge of stealing a gold cigar-case. These pearl sleeve-links belong to Spotson—"

"But, my dear Jones," cried the inspector, "suppose the Ruffstuffer steals them—how are you going to spot him?"

Sheerluck Jones winked, and took down a large bottle marked: "Jet Black Ink. Warranted Quite Indelible."

"I pour some of this in my pockets," he chuckled, "and the thief will get it on his fingers. He cannot possibly get it off. We have only to look for a man with black fingers, and we have our bird."

"Marvellous, Jones!" Codseye and Spotson shouted together. "He's as good as snaffled already!"

At the Baron Bootle's Ball, the

all, we can't search the aristocracy—the dukes and the dukesses and so on—"

"But, my dear Codseye, there is an infallible method in cases of this kind.

aristocracy of the West End were dancing the Lambeth Walk and eating peanuts. Sheerluck, Codseye, and Spotson surveyed them keenly from an alcove. Hidden behind a jungle of palms, the Ruffstuff Rhythm Boys were making noises like the bombardment of Quebec.

In the supper interval, Jones thought he would have a cigar. He fished for his cigar-case, but it was gone. So was his watch. So was his tiepin. So were Spotson's links. He grasped Codseye by the arm.

"Lock the doors!" he barked. "Let no man get away! The thief has been round again! But we've got him now. Codseye, line up those Ruffstuffers in the ball-room here."

There was a tremendous sensation, but above the din of talk and shouting, three loud thuds were heard, as Jones, Codseye, and Spotson each dropped his jaw. For when the Ruffstuffers were lined up, they proved to be ten coal-black niggers, each carrying an instrument.

"You—you silly ass!" hooted Codseye, to the great detective. "Fat lot of good your black ink is on this crowd. They've all got black fingers—and black faces, too!"

Sheerluck Jones seemed stunned. He waved the niggers away, and brooded tensely in a corner. The supper interval was resumed. Codseye was fuming helplessly, and Spotson was dismayed at the idea that his revered chief had failed.

Suddenly there was a stunning explosion! The drummer of the jazz-band hurtled through the dance hall and crashed on the back of his neck.

"Yaroooooh!" he roared. "Gee whistikers! What am you on 'round here? I light de cigar for a smoke and—gosh!—it done blows me into de middle ob nex' wreck. Who put dat dynamite in de cigar, fo' Pete's sake?"

"Seize that man!" roared Sheerluck Jones. "He's the pincher! I jolly well knew those cigars were sent by Basil the Bombster—he meant to blow me to smithereens. And this man pinched my cigar-case, with the cigars inside it. Grab him!"

Codseye was on him like a flash. A search of the big drum revealed all the stolen property concealed inside, and the thief was led away to another sphere of action.

"I planned it all," explained Sheerluck Jones, as he and Spotson ascended their way homewards. "I knew those cigars would get him. It was a deep-laid scheme of mine."

"Marvellous, Jones!"

"Elementary, my dear Spotson."

"And what shall we do now, Jones, about that man from the gas company who I can see standing on our doorstep?"

The great detective did not hesitate a moment.

"It is time we had a holiday, Spotson," he said. "Let us leg it!"

And they legged it forthwith.

of course, their headmaster liked to see them doing; though in lesson-time he preferred to see them enjoy life by the less hilarious method of attending to a master's instructions.

The Head was quite puzzled by what he saw in the quad.

It was true that Mr. Quelch was still away, and while the cat was away the mice would play. But he had made arrangements with Mr. Lamb,

for the art master to continue to take the Remove while Quelch was absent. A notice had been put on the board to that effect. The Remove should have been in their Form-room with Lamb instead of disporting themselves in open spaces. This looked as if Lamb had forgotten his class.

The Head opened his window and called:

"Wharton!"

Harry Wharton looked round at the voice of authority. Then he detached himself from the mob of footballers and hurried across to the Head's window.

"Yes, sir!"

"Why are you not in the Form-room, Wharton? Where is Mr. Lamb?"

"I don't know, sir!"



"Have you not seen Mr. Lamb?"

Wharton coloured a little. Certainly he could not tell the Head anything about the fat Owl and his ventriloquism. It was rather awkward to explain.

"Yes, he came to the Form-room, sir, but—but he hadn't the key," he stammered. "And—and then he went. And as fifteen minutes was up—"

"Oh!" said the Head. "Did not Mr. Lamb tell you to await his return?"

"No, sir."

"Very well, Wharton—you may go!"

Wharton went.

Dr. Locke frowned a little. The fifteen-minute rule was a tradition at Greyfriars School—even the headmaster could not disregard it. If Lamb had kept his Form waiting a quarter of an hour, they were lawfully entitled to their freedom for the rest of the first hour. Dr. Locke, who regarded the acquisition of knowledge as being ever so much more important than punting a footer or playing leap-frog, could not order the Lower Fourth back to their Form-room—not without breaking an immemorial tradition.

He had to let the Remove rip—as the Removites would have expressed it, though certainly not their headmaster.

But this sort of thing, of course, would never do. He decided to speak to Mr. Lamb at once.

Leaving his study, he proceeded to the Remove Form room, where he had no doubt Lamb must be by this time.

To his surprise, he found the Form-room door locked, with the key in the outside of the lock.

He frowned at that key. He did not need telling that some practical joker in the Remove had abstracted the key as a leg-pull on Mr. Lamb, and had stuck it in the lock after Lamb was gone. He concluded that Mr. Lamb was still in search of that missing key, unaware that it was sticking in the door.

"Bless my soul!" murmured the Head.

He proceeded majestically to Mr. Lamb's study to apprise him that it was no longer necessary to search for that key. He tapped at the study door, opened it, and looked in.

"Mr. Lamb—" he began.

He broke off again as he saw that Mr. Lamb was not there. There was no one in Lamb's study.

"Bless my soul!" said the Head again.

He stood in the passage, puzzled, and getting a little impatient.

Monsieur Charpentier looked out of his study inquiringly. French sets had not yet started, and Mossoo was at liberty that morning.

"Is it zat you seek Mr. Lamb, sair?" asked the French master.

"Yes, Monsieur Charpentier. Can you tell me where he is to be found?" asked Dr. Locke.

"I zink zat he is in his room, en haut," said the French master. "I see him go zere, it is some time since, in a veree great hurry. He run—he fly—he pass me vizout vun vord."

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"Dear me!" said the Head. "Thank you, Monsieur Charpentier."

He turned away and went to the staircase near Common-room, which led up to the masters' rooms over the studios. Why Mr. Lamb had rushed off to his room in a hurry, when he ought to have been taking the Remove, was a mystery to the Head—a mystery which it was his duty, as headmaster, to elucidate.

A few minutes later he was tapping at the door of Mr. Lamb's room above.

"Are you there, Mr. Lamb?" he called.

"Is that Dr. Locke?" came back the bleat of the Lamb.

"Certainly."

"Pray excuse me, sir—I unfortunately gave my head a somewhat severe knock, and am bathing the injury at the present moment. My glasses fell off, and in stooping for them—"

"I am sorry, Mr. Lamb," said the Head politely.

"Pray do not disturb yourself in any way." He went on speaking through the door. "I understand that the key of your Form-room was missing—hem! I have ascertained that it is in the Form-room lock. You will find it there."

"In the circumstances, sir, you will not desire me to take the Remove this morning, and I shall be very glad to rest my head—a somewhat severe knock—"

"I will certainly make other arrangements for the Lower Fourth this morning, Mr. Lamb, if you wish," said Dr. Locke. "Perhaps you will be sufficiently recovered to take your Form in third school, however."

"Is not Mr. Quelch taking his Form, sir?"

The Head jumped.

"Mr. Quelch?" he repeated.

"I—I naturally supposed—"

"I do not understand you, Mr. Lamb. Surely you have not forgotten that Mr. Quelch was kidnapped shortly before Christmas—"

"But he has returned, sir."

"What?"

"He has returned—"

"My dear sir," said the Head testily, "if some Remove boy has told you so preposterous a story, it was an absurd invention. Mr. Quelch has not returned. Nothing is known of him."

"He was in the Form-room, sir."

"In the Form-room! Impossible! I repeat, Mr. Lamb, that Mr. Quelch is still missing, and that the police, and even the famous detective, Ferrers Locke, have failed to trace him. What can you possibly mean?"

"He spoke from the Form-room, sir!"

"Nonsense! Really, Mr. Lamb, you are very easily deceived!" exclaimed the Head. "Some boy playing a foolish trick, I have no doubt. As

you have never met Mr. Quelch, you cannot be acquainted with his voice, and so—"

"Oh! No, certainly not! But all the boys said—"

"An absurd practical joke! I will look into this matter immediately!" snapped Dr. Locke, for once seriously annoyed. "This is not a matter for practical jokes—I shall certainly allow nothing of the kind! Some foolish boy must have been in the Form-room—"

"It was Mr. Quelch's voice, sir, and I think you will find that he has returned."

"You speak as if you were acquainted with Mr. Quelch's voice, sir, and as you have never met him—"



"Do you mean that you will not answer me?" Wharton distinctly. "Mr. Quelch would never ask—"

"I mean, all the boys knew the voice—"

"Obviously, an absurd conspiracy—a rag, as they would call it! Absurd! However, I shall look into the matter at once."

Dr. Locke, very much annoyed, rustled back to the stairs.

Mr. Lamb, whether he was bathing a damaged head or not, did not open his door.

#### MYSTERIOUS!

"I SAY, you fellows, 'tain't fair!" squeaked Billy Bunter indignantly.

Other fellows shared Bunter's indignation.

The hour was not yet up. By all rules and traditions, the Remove were free till the next hour, having waited the stipulated time for a beak who



had not turned up. So when they were ordered into their Form-room by their headmaster, they were naturally peeved.

However, they went in. Billy Bunter did not think of carrying his indignation so far as arguing with his headmaster. Neither did any other Remove fellow. They marched in.

Dr. Locke's face was very stern. There had been a jape in the Remove the first morning of term—he was sure of that. Young rascals had taken advantage of Mr. Lamb's unsuspecting simplicity.

And Mr. Quelch's enforced absence was no matter for practical joking in the headmaster's opinion. Quelch—a valued old friend as well as a

Remove, "appears to have abstracted the Form-room key from Mr. Lamb's study this morning. The door was locked, and some boy inside the Form-room appears to have called out and given Mr. Lamb the impression that Mr. Quelch was here. As Mr. Lamb has never met Mr. Quelch, he is naturally unacquainted with his voice, and so was easily deceived when boys of his Form affected to recognise it."

Dr. Locke paused.

The Remove remained silent.

Whether Mr. Lamb had ever met Mr. Quelch, most of the Remove, naturally, did not know. They knew that he had arrived at the school last term on the same day that Quelch had disappeared. He certainly had met some of the masters, and, for all the juniors knew, he might or might not have met Mr. Quelch that day as well as others.

In planning the ventriloquial jape with Bunter, the Bounder had not given that part of the matter a thought. He had simply planned to make a fool of Lamb by making him believe that the Remove's old Form-master was back at Greyfriars. Whether Lamb was or was not acquainted with Quelch had not entered into his consideration.

Now, however, as the Head made that statement, the Bounder and several other fellows exchanged curious glances.

For Lamb, when he was so startled by that voice from the Form-room, had certainly seemed to know that it was Quelch's quite as well as the juniors did—he had been taken in as well as the Form!

How he had known on the instant that that voice was Quelch's—if he had never heard Quelch's bark—was rather a puzzle.

"Now," went on the Head, "no such jesting as this will be permitted on so very serious a subject. I require to know which boy was in this Form-room at the time!"

There was no reply.

Nobody had been in the Form-room at the time. The Head naturally supposed that someone had, in the circumstances. But no one had.

If Dr. Locke had ever heard that there was a Remove fellow who could play ventriloquial tricks, he had naturally long since forgotten such a trifling thing. No such idea was in his mind; indeed, knowing that Lamb had never met Quelch, it did not occur to him that the voice from the Form-room had resembled Quelch's. He supposed that Lamb had drawn his impression entirely from what the boys outside the Form-room had said.

"The boy will stand out before the Form!" said Dr. Locke sternly.

Nobody stood out.

"Unless that boy immediately

stands out, the whole Form will be placed in Extra School for the first half-holiday!" said the Head.

Herbert Vernon-Smith spoke at once.

"If you please, sir, no Remove fellow was in the Form-room at the time," he said.

"That is nonsense, Vernon-Smith! Some boy was in this Form-room, or no one could have spoken from the room!" rapped the Head.

"I said no Remove man, sir. We were all waiting at the door for Mr. Lamb to come and let us in," said the Bounder meekly. "Every fellow will tell you the same, if you ask him."

The Head paused.

"Wharton!"

"Yes, sir?"

"You will answer me, as head boy of this Form. Are you personally aware whether every boy in the Remove was outside the Form-room at the time or not?"

"Yes, sir," answered Harry, "the whole Form was outside. The door was locked as usual, and we all waited for Mr. Lamb."

"You are certain that no boy was missing?"

"Quite certain, sir."

Dr. Locke looked puzzled. The head boy's word on the subject had to be taken; besides, he was able to see that the whole Form were prepared to back up Wharton's statement. What Wharton said was true; no member of the Remove had been inside the Form-room.

"This is extraordinary!" said the Head at last. "It would appear then that the boy must have belonged to some other Form; but that is very singular, as all other Forms must have been in class at the time, and every boy was or should have been with his Form. However, I must accept your statement, Wharton, that no Remove boy was here."

There was another pause.

"I shall inquire further into this matter," said the Head at last. "In the meantime, you may dismiss until the next hour!"

Which was good news to the Remove! The Head, after all, was playing the game, respecting that valued old tradition.

The Remove marched out once more—many of them with grinning faces.

Billy Bunter, who had been feeling rather uneasy under the Head's stern eye, grinned from one fat ear to the other when that stern eye was no longer upon him.

For the rest of that hour the Removeites enjoyed life in the open spaces, while the Head, very much perplexed, looked into one Form-room after another to speak to the beaks there, in the endeavour to ascertain who was the unknown person who had been locked in the Remove room that morning.

As no such person existed, he was not likely to make any discovery, and he had to remain unsatisfied and perplexed.

When the Remove came in for the second hour, they found Monsieur THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,665.



demanding Mr. Lamb. "Yes, sir!" said Harry a fellow in the Form to give another fellow away!"

member of his staff, had been kidnapped, and for weeks he had been a prisoner in lawless hands.

It was known—everybody knew now—that he had been kidnapped by the mysterious crackman who was called Slim Jim, because he had seen that man of mystery one night with his mask off and could have identified him.

Slim Jim had taken care that the only man who knew his hidden face should never place his knowledge at the service of the police.

Boys would be boys, and especially schoolboys would be schoolboys; but such a serious matter was emphatically not a matter for jesting, and Dr. Locke intended to impress that fact on the volatile minds of the Lower Fourth Form of Greyfriars.

"Some boy in this Form," said the Head, with his stern eyes on the



Chapentier prepared to take them in French. Mr. Lamb, he told them, had had a slight accident and would not be taking them that morning.

In third school they were taken in maths by Mr. Jascelles. No Remove man saw Mr. Lamb again till dinner in Hall.

Lamb turned up for dinner with his Form.

By that time, no doubt, he was convinced that Mr. Quelch—in spite of the voice from the Form-room—was not back at Greyfriars. But the juniors could see that he was in a puzzled and disturbed state. He cast many suspicious glances at the rows of faces along the Remove table, and he was not in his usual amiable temper—he was sharp and angry and irritable. For whatever reason, the incident of the morning had deeply perturbed the Pet Lamb.

The Bounder was smiling sarcastically when the Remove came out into the quad after dinner.

"What the dickens does this mean, you fellows?" he asked, addressing the Famous Five. "The Big Beak says that Lamb has never met Quelch—but he knew that back all right when he heard it! He believed that Quelch was in the Form-room before a fellow said a word, same as most of the chaps did!"

"Yes, I thought so," said Harry Wharton. "It's queer!"

"The queerfulness is terrific!"

"And it gave him a shock, too!" continued Vernon-Smith. "I was only thinking of pulling his leg when I put Bunter up to it, but it seemed to knock him over. Why the deuce should he care so much whether Quelch was back or not?"

"I guess I can put you wise!" said Fisher T. Fish.

The Bounder gave him a stare.

"Cough it up, then!" he snapped.

"I'll say that Lamb is getting extra pay for taking the Remove, as well as carrying on as art master!" explained Fisher T. Fish. "If Quelch horns in again, he loses the money!"

The Famous Five grinned, and Smithy gave an angry snort.

That explanation seemed perfectly reasonable to Fisher T. Fish; he guessed, reckoned, and calculated that any guy would sure feel a jolt at the prospect of losing money—money being the beginning and end of all things with Fishy.

But the other fellows did not concur with Fishy's opinion.

"You silly owl!" snapped the Bounder.

"Surest thing you know?" declared Fishy. He, at least, had no doubt!

"Oh, shut up, you ass! What do you fellows think?" asked Smithy.

"Blessed if I know!" said Bob Cherry. "No special bizney of ours, is it? But as it seems to make the Lamb wild, Smithy, you'd better chuck it!"

"I'll watch it!" said the Bounder. "I'm on to something in this that's turning out better than I expected! If the Lamb's going to get his wool off at the idea of Quelch being back, I'm going to feed him up to the chin

with Quelch! (This isn't the finish—it's the start!)"

And the Bounder walked away, whistling cheerily. He was puzzled, but he was elated. What he had intended as a leg-pull to perplex and worry the Lamb had turned out to be a severe jolt to the art master—why, he could not guess; but the fact was plain enough to him.

If the sound of Quelch's voice was sufficient to jolt the Lamb so badly, the Lamb was going to hear it again, and yet again—as long, in fact, as a generous supply of jam tarts induced the Remove ventriloquist to carry on. The vengeful Bounder had found an unexpected and entirely unlooked-for weapon ready to his hand—and he was going to use it for all it was worth!

### A SURPRISE FOR PROUT!

"MR. PROUT!"

Prout, the portly master of the Fifth, jumped.

Had Mr. Prout been a little less portly, he would have jumped clear of the ground, so utterly startled was Prout. Only Prout's avoirdupois prevented him from doing so.

It was a day or two later, after dinner. Prout, as was his custom, was helping an excellent lunch to settle, by pacing majestically on the path under the windows of Masters' Studies, before he retired to his study for forty winks in a deep armchair.

Prout was not thinking of Mr. Quelch at that moment. He was, in fact, thinking of Coker, of his Form—an obtuse and obstreperous youth who made Prout realise, clearly, that there could be happier lives than a schoolmaster's.

But he ceased to think about Coker of the Fifth on that spot, as Mr. Quelch's voice addressed him suddenly.

In utter amazement Prout spun round in the direction of that voice. It proceeded from a study window that was open a few inches.

Prout was passing Quelch's old study at the moment. Quelch's study, of course, was vacant and deserted in Quelch's mysterious absence. It was kept carefully dusted and neat and tidy, in perfect readiness for Mr. Quelch's happy return—when the time came. Every day the Head hoped that there would be news of Quelch; but even Ferrers Locke, so far, had failed to fulfil hopes; and the study remained vacant.

So it was simply amazing to Prout to be addressed from Quelch's study window by the voice of Henry Samuel Quelch.

Prout blinked at that window.

The lower sash was up a few inches—not sufficient for him to see into the study. Prout was a tall gentleman sideways. Perpendicularly, he did not reach very far. Coker of the Fifth could have looked into that study quite easily. Coker's Form-master couldn't, unless the sash was well up. The broad stone sill was in Prout's line of vision.

He could see that the lower sash was a little raised—that was all.

Within, he could see nothing, as a curtain was over the glass. But he could not, of course, fail to recognise Quelch's voice—a distinctive voice, well known to Quelch's colleagues, and well remembered by them. Quelch, after his mysterious absence, was there—Prout was not likely to suppose that Quelch's voice had come back without Quelch!

"Upon my word!" gasped the astounded Fifth Form master. "Quelch! Do my ears deceive me? Is—is—is that Quelch?"

"Quite so, Prout."

"Bless my soul! I never knew! I have not been told! I had not the faintest idea that you had returned, my dear fellow!" exclaimed Prout, coming closer to the window. "I am glad—indeed, overjoyed, that you have been released from the clutches of that miscreant—that desperate character called, I think, 'Thin—no, Slim—Slim Jim! Has Mr. Locke succeeded at last, then, in effecting your rescue, my dear Quelch?"

"Precisely, Mr. Prout."

"Push up the window, Quelch. I shall be glad to see you—to shake you by the hand, my dear fellow!" exclaimed Prout.

"The window seems to be jammed, Mr. Prout—I cannot open it farther—"

"I will come round to your study at once, Quelch—"

"One moment! Pray listen to me, Prout."

"Certainly, Quelch! But I am very eager to hear—my dear, dear fellow, I congratulate you most heartily! We have missed you, Quelch—we have all been deeply concerned—"

"Thank you, Mr. Prout. I learn that a—a person, one Lamb—a Mr. Lamb—has been taking my Form during my absence?"

"Yes, Quelch—the new art master, who, you may remember, came in Mr. Woosey's place towards the end of last term, when Mr. Woosey took up a Government appointment—in the Sealing-Wax Rationing Office, if I remember correctly—or was it the Gum Controller's office—I really forget."

"Yes, yes! I desire to meet this Mr. Lamb, naturally. Will you have the kindness, Prout, to bring him to my study with you?"

"Most certainly, Quelch!"

Mr. Prout, very much surprised by this sudden and unlooked-for return of his missing colleague, and very pleased, also, for Prout was a kind-hearted, plump gentleman, rolled away to go into the House.

Prout's portly motions were leisurely. He rolled along, slow and stately, rather like an old Spanish galleon. Long before Prout reached the door of the House, a fat, grinning Owl had had ample time to dodge out of Quelch's old study and disappear into parts unknown.

Several minutes had elapsed, after the fat ventriloquist's departure, before Prout rolled up Masters' Passage to Mr. Lamb's study.

Prout tapped at the door of that study.



"Come in!" came the Lamb's bleat. Prout rolled in.

Mr. Lamb was standing at a drawing-board, on which was pinned a pen-and-ink drawing, to which he was applying Chinese white. He glanced round inquiringly, over his gold-rimmed glasses, at Mr. Prout.

Lamb was on friendly terms with Prout—he was, indeed, on friendly terms with all the staff, who regarded him with tolerant kindness as a rather simple, obliging, and inoffensive little man. He gave Prout a cordial smile. Having been the victim, on several occasions, of Prout's somewhat lengthy chats, it was possible that he was not fearfully pleased to see the Fifth Form master roll into his study. But he looked quite pleased.

"Mr. Prout!" he said cordially. "Pray take a chair, sir! I am busy, as you see—improving the shining hour, but—"

"I have looked in with a message from Quelch!" exclaimed Mr. Prout.

The art master jumped, just as Prout had done at the voice from Quelch's study window. He gave so emphatic a start that his gold-rimmed glasses slanted down his nose and almost fell off.

"What did you say?" he exclaimed.

Prout stared at him.

The Lamb's voice was suddenly harsh and disagreeable—nothing at all like the bleat of the Pet Lamb. His face had taken on an angry, fierce, almost bullying expression.

Prout stared at him in wonder.

Lamb, leaving the drawing-board, stopped nearer to the Fifth Form master. His face was so black and angry that Prout started back a pace.

"What do you mean?" exclaimed Lamb, as the startled Fifth Form master did not speak. "Mr. Quelch is not here! Some trick like this was played on me by boys in my Form, on the first day of term. What do you mean? I should imagine that you had something better to do than to play foolish practical jokes!"

Prout became purple.

Hitherto, he had rather liked little Mr. Lamb, in a pompous, patronising way. But this roused his deepest ire. The bare idea of Prout, a senior master, a plump gentleman who took himself with the greatest seriousness, playing practical jokes was not merely ludicrous—it was insulting.

"Will you speak?" almost shouted Mr. Lamb. "Tell me what you mean!"

Prout gurgled, and found his voice.

"I mean precisely what I say, Mr. Lamb, and I see no reason—no reason whatever—for this unseemly excitement!" he boomed. "Mr. Quelch has returned to the school."

"He has not!"

"I was speaking to him, sir, at his study window, only five minutes ago!" hooted Prout.

"You were speaking to Mr. Quelch—here?" The Lamb's voice came haltingly. "Are you mad? Mr. Quelch is not here!"

"He has returned—"

"He has not returned!" snarled

Mr. Lamb. "I was made to believe so the other day; but I am not to be so deceived a second time. I am surprised at your folly, sir, in talking such nonsense."

Prout gasped.

"Did you say nonsense, Mr. Lamb?"

Prout could hardly articulate.

"I did—nonsense—sheer folly and stupidity!" snapped Mr. Lamb. "Common sense, sir, is expected of a man of your years!"

Prout wondered whether he was dreaming this! Never in his career as a schoolmaster—quite a long one!—had he been addressed like this before.

"Upon my word!" gasped Prout. "Upon my word! I quite fail to understand you, Mr. Lamb, but you will please understand this. You will not be permitted, sir, to address a member of the staff—a senior member—in such terms. I repeat that Mr. Quelch is now in the school—he is in his study at this moment, and desires to see you."

"Nonsense!"

"He has said so, sir!" roared Prout. "He asked me to take you to his study—which now I shall certainly not do. I shall go to Mr. Quelch and inform him that I have told you of his request, and that, sir, is all! Pah!"

Putting all his scorn and indignation into that "pah," the indignant Prout rolled out of Lamb's study, purple with wrath.

The art master stood breathing quickly, almost panting. Why he was so exasperated, indeed enraged, was a puzzle to Prout, and might have been a puzzle to anyone at Greyfriars School.

He clenched his hands, till the nails almost dug into the palms.

But after a moment or two he stepped to the door and glanced down the passage after Prout. Quelch was not at Greyfriars—he could not have come back to Greyfriars—it was impossible! And yet—

He saw the portly form of Prout stop at the door of Quelch's old study. He saw Prout raise his hand, tap, open the door, and step into that study! And he stepped back quickly into his own and shut the door! What could Prout's action mean, except that Quelch was there—or that, at all events, Prout believed that he was there? Quietly, but swiftly, the art master locked his door on the inside.

Then, with whitened cheeks, the man who did not want to meet Mr. Quelch stood listening, panting for breath while he listened.

#### WHERE IS QUELCH?

"WHARTON!"

"Yes, sir?"

"Have you seen your Form-master?"

"I think Mr. Lamb is in his study, sir."

"I mean your Form-master—Mr. Quelch."

Harry Wharton blinked at the Fifth Form master. How Prout could

imagine that he had seen his Form-master, Mr. Quelch, who was parked in some unknown spot in the hands of kidnappers, was beyond his comprehension.

"I—I—no, sir!" stammered the captain of the Remove. "Mr. Quelch is still away, sir—"

"You were not aware that he had returned, Wharton? You are his head boy."

"I haven't heard anything about it, sir! I—I'm sure I should have heard if he'd come back."

"He has certainly come back, Wharton!" Prout, with a puzzled and flustered look on his plump face, had rolled out of the House and was looking about him in a perplexed way, when he saw the captain of the Remove and called to him. "I spoke to him not half an hour ago, Wharton."

Harry Wharton jumped.

"Did—did—did you, sir?" he stuttered.

"I certainly did! He spoke to me from his study window!" said Mr. Prout. "But, on going to his study, I found that he had left it. I have inquired in Common-room, and no one has seen him there. It is very singular! Are you quite sure that you have not seen him, Wharton? He must, I think, be out of the House, as I cannot find him within."

"Did—did—did you see him in his study, sir?" asked Harry, with a glimmering suspicion of the truth in his mind.

"I did not see him, Wharton, as I was outside, and Mr. Quelch was unable to open the window more than a few inches, as the sash had jammed. But he spoke to me from the window."

"Oh!" gasped Harry.

He quite understood now. The Remove ventriloquist had been at work again—an easy game, speaking from a window a few inches open to Prout on the path below. Bunter's masterly imitation of Quelch's bark had done the trick—Wharton was as sure of that as if he had seen the fat Owl doing it. This was another move in Smithy's game to worry the Pet Lamb.

"It is singular—indeed, mysterious!" said Mr. Prout. "I cannot understand this. You are sure you have not seen him, Wharton?"

"Not since last term, sir!"

"It is very singular! Please inquire among other Remove boys whether they have seen Mr. Quelch to-day!" said Prout.

"Oh! Yes, sir! Certainly!"

Prout rolled on, portly and puzzled, with an eye open for Quelch—if by chance Quelch was in the offing.

Harry Wharton, after a glance round, cut across to the elms, where he spotted Herbert Vernon-Smith and Billy Bunter—the former grinning, the latter chuckling like an alarm clock in action. Prout had not the remotest suspicion of the facts; but the captain of the Remove guessed easily enough, knowing the Bunder's game.

"Bunter, you fat idiot—" he began.

"Eh?" Bunter blinked at him.

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through his big spectacles. "What do—"

"You've been in Quelch's study?"

"He, he, he!" gurgled Bunter. "I say, you should have seen Prout jump! He, he, he!"

"You howling ass, you've set Prout hunting all over Greyfriars for Quelch—"

"He, he, he!" chortled Bunter.

"Bother you, you fat fozzler! Prout's asked me to inquire up and down the Remove whether any chap's seen Quelch to-day!" rapped Wharton.

"He, he, he!" chortled Bunter.

"I've a jolly good mind to boot you—"

"He, he, he! You can boot Smithy!" chuckled the fat Owl. "It's Smithy's stunt. I'm only doing it to oblige Smithy, ain't I, Smithy? I say, where's that tin of toffees—you said—"

"On my study table."

"Oh, all right!" Bunter rolled off towards the House.

"Look here, you fat freak—" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

But Billy Bunter did not "look there." Bunter was in a hurry to get to Study No. 4 in the Remove and a tin of toffees! Bunter rolled off regardless.

Harry Wharton turned a frowning glance on the Bounder.

Smithy met it with a mocking grin.

"What the thump game are you up to now, you ass?" asked Wharton gruffly. "Where's the sense in pulling old Prout's leg with that fat idiot's silly tricks? Have you got a feud on with Prout as well as Lamb? Are you going to row with all the beaks this term?"

"Prout's a pawn in the game!" grinned the Bounder. "He was set to carry the news to Lamb. Coming from a beak, it was likely to convince Lamb that Quelch really was back this time."

"Oh!" said Harry slowly. "I see! Has Prout told Lamb, then?"

"He has!" said the Bounder, with a sneering grin. "Quelch's voice asked him to bring Lamb to his study."

"Oh, my hat! And did he?"

"No—he didn't! I had an eye on him—and Lamb did not go along with Prout to Quelch's study!" sneered the Bounder. "And I jolly well knew he wouldn't, either."

"I don't see why—"

"I'll tell you, then! Lamb doesn't want to see Quelch, for some reason. He showed that jolly plainly the other day at the Form-room door, when he thought that Quelch was in the Form-room. I can't make out why—but he doesn't. Can you?"

"What utter rot!" said Wharton. "Why should Lamb care a boiled bean whether he meets Quelch or not? Quelch wouldn't eat him, I suppose."

"I don't know why he should care—but he does care!" said the Bounder, coolly and deliberately. "They may have met and had a row without the Head knowing about it, perhaps—"

"Jolly unlikely."

"Yes, I know it is—but there's some reason! I've got an impression

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that Lamb's afraid to meet Quelch."

"Go back to the dorm and dream again!" suggested Wharton.

"You don't think so?"

"Of course I don't!"

"Come with me, then, and we'll see!" said the Bounder coolly.

Wharton, in wonder, followed Vernon-Smith into the House.

Vernon-Smith led the way up Masters' Passage to Mr. Woosey's old study, now occupied by Mr. Lamb, which was almost at the end.

Harry Wharton followed him, puzzled and impatient, but curious to know what the Bounder meant.

Smithy tapped at the door. Then he turned the door-handle.

The door did not open, and he gave the captain of the Remove a sneering, significant look.

"Locked!" said Harry, rather startled.

"Yes; he thinks Quelch is about."

"What utter rot!"

The Bounder shrugged his shoulders, and tapped on the door again.

A sharp voice, quite unlike the Lamb's usual peaceful bleat, came through the oak:

"What is it? Who is there?"

"Vernon-Smith, sir! Will you please let me in, as I have a message for—"

"I am busy at the moment, Vernon-Smith! What is the message?"

"Mr. Quelch, sir—"

"What?"

"Will you please step along to Mr. Quelch's study, sir, as Mr. Quelch would like to speak to you?"

There was a dead silence in Lamb's study.

Harry Wharton stood quite still. The Bounder, of course, had no such message; he was simply testing Lamb, in pursuance of his belief that the art master would not come out of his study if he believed that Quelch was about.

Harry Wharton had to admit that, incomprehensible as it was, it looked as if Vernon-Smith was right. Lamb did not come out, and he did not open the door—and why was the door locked?

There was quite a long pause before the Lamb spoke again.

"Vernon-Smith!"

"Yes, sir!" grinned the Bounder.

"Did Mr. Quelch personally give you that message for me?"

That was rather a poser for the Bounder. Apart from considerations of veracity, he could hardly reply in the affirmative when it was certain to transpire before very long that Mr. Quelch was not at Greyfriars at all. But he answered coolly:

"No, sir—Mr. Prout said so."

"Very well, Vernon-Smith, you may go."

The Bounder winked at Harry Wharton, and they went down the passage together.

"What do you think now?" sneered Smithy. "Prout's told him that Quelch wants to see him, now I've told him, and he won't come out—he's sticking like a rat in a hole, with his door locked! Does he want to meet Quelch?"

"Why shouldn't he?"

The Bounder laughed

"That's not an answer! He's got some reason—goodness knows what! He's rather a queer fish altogether—he pretends to be a tame bunny rabbit, and breaks out like a tiger when he forgets his part. What is he putting up a spoof like that for?"

"Oh, rot!"

"There's something in this that I don't get!" said the Bounder. "I don't get it at all! But I know enough to know how to get him on the raw—and, by gum, I'll let him have Quelch, and Quelch, and Quelch again, till he's as fed-up with Quelch as I was with the brute hammering my head in the train the other day. By gum, I'll give him plenty of Quelch, as he likes it so much!"

And the Bounder walked away, laughing, in great good humour at having found so unexpected a stick with which to beat the Lamb!

He left Wharton puzzled and perplexed, and almost forgetting to return to Mr. Prout with the information that Quelch had not been seen by the Remove that day. However, he remembered, and went—and Prout, who had been making inquiries in other quarters without learning anything, was the most mystified man ever.

#### WORK FOR FERRERS LOCKE!

DR. LOCKE opened his eyes wide—very wide indeed.

He gazed at Mr. Prout; he almost goggled at him.

"Impossible!" he said.

"I should have supposed so, sir—I should certainly have supposed so!" said Mr. Prout, whose plump face was the picture of perplexity and puzzlement. "But there is no doubt, sir! Mr. Quelch undoubtedly returned to the school to-day—though it appears that he has since departed, and—"

"You did not see him, Mr. Prout?"

"I did not, sir! But his voice is quite familiar to me. We conversed for several minutes at his study window—there is no possibility of mistake in the matter."

Dr. Locke continued to gaze at the Fifth Form master. On the previous occasion, he had taken it for granted that some trick had been played, as Mr. Lamb was not supposed to be familiar with Quelch's voice. But that, of course, did not apply to Prout. The master of the Fifth knew the voice of his colleague, whom he had met daily, for years on end, until his mysterious disappearance. It was hardly possible that Prout could be mistaken in such a matter.

"We all hope," said Dr. Locke, at last, "that Mr. Quelch may return any day or any hour. But if he did return, Mr. Prout, it is inconceivable that he should leave again without a word. That is impossible!"

"It would seem so, sir!" said Mr. Prout. "I am quite perplexed—but one thing is assured, and that is that I conversed with Mr. Quelch at his study window an hour ago. It is most amazing—incomprehensible! I understand, sir, that you are in touch with the celebrated detective, your



relative Ferrers Locke, in connection with Quelch's mysterious fate—"

The Head started a little.

"Quite so, Mr. Prout!" he answered. "But—"

"This extraordinary occurrence, sir, should surely be reported to Ferrers Locke in your next communication with him!" said Mr. Prout. "I thought I had better report it to you, sir."

"I am obliged to you, Mr. Prout, for doing so!" said the Head courteously.

And Prout left the study—a very puzzled man, leaving the Head equally puzzled.

After a few minutes' reflection, Dr. Locke picked up the receiver of his study telephone and rang up the garage.

"Robinson!"

"Sir!" came back the respectful voice of the Head's new chauffeur.

"A most singular thing has occurred, Ferrers—I mean Robinson." The Head corrected himself hastily.

"Will you kindly step to my study?"

"Immediately, sir!"

Dr. Locke waited till there was a tap at his study door. The lean, olive-complexioned chauffeur entered, and shut the door after him.

Only the headmaster of Greyfriars knew that John Robinson, the new chauffeur, was Ferrers Locke, the celebrated detective of Baker Street. Harry Wharton & Co., who knew Locke well enough, had never dreamed of recognising their old acquaintance in the olive-skinned, dark-haired chauffeur.

John Robinson stood respectfully at attention. Even when he was alone with his venerable relative, the headmaster of Greyfriars, Locke was careful to play his assumed part to the last detail.

"Well, sir?" he asked.

"A most extraordinary thing, Ferrers—"

"Robinson, sir!"

"Yes, yes, I mean Robinson! Please listen!"

And the Head related what Mr. Prout had told him.

Ferrers Locke listened in silence, with astonishment in his face. He had wondered what the Head had to tell him, but certainly he had never anticipated anything like this.

"Extraordinary!" he said at last.

"You have no news—Robinson?" asked the Head.

"None as yet, sir! I fear that there will be no news of Mr. Quelch until Slim Jim is laid by the heels!" said Ferrers Locke quietly. "That the rascal is still in this neighbourhood seems to be indicated by the burglary at the jeweller's in Courtfield during the holidays. There is no doubt that it was his work. But—"

"But according to your theory, the man, in his outward character, has taken up some post in the vicinity," said Dr. Locke.

"I have no doubt of it, sir."

"And you have not been able to trace—"

"So far, nothing!" said Ferrers Locke. "I have not been idle, sir!" He smiled faintly. "You are good enough to allow your chauffeur ample

leisure, and he has not wasted his time. But it is no easy task that I have set myself, sir. I am convinced that the man we want is no common crook who assumes an outward appearance of respectability for a special purpose. He is, I believe, a man with a life-long record that will bear the closest investigation—and who only ceases, for short periods, to be a respectable citizen when he dons the black mask of Slim Jim."

Dr. Locke nodded slowly.

"In seeking Slim Jim, therefore, we are practically seeking a man who does not exist!" said Ferrers Locke. "His existence is limited to short periods in the dark hours. At other times—that is, the greater part of his life—who is he? A character above suspicion—that is proved by the fact that he has carried on for years unsuspected and undetected."

The Head nodded again.

"He may be—anyone!" said Ferrers Locke. "My belief that he takes up some perfectly respectable post, in which he remains till his engagement comes to a natural end, is the only clue I have—if it is a clue! Having taken up such a post, he cracks crib after crib within a wide radius. In such a case, sir, patience is very much needed."

"If any man can succeed, you can, I am sure of that, at all events," said Dr. Locke. "But to return to what Mr. Prout has stated, what do you think?"

Ferrers Locke smiled.

"I do not agree with Mr. Prout that Mr. Quelch reappeared at the school to-day," he said. "That is impossible."

"Mr. Prout is absolutely certain that it was Mr. Quelch's voice that he heard from the study window—"

"No doubt!" said Ferrers Locke. "But it must have been some kind of trickery, for it can have been nothing else. I suspect, sir, that the incident will turn out to be what the school-boys, I believe, call a rag."

Dr. Locke frowned.

"I shall, however, look into the matter without delay," said Ferrers Locke. "It is unimaginable that Mr. Quelch can have come here and left again of his own accord. It is scarcely imaginable that he may have escaped and reached Greyfriars, only to be recaptured by the kidnappers after he got here. It is, I suppose, barely possible—but it is extremely improbable."

"Yet Mr. Prout is assured—"

"At all events, sir, I will ascertain the facts, whatever they are, without delay," said Ferrers Locke. "But in the event of my discovering that the affair is a schoolboy rag, you will not request me to give you the names of the culprits?"

The Head smiled.

"No! No! That is not your work here!" he said. "But I should be very glad to have this very extraordinary affair cleared up and put an end to."

"I think you can rely upon me for that, sir—it is an easier case than that of Slim Jim the cracksman," said Ferrers Locke, smiling.

And he left the Head's study.

The Bounder, who was gleefully

planning to carry that rag for the discomfiture of the Head and Lamb, little dreamed what opposition he was now up against. And it certainly did not occur to the Baker Street detective that in this peculiar episode he was to get his first, faint glimmering of a clue in his hunt for the unknown and mysterious cracksman, Slim Jim.

## THE PRISONER OF THE DUG-OUT!

HENRY SAMUEL QUELCH, the master of the Greyfriars Remove, took twelve paces—turned, and took twelve paces back.

Mr. Quelch, who was a great walker, had long been deprived of that most healthy of all forms of exercise.

His present peregrinations were limited by the space available.

Twelve paces brought him from one end of his present abode to the other. The kidnapped schoolmaster spent a great many of his weary hours of imprisonment in pacing to and fro in those narrow limits.

His present quarters were a considerable improvement on those he had occupied when first he had fallen into the kidnappers' hands.

He had been imprisoned in a damp and gloomy vault under a ruined building for long and weary weeks—the old moat house, near Wharton Lodge in Surrey. Harry Wharton & Co., home for the Christmas holidays, had very nearly discovered him there. But the kidnappers had got him away in time, and his new quarters—where, he had not the faintest idea—were at least more comfortable than the gloomy old vault.

The floor was of thick planks, almost new, the walls and ceiling of unpainted matchboarding. An electric bulb hung from the centre of the ceiling, and the Remove master had a good light—an agreeable change from the oil-lamp in the old vault.

Quelch had been brought into that retreat, gagged and bound and blindfolded, after a long journey in a car. In what direction he had travelled he did not know. He had been rolled in sacking on the floor of the car. But though he did not know where he was, he knew what his retreat was—a carefully constructed air-raid shelter.

It was below ground—how far below he could not tell. But he knew that it was deep down, for when his gaoler came he could hear the man's heavy steps on a wooden stair.

The shelter was furnished for occupation. It had been designed for comfortable use, in case of air raids—though turned now to a very different purpose. He had no doubt that it was in a garden belonging to some building—probably a lonely building. But he could not even guess in what county of England or Wales it might be located.

The fact that it was a safe spot, in case of air raids, did not comfort Mr. Quelch very much. There was no element of funk in Mr. Quelch's composition, and he had never wasted any thought on enemy bombers. He



would have been glad to emerge from that secure spot, in the middle of the biggest raid ever.

But there was no chance of that. The door from the stair was kept bolted on the outside. It was only opened when his gaoler came.

He had a new gaoler in his new quarters. A powerful ruffian, twice or thrice as strong as Quelch, had guarded him in the vault under the moat house. But Quelch had not seen him since his removal. His new gaoler was a man he might have hoped to be able to handle, given a chance. But when the man came, he came with a loaded stick in his hand, which he was obviously ready to use at the first hint of trouble from the prisoner. The Remove master of Greyfriars was as safe a prisoner in the air-raid shelter as he had been in the vault under the moat house.

Quelch's face was worn and weary.

He knew that Ferrers Locke was in search of him. He knew that the Baker Street detective was aware that he had been kidnapped because he was the only man who had seen the face of Slim Jim, the cracksman, with the mask off. But as weary day followed day, his hope even in Ferrers Locke grew faint.

He paced and paced and paced the length of the air-raid shelter and back again—till the sound of tramping feet, coming dully through the door, warned him that his gaoler was coming.

Mr. Quelch halted, and stood facing the door at the end of the dugout.

There was a grinding of bolts, and the door opened. A stocky man, with a muffer tied across a pimply face, and a short loaded stick in his hand, stood aside, for another man to enter.

The second man was wrapped in a long overcoat, with a mask covering the whole of his face.

Mr. Quelch's eyes glittered at him. This was the first time he had seen Slim Jim since he had been in his new quarters.

"Rogue and rascal!" said the Remove master, in a low voice. "Have you come to see that I am still safe in this dreary den?"

The keen, sharp eyes from the eye-holes in the black mask glanced round.

"You are not so badly off here, Mr. Quelch!" came a voice from under the mask. "And you have nothing to fear if enemy bombers come in this direction."

Snort, from Mr. Quelch. Bombers did not worry him.

"And you still have Euripides!" added the masked man, with a nod towards a volume lying on a little table. "No doubt Orestes and Iphigenia afford you some consolation."

Quelch gave him a sharp look. Often and often had he wondered what kind of man this was in his outward life—when he was not playing the part of a thief in the night. Few crooks and cracksmen were acquainted with Euripides. Whatever Slim Jim was, clearly he was no common gangster.

"Why have you come here?" snapped Mr. Quelch. "Not, I sup-

pose, to discuss the Greek tragic poets?"

There was a laugh from under the mask.

"No! Though such a discussion would be quite agreeable to me, Mr. Quelch, with a man of your information and intelligence. But for the unfortunate fact that you saw my face that night at Popper Court, we might have been very agreeable acquaintances."

Another snort from Quelch.

"But I have come on quite a different matter," went on the masked man. "Are you anxious to hear news from the school, where unluckily you have been unable to reappear for the new term?"

Mr. Quelch gave a violent start.

"Is it possible that you have had the audacity, the impudence, to pay a visit to Greyfriars?" he exclaimed.

"Why not? Slim Jim by day is not the same man as Slim Jim by night," answered the masked man.

"What do you know of me, excepting my features? Suppose I told you that I had called upon Dr. Locke as an official from the Inland Revenue Department, to ask for his cheque for income-tax?"

Mr. Quelch stared at him.

It was possible enough! In his outward life, Slim Jim might be anything from an income-tax inspector to a schoolmaster.

"That is not true!" said Mr. Quelch, at last.

"Why not?"

"Because, if it was, you would not tell me!" said the Remove master scornfully. "I shall be free some day, and you would not incur unnecessary risk."

The masked man laughed again.

"Quite!" he assented. "Yet it is a fact that I have seen Dr. Locke, in an equally impeccable character. You will be glad to hear that the venerable gentleman is in the best of health, though deeply distressed by your disappearance and your unknown fate."

Mr. Quelch watched him keenly. He did not doubt that the man had seen the headmaster of Greyfriars School. But he knew that Slim Jim must have some motive for telling him this.

"Well?" he rapped.

"Now we are coming down to brass tacks!" said the masked man. "On the occasion of my visit to the school a curious thing occurred. Dr. Locke was very much disturbed by a peculiar trick played by some boy in the school, which startled and distressed him. It seems that some boy in the school has a peculiar gift for imitating voices, and this boy, at present unknown, caused a belief that you had returned there—"

"What?"

"By speaking from a window, in a voice that was accepted as yours. Such an occurrence, naturally, distressed Dr. Locke very much. As my visit to the school occurred that day, I was present, as it chanced. Needless to say, I was very startled—"

"You supposed that I had escaped, and returned to Greyfriars," said the Remove master contemptuously. "You feared that I might be there—"

that I might see you and denounce you for what you are!"

"You get me exactly!" said the masked man, with a cool nod. "But it soon transpired that it was some sort of a trick. I learned that it has occurred twice—doubtless the young rascal, whoever he is, intends to carry on this peculiar jest. No doubt he is a boy in your Form, and probably known to you."

Mr. Quelch did not answer.

Slim Jim's surmise was quite correct. More than once, Mr. Quelch had whopped a certain member of his Form for having played such tricks. He was well acquainted with Billy Bunter's ventriloquial trickery, and he knew that the fat junior had often imitated his majestic bark to make fellows jump. It was clear from what the masked man said that he had been at the school, and that Bunter had played tricks while he was there.

"The headmaster, naturally, is very much disturbed and distressed by this," went on the masked man. "And—I am a good-natured man, Mr. Quelch—if you care to write a note to Dr. Locke, acquainting him with the name of the unknown trickster, I will see that it reaches him in a way, of course, that will bring no danger to myself."

Mr. Quelch still stood silent.

"I have no doubt you are acquainted with the boy's name, as I can hardly doubt that he is in your Form," said the masked man, watching him narrowly through the eye-holes of the mask.

"Possibly!" said Mr. Quelch.

"That is as good as an answer in the affirmative. It is in your power to relieve your headmaster of this trickster. I will see that the information reaches him, as I have said, if you care to write—"

Mr. Quelch's lip curled.

"I will tell you nothing," he answered.

"A note to Dr. Locke—"

"Which you would read and never deliver," said Mr. Quelch contemptuously. "Do you take me for an infant? Why you should care about such trickery I cannot guess, but it is perfectly clear to me that you have some purpose of your own to serve in asking me this. Your concern for Dr. Locke, sir, is sheer humbug—I do not believe in your good nature. You desire to learn the boy's name, for some reason that I cannot fathom—and I shall tell you nothing."

The eyes from the mask glittered at the kidnapped Form-master. Quelch had read the man like an open book.

"Perhaps," said Mr. Quelch, sarcastically, "your outward avocation may cause you to visit the school again. The trickery might recur—and such an experience must be disagreeable to a man who has so much to fear. You might even betray yourself, or excite suspicion, in a startled moment. I understand you perfectly—and I will tell you nothing!"

For a long minute the masked man stood looking at him in silence. Then, still without speaking, he turned and left the dugout. The door closed again, and the bolts shot into place,





Lamb's hand was raised to strike again, but Wharton grasped at his arm and dragged it down. "You'd better stop that, Mr. Lamb!" he snapped contemptuously. "You shan't touch Smithy again! I'll call the Head if you do!"

Mr. Quelch, left alone again, resumed pacing the dug-out—perhaps a little bucked by that interview. For whatever reason it might be, Slim Jim evidently wanted to learn what he had come there to find out—and it was some comfort to send him away disappointed.

#### CORNERING THE LAMB

"I SAY, you fellows!"

"Buzz!"

"I haven't come to tea," said Billy Bunter, disdainfully. "Think I want any of your measly spread? I'm going to tea with Smithy!"

"You fat villain!" said Bob Cherry. "Is Smithy feeding you for pulling the Pet Lamb's leg?"

Billy Bunter grinned. His ample form adorned the doorway of Study No. 1 in the Remove, at tea-time.

The Famous Five, in that study, were getting tea—rather a frugal tea, Christmas tips having mostly petered out by this time.

Billy Bunter did not want any of that frugal tea. Smithy's study, which was like unto a land flowing with milk and honey, was open to Bunter now.

Last term a boot would have greeted the fat Owl in Smithy's study. This term there was a happy change. So long as the Bounder wanted to make use of Billy Bunter's weird gift of ventriloquism, he was not in a position to refuse Bunter the hospitality of his study. Bunter was the man to make the most of such a happy chance.

"I say, you fellows, Smithy's got a jolly good spread," said Bunter. "Three kinds of jam—"

"Go and sample them!"

"And sosses—lots of sosses!" said Bunter. "I'm waiting for Smithy to come up now. He's getting a cake and some doughnuts from the shop."

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"Bunter's going to be a pig in clover so long as Smithy keeps up this stunt," he remarked. "Don't burst all over his study, old fat man!"

"I say, you fellows, though, who'd have thought the Lamb would be so jolly knocked over?" said the fat Owl. "Can you fellows make it out? The idea at first was only to puzzle the silly ass, and worry him, you know. But look how it's turned out! He goes all ga-ga when Quelch's voice crops up. Smithy says he must be afraid of Quelch for some reason."

"Smithy's an ass!" said Harry Wharton.

"Well, it's queer, you know," said Bunter. "Even if he knows Quelch, and they've had some row, he can't be afraid of Quelch punching his head, or anything, can he?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, it ain't likely, is it?" said Bunter.

"Not quite."

"The likeliness is not terrific."

"Well, then, I don't see why he should be so afraid of running into Quelch," said Bunter.

"Perhaps he isn't."

"Well, Smithy thinks so, and it jolly well looks like it," said Bunter.

"He cleared off this afternoon—we haven't had him in Form. We've had extra French and maths instead. Well, what did he clear off for?"

"Ask him when he comes in," suggested Nugent.

"Smithy thinks he cleared off for the afternoon because he fancied Quelch might be about, you know, after what Prout said—"

"Smithy's a goat!" said Bob Cherry.

"Thanks!" said a sarcastic voice from the passage, as the Bounder looked in over Bunter's fat shoulder.

"Not at all, old bean—you're welcome," said Bob affably. "You shouldn't talk such rot about the poor old Baa Lamb, Smithy!"

"Is it rot?" sneered the Bounder.

"The rotfulness is terrific, my esteemed Smithy."

"I say, Smithy, got the doughnuts?" asked Bunter.

"Never mind the doughnuts now," said Smithy. "Lamb's come in, and I think he's coming up here. He asked me if you were in your study, Wharton."

"Well, here I am, if he wants me," said the captain of the Remove. "I don't know why—"

"You think he's not afraid to see Quelch!" sneered the Bounder. "Well, as soon as he's inside the study he's going to hear Quelch's voice outside. That jolly old voice is going to corner him! See?"

"He, he, he!" from Bunter.

"Look here, chuck it, Smithy!" exclaimed Wharton. "Don't start  
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playing your fatheaded japes on Lamb in my study!"

"It's utter rot," said Johnny Bull. "The Lamb has acted rather queerly, but why the dickens should he object to seeing Quelch?"

"Well, wait till he's in the study, and hears Quelch outside, and thinks he can't get away without meeting him!" sneered the Bounder.

"From what the Head said the other day, he doesn't even know Quelch's voice, as he's never met him!"

"He's pulled the Head's leg about that! He knows Quelch's voice as well as we do, so he must have met him, and knows him pretty well, too, I should think," answered Vernon-Smith. "You'll see."

"Look here——"

"Shut up—he's coming."

The Famous Five remained silent, though feeling very restive. They could not risk giving the fat ventriloquist away to Lamb; but they had little sympathy with the Bounder's feud, and they did not want tricks played on the Pet Lamb in Study No. 1.

But there was no help for it now—Lamb was coming up the passage, and he passed Vernon-Smith and Bunter at the doorway and looked in. He peered at Harry Wharton over his gold-rimmed glasses.

"Ah! You are here, Wharton!" he said in his accustomed amiable bleat.

"Yes, sir! Please come in!" said the captain of the Remove politely. He was wondering what the Lamb wanted. The art master had been away from the school that afternoon, and this was the first Wharton had seen of him since dinner.

The Pet Lamb ambled into the study.

Frank Nugent politely placed the best chair for him, and he sat down.

Outside the study, Billy Bunter backed a little, behind the Bounder, who lounged by the doorway. A fat little cough was heard—the Remove ventriloquist's usual preliminary before he went into action.

"I wish to ask you something, Wharton," said the Lamb. "You or your friends will, I feel sure, be able to answer me. Probably you are aware of what occurred to-day—some foolish boy who appears to have a gift for imitating voices, deluded Mr. Prout into believing that your Form-master, Mr. Quelch, had returned to the school."

"Oh!" exclaimed Harry.

Evidently the Pet Lamb had guessed it!

Mr. Lamb did not know that there was a ventriloquist in his Form. But he had tumbled to it that some fellow well acquainted with Quelch's voice had been able to imitate it. That was indeed really the only possible explanation of what had happened, as it was certain that Quelch was still away from the school.

"Now I think it very probable," pursued Mr. Lamb, "that you, Wharton, know something about this."

Wharton did not speak. He did, indeed, know something about it, as

every fellow in the Remove did. But he had no intention of telling Mr. Lamb what he knew.

"Such trickery," said Mr. Lamb, "cannot be allowed to continue! It is distressing to the headmaster, in the circumstances. It is very annoying to me. Are you aware, Wharton, whether any boy in the Remove possesses this trick of imitation? I am speaking to you as my head boy."

No answer.

"Do you hear me, Wharton?" asked Mr. Lamb, raising his voice a little.

"Yes, I hear you, sir!" answered Harry.

"Please answer my question, then!"

"I cannot answer it, sir," said the captain of the Remove quietly. "It is not a head boy's duty, sir, to answer such questions. I cannot tell you anything about other fellows in my Form!"

Mr. Lamb looked at him, the amiable expression fading from his face and an angry gleam coming into his eyes.

All the Famous Five could see that one of the Lamb's outbreaks of temper was coming. It did not daunt Harry Wharton, however. If the Lamb supposed that he could turn his head boy into a sneak, telling tales about other fellows in the Remove, the Lamb was mistaken, and the sooner he understood it, the better.

"Wharton! I order you to answer me!" rasped Mr. Lamb. His voice became harsh and unpleasant when he was angry, and he was angry now. "I can see that you know—and I order you to reply!"

Wharton's face took on a dogged look.

"I've nothing to tell you, sir!" he answered.

"You do not mean that you cannot answer? Do you mean that you will not?" demanded Mr. Lamb.

Wharton looked at him steadily.

"Yes, sir," he answered distinctly. "If you want it plain, I mean that I will not. Mr. Quelch would never have asked a fellow in the Form to give another fellow away!"

"You are not dealing with Mr. Quelch now!" said the Lamb harshly. "You are dealing with me, and if you do not answer my question, Wharton, I shall punish you with the greatest severity!"

Wharton's eyes flashed.

"You will do as you think best, sir," he answered. "But you will never make a sneak of me or of any other man in the Remove!"

"Hear, hear!" murmured Bob Cherry.

Mr. Lamb rose to his feet. His face was flushed, his eyes glittering, under knitted brows. Harry Wharton faced him steadily. If Lamb was going to start smacking his head as he had smacked the Bounder's on the train on the first day of term, there was trouble coming! And Lamb looked like it!

But even as he was making a step towards Wharton, there was a sharp barking voice at the doorway behind Lamb's back.

"Is Mr. Lamb here? I was told that Mr. Lamb was here."

It was the familiar bark of Mr. Quelch.

So life like—so exactly like Quelch's bark—was that voice that the Famous Five, for a moment, really fancied that Quelch was in the passage, forgetting the fat ventriloquist.

The effect on Mr. Lamb was very startling.

He knew, as the Famous Five knew, that Mr. Quelch was not in the school. But, for the moment, the impression that Quelch was not only in the school but actually standing at that moment in the passage outside the study was irresistible.

The art master spun round as if electrified, caught hold of the study door, and slammed it. That sudden slam rang along the Remove passage, and Mr. Lamb stood at the shut door, panting, while the Famous Five stared at him blankly.

#### A ROW IN THE REMOVE!

**H**ARRY WHARTON & CO. stared as if transfixed.

They were too astonished to move or speak.

Lamb's sudden action had taken them quite by surprise. They had doubted, or rather derided, Smithy's assertion that Lamb was afraid, for some mysterious reason, to meet Mr. Quelch. But they could hardly doubt it now.

Lamb's action had been swift, instinctive, without thought—the outcome of sudden panic at the voice of Mr. Quelch—which only too evidently he knew well enough, though the Head supposed that he had never met the Remove master. The amazed juniors could see that. For some utterly inexplicable reason, the man who was taking Mr. Quelch's place at Greyfriars panicked at the prospect of meeting Mr. Quelch face to face. It was so amazing that the juniors could only stare, dumb.

Knock!

It was a knock outside the door.

"Is Mr. Lamb here?" came the well-known bark. "If you are here, Mr. Lamb, I should be glad to speak to you!"

There was a dead silence in Study No. 1.

Harry Wharton & Co. needed only a moment's reflection to tell them that it was the fat ventriloquist at work again, carrying on with Smithy's stunt, and cornering the Lamb in that study.

"Are you there, Mr. Lamb?" came the bark again, so exactly Quelch's that though they knew the facts, the Famous Five could hardly believe that it was not their old Form-master speaking.

But they knew that it was Bunter, and as Lamb had already guessed that that mysterious voice was produced by some fellow with a gift of imitation, they expected him to realise very soon how matters stood.

Mr. Lamb was not long in doing so. The unexpected voice had thrown



him quite off his balance for the moment. But he was quick to recover.

The look of rage that flashed over his face startled the juniors in the study. He spun round to the door, which he had slammed only a few moments ago, and tore it open.

Evidently he had already realised that Mr. Quelch was not, and could not be, there, and was furiously eager to get hold of the trickster whom he knew must be there.

"Ow!" came a startled squeak, as Mr. Lamb, fairly leaping out of the study, crashed into Billy Bunter.

The fat Owl staggered across the passage.

Mr. Lamb did not heed him. Not for a moment did his suspicions turn on Bunter—the fat and obtuse Owl of the Remove was not a fellow he was likely to suspect.

His eyes glittered up and down the passage. Only one other fellow was near at hand—Herbert Vernon-Smith—with a sardonic grin on his face.

"You!" breathed Mr. Lamb.

He had no doubt of it. He had not forgotten the episode in the train, and Smithy in the Form-room during the past few days had let it be seen plainly enough that he had not forgotten it, either. It was Vernon-Smith who was playing this trick—Lamb jumped to that at once.

He uttered only that one word—then he almost flew at the Bounder. In a moment his grasp was on Smithy.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Billy Bunter.

The fat Owl was thankful from the bottom of his fat heart that the enraged Lamb had not spotted him. The look on the art master's face scared him almost out of his podgy wits.

Smack, smack, smack, smack!

Herbert Vernon-Smith, taken quite by surprise by that sudden onslaught, struggled in the art master's grasp and yelled frantically.

Lamb heeded neither his struggles nor his yells. His blows came down like rain.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bob Cherry.

The Famous Five crowded out of the doorway of Study No. 1.

Smack, smack, smack, smack!

Harry Wharton, with a set face, ran forward and grasped Mr. Lamb's right arm, as his hand was descending in another tremendous smack.

"Stop that!" he panted.

"Let go my arm, you young rascal!" roared Lamb.

He wrenched his arm savagely away.

A dozen Remove fellows crowded out of the studies, staring on at the scene with startled faces.

Lamb's hand was raised to strike again, but Wharton grasped at his arm and dragged it down.

"You'd better stop that, Mr. Lamb!" he snapped contemptuously. "You shan't touch Smithy again! I'll call the Head if you do!"

Vernon-Smith tore himself loose from Lamb's grasp and jumped away. His eyes were blazing, and he clenched his hands.

"Let him touch me again!" he shouted. "I'll knock him spinning if he does!"

Tom Redwing ran out of Study No. 4 and joined his chum. A crowd of fellows gathered round, startled and excited.

Mr. Lamb wrenched his arm from Wharton's grasp again, and seemed for a moment about to wreak his rage on the captain of the Remove. But he turned towards Vernon-Smith.

The Bounder glared at him with savage defiance.

"Come on, if you like!" he said, between his teeth. "I'll knock you spinning, if I'm sacked for it the next minute!"

"And I'll back you up!" exclaimed Tom Redwing.

Mr. Lamb stood panting. But he did not approach the Bounder again. It was plain that he was trying to control his savage temper; and equally plain that he found it very difficult to do so. He spoke at last, his voice harsh and gasping.

"Vernon-Smith! It is you who have been guilty of all this trickery! I shall report you to your headmaster."

"Report, and be hanged!" retorted the Bounder.

"It was not Vernon-Smith, sir!" said Harry Wharton quietly. "Every fellow in the Remove knows that it wasn't."

Lamb stared round at him.

"Then who was it?" he snarled.

"That's for you to find out!" answered Wharton coolly. "I think you'd better go, sir!"

Lamb gave him a fierce look. Then his glance swept round over the crowd of faces in the Remove passage—many of them contemptuous.

"Rotten bargee!" came a voice from the back of the crowd. Two or three fellows hissed.

Probably it dawned on Mr. Lamb that Wharton's suggestion was a good one, and that he had better go. After that glare round, he turned and walked to the Remove landing and the stairs.

"By gad!" said Lord Mauleverer. "What a bargee!"

The Bounder stood panting.

"Oh crikey!" said Billy Bunter.

"You fat ass!" said Harry. "You'd better let that be your last trick on Lamb. He may spot you next time."

"Oh lor'!"

Mr. Lamb had disappeared down the stairs. The Famous Five went back into Study No. 1—leaving the enraged Bounder the centre of a buzzing crowd in the passage.

Bob Cherry shut the door and cast a look round at his comrades.

"We'd better call that bargee the Pet Tiger, instead of the Pet Lamb," he remarked. "But what the dickens does it all mean, you fellows? It's as plain as anything that the man knows Quelch's bark, and that it startles him almost out of his seven senses! Why should it?"

But that was a question to which no member of the Co. could find an answer!

## NOT A DIFFICULT CASE!

**J**OHAN ROBINSON, the Head's new chauffeur, stood at the telephone in his room over the Greyfriars garage.

Outside, the early winter darkness had set in, and it was already black-out.

John Robinson had called a London number, and was waiting for an answer from Baker Street.

The voice that came through was that of Jack Drake—once a Remove fellow at Greyfriars, now Ferrers Locke's assistant.

"Drake speaking, Mr. Robinson."

"I want to ask you a question, my boy!" said Ferrers Locke. "You have not, I suppose, forgotten your Greyfriars days?"

"Eh? No! Not likely!" answered Drake, in a tone of surprise. "Especially as I spent the Christmas holidays with Wharton and his pals. Why?"

"You remember the Remove boys pretty well?"

"Yes, rather!"

"Can you recall any boy in that Form who had a gift for the imitation of voices?"

There was a chuckle over the wires. "Has Bunter been pulling your leg, Robinson?"

"Bunter?" repeated Ferrers Locke. "You know Bunter—the fattest and fatheadedest ass ever! Bunter's your man!"

"You are sure of this, Drake?" asked Ferrers Locke.

"Bank on it!" answered the boy at Baker Street. "Bunter can do the farmyard imitations in every variety. His favourite game used to be making the fellows jump by imitating their Form-master's voice—poor old Quelch's!"

"Oh!" murmured Locke.

"He made me jump almost out of my skin once, when I was respectfully referring to my Form-master as a donkey, by making Quelch speak just behind me," chuckled Drake. "You wouldn't think that a fat ass like Bunter could do that, or anything else, would you? But it's a gift—if it needed brains, Bunter couldn't do it, of course!"

Ferrers Locke laughed.

"Then you have actually heard Bunter reproduce Mr. Quelch's voice so exactly as to deceive you?" he asked.

"More than once!" answered Drake. "All the Remove know his little games in that line. But surely Bunter hasn't been playing that trick again while Mr. Quelch is away?"

"I think he has, Drake," answered Ferrers Locke.

"I say, though," came Drake's voice, "play the game, Robinson, you know! Bunter's not to get into a row from anything I tell you in the way of business."

Locke laughed again.

"You need not be uneasy, my boy!" he said. "Bunter will not get into a row. He will only be warned to stop playing such tricks, which seem to have caused some commotion in the school in the present circum-



stances. I thought you would probably be able to put me wise—I am much obliged to you, my boy."

Locke put up the receiver.

He stood smiling for a moment or two. It had not taken him long to elucidate the mystery of the voice that had so startled Mr. Prout—and Mr. Lamb still more, though the detective was not yet aware of that.

That it came from some fellow who had the trick of imitating voices Locke had guessed easily enough, as Lamb had done. That this fellow belonged to Mr. Quelch's Form was most probable. And as his boy assistant, Drake, had been in Mr. Quelch's Form when he was at Greyfriars School, it was more than likely that Drake knew what fellow it was who could play that peculiar trick. So Ferrers Locke's investigations into that mystery had only taken the form of waiting till he knew that Jack Drake would be in the rooms at Baker Street, and then ringing up his boy assistant!

Now he knew all that he wanted to know.

Half an hour later, Ferrers Locke emerged into the black-out from the private door of the garage.

John Robinson, for the time, had ceased to exist; it was the Baker Street detective, in his own proper person, who emerged.

In the darkness of the black-out there were no eyes to observe him; but Locke never took the remotest of chances; and had an eye fallen on him, he would not have been known—with a heavy coat-collar turned up about his ears, a soft hat pulled low over his brow, and a handkerchief held to his face, as he stepped to the gate that gave on the lane at the side of the school buildings.

Outside that gate, the Baker Street detective replaced his handkerchief in his pocket, and walked up to the road.

A minute or two later, he was ringing the bell at the school gates.

When old Gosling came to let him in, he touched his hat very respectfully to Mr. Locke, the relative of the headmaster, nothing doubting that Mr. Locke had arrived by train and walked to the school—and certainly never dreaming that Mr. Locke had only walked round the school from the garage!

### UNEXPECTED!

"COME in, fathhead!"

Harry Wharton called out as a knock came at the door of Study No. 1.

The Famous Five had just finished tea.

In response to that polite invitation the door opened and a lean, well-known figure appeared in the doorway.

"Oh!" gasped Wharton, as he saw who the visitor was.

The Famous Five jumped to their feet.

Harry Wharton's face was crimson. "Sorry, Mr. Locke!" he gasped. "I never knew—"

"Quite!" agreed Ferrers Locke  
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with a smile, as he stepped into the study. "No harm done! I hope I am not barging in at an awkward moment?"

"No fear! Jolly glad to see you!" said the captain of the Remove. "Please sit down, sir! May we ask you to tea?"

The Famous Five had cleared the table rather effectually and the tuck-shop was closed. But the chums of the Remove were ready to scrounge along the passage and raid every study in the Remove to entertain so distinguished a visitor.

But Locke shook his head.

"Thank you—I regret to say that I have had my tea," he answered. "But I will sit down for a few minutes, if agreeable to you."

The best chair was immediately forthcoming, and Mr. Locke sat down.

"Any news, sir?" asked Bob Cherry.

"News?" repeated Ferrers Locke.

"Well, it's pretty well known that you were called in when our Form-master was kidnapped, sir," said Bob. "We should all be jolly glad to hear news of Mr. Quelch."

"I am sorry to say that there is no news of Mr. Quelch so far," said the Baker Street detective.

"Rotten!" said Bob. "And that blighter, Slim Jim, is still tottering round cracking cribs, when Quelch could identify him, if he were only free to do it."

"That is how the matter stands at present," assented Locke. "But—"

"But that isn't what you came to tell us!" said Harry Wharton, smiling.

"No," agreed Locke. "The fact is that at the moment I am looking into quite another matter, in which a Remove boy can assist me."

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Bob. "Anything we can do, sir, you know you've only to say the word."

"Yes, rather!" said Johnny Bull. "The ratherfulness is terrific."

Locke smiled.

"I am sure of that," he assented. "But in this case, Bunter is the man I want. Can you call Bunter?"

"Bunter!" repeated the Famous Five all together, blankly. How the fat and fatuous Owl of the Remove could be of any assistance to Ferrers Locke was quite a mystery to them.

"Yes, Billy Bunter," said Locke.

"I'll call him at once," said Harry, quite mystified. "He's tea-ing with Smithy—but I expect he's through by this time. I'll hook him along, whether he is or not."

"Thank you!"

The captain of the Remove left the study and went along to Study No. 4. A minute later a fat, protesting voice was heard in the Remove passage.

"Oh, really, Wharton! I haven't finished yet! There's still a cake—wait a minute—I'll bring the cake— That's all right! You don't mind, Smithy?"

"Take it and go, you fat octopus!" came another voice, which did not sound as if Smithy was in a good temper.

"Oh, really, Smithy—"

"Seat!"

"Beast!"

"Come on, you fat chump!" said Harry Wharton.

A few moments later he reappeared at the door of Study No. 1, followed by Billy Bunter—with a cake under his left arm and a chunk of the same in his right paw.

Billy Bunter gave Mr. Locke a blink through his big spectacles, and a nod.

"Hallo, Mr. Locke!" he said breezily. "Wharton says you want to speak to me."

"I shall be very glad to have that honour, Master Bunter!" answered Ferrers Locke gravely.

"Oh, all right!" said Bunter cheerily; and he rolled into the study.

Harry Wharton closed the door.

The fat Owl laid the cake on the table. On further thoughts, he laid the chunk beside it, perhaps reflecting that something was due to manners. Bunter had done uncommonly well in the Bounder's study, and he was prepared to give Mr. Locke a few minutes of his valuable time before he finished the cake!

He blinked inquiringly at the Baker Street detective, while Harry Wharton & Co. looked on curiously.

"I require your help, Master Bunter, in elucidating a very curious occurrence!" said Ferrers Locke.

"Glad to help you, old chap!" answered Bunter affably. "I've often thought that I could do the detective business better than that chap Drake, who used to be here. He's not much good, if you ask me."

"You fat ass—" began Bob Cherry.

"You shut up, Cherry, while I'm speaking to Mr. Locke!" said Bunter reprovingly. "Mr. Locke's come here to consult me, not you, haven't you, sir?"

"Precisely!" said Ferrers Locke. "I think you may be of material assistance to me in this matter, Master Bunter."

Billy Bunter gave the Famous Five a vaunting look. Bunter, evidently, was the goods. The chums of the Remove could only wonder.

"Well, let's hear about it, Mr. Locke," said the fat Owl cheerfully. "I dare say I can see you through! I'm pretty keen, you know. What's it about?"

"Something that happened here at the school soon after midday!" said Mr. Locke.

The Famous Five all started, and Bunter blinked in astonishment.

"Something that's happened at Greyfriars?" ejaculated Bunter.

"Exactly."

"Blessed if I know what!" said the mystified Owl. "But carry on—I expect I can help you, all right."

"I have no doubt about it!" agreed Ferrers Locke. "What happened was this—I have been informed that Mr. Prout was addressed by some person whom he supposed to be Mr. Quelch, and—"

"Eh?"

"And as Mr. Quelch is absent from the school, it can only have been by some person who has picked up the peculiar trick of imitating voices, and—"

"What?"

"And I think, Master Bunter, that



you, with the keenness and perspicacity you possess, may be able to lay your finger on the culprit."

"Oh crikey!"

The Famous Five could only stare. They understood now that Ferrers Locke was there on account of that mysterious voice which had caused so much excitement in the school that day. Bunter, undoubtedly, was the fellow to help him find the culprit!

But now that he knew what was wanted, all Bunter's keenness to help the celebrated detective had left him! He stood goggling at Mr. Locke through his big spectacles, his fat jaw dropping. Then, forgetting even the cake, the fat Owl turned hurriedly to the door.

"Stop!" rapped Ferrers Locke.

"I—I—I've got to see Lamb!" stammered Bunter. "I—I forgot that Lamb told me to come to his study after tea—"

Ferrers Locke rose from his chair, grasped the fat Owl by a fat shoulder, and hooked him back. Then he stood by the door, his eyes fixed on the dismayed Owl.

"I am afraid that Mr. Lamb will have to wait!" said Locke. "I fear that I cannot do without your assistance in this matter, Master Bunter!"

"I—I—I don't know anything!" groaned Bunter. "It wasn't me! I wasn't there! I certainly never went into Quelch's old study, and Smithy never told me about old Prout doing his grind by the study windows after dinner—Smithy never mentioned the matter to me at all. Why should he?"

"So it was you!" said Ferrers Locke.

"No!" yelled Bunter. "I've told you that it wasn't! As for imitating Quelch's voice, I couldn't do it if I tried. I can't do ventriloquism at all. I've never imitated a voice in my life! You can ask these fellows—they've heard me often enough—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, cackle!" howled Bunter. "You'd like to see me landed in a row, wouldn't you? I never did it, and you jolly well know that it was Smithy put me up to it because the Lamb's afraid to meet Quelch, and goes off at the deep end if he thinks he's about. Lamb would take my skin off if he knew that it was me who frightened him with Quelch! Look how he pitched into Smithy when he thought it was him!"

"Shut up, you fat ass!" said Bob. "Mr. Locke doesn't want to hear all that."

"Well, it wasn't me! I never did it, Mr. Locke, and if I did it was Smithy put me up to it, and you can ask him. He likes frightening the Lamb by making him think Quelch is just round the corner."

The smile that had hitherto been on Ferrers Locke's face faded, and a strangely keen and intent look took its place.

All the keenness of the detective flashed out in that brief moment, though the next Locke was smiling again.

"I think, Master Bunter, that you may as well tell the truth, un-

(Continued on next page.)



# COME INTO the OFFICE, BOYS - AND GIRLS!

Your Editor is always pleased to hear from his readers. Write to him: Editor of the "Magnet," The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

**Q**UITE a number of readers have been writing in to say that they have been unable to get a copy of the MAGNET recently, and ask me why it is. Well, I can only say that those of you who are getting your copy regularly every week have been either wise or very fortunate. The wise boys and girls are those who have followed out my recent instructions and registered with their newsagents; the fortunate ones are those whose local newsagent had a spare copy for sale. You all want to make sure of obtaining your MAGNET regularly every week, don't you? Well, there's one way, and one way only. War-time restrictions ban newsagents from ordering more copies of the MAGNET than they can sell. You can guard against disappointment—and help the newsagent at the same time—by filling in the Order Form on this page and handing it to him to-day! There is a copy for every reader who orders it!

Now for a few

## REPLIES IN BRIEF

to readers' queries:

Fred SMART (Bexley Heath).—Prefects have the privilege of "whopping" juniors and giving them lines, but are not allowed to impose detentions. Prefects are appointed solely at the discretion of the Head, and are not elected as at some schools.

Walter WILSON (Yorks).—Bob Cherry is the best boxer in the junior school; but he's nowhere near so brilliant in class as Mark Linley. Bob Cherry has big feet and a big heart!

James STEWART (Barking).—You've rather stumped me with your query: "Who is the best singer in the Remove?" Johnny Bull can bellow; a certain Chinese junior is handicapped by having only Wun Lung; but you should hear Hurree Singh!

George BENNETT (Exeter).—Mr. Prout never complains about being too stout. His only worry seems to be trying to teach Horace Coker to spell!

So much, then, for Replies in Brief. Now let me say a word or two about next week's star school story of Harry Wharton & Co., which appears under the title:

## "THE BOUNDER ON THE TRAIL!"

With a nerve that no other fellow at Greyfriars possesses, Vernon-Smith risks expulsion by breaking out from the school at the dead of night to play a wild and reckless schoolboy joke on Mr. Lamb, the new master of the Remove. A surprise awaits the Bounder, however, for the Lamb is not asleep as is expected, but very much awake! What's more, there's a watcher on the scene in the shape of Ferrers Locke, who is on the verge of making a startling discovery—only to be left where he started, owing to the Bounder's recklessness. This is one of the finest yarns Frank Richards has written, so do as I advised earlier in this chat—fill in the Order Form on this page and hand it to your newsagent. It's the only way of making sure you get the MAGNET regularly each week.

Meet you all again next Saturday, chums.

Till then, cheerio,

YOUR EDITOR.

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accustomed as you are to such a resource," he said.

"I keep on telling you it wasn't me—" wailed Bunter. "And it was all Smithy's fault. You ask Smithy if he ain't set on frightening the Lamb because the silly ass is afraid to meet Quelch for some silly reason—"

"Will you listen to me, Bunter—"

"Yes, if you ain't going to make out that it was me!" said Bunter.

"I shall not refer outside this study to what you tell me, Bunter. You have nothing to fear."

"Oh," said Bunter. "You ain't going to give me away to Lamb?"

"Certainly not!"

"Or the Head?"

"No!"

"Oh!" said Bunter, considerably relieved. "I don't mind saying I did it, if you ain't going to tell anybody; but if you are, I know nothing at all about it—absolutely nothing!"

"I can assure you, Bunter, that you will be in no trouble over this matter so long as you do not repeat your action," said Ferrers Locke. "I shall say nothing of what you tell me. But if such a trick should be played again you must be prepared to take the consequences."

"Oh, all right! I'll tell Smithy I shan't do it again!" said the fat Owl. "I'm not going to get into a fearful row because he likes frightening that fool Lamb! He can't expect it!"

"So Mr. Lamb was frightened, was he?" said Ferrers Locke, with a very curious look at the Owl of the Remove.

"Yes, blessed if I know why!" said Bunter. "We thought it was not when Smithy said so first, but all the fellows could see it afterwards. What was a fellow to think when he locks himself in his study because Prout told him Quelch had come back, and when he slams a door because he thinks Quelch is in the passage?"

"Very extraordinary, if true," said Ferrers Locke dryly. He glanced at Harry Wharton. "Is it a fact, Wharton that Bunter's trickery has produced this extraordinary effect on Mr. Lamb?"

"Well, yes, it seems so, Mr. Locke," answered Harry. "He's not supposed to have met Mr. Quelch, but he's given it away pretty plainly that he knows his voice, and it seems to startle him fairly out of his wits. Nobody knows why."

Locke smiled.

"And Vernon-Smith has been playing upon this peculiar weakness of Mr. Lamb's, putting up this stupid boy, Bunter, to play his ventriloquial tricks?"

"Yes; you see, Smithy's got a feud on with Lamb," explained Harry. "Lamb breaks out into a fearful temper every now and then, and

Smithy got the benefit of it first day of term."

Ferrers Locke nodded.

"Very odd," he said carelessly. "But from now on, Vernon-Smith must find some other method of carrying on his feud. Nothing will be said of this, Master Bunter, if you stop your trickery, and I can tell your headmaster that it will not occur again."

"Mind you don't mention me," said Bunter anxiously.

"I shall not mention you."

"Oh, all right! If—if you did, you know, I should have to tell the Head the truth that I never did it—"

"You young ass!"

Ferrers Locke, with a nod to the Famous Five, left the study.

Billy Bunter turned to the cake.

"I say, you fellows," he said, with his mouth full, "I'd offer you some of this cake, only there's only three pounds of it. I say, fancy Ferrers Locke coming here over a jape on Lamb—"

"You fat ass!" said Bob. "He's on Quelch's case, so the Head would tell him at once if anything happened connected with Quelch. You've given him all this trouble with your fat-headed ventriloquism—and if there's any more of Quelch's voice haunting the Lamb, you'll get it right in the neck!"

"I'll watch it!" said Bunter.

The mysterious voice of the missing Form-master had been heard at Greyfriars for the last time!

John Robinson, in his rooms over the garage, called Dr. Locke on the telephone. He was able to relieve the Head's mind by the assurance that he had already discovered that the strange affair of Quelch's voice was a schoolboy jape, and that the boy concerned had been warned and would not repeat his trickery. Which was a satisfaction to the Head, who desired to know no more than that.

But after he had put up the receiver, John Robinson paced the room, in very deep thought.

Ferrers Locke was in search of a man whose face was known to Mr. Quelch, the missing Remove master, and to no other. There was a master at Greyfriars School—a new master—who betrayed an utterly unaccountable dread of meeting Mr. Quelch face to face! Was this a strange coincidence, or was it a clue?

That evening John Robinson had ample food for thought!

THE END.

(Don't miss the next yarn in this thrilling series. It's entitled: "THE BOUNDER ON THE TRAIL!" You'll find it in next Saturday's MAGNET.)

## "MAGNET" PEN PALS

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"Have you not seen Mr. Lamb?" Wharton coloured a little. Certainly he could not tell the Head anything about the fat Owl and his ventriloquism. It was rather awkward to explain.

"Yes, he came to the Form-room, sir, but—but he hadn't the key," he stammered. "And—and then he went. And as fifteen minutes was up—"

"Oh!" said the Head. "Did not Mr. Lamb tell you to await his return?"

"No, sir."

"Very well, Wharton—you may go!" Wharton went. Dr. Locke frowned a little. The fifteen-minute rule was a tradition at Greyfriars School—even the headmaster could not disregard it. If Lamb had kept his Form waiting a quarter of an hour, they were lawfully entitled to their freedom for the rest of the first hour. Dr. Locke, who regarded the acquisition of knowledge as being ever so much more important than punting a footer or playing leapfrog, could not order the Lower Fourth back to their Form-room—not without breaking an immemorial tradition.

He had to let the Remove rip—as the Removeites would have expressed it, though certainly not their headmaster.

But this sort of thing, of course, would never do. He decided to speak to Mr. Lamb at once.

Leaving his study, he proceeded to the Remove Form room, where he had no doubt Lamb must be by this time. To his surprise, he found the Form-room door locked, with the key in the outside of the lock.

He frowned at that key. He did not need telling that some practical joker in the Remove had abstracted the key as a leg-pull on Mr. Lamb, and had stuck it in the lock after Lamb was gone. He concluded that Mr. Lamb was still in search of that missing key, unaware that it was sticking in the door.

"Bless my soul!" murmured the Head. He proceeded majestically to Mr. Lamb's study to apprise him that it was no longer necessary to search for that key. He tapped at the study door, opened it, and looked in.

"Mr. Lamb—" he began. He broke off again as he saw that Mr. Lamb was not there. There was no one in Lamb's study.

"Bless my soul!" said the Head again. He stood in the passage, puzzled, and getting a little impatient. Monsieur Charpentier looked out of his study inquiringly. French sets had not yet started, and Mossos was at liberty that morning.

"Dear me!" said the Head. "Thank you, Monsieur Charpentier." He turned away and went to the staircase near Common-room, which led up to the masters' rooms over the studies. Why Mr. Lamb had rushed off to his room in a hurry when he ought to have been taking the Remove, was a mystery to the Head—a mystery which it was his duty, as headmaster, to elucidate.

A few minutes later he was tapping at the door of Mr. Lamb's room above.

"Are you there, Mr. Lamb?" he called.

"Is that Dr. Locke?" came back the bleat of the Lamb.

"Certainly."

"Pray excuse me, sir—I unfortunately gave my head a somewhat severe knock, and am bathing the injury at the present moment. My glasses fell off, and in stooping for them—"

"I am sorry, Mr. Lamb," said the Head politely. "Pray do not disturb yourself in any way." He went on speaking through the door. "I understand that the key of your Form-room was missing—hem! I have ascertained that it is in the Form-room lock. You will find it there."

"In the circumstances, sir, you will not desire me to take the Remove this morning, and I shall be very glad to rest my head—a somewhat severe knock—"

"I will certainly make other arrangements for the Lower Fourth this morning, Mr. Lamb, if you wish," said Dr. Locke. "Perhaps you will be sufficiently recovered to take your Form in third school, however."

"Is not Mr. Quelch taking his Form, sir?"

"The Head jumped. "Mr. Quelch?" he repeated.

"I—I naturally supposed—" "I do not understand you, Mr. Lamb. Surely you have not forgotten that Mr. Quelch was kidnapped shortly before Christmas—" "But he has returned, sir."

"What?" "He has returned—" "My dear sir," said the Head testily, "if some Remove boy has told you so preposterous a story, it was an absurd invention. Mr. Quelch has not returned. Nothing is known of him."

"You have never met Mr. Quelch, you cannot be acquainted with his voice and so—" "Oh! No, certainly not! But all the boys said—"

"An absurd practical joke! I will look into this matter immediately!" snapped Dr. Locke, for once seriously annoyed. "This is not a matter for practical jokes—I shall certainly allow nothing of the kind! Some foolish boy must have been in the Form-room—"

"It was Mr. Quelch's voice, sir, and I think you will find that he has returned."

"You speak as if you were acquainted with Mr. Quelch's voice, sir, and as you have never met him—"



"Do you mean that you will not answer me?" demanded Mr. Lamb. "Yes, sir!" said Harry Wharton distinctly. "Mr. Quelch would never ask a fellow in the Form to give another fellow away!"

Remove, "appears to have abstracted the Form-room key from Mr. Lamb's study this morning. The door was locked, and some boy inside the Form-room appears to have called out and given Mr. Lamb the impression that Mr. Quelch was here. As Mr. Lamb has never met Mr. Quelch, he is naturally unacquainted with his voice, and so was easily deceived when boys of his Form affected to recognise it."

Dr. Locke paused. The Remove remained silent. Whether Mr. Lamb had ever met Quelch, most of the Remove, naturally, did not know. They knew that he had arrived at the school last term on the same day that Quelch had disappeared. He certainly had met some of the masters, and, for all the juniors knew, he might or might not have met Mr. Quelch that day as well as others.

In planning the ventriloquial jape with Bunter, the Bunder had not given that part of the matter a thought. He had simply planned to make a fool of Lamb by making him believe that the Remove's old Form-master was back at Greyfriars. Whether Lamb was or was not acquainted with Quelch had not entered into his consideration.

Now, however, as the Head made that statement, the Bunder and several other fellows exchanged curious glances.

For Lamb, when he was so startled by that voice from the Form-room, had certainly seemed to know that it was Quelch's quite as well as the juniors did—he had been taken in as well as the Form!

How he had known on the instant that that voice was Quelch's—if he had never heard Quelch's bark—was rather a puzzle.

"Now," went on the Head, "no such jesting as this will be permitted on so very serious a subject. I require to know at the time!"

There was no reply. Nobody had been in the Form-room at the time. The Head naturally supposed that someone had, in the circumstances. But no one had. If Dr. Locke had ever heard that there was a Remove fellow who could play ventriloquial tricks, he had naturally long since forgotten such a trifling thing. No such idea was in his mind; indeed, knowing that Lamb had never met Quelch, it did not occur to him that the voice from the Form-room had resembled Quelch's. He supposed that Lamb had drawn his impression entirely from what the boys outside the Form-room had said.

"The boy will stand out before the Form!" said Dr. Locke sternly. "Nobody stood out. Unless that boy immediately

stands out, the whole Form will be placed in Extra School for the first half-holiday!" said the Head. Herbert Vernon-Smith spoke at once.

"If you please, sir, no Remove fellow was in the Form-room at the time," he said. "That is nonsense, Vernon-Smith! Some boy was in this Form-room, or no one could have spoken from the room!" rapped the Head.

"I said no Remove man, sir. We were all waiting at the door for Mr. Lamb to come and let us in," said the Bunder meekly. "Every fellow will tell you the same, if you ask him."

The Head paused. "Wharton!"

"Yes, sir?"

"You will answer me, as head boy of this Form. Are you personally aware whether every boy in the Remove was outside the Form-room at the time or not?"

"Yes, sir," answered Harry, "the whole Form was outside. The door was locked as usual, and we all waited for Mr. Lamb."

"You are certain that no boy was missing?"

"Quite certain, sir."

Dr. Locke looked puzzled. The head boy's word on the subject had to be taken; besides, he was able to see that the whole Form were prepared to back up Wharton's statement. What Wharton said was true; no member of the Remove had been inside the Form-room.

"This is extraordinary!" said the Head at last. "It would appear then that the boy must have belonged to some other Form; but that is very singular, as all other Forms must have been in class at the time, and every boy was or should have been with his Form. However, I must accept your statement, Wharton, that no Remove boy was here."

There was another pause. "I shall inquire further into this matter," said the Head at last. "In the meantime, you may dismiss until the next hour!"

Which was good news to the Remove! The Head, after all, was playing the game, respecting that valued old tradition. The Remove marched out once more—many of them with grinning faces. Billy Bunter, who had been feeling rather uneasy under the Head's stern eye, grinned from one fat ear to the other when that stern eye was no longer upon him.

For the rest of that hour the Removeites enjoyed life in the open spaces, while the Head, very much perplexed, looked into one Form-room after another to speak to the beaks there, in the endeavour to ascertain who was the unknown person who had been locked in the Remove room that morning.

As no such person existed, he was not likely to make any discovery, and he had to remain unsatisfied and perplexed.

When the Remove came in for the second hour, they found Monsieur THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,665.