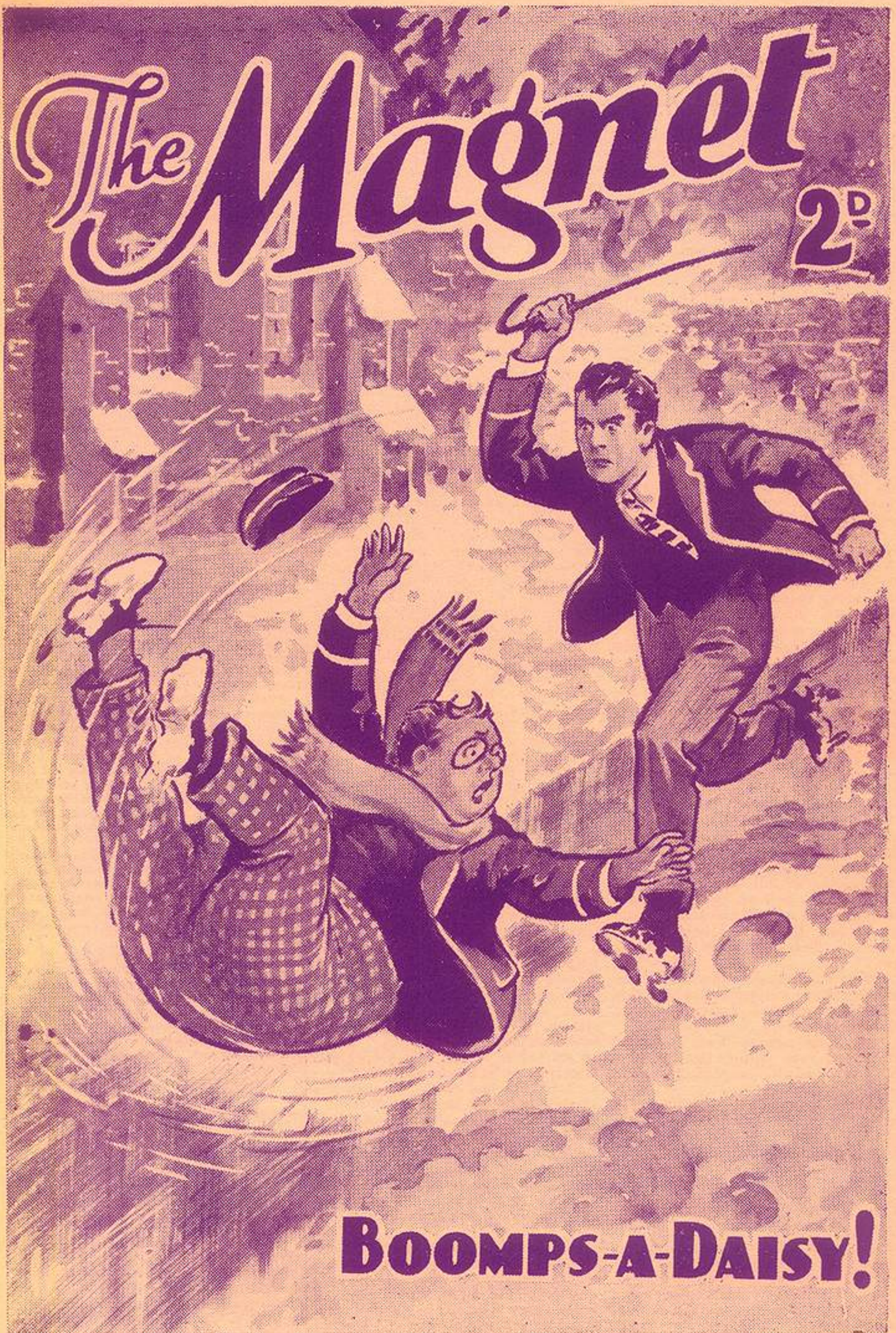


**THE
MAGNET**

HARRY WHARTON & CO. in: "SIX ON THE WARPATH!"

The Magnet

2^D



BOOMPS-A-DAISY!

Sensational Short Story.
(It cost us a dollar!)

BAZOOKA THE BRIGAND!

By FISHER T. FISH

BAZOOKA the Brigand lived in a cave in the Gorgon Mountains, and I guess no citizen in those parts was more feared than that guy. I'll say he was hated worse than a bad smell. He and his posse of tough yeggs swooped on any galoot who came near the mountains, and hove him in the cave till his pards raised a ransom for him. If they were slow in coughing up the dust, Bazooka would cut off a coupla ears or a finger or two to remind 'em.

Yessir, there were no flies on Manuel Bazooka, and though the Government had offered a reward of a million pazoozas for him, dead or alive, no wise guy durst fool around Bazooka's territory, or he'd have been towed home with a skinful of holes.

But Silas K. Chewball, an American tourist, kinder laughed when they tried to warn him off taking a trip round that way.

"Feed that stuff to the goats," he said. "I guess I paid my dollars for an automobile trip round the Gorgon Mountains, and I calculate I'm taking that trip right now. You can't pull anything over Silas K. He's kinder wide!"

There's only one thing can happen when a Noo York citizen makes up his mind, and that's what he makes up his mind about. Silas K. and his auto were half-way to the Gorgons before they knew what had hit them. Silas sure enjoyed that leetle drive, with crags and precipices, and such all-fired things round the landscape, but I guess he was mighty surprised when a bullet came along and took off his Homburg. He sure swallowed his cigar as Bazooka himself took a nose-dive from a low cliff and landed in the auto, with a caanon prodding Silas in the midbit.

"Da hands well up, cef you plects," said Bazooka. "Eef you toucha da hip-pocket, I blow da hole in you pronto. Dat is righta! I t'ank you!"

"Say, whereja get this stuff?" demanded Silas hotly. "I guess this ain't your party. You mosey outa here, willya?"

"Me, I not mosey. I am Bazooka! Dees will cost you a lotta money, Mcester Shooball. Stop at dat cave-a cef you plects."

In the brigand's cave, Silas was welcomed with ironical bows from a gang of yeggs, who sat him on the floor and chained his feet.

Bazooka grinned all over his fat face as he lit a cheroot and blew a smoke-ring at the roof.

"Welcome to my poor abode-a, Mcester Shooball. Ect ees not alla same as da Park Avenue drawing-room, but dat cannot be helpa!"

"You're telling me!" snorted Silas. "Say, Greasepot, ain't you guys never heard of a central-heating hot-water system? I guess I'm European agent for the Slicker System,

and I sure can offer you the best terms. Now, see hyer, I can provide and install a complete hot-water system in this li'l old cave for seven hundred and fifty bucks."

He took some booklets out of his pockets and dished them round to the guys, and then he shot off his mouth and told 'em square what they were missing. He hadn't been talking more'n about four hours when Bazooka caved in and signed on the dotted line.

"Dees ees verra onpleasant," he grumbled. "I do not weesh to talk about da hot-watta scestem. I bring you here for da ransom. It veel costa you ten t'ousand pazoozas, and den some, or I cut off your cara, you savvy?"

"Sure, that's all right, but I gotta just tell you guys you ain't seen nothing, way up here in this cave. I guess I'm a world agent for Slicker's Self-Adjusting Electric Motor, which you can fit right hyer on the spot for twenty-two hundred bucks. A guy simply can't exist these days without electric light. Why, gee, look at what it brings you—electric vacuum-cleaners, electric toasters, electric hair-driers, electric fires—and all outa that one li'l Slicker Self-Adjusting, which runs for a month on a pinta oil. Now here's an order form—sign there, willya? And, mind, it's a knock-out price!"

Bazooka grumbled a bit, but he signed up.

"Now, about da ransom——"

"Never mind about that, sonny. We got more important things to think of right now. S'pose you got the ransom—what would you do with it? Bury it? I guess what you need more'n anything is a Slicker Sensation Crimeproof Safe. Now, I'm an agent for them safes, and I guarantee 'em. Five thousand dollars spot cash, and another three hundred for transit. Sign here."

The brigand signed mournfully without a word, and while he was signing, Silas sold him a washing-machine. After that he up and sold him a self-contained drainage system, a radiogram, a collapsible bookcase, and a bread-oven. When he started in to sell him a concrete-mixer, Bazooka shook his head.

"I cannot buy ect. I cannot buy nozzing more. I am broka."

Silas was disappointed, naturally, but he had to put up with it.

"Well, gee, it seems there ain't no use my hanging round any longer, bo'!" he said, as he tied the pazoozas in a bundle. "I guess I'll call back when you're flush agen. So long, Greasepot!"

He tooted off with the brigand's life savings, and Bazooka jumped over a precipice in despair. So that was the end of another wise guy. I guess these brigands can't pull anything over a galoot who had his eye teeth cut in Noo York!

A GAY DOG!

(The author of this prefers, for obvious reasons, to remain anonymous)

MIDNIGHT in Friardale Lane! I am tramping cautiously towards Greffriars, having been out "on the tiles" at the Cross Keys. In an atmosphere thick with tobacco and spirits, I have played billiards and lost all my money. My head is aching furiously; I am tired and groggy; my throat is hot and furred with smoke. Life seems hardly worth living.

It is pitch dark in the lane. I have to pick my way with care, though my eyes are so tired and strained that I just want to shut them and sleep like a log. Every movement in the bushes startles me. I am not really a funk, but there are often bad characters about the district of a night, and what chance should I have against a poacher or a race-course tough, armed with a cudgel? My heart is in my mouth the whole way back.

I could swear I am being followed. In wretched suspense I stop a moment to listen for a stealthy footstep behind me. The wind rustles the trees, and it sounds like somebody creeping through the grass. Suddenly an owl hoots right above my head. I nearly jump out of my skin. Sick with terror I hasten on to the school.

The sinking feeling inside me grows deeper rather than less, after I have climbed the wall and dropped into the quad. Suppose Quelch or some other beak has found I am out of my dorm? Suppose a prefect is on the prowl, looking for night birds? All the risks I am taking crowd on me as I take my stealthy course to the box-room window.

Perhaps someone has shut the window. No, thank heavens, it's still open. I climb in and creep up to bed, but not to sleep. Lights seem to dance in front of my strained eyes; my head is throbbing dismally; I am feeling sick from the dingy smell of cigars and spirits. And I am dismally regretting the money I've lost. It is an hour or more before I drop into an uneasy sleep.

In the morning I am utterly washed out. I am irritable and useless. I bungle my construe in class and reap an impot. The black depression hangs over me all day long, and fellows tell me I am like a bear with a sore head.

But I am simply a "gay dog." Perhaps this little sketch of a gay dog's real feelings will pour cold water on some other fellow's idea of it. Believe me, it's not worth it. School life grows a bit boring at times, and fools like myself get the old hankering for a night out. But please don't envy the gay dog.

As a rule there's nobody more sorry for him than he is.

RIDDLES

What's the difference between a bottle of medicine and the hand of friendship?

One you shake before taking, the other you take before shaking.

Why doesn't Coker like to be away from Aunt Judy?

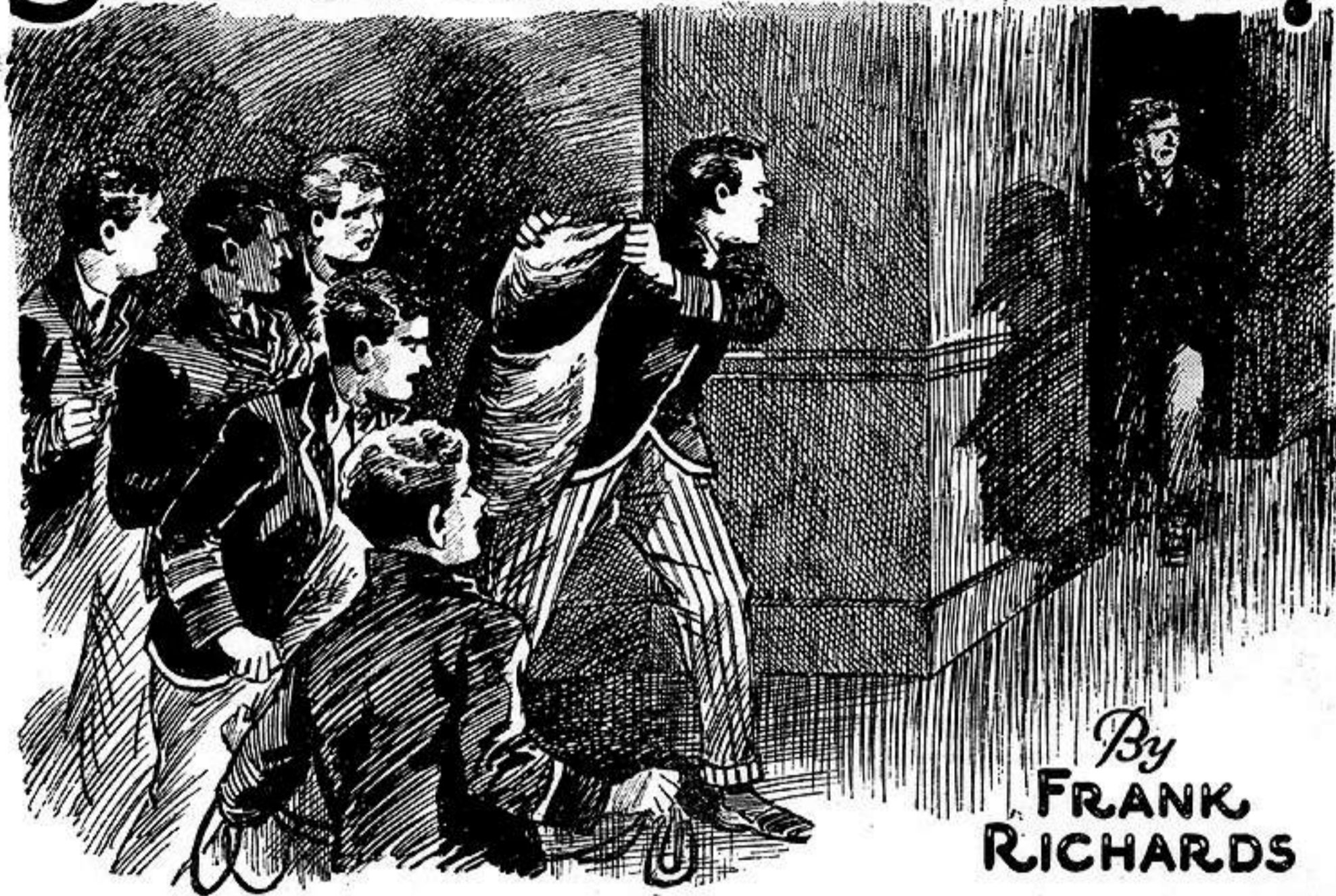
Because he is fond of her presence (presents).

When does Bolsover have four hands?

When he doubles his fists.

GERALD LODER, THE BLACK SHEEP OF THE SIXTH, IS ASKING FOR TROUBLE AGAIN! AND THE FAMOUS FIVE AND VERNON-SMITH ARE ONLY TOO WILLING TO OBLIGE! BUT THEY BLUNDER—AND BLUNDER BADLY!

SIX on the WARPATH!



By
**FRANK
RICHARDS**

In the blackness of the night the door of the lobby opened and a figure stepped out. Armed with an open sack and a coil of rope, the Greyfriars Removites waited!

SLIPPERY!

"CAVE!" squeaked Billy Bunter. The warning passed unheeded.

"I say, you fellows! Loder's coming!" howled Bunter.

Still the Removites did not hear or heed.

The Greyfriars Remove were enjoying life after third school. It was a cold and frosty morning, and it had been freezing all night. There was snow banked between the old elms and the school wall—and the elms, leafless as they were, screened the spot from general view. The snow was frozen hard as rock. So it was in the nature of things for a crowd of juniors to make a slide there—forgetting, or preferring to forget, that slides in the quadrangle were strictly forbidden.

A merry crowd were joyfully whizzing.

Harry Wharton & Co., and the Bounder, and a dozen other Remove fellows, whizzed down the slide one after another, jumping off at the end and cutting back to slide again.

Billy Bunter watched them through his big spectacles. He was not sliding—such exertion did not appeal to the fat Owl of the Remove. Bunter was, in fact, waiting for the Famous Five to come off, in the hope

of touching some member of the Co. for a small spot of cash, to be expended in light refreshment to tide him over till the dinner-bell rang.

So it happened that Bunter was the only fellow who noticed Loder of the Sixth appear in the offing.

Loder was a prefect, and it was a prefect's duty to stop sliding in the quad. Loder was a whale on duty, when it could be made unpleasant to anybody. So, as Gerald Loder approached the spot, with his official ashplant under his arm, and an aggressive look on his face, Billy Bunter squeaked a warning.

But the Removites went whizzing down the slide unheeding.

Billy Bunter rolled nearer to the slide. He waved a fat hand and roared at the top of his voice:

"I say, you fellows!"

"Come on, Bunter!" called out Bob Cherry. "Join up, old fat bean! A

**Enthralling Long Complete Story
of Schoolboy Adventure, featur-
ing HARRY WHARTON &
CO., of GREYFRIARS.**

spot of exercise will do you good! Get an appetite for your dinner!"

Billy Bunter did not need to get an appetite for his dinner! His appetite, as usual, was in first-class form.

"You silly ass!" yelled Bunter. "Loder's coming!"

"Oh, my hat!" Bob looked round and spotted Loder of the Sixth in the distance. "Cave, you fellows! 'Ware pre's!"

"Blow Loder!" growled the Bounder.

"Better cut!" said Frank Nugent. "You can blow Loder all on your own, Smithy! I don't want six!"

"Same here!" agreed Johnny Bull.

"Oh, rot!" Herbert Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars, was always ready for trouble. "Let's roll him in the snow if he barges in!"

"Fathead!" said Harry Wharton.

Rolling a Sixth Form prefect in the snow was one of those agreeable things that might be suggested, but could not be done. Nobody wanted six from Loder's ashplant—and perhaps Smithy, on second thoughts, didn't! Anyhow, there was a rush of footsteps, and the forbidden slide was suddenly deserted, the whole mob of juniors scampering off along the wall, before Loder could arrive on the spot.

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Billy Bunter was left standing by the slide on his own.

He blinked round at Loder through his big spectacles. Bunter hadn't been sliding. He was merely, like Shakespeare's Duke, a looker-on in Vienna, so to speak! So Bunter saw no reason for getting into rapid motion.

Loder quickened his pace as the crowd scampered off. He had only a brief view of vanishing backs—and a more leisurely view of a fat face and a big pair of spectacles. It was rather a disappointment to the bully of the Sixth, who rather liked handling his ash. However, Bunter was there!

"You young sweep!" said Loder. He pointed to the slide with his ash. "Don't you know that's against the rules?"

"Eh? Oh, yes!" said Bunter, blinking at him. "I haven't been sliding, Loder!"

"Only just standing about to get your feet cold, what?" asked Loder, with a grin.

"Eh? Oh, no! You see—"

"I see!" agreed Loder. "Bend over and touch your toes!"

"I—I—I say—" stuttered Bunter in alarm. "I wasn't—I never—I didn't—I wouldn't—I—"

"I said bend over!" remarked Loder. He slipped his ashplant down into his hand and swished it in the air.

Billy Bunter jumped back out of reach.

Really and truly, Billy Bunter hadn't been sliding—he was too fat and lazy! Bunter was innocent as a dove! But Loder, evidently, believed that he had, and was going to whop the only one of the sliders he had caught! Which was fearfully unjust and hard lines on the fat Owl.

But, in jumping back out of Loder's reach, Bunter had forgotten that the slide was just behind him. He was reminded of it the next second, as his feet suddenly flew from under him.

"Woooooh!" roared Bunter.

That slide was well worn and extremely slippery. One of Bunter's feet flew to the north, the other to the south; and Billy Bunter sat down on the county of Kent with a bump that nearly shook that county.

"Yaroo!" bellowed Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Loder.

Loder seemed amused.

Bunter was not amused. He sat on the slippery slide and roared.

"Ow! Oh! Oh crikey! Ooooh! Wow! Oh scissors!"

"Get up!" grinned Loder. "I'm waiting for you, Bunter!"

It was not easy for Bunter to get up! He scrambled and scrambled, and slipped and slid. Bunter never found it easy to get up at the best of times, having a lot to lift. It was an unusually difficult performance on slippery frozen snow.

Billy Bunter seemed to be making frantic efforts to turn himself into a catherine-wheel and tie himself in sailor's knots.

Loder, by way of assistance, gave him a lick with the ashplant. Then

Bunter, with a really terrific effort, heaved himself up.

He gained his feet, only to lose them again. For a millionth part of a second the fat Owl of the Remove stood perpendicular—after that brief space his feet shot away beneath him, and Bunter plunged headlong forward—right at Loder!

Crash!

Billy Bunter's bullet head hit Loder's waistcoat like a cannon-ball.

It came before Loder of the Sixth knew that it was coming. It knocked every ounce of breath out of Gerald Loder, and he folded up like a pocket-knife and sat down.

"Oooooogh!" gasped Bunter.

"Urrrrggh!" gurgled Loder. "You—groogh—you—ooogh—you—woooogh—you—urrrrrggh!"

"Oh crikey!"

Loder, gurgling, pressed both hands to his waistcoat. He had no wind there, but he seemed to have a pain instead. His gurgles were horrible.

Billy Bunter blinked at him in horror. How long Loder was going to sit there Bunter could not guess—but what Loder was going to do when he got up, the fat Owl could guess only too easily.

Bunter did not wait for Loder to get up! He shot away along the slide, as the quickest mode of retreat. He rolled off the end of the slide, scrambled up, and bolted—leaving Loder still sitting it out, uttering mumbles, moans, and gurgles that might have moved a heart of stone.

THE INVISIBLE OWL!

"PLEASE, sir—"

Mr. Lamb, at the head of the Remove table, in Hall, glanced along that table over his gold-rimmed glasses, as the fattest member of his Form addressed him.

Mr. Quelch being still absent from Greyfriars, Lamb, the art master, was still in charge of the Remove, and he took the head of the table with his Form, as Quelch had been accustomed to do.

"Did you speak, Bunter?" asked Mr. Lamb in his mild, bleating voice.

"Yes, sir! May I go out, sir. I—I remember that I left the tap running in the Remove passage, sir."

That statement, from Billy Bunter, drew the attention of all the Remove.

There was steak-and-kidney pie for dinner. Bunter revelled in steak-and-kidney pie, when he had the happy opportunity. Bunter had had only two helpings—and he was always good for as many helpings as he could get. It was not merely unusual but utterly unprecedented for Billy Bunter to leave off eating before he had to. Yet here he was, asking for leave out of Hall with dinner still unfinished—and pie yet to come!

It was amazing!

Moreover, his excuse was a flimsy one. A careless fellow might leave the tap at the sink in the Remove passage turned on, if he washed his hands there in a hurry. Bunter was careless enough—but the washing of his fat hands was not a frequent performance! Indeed, the most casual

glance at those podgy paws revealed that they had not been recently washed, though they undoubtedly needed it.

"Dear me!" said Mr. Lamb. "That was very careless, Bunter! You may go at once and turn off the tap!"

"Thank you, sir!"

Bunter jumped up at once.

"We're dreaming this!" murmured Bob Cherry. "Is Bunter really cutting tiffin?"

"He hasn't scoffed enough for two yet!" said Frank Nugent, in wonder.

It was really mysterious. Bunter could have had a third helping of steak-and-kidney pie, if not a fourth. And there was apple tart to follow.

Regardless of steak-and-kidney pie, and apple tart to follow, the fat Owl rolled doorward.

An eye from the Sixth Form table followed him as he went. At the high table, where the prefects sat, was Gerald Loder. That, if the Removites had known it, was the reason for Billy Bunter's amazing action in quitting a table where there were eatables still uneaten!

Since Bunter had butted him over by the slide Loder had not seen the fat junior till the school came in to dinner. Bunter had taken care of that! At dinner, Loder could not deal with him—but his eye was on him, and it was painfully clear to Bunter that Loder was going to deal with him when the school went out of Hall.

Hence the fat Owl's early retreat—in spite of the almost irresistible attractions of steak-and-kidney pie. Even at the awful cost of leaving a meal unfinished, Bunter wanted to keep clear of Loder of the Sixth.

Bunter rolled out of Hall.

Loder's eye was on him, but Loder was not disposed to leave his dinner unfinished.

The fat Owl rolled away to the stairs and ascended the same to head for the Remove passage. There was no tap turned on there; and if there had been, Billy Bunter would not have clambered up two staircases to turn it off. But he had to find cover before Loder came out of Hall.

Loder, if he looked for him, would draw that cover first of all. And Bunter had a deep and dark foreboding that Loder was going to look for him. So, with deep artfulness, the fat Owl did not head for his own study, No. 7, but rolled into Study No. 1, which belonged to Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent.

In that study the artful Owl backed the armchair into a corner. A fellow could sit in that armchair in ease and comfort, and pop behind it at the sound of a footstep!

This looked good to Bunter. It was a half-holiday that afternoon—and sitting in an armchair was, according to the fat Owl's ideas, a very happy way of spending a half-holiday. All he required to while away the lagging moments was something to eat!

Fortunately, there was a tin of toffees in the study cupboard. It was not, perhaps, fortunate for Wharton and Nugent that Billy Bunter found it there—but it was quite a windfall to Bunter.

He sat in the armchair, with the

toffee-tin on his knees, chewed toffee, and listened for an alarm of the enemy.

A quarter of an hour later, there were footsteps on the Remove landing and in the passage.

Billy Bunter heaved his weight out of the armchair and squeezed into the corner behind it—not forgetting the toffee-tin. He did not know whether it was Loder coming or not; but in the perilous circumstances, it was evident that a fellow could not be too careful.

The study door opened.

There was a tramp of feet as five fellows came in together. Then from the passage came a well-known voice: "Wharton!"

"Yes, Loder."

"Is Bunter in the studies?"

"I haven't seen him."

Billy Bunter's mouth, behind the armchair, was full of toffee. But he did not venture to chew it. He hardly ventured to breathe. The Famous Five were in the study, and Loder of the Sixth was looking in at the doorway. Billy Bunter was thankful that he was out of sight.

"I've looked in his study!" growled Loder, with a suspicious glare at the chums of the Remove. "He's not there! Do you know where he is?"

"Haven't the foggiest!" answered Harry.

"I know he came up! Look here, if you young sweeps know where he is, tell me at once!" growled Loder.

From Loder's look, and the fact that he had his ashplant ready in his hand, the Famous Five could guess why he wanted Bunter. They could now guess, too, why Bunter had disappeared early from Hall. So, had they known where the fat Owl had parked himself, they certainly would not have been disposed to tell Loder. But they did not know—little guessing how near at hand he was—and Harry Wharton, Frank Nugent, Johnny Bull, Bob Cherry, and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh all shook their heads together.

Loder gave them a glare, and stepped back from the doorway. Then he tramped up the passage, apparently to draw the other studies for Bunter. His voice was heard from up the passage:

"Mauleverer! Have you seen Bunter?"

"No, Loder!"

Harry Wharton threw shut the door of Study No. 1.

"Loder seems to be after that fat ass!" he remarked. "I suppose he's dodging out of sight somewhere. I wonder——"

"I say, you fellows!"

The Famous Five jumped and stared round at that unexpected voice. From behind the armchair in the corner, a fat face rose into view and a big pair of spectacles glimmered at them.

"Bunter!" howled Bob Cherry.

"I say, don't yell!" hooted Bunter. "I don't want that cad Loder to come back here! I say, I suppose you don't mind me having these toffees, Wharton?"

"What?"

"I'll stand you another tin when my postal order comes! I think I

told you I was expecting a postal order. That's all right, ain't it?"

And Billy Bunter sank down in the armchair again, blinked at the Famous Five through his big spectacles, and chewed toffee.

QUICK WORK!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. gazed at Bunter.

Bunter chewed toffee cheerfully and blinked round him.

Loder of the Sixth, having looked into that study and passed on, the fat Owl was feeling safe. It was a great relief to Bunter's mind. Loder was welcome to keep up the search as long as he liked and squint into every study at Grevfriars, so long as he did not squint into Study No. 1.

"You fat villain!" said Harry. "We're going on the cliffs this afternoon, and we were going to take those toffees——"

"Well, I wouldn't be selfish!" said Bunter. "I've got to stick in this study, with that beast hunting me—I suppose you wouldn't like me to stick here for hours with nothing to eat?"

"That's fearfully important, isn't it?" remarked Frank Nugent sarcastically.

"Yes, old chap! I say, it was all your fault, you know, for making that slide! I slipped on it and butted Loder in the tummy! I think he had a pain in his tummy—he gurgled like anything. I say, you fellows, if that beast butts in here again, don't you say anything—I've got to keep clear of him. I say——"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "That sounds like jolly old Loder coming back again!"

There was a sound of angry, stamping feet coming down the Remove passage.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

He whipped out of the armchair and dodged behind it again. Once more the fat Owl was invisible.

He was only just in time.

The study door was thrown open and Loder of the Sixth stared in again.

His face was red and angry. Loder still had a lingering pain in the region which Bunter described as his tummy, and it seemed to produce a deteriorating effect on his temper—never good, at the best of times.

"Look here, I can't find that young sweep in the studies!" rapped Loder. "If you've got him here——"

It was rather an awkward position for Harry Wharton & Co. A short time ago, they could have answered that Bunter wasn't there—not knowing that he was. Now they couldn't.

"He's hiding somewhere!" growled Loder. "I shouldn't wonder if he's in this study! Is he?"

"I haven't got him in my waistcoat pocket, Loder!" answered Bob Cherry gravely.

Loder gave him a glare.

"Is he here?" he roared.

Loder, evidently, was suspicious. The Famous Five were just the fellows to stand by a fellow in trouble—as indeed they were doing at

the present moment. Loder suspected that Bunter was parked in that study.

"Well, I'll look!" he snapped.

He stamped in.

There was not much cover in a junior study. The study cupboard and the corner behind the armchair were the only possible places.

Loder stamped across to the cupboard. It was a big cupboard, extending from the floor. Loder dragged the door open and stared into it.

Billy Bunter, in his corner, palpitated.

Vernon-Smith looked in from the passage.

"You fellows seen Bunter?" he asked.

"Oh, my hat! Does everybody want Bunter?" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "Bunter's getting a rush of custom to-day!"

"I've got detention this afternoon," grunted the Bounder, "and I want that fat ass——" He broke off as he saw Loder. "Oh gad! What does Loder want here?"

"Bunter!" grinned Bob. "Bunter's in demand!"

Gerald Loder turned from the study cupboard. He stepped across towards the armchair and glanced over its high back into the corner.

"Oh!" he ejaculated.

An upturned fat face with two little round eyes popping behind a pair of big round spectacles met his view.

Billy Bunter gave a gasp of affright as Loder's eyes fixed grimly on him.

"So you're here!" said Loder.

"Oh, no!" gasped Bunter. "I—I ain't here, Loder!"

"Come out of it!" Loder stared round at the Famous Five. "You young rascals, you told me that you hadn't seen Bunter!"

"We hadn't when we told you so," answered Harry Wharton curtly.

Loder grasped the armchair and twirled it to one side. The invisible Owl was revealed. Loder swished his ash.

"Come out of it, you fat sweep! Now bend over that chair!" said the bully of the Sixth grimly.

Billy Bunter came out of it. But he did not bend over the chair. He backed away from Loder and his ashplant.

"I—I—I say, Loder," he gasped. "I—I—I——"

"Bend over!" roared Loder.

"You—you see, I—I——"

Loder made a stride at him to grasp a fat shoulder. But the look on Loder's face, and the ashplant in his hand, were too much for Bunter. He made a bound for the doorway.

"Stop!" roared Loder.

Bunter did not stop—he flew! An arrow in its flight had nothing on Bunter as he shot past the Bounder at the doorway.

Loder shot after him.

Bunter would have been grabbed in another moment. But in that moment Herbert Vernon-Smith put a foot in Loder's way. It was rather a dangerous game to trip a prefect;

but the Bounder of Greyfriars was always reckless.

Loder stumbled over that foot before he saw it, and went over in the passage on his hands and knees. He fairly bellowed as he crashed.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bob Cherry. Bunter was scudding for the stairs.

Loder scrambled up in the passage, spluttering with fury. He made a jump at Vernon-Smith, lashing out with the ash.

Swipe, swipe, swipe!

He landed three before the Bounder escaped up the passage.

Billy Bunter, meanwhile, was in full flight. He charged across the Remove landing like a frantic rhinoceros.

It was rather unfortunate for Fisher T. Fish of the Remove that he was coming up the Remove staircase as Billy Bunter charged down.

Fishy hardly knew what hit him. It felt like a runaway lorry. Fisher T. Fish went backwards to the lower landing with a crash that shook up every bone in his bony person. Fish yelled wildly—unheeded by Bunter, who flew onward to the lower staircase, leaving Fishy for dead, as it were.

"Aw! Wake snakes!" roared Fisher T. Fish. "Aw! Carry me home to die! Say, you galoot—say, you mad mugwump—Yaroooh!"

But Bunter was gone.

The next minute Loder of the Sixth came out of the Remove passage at a run. But he had lost a minute swiping the Bounder, and Bunter had a start. The fat Owl was at the bottom of the staircase by the time Loder reached the top. Loder went down two at a time.

But he did not find Bunter. Once more the Owl of the Remove had vanished into space.

DOGGO!

"O H crikey!" breathed Billy Bunter.

Under a study table in Masters' Passage the fat Owl gasped for breath. Only in a case of desperate extremity would Billy Bunter have thought of taking refuge in a master's study. But it was, after all, about the safest spot he could have chosen, for wherever Loder of the Sixth looked for him, he was not likely to look in Mr. Lamb's study.

Mr. Lamb was going out that afternoon. Bunter knew that, because he had heard him say so. Smithy of the Remove was booked for detention that afternoon, and as Mr. Lamb was going out, the new master of the Remove had spoken to Wingate of the Sixth on the subject—not trusting Smithy to remain kept in unless an official eye was open. Billy Bunter had heard him—Bunter's fat ears often heard what was not addressed to them!

So, as Lamb was going out, Bunter hoped that he was already gone when he headed for Lamb's study. He found that study unoccupied, whether Lamb was gone out or not, and

promptly parked his fat person under the table. Loder was not likely to look in—and if Lamb did, Bunter was out of sight.

As soon as he was sure that Lamb was gone, the master's armchair was at his disposal. But he was not sure yet—and, in the meantime, under the table seemed the safest spot. Under that table the fat Owl kept doggo.

That Lamb was not yet gone, he was definitely apprised by the sound of the art master's bleat in the passage.

Why the beast was not already gone, if he was going, Bunter did not know. Anyhow, the fugitive Owl was safely hidden if he came into the study.

"Yes, Mr. Hacker, it is such a fine afternoon, though cold—indeed, very cold!" the Lamb was saying just outside the study door. Evidently he was speaking to Hacker, the master of the Shell.

"If you are going my way, Mr. Lamb—" came back the sharp voice of the Acid Drop.

"Which way are you walking, Mr. Hacker?"

"I was thinking of a walk across the common to Courtfield."

"Ah, I am sorry!" bleated the Lamb. "I shall be walking down by Friardale to get a whiff of the sea air, Mr. Hacker!"

"My dear fellow, it is immaterial to me," said Hacker. "I shall be glad to take a walk by the sea. We may see something of the mine-sweepers."

There was a moment's pause. Then the amiable bleat of the Lamb came again.

"That will be very nice, Mr. Hacker—very nice indeed! I will join you in a few minutes. I have to step into my study to put away some drawings."

"I will wait for you at the Common-room door," said Mr. Hacker.

Bunter heard Hacker's footsteps depart. Then the door-handle turned and Mr. Lamb came into the study, shutting the door after him.

"Fool!" he breathed aloud.

Bunter, for a second, dreaded that he was discovered. Mr. Lamb could hardly be speaking to himself—and Bunter was the only other person in the study. And the expression he used seemed applicable to Bunter.

But Lamb did not approach the study table. He turned his back to it, stepping to the desk by the window.

Bunter had a view of legs and the tail of an overcoat. Lamb was already dressed for going out when Hacker had caught him.

From what he had said, he had to put away some drawings before he went out. But he did not put away any drawings. He took the receiver from the telephone that stood on the desk. He was going to phone.

It seemed rather singular to Bunter that he had told Hacker that he had drawings to put away, when in reality he was going to use the telephone. What Mr. Lamb said on

that instrument seemed more singular still.

"Is that you, Nobby?"

Bunter did not hear the answer from Nobby, and Mr. Lamb's voice went on:

"I shall be late! A troublesome fool is going to walk with me—I can hardly object! I may be an hour late!"

Billy Bunter grinned under the table.

Hacker, evidently, was the "troublesome fool." The Acid Drop would have liked that, Bunter thought, if he could have heard it! The master of the Shell was bestowing his company rather patronisingly on little Mr. Lamb, little dreaming what his feelings were, under his outward docile politeness.

Bunter was rather amused.

Lamb was going to meet somebody, and was putting off the meeting till he had got rid of his undesired companion in his walk. So much was clear, from what Lamb said on the telephone.

Something came through from the other end, which Billy Bunter could not hear. Then the Lamb spoke again.

"It cannot be helped. I have to play up, Nobby. No, no, that is all right—I gave the young rascals a severe caning, and they are not likely to come near the place again. I shall be careful, of course, but that is all right! O.K., Nobby!"

Mr. Lamb put up the receiver.

To Billy Bunter's relief, he went straight to the door, without even a glance towards the table.

Bunter was glad to see a pair of legs and the tail of an overcoat disappear out of the doorway and the door shut after them.

Mr. Lamb was gone to join Hacker at the door of Common-room and start on that afternoon walk. He had come and gone without the slightest suspicion that a fat Owl was under the study table. Which was very fortunate for Bunter, who remembered that Lamb had given the Bounder a tremendous licking once, when he had caught him in his study.

It was all clear now.

Billy Bunter crawled, at last, out of his retreat, and rolled over to the study window. Keeping carefully in cover of the curtain, he peered out through his spectacles and had a view of Mr. Lamb and Mr. Hacker going down to the gates.

Lamb was safe off the scene now. From what he had said on the telephone, he was going to be out most of the afternoon. Nothing could have suited Bunter better.

The two masters disappeared. A few minutes later, Bunter caught sight of Vernon-Smith roaming about the quadrangle as if in search of somebody. He heard Smithy call out to Skinner:

"Seen that fat ass Bunter?"

"No!" answered Skinner, and he went on: "It's nearly two, Smithy. Haven't you got detention at two?"

"Yes; I wanted to see that fat fool first!" growled the Bounder. "I

suppose the blithering idiot is still dodging Loder?"

Vernon-Smith strode away angrily to the door of the House. At two o'clock he had to report himself to the head prefect for detention, his Form-master having gone out. The expression on the Bounder's face did not indicate that he intended to remain in detention, however, if he found a chance of cutting.

A little later, five cheery faces passed in Bunter's view. Harry Wharton & Co. were going out.

Then the portly form of Mr. Prout,

PAYING OUT PARKER!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! Smithy!" roared Bob Cherry.

The Famous Five all looked round. They were sauntering down Friar-dale Lane, to take the path to the cliffs, when there was a patter of running footsteps behind them.

Herbert Vernon-Smith, who was supposed to be in detention in the Remove Form room, overtook them breathlessly.

The chums of the Remove were not wholly surprised to see him. Break-

time to let him out. I'm chancing it, anyhow."

"Risky, old man!" said Frank Nugent, shaking his head. "The Lamb's got a down on you!"

"I know that!" sneered the Bounder. "I've got a down on him, too. He's got his knife into me for nothing—"

"Nothing?" asked Johnny Bull. "Is sticking a jam tart on his face nothing, Smithy?"

"He shouldn't pretend to be a soft ass that can be ragged!" retorted the Bounder. "Think I should have



Mr. Parker threw open the gate and ran out, flourishing a stick. As he did so, the Greyfriars juniors let fly, with deadly aim, and snowballs crashed and smashed all over the stocky man!

the master of the Fifth, appeared on the path under the windows of Masters' Studies, walking with Mr. Capper.

Billy Bunter promptly retreated from the window. He did not want to risk being spotted in a master's study.

He plumped down in Mr. Lamb's armchair and put his feet on Mr. Lamb's fender, and, having thrown some coal on Mr. Lamb's fire, settled down comfortably. There was, unfortunately, nothing to eat in Mr. Lamb's study; but it was a comforting reflection that he had bolted most of the toffees before he was rooted out of Study No. 1 in the Remove.

Loder of the Sixth was probably still looking for him. He was not likely to look in Lamb's study. Later on, when the painful shock to his tummy had quite worn off, Bunter hoped that Loder would be in a better temper—and that he might let that little matter drop.

Bunter had a hopeful nature!

ing detention was a rather serious matter; but it was not the Bounder's way to think much of the consequences of his actions. It was Mr. Lamb who had detained him, and against the Pet Lamb, Smithy had a deep and bitter feud. He was not likely to spend a half-holiday in the Form-room at Lamb's order, if he could help it.

"So you've cut, Smithy!" said Harry Wharton.

The Bounder cast a swift look backwards before he answered.

The Famous Five were half a mile from the school; and Smithy appeared to have run all the way. But there was no sign of pursuit in the lane.

"Yes, I've cut!" said Vernon-Smith. "Lamb's gone out, and ten to one, Wingate won't look into the Form-room again! I let him march me there, and clear. I wasn't five minutes after him. He isn't a spy like Lamb—he won't go nosing into the Form-room after a fellow, till it's

stuck a jam tart on Quelch's face? Lamb asks to be ragged by making out that he's a silly soft ass—when he's nothing of the kind!"

"And is chucking a bundle of crackers in at his bed-room window, in the middle of the night, nothing?" inquired Johnny Bull.

"The rotter asked for that," said Smithy, "and he got it! And I'd like to know why he turned out in the middle of the night and opened his window, too! I was going to break a pane if he hadn't; but he did! And why did he want to keep it dark?"

"Did he?" grunted Johnny.

"He said nothing about it—only kept an eye on me like a cat, and caught me out for something else!" said the Bounder bitterly. "I wonder what secrets he's got to keep—the rat!"

"Smithy doesn't love our Pet Lamb, and no mistake!" said Bob Cherry, with a grin.

"The loveliness is not terrific!" agreed Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"You fellows going anywhere?" asked Vernon-Smith.

"Yes," said Harry, "and if you'd like to hike along, O.K. But—"

"But you don't want the company of a fellow out of detention?" sneered the Bounder. "All right—I'll clear!"

"Don't be an ass!" said the captain of the Remove quietly. "I was going to say that this is riskier than you think. Ten to one the Lamb has asked Wingate to keep an eye on the Form-room. You'll be missed."

"I shouldn't wonder! I don't care!" grunted Vernon-Smith. "If I could have found that fat idiot, Bunter, I'd have fixed it up with him as I did on Saturday—you know, I locked him in the Form-room, and he spoofed Lamb, through the door, with his putrid ventriloquism, making Lamb think I was inside. It would have done equally well for Wingate to-day; but I couldn't find the fat chump anywhere."

"He's still dodging Loder's ash!" grinned Bob.

"The fat fool!" growled Vernon-Smith. "I hunted all over the shop; but he's parked himself somewhere out of sight. Where are you fellows going?"

"Down to the cliff road," said Harry. "The fact is, we're on the warpath, Smithy—if you're ripe for a row, as usual."

"You good little Erics hunting trouble?" exclaimed the Bounder, in sarcastic surprise. "You surprise and shock me, Wharton."

"Oh, don't be a goat! Last Wednesday we were caught in the rain, with some of the Cliff House girls with us, and we took shelter at a chalet along the cliff road, called Sea View," explained the captain of the Remove. "There's a caretaker there—a surly brute named Parker—and he refused to let us stay."

"Why?"

"Goodness knows—just a surly brute, I suppose. We couldn't let the girls go out in drenching rain, so we stayed—and he cut up rusty, and I punched him."

"Good for you!" said Smithy. "Are you going back now to punch him again?"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"No! You see, he complained at the school, calling it trespass and an act of violence, and Lamb called us up and gave us six each—fearfully hard!"

"After which you still thought he was a nice fluffy little Lamb who wouldn't hurt a fly?" asked the Bounder sarcastically.

"No; we thought he was a savage brute!" said Harry. "I don't believe in his soft ways any more than you do, Smithy. Even if he had to whop us, he needn't have laid it on as if he was beating a carpet."

"Blessed if I know why he did, either!" said Nugent. "We explained why we had to stay there under shelter; but it made no difference."

"Were you asses enough to give the

man your name?" asked the Bounder.

"No fear!"

"Then how the dickens did he report you at Greyfriars?"

"The Lamb happened to pass while we were there!" explained Harry.

"He was taking a walk in the rain, and passed Sea View, going along to Pegg. So when that brute's report came in, Lamb knew it was us. It was rotten luck! If he hadn't happened to be passing the place, we should have been all right. Well, we're walking round now to see if that brute Parker is about."

"There's been snow since last week!" grinned Bob Cherry. "Tons of it on the cliff road. If we get a sight of Parker, there will be snowballs flying!"

"No trespass this time!" said Johnny Bull. "We're keeping on the safe side of the jolly old frontier. But snowballs might whiz anywhere!"

The Bounder grinned.

"I'm on!" he said.

He walked on with the Famous Five, and they reached the open road which ran along the cliffs, in view of the rolling sea. There was, as Bob had said, plenty of snow on that road. All the Famous Five were keen to make the obnoxious Mr. Parker sit up for his sins, and there was any amount of ammunition lying about—if Parker was spotted.

The chums of the Remove were far from vengeful, as a rule—they had none of the Bounder's bitter memory for an offence. But the man at the seaside chalet had been inhospitable and offensive—and from sheer surly temper, so far as the juniors could see, he would have driven them out into the rain, with three girls in the party, and he had tried to pitch them out when they refused. And the whopping Lamb had handed out had been one to be remembered.

Mr. Lamb had told them that it was a warning to keep clear of Sea View, and have no more trouble with the surly caretaker. But, as a matter of fact, it had produced exactly the opposite effect on the juniors. It had made them determined to give Mr. Parker something for himself at the first opportunity.

"Here's the place, Smithy!" said Bob, at last.

They came to a halt where there was a gate in the wooden fence along the inland side of the road. On the other side of the road were the open chalk cliffs, dropping steeply to the beach below. In summer it was a very pleasant spot; but in January it was cold and misty, windy and stormy; and of all the seaside holiday buildings along the road none was inhabited—and only one had a resident caretaker; the rest were locked up and deserted.

Sea View stood at a considerable distance from the nearest of the other buildings. It was surrounded by a good acre of ground, dotted with hawthorn thickets and poplars. The chalet stood well back from the road—and a dozen yards from it, in the garden at the side, and still farther back, was what Harry Wharton & Co. knew to be an air-raid shelter—a dugout among the poplars, camouflaged by an extensive mound of

grassy earth. The entrance to the dugout could not be seen; either it was at the back, or it was camouflaged like the rest.

Farther back from the road were wired chicken-runs, with a fowl-house. And in that direction, a man with a thick-set, stocky figure could be seen.

Perhaps he had been attending to the chickens. He was coming back towards the house, as the juniors looked over the gate.

"Is that the sportsman?" asked Smithy.

"That's the blighter!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"He looks rather a toad!"

"The toadfulness is terrific."

The caretaker at Sea View did not look a pleasant man. His chin was stubbly, his face was pimply, his eyes narrow, shifty, and furtive.

Catching sight of the schoolboys at the gate, he stared at them—and a dark and threatening scowl came over the pimply face. Evidently Mr. Parker recognised his visitors of a week ago—and was not pleased to see them again.

"Collar him and roll him in the snow!" suggested the Bounder.

Smithy was entering wholeheartedly into this campaign; probably chiefly from his love of a row.

"My dear chap, we mustn't trespass!" said Bob. "We got whopped for trespassing. We've got to attract him within range."

The stocky man had come to a halt and stood staring at the group of juniors.

Bob Cherry placed the thumb of his right hand to his nose, and extended the fingers. Then he placed the thumb of his left hand to the little finger of his right hand, and extended the fingers of the left hand also.

The other fellows chuckled.

Bob's action was not dignified. It was not really worthy of a Remove man of Greyfriars. Inky little fags in the Second Form made such disrespectful gestures sometimes—scrubby little rascals like Sammy Bunter and Nugent minor. But they did not do such things in the Remove. They were above it—miles above it.

But Bob made an exception in favour of Mr. Parker. The caretaker of Sea View had to be attracted within range of snowballs somehow. That was the idea! Bob's action was not, perhaps, attractive in itself. Nevertheless, it had the effect of attracting the stocky man. He gave Bob an angry glare, and came towards the gate at a run. There was a stick in his hand. It looked as if Mr. Parker intended to use that stick.

"Go it!" murmured Harry Wharton.

On either side of the gate snow was banked high and thick. While Bob continued to extend his fingers from his nose, attracting the enraged Mr. Parker, five fellows stooped and grabbed snow, and rapidly kneaded snowballs. They rose, each with a snowball in either hand, as Mr. Parker arrived at the gate.

Bob Cherry jumped back as Parker made a lick at him with the stick. The stocky man threw open the gate and ran out, flourishing the stick.

As he did so, five snowballs flew with deadly aim, crashing and smashing all over Mr. Parker. He staggered. Five more snowballs crashed and smashed the next moment, and Mr. Parker, spluttering, rolled over under the fusillade and sprawled headlong in the snow on the cliff road.

ROUGH LUCK!

"OOOOOH!" spluttered Mr. Parker.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Give him a few more!" grinned the Bounder.

"Go it!"

"Urrrggh!" gurgled the caretaker of Sea View. "Urrgh! You young 'ounds—Grrrrggh!"

Whiz! Crash! Smash! Squash!

The pimply man sat up in the snow dizzily. The stick had fallen from his hand and the cap from his untidy head. He spluttered wildly.

Six fellows surrounded him, at a little distance, whizzing snowballs. The Remove fellows were warming to the work. With wonderful rapidity they grabbed up snow and whizzed the missiles at the dizzy, spluttering Mr. Parker. Snowballs crashed and smashed all over him.

Mr. Parker, in the opinion of the Famous Five, had asked for this—indeed begged for it. A surly brute who refused to let a party of schoolboys and schoolgirls shelter under his veranda roof, in a heavy downpour of rain, and who got five fellows a severe whopping for trespassing in such circumstances, deserved all that came to him. And what came to Mr. Parker came thick and fast. It seemed to Mr. Parker that the air was full of snowballs—that he lived and moved and had his being in a world of snowballs! Every second they smashed and squashed on him.

Bellowing like a bull with rage, Mr. Parker got on his feet at last, grabbed up his stick, and charged.

The infuriated expression on the pimply face showed that Mr. Parker would have done some damage with that stick, if he had got to close quarters.

But the cheery Removites did not intend to let him get to close quarters with that stick. They were a good deal more active and nimble than the stocky man, and they dodged him promptly, scattering from his angry rush.

As fast as he got after one of the party, the rest closed in behind him, pelting him with snowballs.

Mr. Parker slipped, and went over again, sprawling in the snow, fairly yelling with rage by this time.

"Man down!" chortled Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Have a few more, Parker?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The pimply man scrambled up again with a fury in his face that was positively deadly.

Vernon-Smith landed a snowball under his chin, and it burst all over his bull neck. He rushed fiercely at the Bounder, who jumped promptly back—and bumped on the fence.

Another moment and Parker would

have had him pinned against the fence.

The stick was uplifted, and had it landed on Smithy, it certainly would have hurt him rather severely.

But the Bounder was swift. He put a hand on the fence, and vaulted over into the garden, as Parker swiped.

There was a terrific crash as the stick struck the fence with such force that it was jerked out of Parker's hand.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bob breathlessly.

"Collar him!" roared Johnny Bull.

Mr. Parker was getting dangerous. That terrific swipe would have done real damage had it landed on Smithy. No fellow there wanted his nut cracked by Mr. Parker—and as he stooped and clutched at the fallen stick, the whole Co. rushed him down, grabbed him, and rolled him over in the snow.

Johnny Bull caught up the stick and whizzed it away over the cliffs. It dropped a dozen yards away, in snowy grass, safely out of Mr. Parker's reach.

Snow was kicked up in clouds as Mr. Parker rolled in it. He struggled and kicked and hit in a perfectly frantic manner. In the breathless excitement of the tussle, the Famous Five did not notice a figure coming up the road.

The Bounder, on the inner side of the fence, ran along to the gate, to emerge and join in the fray again. But, as he did so, he spotted a figure on the road which was unnoticed by Harry Wharton & Co.—and which was now coming on at a run.

It was Mr. Lamb.

Lamb had, apparently, got rid of Mr. Hacker—at all events, he was alone now. As he saw what was going on outside the gate of Sea View, he broke into a rapid run.

"Oh gad!" ejaculated Vernon-Smith.

He gave a shout of warning.

"Cave! Look out, you fellows—it's the Lamb!"

"What—"

"Oh crumbs!"

The Famous Five, at the Bounder's shout, released the stocky man and stood breathless, staring down the road. They stared in dismay at their approaching Form-master.

"Lamb!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"Oh, what rotten luck!" breathed Nugent.

It was dismaying for the Famous Five. And it was quite unexpected and surprising. The previous Wednesday, Lamb had happened along and spotted them at that spot. Now he had happened along and spotted them again at the same spot! Nobody could have expected such a coincidence.

It was useless to cut. The Lamb's eyes were on them, and he knew who they were. They stood panting for breath and waiting for him to come up.

But the Bounder backed swiftly behind the fence again.

Lamb had not seen him, as he was within the gate. Lamb was not going

to see him—out of detention—if Smithy could help it. Parker knew nothing of him, and could not give his name.

Smithy was quite ready to stand his share of the row for ragging Parker; but breaking detention was a more serious matter. He was quite aware that the Lamb would report him to the Head for it, and that meant a flogging. He was going to keep out of sight, if he could.

Ducking his head, to keep out of view from over the fence, the Bounder cut across the extensive gardens of the chalet. He headed for the snowy mound that covered the air-raid dug-out, and cut behind it. Nobody was likely to come there, and it was safe cover till the coast was clear and he could get away, after Lamb was gone.

Meanwhile, Mr. Lamb arrived, panting for breath after his sharp run, and with an expression of concentrated anger on his face, remarkably unlike his usual lamb-like expression.

Mr. Parker sat up in the snow, spluttering.

"What does this mean?" asked Mr. Lamb. His voice was hard and concentrated, nothing like his usual peaceful bleat. "Last week I caned you—all of you—for trespassing at this place and annoying the caretaker! Now I find you here again, engaged in a scuffle with him. What does this mean, Wharton? You have been trespassing here again—"

"Not at all, sir!" answered Harry. "This is a public road. We have not been inside the gate."

"What are you doing here at all?"

"This road is not out of bounds on a half-holiday, sir! We have a right to be here!" answered the captain of the Remove.

Mr. Lamb's eyes glinted over his gold-rimmed glasses.

"Urrrggh!" came a gasp from Mr. Parker. "The young 'ounds! Snowballing a bloke! I'll go to their 'cadmaster about it! Urrgh!"

"I am a master at Greyfriars, my man!" said Mr. Lamb. "I shall deal with these boys! You have snowballed this man, Wharton?"

"Yes, sir!"

"Because he reported you for trespass last week, I presume?"

"Because he was a surly, brutal hooligan, and wanted a lesson!" answered the captain of the Remove. "Actually, he started the row by coming out at us with a stick."

"Did you come here intending to snowball him?"

There was only one answer to make to that. Mr. Parker had actually started the row, unless Bob's fingers to his nose could be considered the start. Nevertheless, the Famous Five certainly had come there to snowball Parker, as a well-merited punishment for his sins.

"Yes, sir!" answered Harry.

"That is enough!" said Mr. Lamb harshly. "You will return immediately to the school. You will join Vernon-Smith in detention, and remain in the Form-room until I return. I shall then deal with you severely. Greyfriars boys will not

be allowed to act like hooligans, disturbing the public peace—not boys in my Form, at all events. Go back to the school at once!”

In silence, the Famous Five obeyed that order.

They tramped down the road towards Friardale, Mr. Lamb watching them, as they went, over his glasses.

Parker scrambled to his feet, scraping off snow and bestowing savage scowls at five departing backs.

“There was another of ‘em!” he grunted. “He got over the fence——”

Parker stared over the fence. But the Bounder had had ample time to find cover, and there was nothing to be seen of him. “He’s ‘ooked it—but there was another of ‘em!”

Mr. Lamb did not reply. He stood watching the juniors disappearing down the road, his eyes glinting and his lips set hard.

Harry Wharton & Co. tramped away, with grim faces. It had been, perhaps, rather a thoughtless expedition; but they had never dreamt that Mr. Lamb would come along, as he had done the previous week. It was rather an unfortunate coincidence for the Famous Five.

“Where’s Smithy?” asked Bob, when they were safely out of hearing. “Lamb hasn’t spotted Smithy!”

“That’s a spot of luck for Smithy!” said Nugent. “He would get it a good deal worse than us—being out of detention!”

“He must have cut across the Sea View gardens to the fields!” said Harry. “I expect we shall find him at the school when we get in! Lamb won’t know he’s been out—lucky for Smithy!”

But they did not find the Bounder at Greyfriars when they got in. They went to the Form-room, as bidden; but Herbert Vernon-Smith was not there. The Bounder, wherever he was, was still out of gates.

THE GREEN DOOR!

HERBERT VERNON-SMITH caught his breath.

On the safe side of the mound that covered the air-raid shelter, he was out of sight from the road, and had, as he thought, only to wait. Lamb, he supposed, would go on his way, and he did not care whether Parker saw him again or not, when he came out of his cover, as Parker did not know his name to report at the school.

But a sound of shuffling feet in the snow, now approaching the dugout, warned the Bounder that he was not so safe as he supposed. For a moment he guessed that Parker still suspected that he was within the grounds of Sea View, and was looking for him. But the next moment he knew that two men were approaching the air-raid shelter from the farther side, and that one of them was Mr. Lamb.

“There was ‘arf-a-dozen of them!” He heard the gruff, surly voice of the pimply man. “One of them nipped over the fence when I licked at him with my stick!”

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“He must have gone, Nobby. Perhaps you had better look round and make sure!”

The Bounder, for a moment, was spell-bound.

Mr. Lamb, art master of Greyfriars School, knew that pimply man at Sea View—he was so familiar with him that he addressed him as “Nobby”—evidently a nickname. And for some utterly inexplicable reason he was coming to the dugout with Parker—certainly not because of any air raid alarm—there had been nothing of the kind.

But the Bounder, amazed as he was, was quick to act.

The entrance to the dugout was on the inner side of the mound—Smithy had already spotted it—a door painted green, set in the side of the earthen mound. Smithy was standing within a few feet of it when he heard the voices of Lamb and Parker.

He did not lose a second. Close at hand were hawthorn bushes, among which slender poplars grew.

The Bounder backed swiftly into the hawthorns and crouched down out of sight, half-smothered with snow.

Lamb had told the stocky man to look round, and make sure! But he would have had to look very carefully to spot the Bounder now.

The Bounder crouched silent and still, heedless of cold and chilly discomfort.

Two figures came round the earthen mound. Through the tangled hawthorns, Vernon-Smith had a glimpse of the Lamb, with his gold-rimmed glasses glimmering in the winter sunshine, and the stocky man with his surly, pimply face.

Mr. Lamb stopped to the entrance of the dugout, but did not enter. He stood there, his back to the door, scanning the extensive garden to the hedge that barred it off from the fields behind.

Parker moved on, tramping through the hawthorns—and the Bounder held his breath, as the man passed within three yards of him.

For several minutes, Parker moved about the grounds of Sea View, while Mr. Lamb stood where he was, waiting and watching.

It was clear that both of them believed that the sixth member of the Greyfriars party had cut off, and that this search was only to make sure.

Why did they want to make so sure? Parker, no doubt, would have liked to lay hands on any member of the party. But what was Mr. Lamb’s interest in the matter?

The Bounder’s brain was almost in a whirl.

Already he was vaguely suspicious of Lamb. He had said that the Pet Lamb of Greyfriars was a man with secrets to keep. There were many curious incidents in connection with the man that puzzled other fellows, as well as the Bounder, though they interested nobody but Smithy.

Smithy was, perhaps, a little suspicious by nature. His bitter dislike of the Lamb sharpened his suspicions. It made him rather liable to exaggerate trifles.

But what was happening now, under his eyes, was no trifle. It was utterly strange and perplexing.

What connection could there possibly be between the art master of Greyfriars and that low-browed, surly brute at Sea View? That connection, whatever it meant, was a secret—and it explained why Lamb had so severely punished the Famous Five for visiting the place a week ago. It explained why he had twice happened to be on the spot on half-holidays. But what did it, and could it, mean?

Parker came back, at last, and re-joined the Lamb at the dugout.

“All clear, I reckon!” he said.

“What was the boy like?” asked Mr. Lamb. “I shall inquire into this, if you can tell me what he was like.”

“Jest one of them schoolboys,” grunted Parker. “I never noticed special—a young bloke with an ugly mug, that’s all!”

“Well, he is gone, at all events! I am sorry that I did not see him—I would have given him a lesson about butting in where he has no business. But it matters little—get the door open.”

Every word came clearly to the ears of the Bounder.

Parker produced a key from his pocket and stepped down to the little green door, which was half below the surface of the ground.

The door was opened, and Parker passed through. Mr. Lamb followed him, and both of them disappeared from Vernon-Smith’s sight. He heard a click as the door closed and locked behind them.

Smithy drew a deep breath and emerged from his hiding-place. He stared at the sunken green door, behind which the caretaker of Sea View and the art master of Greyfriars had disappeared. He was utterly amazed.

Mr. Parker’s duty, as caretaker, might be inspecting the air-raid shelter and keeping it in order. But for what imaginable reason had the art master of Greyfriars visited it?

If the Bounder had been suspicious of the Lamb before, he was doubly suspicious now. Yet his suspicions could take no definite form. Lamb was a man with secrets to keep—strange secrets—but what those secrets were, the Bounder had not the remotest idea. Why, in the name of all that was inexplicable, had the art master of Greyfriars gone down into the locked dugout with the caretaker of Sea View?

For a long minute, Vernon-Smith stood staring at the half-hidden green door. Then he turned away.

The coast was clear now; he was able to go unseen, and he had plenty of time to return to the school before his detention was up. He tramped away to the road and headed for Greyfriars—and as he went, he puzzled, and puzzled in vain, to guess what strange secret might be hidden by the green door.

Whatever was taking place there, only the art master of Greyfriars and the surly Parker knew.

THE SECRET OF THE DUGOUT!

MR. QUELCH, the kidnapped Remove master of Greyfriars School, laid down his book and rose to his feet.

A single electric bulb burned in the matchboard-walled room, where the Remove master was a prisoner.

How many weary days had passed since he had fallen into the hands of Slim Jim, the cracksman, Quelch hardly knew.

They seemed endless.

On that night, many weeks ago, when the Remove master had seen Slim Jim without his mask, he had been glad of the chance that had revealed the features of the mysterious crook, and enabled one man, at least, to identify him, if he could be found.

Not for a moment had he dreamed of what would follow—the sudden swift kidnapping that placed it out of his power to put his knowledge to use.

One man, and one man alone, knew the face of Slim Jim, and that man was a prisoner in a dugout, hidden from the eyes of the world.

How long his imprisonment was to last, he could not tell. It was to last at least as long as the cracksman's safety demanded it. Weeks had passed—Christmas had come and gone—and he was still a prisoner. Ferrers Locke, the famous detective, was in search of him—he knew that. But he had little hope that even Ferrers Locke would ever find a clue to his hiding-place—an air-raid dugout, in what county Quelch did not know.

It was the unbolting and opening of the door that caused Quelch to lay down his precious Euripides—his sole comfort in his strange prison—and rise to his feet.

At the open doorway, he had a glimpse of a stocky man with a muffer over a pimply face and a stick in his hand. But this man, the gaoler whom he often saw, did not enter.

The man who entered was a man of slight stature, his face covered by a black mask. The face under that mask, Quelch knew—it was the face he had seen that night at Popper Court. But the crook never revealed it on the rare occasions when he visited the kidnapped Form-master. Perhaps his idea was that Quelch's recollection of that face might grow dim with the passage of time. Or perhaps it was merely the crook's habitual caution.

Mr. Quelch fixed his gimlet eyes on the masked face. He did not speak, but his look spoke volumes.

"You are still safe, my friend!" said the masked man, in a tone of amused mockery. He stood just within the door, his eyes, from the eye-holes in the mask, fixed on the Remove master of Greyfriars.

"You did not come to ascertain that!" answered Mr. Quelch contemptuously. "You know that there is no escape from this hidden den!"

"One cannot be too sure!" said the masked man. "It is safer to give you the once-over now and then, Mr. Quelch!"

"That is not why you came!" re-

peated the Remove master. "Is this den a hiding-place of your plunder as well as of your prisoner?"

The masked man gave a slight start.

"You are a very keen man, Mr. Quelch!" he said, after a pause. "Perhaps you are too keen for your own good!"

The Remove master gave a contemptuous snort.

"Pah! It is plain enough to me," he said. "I have seen you three times since I have been a prisoner in this dugout. I have no doubt that on each occasion Slim Jim had been at his nefarious work before you came. Unknown as you are to the police, you must run some risk in coming here, where your prisoner is hidden. You come with the loot of your thefts!"

The masked man gave a low laugh.

"Perhaps!" he said. "But if you dream that Ferrers Locke will ever follow my trail to this dugout, you had better dream again. Suppose I tell you that only a few weeks ago I met Ferrers Locke and talked with him face to face?"

Mr. Quelch gave a contemptuous shrug of the shoulders. It was evident that he did not believe that statement.

"It is true," said the man in the mask, "and Mr. Locke's opinion of me, if he remembers my existence at all, is that I am one of the simplest and most innocent men with whom he has ever spoken. Nevertheless, I have made it a point to keep myself acquainted with the movements of Ferrers Locke. It is some time since he has been seen at his place in Baker Street. He is said to be on the north-east coast—"

"On the north-east coast!" repeated Mr. Quelch.

"In these days there are foreign spies to be trailed!" said the masked man. "A matter of more urgency with Ferrers Locke than the search for a missing Form-master from a school in Kent. I do not think, Mr. Quelch, that I have much to fear from Ferrers Locke!" A laugh came from under the mask. "I leave you with that piece of information for your comfort."

"I do not believe it," muttered Mr. Quelch. "I am assured that Ferrers Locke would not abandon me—"

"After all these weeks? If Locke ever took up the case at all, he has thrown it up. I have means of finding out what I want to know. Ferrers Locke is now very differently engaged!"

With that the man in the mask stepped back through the doorway, and the door was immediately closed.

Mr. Quelch heard the bolt shoot into the socket outside.

There was a tramping of footsteps on a wooden stair, and then silence—silence as of the tomb, to which the prisoner of the dugout was wearily accustomed.

Mr. Quelch stood with a wrinkle of thought in his brow, after the man in the mask had gone.

Little as the masked man guessed it, what he had said had brought a

gleam of hope to the imprisoned Form-master of Greyfriars.

Ferrers Locke was no longer seen at Baker Street—he was busy elsewhere. The cracksman was satisfied that if the famous detective ever had taken up the case, he had realised that there was nothing to be done. But Mr. Quelch was a very keen man—keener, probably, than Slim Jim, cunning as the crook was.

If Locke was, at last, on the trail of the man of mystery, a report might be spread of activities in another quarter, to throw dust in the eyes of his quarry. It was possible—it was even likely—and this might mean that Locke was at last on the track.

It was, at least, a glimmer of hope to the prisoner of the dugout.

HOW TO TAKE A WHOPPING!

"**H**E, he, he!" Billy Bunter seemed amused.

Five fellows on the Remove landing were anything but amused. Harry Wharton, Frank Nugent, Johnny Bull, Bob Cherry, and Hurree Janset Ram Singh stood in an unhappy group—only too plainly having been through it! Herbert Vernon-Smith stood leaning on the banisters, his hands in his pockets—quite at his ease. The Bouncer had not been through it like the Famous Five.

He had been back in detention in good time. As he had hoped, Wingate of the Sixth had not taken the trouble to visit the Form-room and keep an eye on him, taking it for granted that a junior in detention would remain in detention.

So when Mr. Lamb came in the Bouncer was already there, and the Lamb did not know that he had been out. Smithy had been curtly dismissed, but the Famous Five had had six each before they were dismissed. Mr. Lamb was evidently determined to impress upon their minds that it was more judicious to keep at a safe distance from the chalet on the cliff road.

Five juniors were wriggling very painfully, and uttering a series of gasps and ejaculations, when a fat figure came up the Remove staircase.

Billy Bunter blinked at them through his big spectacles, and grinned.

That scene of woe seemed to strike Bunter as funny.

"I say, you fellows, have you been whopped?" asked the fat Owl.

"The whopfulness was terrific," murmured Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"Don't make a fuss about it," advised Bunter.

"What?" came a deep growl from Johnny Bull.

The Famous Five were not really making a fuss. They could stand a licking, but six of the very best were calculated to make the hardest fellow wriggle and gasp a little.

"Brace up, you fellows!" said Bunter breezily. "I shouldn't make a fuss about a licking! Take it in your stride, you know!"

"Kick him, somebody!" groaned Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry! I'm only advising you for your own good," said Bunter. "Remove men are expected to be a bit tough, you know. A fellow ought to be able to stand a licking!"

"Seen Loder yet?" asked Frank Nugent.

"Eh? Oh, no!" Billy Bunter gave a quick blink round him. "I say, you fellows, think that beast is still after me? His tummy must be all right again by this time! It was rather a cosh, I know!"

"Ow!" mumbled Bob Cherry, with a painful wriggle.

"I had to get out of Lamb's study," said Bunter. "I've been there this afternoon. But I spotted him from the window, so I thought I'd better get out before he blew into the study—"

"Lucky for you you did, you fat clump!" said the Bounder. "Lamb would have given you six if he'd copped you there."

"He jolly nearly did before he went out," grinned Bunter. "But I was under the table, you know, so it was all right. I wish Hacker could have heard him on the phone as I did! He, he, he!"

Bunter chortled.

"I say, you fellows, what do you think? The Acid Drop stuck on to him for a walk, and Lamb came into the study to phone some man and put off seeing him till he could get shut of Hacker! He, he, he!"

Harry Wharton & Co. did not heed. Their thoughts were quite occupied at the moment. But Vernon-Smith heeded very promptly.

"You heard that on the phone in Lamb's study?" he exclaimed.

"I jolly well did!" grinned Bunter. "Wish Hacker could have heard! He, he, he! He said he was a troublesome fool—he, he, he! I say, that man Lamb is an awful humbug, you fellows! He was as nice as pie to Hacker—and then he goes and telephones that he was a troublesome fool, sticking on to him like that! I say, you fellows, have you ever heard of anybody named Nobby?"

The Bounder jumped.

"Nobby!" he exclaimed. Very clearly indeed did Smithy remember that name, applied by the Lamb to Mr. Parker, at Sea View.

"Yes—Nobby!" said Bunter. "That was the name—he was speaking on the phone to somebody named Nobby. Queer name, ain't it?"

"By gum!" murmured the Bounder.

Clearly, the Lamb's visits to Sea View were very secret, as he had had to delay his visit there because Mr. Hacker had started out on the walk with him.

"Ever heard of him, you fellows?" asked Bunter. "Who is he? Jolly queer name, I think."

"Ow!" said Frank Nugent.

"Wow!" said Johnny Bull.

"Ooooooh!" mumbled Bob Cherry.

"He, he, he! I say, you fellows, you're doing a song and dance about it, and no mistake!" said Billy Bunter. "I'd brace up, if I were you! After all, what's a licking?"

"You fat, footling, frabjous fat-head!" said Bob Cherry, in measured tones. "Shut up!"

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"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Wow!" Harry Wharton uttered a sudden ejaculation. There was no doubt that the Lamb had laid it on hard!

"He, he, he!"

Billy Bunter cackled. Five fellows understudying contortionists undoubtedly entertained William George Bunter.

Bob Cherry made a motion with his foot.

The fat Owl promptly backed away. He grinned from one fat ear to the other.

"If you fellows knew what a funny lot you look, wriggling like a lot of eels, you'd laugh!" he said. "If you take my tip, you won't be soft. Dash it all, a whopping's only a whopping! You wouldn't hear me squealing like that, and chance it! I can stand a licking, I hope!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Bounder.

Bunter blinked round at him.

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at, Smithy!" he said. "I mean it—I can stand a licking without doing a song and dance about it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Why Herbert Vernon-Smith was laughing Bunter did not know. He could not see what Smithy could see over the banisters.

What Smithy could see was the head of Gerald Loder of the Sixth Form rising into view on the staircase.

"Well, you can cackle!" snorted Billy Bunter. "But if I had a licking I can jolly well tell you that I should take it like a man! I shouldn't wriggle like an eel, and I jolly well shouldn't squeak and squeal, either. I've got grit, I hope, and—"

Bunter broke off at a sound of hurried feet on the stairs. Loder of the Sixth had heard the fat voice on the landing above, and accelerated.

Bunter blinked round—too late!

Loder came with a rush!

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

He made a bound for the Remove passage—too late! A grasp was on his collar.

"Now—!" gasped Loder.

"Yarooooh!"

"Bend over and touch your toes, Bunter."

"Yoo-hoop! Leggo! I say, you fellows, rescue! Oh crumbs! Yaroooh!"

Whack!

Holding Bunter by the back of his fat neck with his left, Loder laid on the ash with his right.

The ashplant landed on the tightest trousers in the British Empire, with a crack like a pistol-shot.

Whack!

Bunter bellowed.

Whack!

"Yarooooooop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Bounder.

"Take it like a man, Bunter! Don't

do a song and a dance like other fellows!"

Whack!

"Whoo-ooo-hooooop!"

The Famous Five grinned. Bunter was doing a song and a dance—a song on his top note and a perfectly frantic dance. He seemed to have forgotten his advice to the Famous Five on how to stand a whopping. He danced, he pranced, he bellowed, and he roared.

Whack, whack, whack!

"Oh crikey! Oh crumbs! Will you leave off, you beast?" roared Bunter. "I'll go to Quelch—I mean Lamb—I'll go to the Head—I'll— Yaroooh!"

Whack, whack, whack!



The Famous Five were wriggling very painfully w
"Brace up, you fellows!" said the fat junior bre
Take it in your st

Whether Loder's tummy was all right again or not after the shock of the morning, it was clear that his temper was not all right. Forgetting the immemorial rule that six was the limit, he whacked and whacked and whacked, and Billy Bunter bellowed and bellowed and bellowed.

Loder seemed tired at last—though not so tired as Bunter. Breathing hard after his exertions, he tucked his ashplant under his arm and went down the staircase. He left the Owl of the Remove uttering frantic sounds of woe.

"Brace up, old fat man!" advised Bob Cherry.

"Yaroooh!"

"If you knew how funny you look, wriggling like an eel—" remarked Frank Nugent.

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"You'd laugh!" grinned Johnny Bull.

"Ow! Wow! Yow! Wow! Yooh!"
 "Dash it all, a whopping's only a whopping, Bunter!" said Harry Wharton. "What about taking it like a man?"

"Ow! Yow! Wow! Ow! Yow-ow-ow!" howled Billy Bunter.

Evidently Billy Bunter's good advice was of no use to himself. Billy Bunter was making more fuss than the Famous Five all put together—about ten times as much.

SHADOWED IN THE NIGHT!

JOHN ROBINSON, the Head's new chauffeur, opened the door at the side of the garage, stepped out into blackness, and closed



When Billy Bunter came up the Remove staircase. "I shouldn't make a fuss about a licking! Side, you know!"

the door behind him without a sound.

Had it been less dark, and had there been an eye to see, that eye would not have recognised John Robinson, or Ferrers Locke, the detective of Baker Street.

The man who emerged from the private door of the garage was muffled in a thick dark coat, with a hat slouched over his face, and most of that face was hidden by a thick beard.

All was dark in the Greyfriars quadrangle, when the Baker Street detective glided like a shadow in the night.

It was eleven o'clock, and at that hour all Greyfriars slept. Even had a light been burning, it would have been hidden by the black-out. Locke made no sound—he was a silent shadow among shadows. Even Ferrers Locke's keen eyes were of little use

in the gloom—but his ears were equally keen, and they were on the strain.

Slim Jim might believe, as he did believe, that the Baker Street detective had abandoned the case of the kidnapped Form-master. But Mr. Quelch, in the prison dugout, had guessed more correctly. Ferrers Locke was very far from having abandoned the case. But whether he was on the trail, as Mr. Quelch hoped, the detective could not be sure.

That Slim Jim was still in the vicinity was known—at least, once a week his activities were traced. Under what name—under what outward aspect—he passed, no one knew or could guess—unless Ferrers Locke had at last put his finger on a clue. It was upon Mr. Lamb, the art master of Greyfriars, that his suspicion was fixed—and yet he had to admit that the circumstances that had led him to fix his attention upon Lamb, though worth following up, were far from clear or certain.

And yet—

That night last week when Lamb had opened his window at midnight, what had been his intention? If it had been to leave the House by that window, he had given it up when Vernon-Smith had played his reckless trick of tossing a bundle of fireworks in at the window. Since that night the Baker Street detective had watched many nights—in vain.

If the man was Slim Jim, one alarm of that kind was enough for him. He would never use that window again as a mode of egress. The remotest chance of being observed would stop that. But if he was indeed the mysterious cracksman who worked with a masked face, he had to leave the school at night. By what window or door, among hundreds?

Only patient waiting and watching could answer that question. But the Baker Street detective was patient. His patience had been unrewarded, so far—but it was, at length, to be rewarded. For as he moved, silent as a shadow in the darkness, a faint sound came to his ears in the gloom, and he knew that it was the sound of a stealthily opened door.

Locke stood quite still, his heart beating for a moment. Then he moved quickly.

It was a quarter-past eleven, and someone was leaving the building. Swiftly, but silently, the Baker Street detective moved in the direction of the sound. He guessed—and soon he knew—whence it had come—the door of the Sixth Form lobby, which opened on to the quad. He heard the sound—soft but unmistakable—of that door closing again, and glimpsed a dark muffled figure that moved away from it.

That muffled figure moved away quickly in the dark.

Locke followed silently.

Who it was—whether man or boy—he could not tell in the dark. It was not, at all events, a junior, like that reckless young rascal who had spoiled everything by his trick with the fireworks at Lamb's window. The figure was at least as tall as Lamb's—it seemed a trifle taller, if anything. It was impossible to make a guess at its identity.

Locke followed silently.

The muffled figure headed for masters' gate, near the big gates. To that private gate, masters and prefects at Greyfriars had keys. Lamb, as a master, had a key. And whether the muffled figure was Lamb's or not, he was going to that gate.

Locke heard a click. The gate had opened and shut. Whoever it was, he was now outside in the road.

There was no click as Ferrers Locke opened and shut the little gate in his turn. The detective had a key.

Outside, all was dark. But Locke's ears told him what his eyes could not see, and in another moment he was following that muffled figure through the dark.

If it was Slim Jim, the direction he was taking was unexpected. It was Friardale Lane, which led to the village and to the cliff road beyond.

Locke would have expected Slim Jim to head for the town of Courtfield, or for one of the wealthy mansions in the neighbourhood. But he followed.

If this was Lamb, he was going to know Lamb's business outside the school in the dark hours of the night. If it was Lamb—and if Lamb was the mysterious masked cracksman—Slim Jim was going to crack his last crib that misty night—and the rescue of the kidnapped Form-master would follow the arrest of the kidnapper.

At a little distance from the school, the muffled figure, hitherto cautious, seemed to neglect caution. He made no further attempt to move silently—and Locke was easily able to pick up the sound of his footsteps on the frozen earth of the lane.

Apparently, the muffled man was heading for the village—where there certainly was no crib worth Slim Jim's while to crack. But he stopped before he reached the village at the gate of a building a little back from the road.

No gleam of light came from that building; but Locke knew the Cross Keys—a far from savoury resort.

The muffled figure moved up the lane beside the inn, stopped, and tapped at a side door.

Locke, with a feeling of disappointment growing in his heart, stood in the darkness and watched.

Was this Slim Jim? Was he there to meet some confederate in secret? For it was certain that the man of mystery had confederates. Was he there to hand over the loot of his last midnight raid to other hands? Locke watched in silence.

The side door of the inn opened. A gleam of light came from the doorway, revealing a beery man in shirt-sleeves.

That gleam of light fell on the face of the muffled figure—revealing it to the keen eyes of the detective watching from the dark.

Ferrers Locke gritted his teeth. He knew that face. It was not the face of Lamb. It was the face of a Sixth-Former of Greyfriars School—whose name he knew—Gerald Loder.

The Baker Street detective's feelings were deep. He had left his watch—left Slim Jim, perhaps, emerging from door or window while he had been led on a wild-goose chase by a young blackguard breaking bounds at night.

There was a mutter of voices.

Loder of the Sixth stepped in at the doorway; the door was shut, and the light shut off. And Ferrers Locke was left in the dark with feelings that he could not have expressed in words.

A LESSON FOR LODER!

MIDNIGHT had passed when Loder of the Sixth let himself in at the gate and trod quietly across the dark quadrangle.

There was little danger in the silence of midnight, but the black sheep of the Sixth was very cautious. Discovery meant that Loder of the Sixth would take an early train home in the morning, and that Greyfriars School would see him no more. Breaking out at night was the most serious of offences—most serious of all in a Sixth Form prefect who was trusted by his headmaster.

With stealthy footsteps Gerald Loder approached the door of the Sixth Form lobby, by which he had let himself out an hour ago. Loder was feeling, at the moment, in a very satisfied mood.

He had seen Mr. Bill Lodgey at the Cross Keys; he had been in time to get on—and if Blue Peggy won on Thursday, Loder was going to make quite a packet, having backed Blue Peggy at five to one in quids. Five quids in a lump would come in very useful to a sportsman who had not found the "geogees" a very profitable speculation so far.

But as he drew near the lobby door, Loder gave a sudden start, and felt an uncomfortable thrill, as a shadow loomed in the darkness.

It loomed and disappeared, and Loder came to a halt, his heart beating, jumping almost into his neck.

Had he been mistaken, or was someone out there in the quadrangle in the darkness of midnight?

He could not have been missed. He had locked his door after him when he crept out of his study—which, in the Sixth, was also a bed-room at night. But was some beak on the prowl? Or Wingate? He knew that the head prefect had a rather dubious eye on him.

Loder's heart thumped as he stood listening.

Another thought came uncomfortably into his mind—Slim Jim, the cracksman, said to be busy in the

neighbourhood, and who had paid Greyfriars one visit on a dark night weeks ago. He remembered that Vernon-Smith of the Remove had run into the masked cracksman that night and given the alarm in time. Loder had no desire whatever to run into a masked cracksman—he was very far from possessing the iron nerve of the Bounder.

For a long minute he stood. Then he moved on stealthily, with thumping heart, towards the lobby door.

At almost every step he glanced uneasily over his shoulder. He had a horrid feeling that someone was stalking him in the dark—someone who had been near Masters' Gate when he let himself in with his key.

It could hardly be a prowler of the night like Slim Jim, whose game would have been to hunt cover if he spotted anyone up and abroad at that hour. Still less could it be a master, whose hand would have dropped on his shoulder at once. Who could it be?

Loder's teeth shut hard as another idea came into his mind. Once it had happened that some young rascals of the Remove, having known that he was out of bounds, had collared him as he came in, and ragged him—in retaliation for some of his high-handed proceedings with the ashplant. Was that it?

Looking over his shoulder, he was sure that he saw a shadow stir among shadows. It vanished instantly.

Loder hurried on. Whoever and whatever it was, it was somebody or something, and his nerves were jumping.

He reached the lobby door and fumbled with the key at the lock. As he did so, a sudden grasp was laid on him from behind.

Loder let out a gasping howl of terror.

The key dropped from his hand, the door not yet unlocked. Loder spun over, and went heavily to the ground.

Terror so overmastered him that he hardly knew what was happening. Hands were on him in the dark, and he was rolling on the earth—and his head was suddenly jammed into a mass of snow that had piled up by the wall.

He gurgled and spluttered as his head went in. Head and hat and face were buried in snow.

Then the unseen hands that had grasped him released him as suddenly as they had grasped.

Loder was left to squirm out of the snow on his own.

He sat up dizzily.

Nothing was to be seen in the dark, he heard no sound. Whoever had seized him and jammed his head into the snow had vanished. Whether it was one, or more than one, he could not tell, so suddenly had it happened, and so utterly confused and confounded had he been.

He scrambled to his feet, snow smothering his face, sticking in his mouth and ears and neck. His hat was gone, his hair drenched with snow. He gasped for breath and glared round him.

Confusion and terror gave place to rage. Such an act could not have been performed by a master or a

fellow-prefect—still less by a night-prowling cracksman. It was a rag, and he owed this to some of his enemies in the Lower School—those young villains in the Remove, most likely!

In all his surmises on the subject, Loder was not likely to guess that he owed it to a detective, whose task was complicated by a young rascal breaking out at night, and who considered that such a lesson might cause him to think twice before breaking out again.

Breathing fury, Loder stooped and hunted for his hat. He found it at last, buried in snow.

Then he hunted for the dropped key. That was a good deal more difficult to find, for he dared not turn on the slightest gleam of light. He was already dreading that some wakeful ear might have heard the startled howl he had uttered when he was seized.

For long minute after minute, Gerald Loder groped, peered, and scraped, hunting for that key. It was a good ten minutes before he found it.

He unlocked the lobby door at last.

From his assailant, or assailants, there had been no sign—he, or they, had gone. But Loder was glad to get on the safe side of the door and lock it again after him.

Safe inside, he groped away in the dark for his study.

There he paused. If, as he firmly believed by this time, his assailants had been a gang of young rascals in the Remove, they had had to leave their dormitory and get out of the House. If there was still a chance of catching them out—

But he shook his head. They had had ample time to get back—they must have been in their dormitory again long ago! There was nothing doing in that line.

With gritted teeth, Loder unlocked his study door and went in, and towelled his damp head in the dark. He was going to make some investigations on the morrow and find out who had been guilty of that midnight rag—and make them extremely sorry for themselves.

In the meantime, there was nothing for Loder to do, but postpone vengeance and go to bed—and he went to bed, in the worst temper ever.

In the room over the garage John Robinson also was going to bed, his vigil for that night ended! And after that lesson to Loder, John Robinson hoped that he would not again be interrupted in his night-watch by the black sheep of the Sixth going out of bounds!

WHO IS NOBBY?

"**W**HAT rot!" said Billy Bunter.

The Bounder scowled.

"You fat idiot—"

"Oh, really, Smithy—"

"Do as I tell you!" growled Vernon-Smith. "The Lamb hasn't spotted your rotten ventriloquism yet—"

"Do you mean my wonderful ventriloquism?" asked Billy Bunter.

"You fat owl!"

"Yah!"

Herbert Vernon-Smith gave the Owl of the Remove a most unpleasant look.

Billy Bunter responded with a defiant blink.

That weird gift of ventriloquism possessed by the fat and fatuous Owl of the Remove was very useful to Smithy in his campaign against Mr. Quelch's substitute. Smithy had lots of money, and he did not grudge having to bribe the fat ventriloquist with tarts and doughnuts. But Billy Bunter, finding that he was indispensable, naturally swelled with importance—which was Bunter's way. He was given to arguing—and when he argued, the irritated Bounder could hardly refrain from kicking him—which was not the way to get ventriloquism out of Bunter!

"If you mean my wonderful ventriloquism," said Billy Bunter calmly, "you can say what you mean. If my ventriloquism's rotten, it's no use to you! Sorry I can't stop, Smithy—I've got to see Manly before the bell goes."

"Hold on!" The Bounder controlled his angry temper. "Come and talk it over in the tuckshop, Bunter."

"Oh, all right!" agreed Bunter promptly.

Bunter never needed asking twice to turn his footsteps in the direction of the school shop!

He rolled away cheerfully with Smithy.

"But it's rot old chap!" he went on. "I don't mind making that beast Lamb sit up, with my wonderful ventriloquism—so long as he doesn't spot me, of course. I'll make a dog bark in the Form-room, or I'll make a cat mew—I'll make the bust of Socrates talk to him, if you like! But your idea is rot—"

"Rot or not, that's what I want you to do!" snarled the Bounder. "You can make your silly voice sound as if it comes from the door—"

"My what?" asked Bunter.

"I mean your voice," said Vernon-Smith, barely refraining from kicking the fat Owl, "and you can make it sound as if it isn't your own!"

"I'm not going to put up Quelch's voice again! There was a row, and the—"

"Oh, shut up! Any old voice will do, so long as you make it say what I've told you."

"But it's rot!" said the puzzled Owl. "What's the good of saying 'Who's Nobby?' at the Form-room door? Nobby's the name of the man Lamb was phoning to yesterday—"

"That's why!"

"Well, I don't see anything in it!" said Bunter. "I'll make a wasp come buzzing, if you like! I played that once, on Quelch, and he never spotted it."

"Yes; it would be like you to make a wasp come buzzing in January!" grunted the Bounder. "Do as I tell you!"

"Well, I don't understand—"

"You're not expected to, with a brain like yours!"

"Look here, you checky beast—"

"Coming in or not?" demanded

Vernon-Smith, at the door of the tuckshop.

There was only one possible answer to that question—in the affirmative. Billy Bunter rolled in.

And, though Bunter failed to see anything in the Bounder's latest wheeze for worrying Mr. Lamb, and considered it rot, a plate of jam tarts sufficed to banish doubts and objections on Bunter's part—especially as there was a promise of a bag of doughnuts after third school, over and above!

The fat ventriloquist was sticky, but ready for action, when the bell rang and the Remove trooped to their Form-room.

The Pet Lamb looked as amiable and docile as ever when he let his Form in. He looked, in the eyes of the juniors, an ass—in his velvet coat and his hair worn longer than was customary. They were used to Mr. Quelch in cap and gown, and they thought that even an art master ought to have gumption enough not to wear a velvet coat in a Form-room. But that, of course, was in keeping with the Lamb's general fatheadedness.

Some members of the Form, however, no longer regarded the Lamb as soft, or docile, or fatheaded. The Bounder had spotted the hard nature under the soft exterior—and Harry Wharton & Co. had been driven to admit that Smithy was right in that respect.

And, though they were far from suspicious, they had to admit that what Smithy had told them of his adventure at the dugout at Sea View was very curious and very queer. It looked as if Smithy had been right, too, in his assertion that the Lamb was a man with secrets to keep—though what those secrets were the Famous Five could not guess—and did not specially want to guess, though the Bounder did.

There was a streak of catlike cruelty in the Lamb, as the chums of the Remove knew now, and their liking for him had quite faded away. They were, in fact, rather disposed now to back up the Bounder in his feud.

Yet so well did the Lamb play his part, as a rule, that it was hard to believe that it was an assumed part at all.

There was a loud bang of a desk-lid to begin third school. Bolsover major let it drop with a terrific concussion.

"Quite an accident, sir!" said Bolsover blandly, as the Lamb peered round over his gold-rimmed glasses.

"Do please be more careful, Bolsover!" bleated the Lamb. "I am afraid that you are a clumsy boy, Bolsover!"

Bang!

"Dear me! Who was that?"

"So sorry, sir!" said Hazeldene. "Quite an accident!"

Bang!

"Field, be more careful! I shall give you lines! I shall really give you lines!" bleated the Pet Lamb.

Bang!

"Upon my word! Take fifty lines, Russell! I am sorry to give you lines, but really, really, I must keep order in this Form-room! Fifty lines, Russell!"

"Thank you, sir!" said Russell; and there was a laugh.

Nobody in the Remove minded getting lines from the Lamb. He hardly ever asked for them to be shown up. Whether it was forgetfulness or good nature, the Lamb was a very easy-going man—except on rare occasions! But the fellows who had experienced the sharp edge of his temper on those rare occasions regarded him with a very distrustful eye—while to most of the Form, and to the school generally, he was "that ass Lamb."

However, the dropping of desk-lids ceased at last, and the Remove got going on third lesson—which was destined to be interrupted.

The lesson was geography, and the Lamb was telling his Form how to pronounce "Przemysl"—not an easy task—when the interruption came.

There was a sharp tap on the door.

It was caused, in point of fact, by the Bounder, who projected a small round pebble from finger and thumb, taking advantage of a moment when the Lamb's back was turned. That pebble shot like a bullet and struck the oak with a sharp tap.

But it sounded like a tap on the door from outside, and the Lamb turned towards the door.

"Come in!" he bleated.

Billy Bunter gave a little fat cough.

The Form-room door did not open. All the fellows glanced at it, wondering why it did not, after the tap! No one had observed the Bounder's action, except his chum, Tom Redwing, who was near him. So the Form, as well as the Form-master, supposed that someone had tapped at the door.

"Come in!" repeated the Lamb, in a louder key.

Still the door did not open. But a voice replied. To everybody in the Remove-room it seemed to come from the other side of that door, on which attention was already concentrated. The voice said:

"You there, Lamb? Who's Nobby?"

SIX FOR SMITHY!

MR. LAMB gave a sudden jump. His eyes seemed to pop over his gold-rimmed glasses.

On the occasion when the Remove ventriloquist had played tricks by imitating the voice of the absent Quelch, Mr. Lamb had been fearfully startled. But he seemed even more startled now.

He stood as if transfixed, staring at the door with popping eyes.

"Who's Nobby?" came the voice—a voice that no one in the Form-room could recognise. "Cough it up, Lamb! Who's Nobby?"

The Removites simply stared. Nobody but the Bounder was thinking of Bunter and his ventriloquism. And why anyone in his senses should

tap at a Form-room door and call out "Who's Nobby?" was a mystery to the Remove.

The Bouncer was watching Lamb like a cat.

He read the startled amazement in the man's face, and he read, too—he was certain that he read—fear. The Lamb was not merely startled—he was scared, if Smithy's keen eyes read his face aright.

Lamb seemed rooted to the floor for long moments. Then, with a snarling face, he rushed across to the door, and tore it open.

All the Remove looked to see who was there. But there was nobody to be seen.

Mr. Lamb stepped out of the doorway and glanced up and down the passage. Then, swiftly, he ran along to the nearest corner and looked round it—again seeing no one.

"What on earth is this game?" asked Bob Cherry. "What silly ass is playing that fatheaded trick?"

"He, he, he!"

"That fat ass Bunter!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"He, he, he!" chortled Bunter.

"Oh, my hat! The giddy ventriloquist again!" exclaimed Bob.

"I say, you fellows, did it make him jump!" chuckled Bunter. "I thought it was a rotten idea when Smithy told me—but, I say, it made him jump! I say, you fellows, I wonder who Nobby is? He, he, he!"

"Who the thump is Nobby?" asked Peter Todd.

There were six fellows in the Form who could have answered that question. Billy Bunter only knew that "Nobby" was the name Mr. Lamb had spoken to on the telephone in his study. But Smithy and the Famous Five knew that it was the name, or nickname, of the stocky man at Sea View, on the cliff road, with whom the Lamb was so mysteriously acquainted.

"Lamb seemed fearfully startled!" said Lord Mauleverer, smiling. "You shouldn't make our little Baa-lamb jump like that, Bunter!"

"He, he, he!"

"The jumpfulness was terrific!" murmured Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh.

"I guess it's the bee's knee!" said Fisher T. Fish. "I'll say it's easy to make that guy hop! Who the John James Brown is Nobby?"

"Cave! Here he comes!" whispered Ogilvy.

Mr. Lamb came back into the Form-room. He was breathing hard and quickly, and his eyes were glinting. There was no trace of the docile Pet Lamb about him now. The hard and bitter temper, generally so carefully concealed, was very plainly to be read in his set face.

He closed the Form-room door, and the juniors watched him in silence.

Billy Bunter felt a little trepidation. He was safe from discovery—Lamb had not the remotest suspicion of him. But that look on the art master's face made Bunter feel uneasy, all the same.

Lamb's eyes glinted over a silent Form.

"Someone has been playing foolish

tricks at the Form-room door!" he said, in hard, quiet tones. "I cannot allow any such interruption of lessons. Can any boy here tell me who it was?"

No answer.

"I have no doubt," said Mr. Lamb, "that some boy is out of his Form-room, and playing tricks. You all heard him call in at the door. It is, I suppose, what you would call a rag. Do you know anything of this, Vernon-Smith?"

"I, sir!" ejaculated the Bouncer, with an air of surprise. "How could I, sir? I was sitting here! I did not call in at the door."

"I am aware of that, Vernon-Smith," said Mr. Lamb, his eyes very penetratingly on the Bouncer of Greyfriars. "But I think it very probable that you have arranged this matter with some young rascal in another Form."

"I haven't spoken to any fellow in another Form to-day, sir!" answered the Bouncer.

"I have not been at this school very long, Vernon-Smith, but I have been here long enough to learn that your word cannot be taken!" said Mr. Lamb.

Vernon-Smith crimsoned.

It was true enough—the Bouncer was quite unscrupulous in his dealings with beaks. Still, it was not pleasant to hear.

"This is not the first time," went on Mr. Lamb, "that tricks of this kind have been played on me since I have been in charge of the Remove. I have no doubt that you have a hand in it, Vernon-Smith."

The Remove sat silent.

Lamb had no proof—not a spot of proof. He did not even suspect that there was a ventriloquist in the Remove. But he had put his finger on the spot, as it were, all the same. He was well aware of the Bouncer's feud; he had had a great deal of trouble with Smithy; and he jumped to the conclusion that this latest rag came from Smithy—and the conclusion was correct, as all the Remove knew.

"Will you give me the name of the boy who called in at the Form-room door, Vernon-Smith, so that I may report him to his Form-master?"

Billy Bunter quaked.

But he had nothing to fear from the Bouncer. Vernon-Smith could see that he was booked for trouble; but not to save himself from six, or sixty, would he even have thought of giving away the fat Owl.

"How can I give you the fellow's name, sir?" asked the Bouncer. "I can't see through a shut door!"

Mr. Lamb's lips set in a hard line.

"I will listen to no more prevarication, Vernon-Smith. I am convinced that you have arranged this trickery with a boy in another Form."

That was quite correct, except that the boy was not in another Form. But it was not correct in that particular.

"I have not done so, sir!" answered Vernon-Smith.

"For the last time, will you give me the boy's name?"

"I'm afraid I can't, sir."

"Very well!" said the Lamb, between his shut lips. He stepped to his desk and picked up the cane. "Stand out before the Form, Vernon-Smith!"

Smithy, breathing hard, went out from his place.

He was for it, he knew that, and he knew that cruel gleam in Lamb's eyes. He knew, too, that it was not the trick at the Form-room door, but the startling discovery that the name of Nobby was known in the school, that had roused Lamb's bitter temper. But there was no help for it—Lamb had chosen to pick on him, and Lamb was master of the Remove.

"Bend over that desk, Vernon-Smith!"

The Remove, in deep silence, watched the swishing that followed. It was severe enough; but, though there was no proof against Smithy, it could hardly be called unjust, for all the Form knew that Lamb had guessed right.

Six strokes came down hard and fast; and the Bouncer, tough as he was, could not suppress a gasp.

When it was over, he went back to his place, with set face and burning eyes. There was no more ventriloquism; the sight of the Bouncer's licking was more than enough for Billy Bunter. But the Lamb's temper did not improve.

Perhaps he suspected that others, as well as Smithy, were concerned in that peculiar rag. Or perhaps he was merely disturbed and angry. Anyhow, he was hard and sharp through third school—so unlike the Pet Lamb that the Remove fellows hardly knew him. When Bolsover major dropped a book, a rap on the knuckles that made Bolsover wriggle with anguish rewarded him, and Bob Cherry, for a whisper in class, was called out and caned. After which, the Remove were as wary as they had ever been with Henry Samuel Quelch—and they were glad enough when the bell rang and they were able to get away from that very un-lamblike Lamb.

HANDLING LODER!

"L ODER!" ejaculated Harry Wharton.

Nugent stared

After class that day, the two juniors had come up to their study.

They were surprised to find Loder of the Sixth there. They eyed him rather warily as they came in. What Loder wanted there, they could not guess; but they had had plenty of trouble with the bully of the Sixth, and did not suppose that this was a friendly call.

Loder certainly did not look friendly. His brows were knitted, and his eyes glinted at the captain of the Remove.

"Want anything, Loder?" asked Harry.

"Yes. I want the names of the Remove boys who were out of the House after lights out last night!" answered Loder grimly.

Two blank stares answered him.

If any Remove fellows had been out of bounds the previous night,

Wharton and Nugent knew nothing about it. Had they known, they certainly would not have dreamed of telling a Sixth Form prefect.

"Well?" rapped Loder.

"Was anybody out of the House?" asked Harry.

"I fancy you know!" sneered Loder. "I've no doubt one of them was you, and, in fact, I know it was."

His eyes were keenly on Wharton's face as he spoke. In the rag of last term, Wharton had been the leader, and Loder, who had given the matter a good deal of thought that day, could think of no one else who was likely. But if he watched Wharton's face for signs of guilt, he was disappointed. He read nothing there but contemptuous surprise.

"Well, if you know, it's no use asking me, is it?" said the captain of the Remove coolly. "But if you don't know, I will tell you that I never left my bed till rising-bell this morning."

"Then who was it?" demanded Loder.

"Nobody, that I know of! If I knew I shouldn't tell you. You've no right to ask a fellow to inform on another fellow. But I don't know anything about it—and I don't believe anybody was out of the House."

"That won't do!" said Loder. "If it was not you, it was some other young rotter in your Form! You'll give me his name, or you'll take the licking yourself—and you can take your choice about that!"

Loder slipped his ash down into his hand.

Harry Wharton stood looking at him steadily.

Loder, as a prefect, had whopping privs. If he whopped not wisely, but too well, that was a matter for his own judgment. But there was a limit to even a prefect's power and privileges; and Loder was stepping over the limit now. And the captain of the Remove was the fellow to tell him exactly where he got off.

"I shall not give you any name, Loder, and I shall not take a licking!" said Harry Wharton, very distinctly. "Got that clear?"

"Will you tell me who was out of the House after lights out?"

"I don't know; and if I knew, I wouldn't tell you!"

"That will do! Bend over that table!"

Loder was fairly sure that he had got his man—or, at the very least, that Wharton knew who the man was. In either case he was going to hand out a swiping six, as a reward for what he had gone through the previous night.

But Harry Wharton did not bend over the table. He stepped to a corner of the study and picked up an Indian club that stood there.

Loder watched that proceeding in angry amazement.

"Did you hear me?" he rapped.

"Yes, I heard you!" answered Harry. "I won't bend over the table, and if you like to report me to the Head, I'll go to him with pleasure and ask him whether a rotten bully is allowed to whop fellows just as he pleases."

"A—a—a what?" stuttered Loder.

"A rotten bully!"

Loder made a stride towards him, gripping the ash. He did not intend to take Wharton to the Head to report him for disobedience to a prefect's order. Punishment without proof or a jot or tittle of evidence might be good enough for Gerald Loder, but it would hardly have done for the headmaster. It would have been more likely to cause Dr. Locke to dispense with Loder's services as a prefect!

BOB CHERRY tells of Coker's Common Sense!

THE other morning Frank Nugent and I were walking along the Beaks' Grind—which is the common name for the path under the study windows. Parts of the school are being redecorated, and a ladder was resting against the school wall. On top of the ladder a workman was painting the window-frames.

"Hold on!" said Franky, as we were about to pass under the ladder. "I don't like the look of that pot of green paint balanced up on the window-sill. Safer to give it a wide berth." So we walked round the ladder instead of under it.

Coker, of the Fifth, came up at that moment. Old Horace stared at us with a heavy frown, and raised his hamlike hand.

"What do I see?" he asked dramatically.

"Eh?" I was puzzled.

"What do I see? Two silly young idiots being superstitious. You can't deny it! You took all the trouble to walk round that ladder."

"Guilty, my lord!"

"Don't you know," asked Coker, with curling lip, "that superstition is the sign of a weak mind? Savages are superstitious because they don't know any better, but any fellow with a scrap of common sense knows it's all rot. By going round that ladder," declared Coker, "you publicly admit that your brains are weak. You show the world that you've no common sense."

"Do we?"

"Can't you see that you do? If you spill salt, I suppose you throw some over your left shoulder. If you break a mirror, I dare say you think you're in for seven years' bad luck. That's the sort of footling rot you fags believe! I'm ashamed of you!"

"Don't say that, Coker."

"Ashamed of you!" bawled Coker. "Any fellow with a grain of sense knows better than that. Silly little idiots! Well, I'll walk under the ladder, and you can see for yourselves if any bad luck comes to me."

Coker walked disdainfully under the ladder.

And, at that moment, the pot of paint overbalanced and came down.

On Coker's head!

Well, I mean, if a fellow WILL ask for it—!

Loder was taking this into his own hands. If Wharton did not bend over the table, he was going to take him by the collar.

At least, that was his intention. But he stopped his advance quite suddenly, as Wharton swung up the club.

"Stand back, you bully!" snapped Wharton.

"Put that down!" roared Loder.

"You handle that cane, and I'll handle this club!" said the captain of the Remove coolly. "I mean that, Loder."

"I'm backing you up, old chap!" said Nugent. And he picked up a ruler from the study table.

Loder paused a moment. He was exceeding his powers—as Loder often did. He dared not take such a matter to the headmaster. But even if he had felt disposed to retreat—which he did not—he could hardly have backed down before the defiance of Remove juniors.

"I've ordered you to bend over, Wharton!" he snapped.

"You can order till you're black in the face!" retorted the captain of the Remove.

"Will you or not?" roared Loder.

"Not!" answered Wharton tersely.

That was enough for Loder! He rushed, lashing out with the ash. It was not going to be six now—it was going to be such a whopping as Wharton would remember till the end of the term—if Loder got by with it. He was not going to be startled out of his wits in the middle of the night and have his head jammed in snow for nothing!

But Loder had not got by with it yet!

The Indian club jammed on his waistcoat with terrific force. At the same moment Nugent's ruler rapped on the hand that held the ash with a loud crack!

Loder gave a roar and staggered back. The ash dropped from his hand, and he sucked his knuckles frantically.

"Oh!" gasped Loder. "Oh! Ow!"

Harry Wharton promptly kicked the ashplant out into the passage.

"That's that!" he said. "You'd better go after your ash, Loder! Get out of my study!"

Loder stood sucking his knuckles, with a face of fury.

The two juniors watched him, ready for another attack.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" came a roar in the doorway. "What's up?"

A dozen Remove fellows were coming along the passage to see what was up.

Bob Cherry stared into Study No. 1. "Loder playing the goat!" answered Harry. "The fool fancies that some Remove man was out of bounds last night, and that he can find him in this study."

"Silly ass!" said Johnny Bull.

Some of the fellows in the passage looked round at Herbert Vernon-Smith.

If any Remove man had been out of bounds, it was most likely the Bounder. But Smithy, for once, had a clear conscience. He laughed.

"Are you getting out, Loder?" asked Harry. "You're not wanted here, you bully!"

Loder's answer was a spring, rather like that of a tiger.

The Indian club banged again, but this time it did not stop Loder. He grasped the captain of the Remove with both hands. The next moment he yelled with anguish, as Nugent's ruler cracked on the side of his head.

Thump, thump, thump!

Loder had lost his ash. He thumped instead, and Wharton gasped under those hefty thumps from a Sixth Form senior. He drove his fist under Loder's chin with a force that made the senior's head spin, and wrenched himself loose.

Loder staggered, and Nugent hooked his leg as he staggered, and the bully of the Sixth went over on his back. He landed with a terrific bump on the carpet in Study No. 1.

"Ooooh!" spluttered Loder.

He sprawled and gasped for breath.

Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull and Hurree Singh pushed into the study. They were ready to lend aid in handling the bully of the Sixth. But Loder was not in a hurry to be handled again. He lay on his back in a dizzy and breathless state, gasping.

"I say, you fellows!" came a fat squeak from the passage. "Here comes Lamb!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Ware beaks!"

"Look out, you fellows!"

It was not much use the fellows in Study No. 1 looking out. The uproar had drawn a master to the scene, and they had to face him.

Loder was still sprawling on his back, Harry Wharton standing panting for breath, when the Lamb's gold-rimmed glasses gleamed in the doorway, and the master of the Remove looked in.

"What is all this?" bleated the Lamb. "You can be heard all over the House! What is this disturbance?"

Loder staggered to his feet.

LODER GETS BY!

MR. LAMB glanced from one to another.

The juniors stood silent.

They were in the right, if it came to that, but handling a Sixth Form prefect was a fearfully serious matter, all the same.

Loder spluttered for breath.

"Loder!" exclaimed Mr. Lamb. "What are you, a prefect, doing here? What is all this about?"

Loder was in an awkward position. He could hardly explain to a Form-master that he had been going to whop a junior on bare suspicion. The bully of the Sixth wished himself well out of the study! But it was too late to wish that, and Loder had to explain somehow.

"I came here to question Wharton, sir!" he answered. "In—in fact, to give him six for breaking out at night."

The Lamb started.

"Breaking out at night!" he ex-

claimed. "Is it possible? That is a very, very serious matter, Loder! Wharton—"

"It is not true, sir!" said Harry Wharton. "I never left my dormitory last night. Loder seems to think that someone did, that's all. He has no right to suppose that it was I."

The Lamb stepped into the study. His face hardened. Faces in the passage grew serious. It was clear that the Lamb was going into this.

Breaking out at night was, of course, a serious matter. It was not surprising that the Lamb took it very seriously.

But the Bounder, as he watched him, wondered sarcastically whether the Lamb had any private reason of his own for getting his teeth into this!

Smithy had not forgotten that mysterious incident of the Lamb's window opening at midnight, and his suspicion that Lamb had been intending to leave the House quietly in the night for some unexplained reason. If such were the Lamb's manners and customs, it was certain that he could not want Greyfriars fellows breaking out at night—at the risk of running into him on one of his mysterious excursions!

Certainly the Lamb looked grim enough. For whatever reason he was going into this, he was going into it deep.

"This must be explained!" said Mr. Lamb, and his voice was very sharp. "If a Remove boy has been out of the House at night, I shall deal with the matter very severely. You are sure of this, Loder?"

Loder hesitated a moment. But his bullying temper had placed him in a position from which there was no escape.

After all, he told himself, he was sure! It was some Remove ragger who had handled him last night—most likely Wharton, or, at any rate, some of his pals. Loder had to stretch a point to save his own bacon.

"Yes, sir!" he answered. "It was certainly Wharton."

The captain of the Remove looked at him. He could see that Loder believed it—or, at least, convinced himself that he believed it. But he was making a false statement to get himself out of a scrape, and Wharton's lip curled with contempt as he looked at him.

"When did you see this boy out of the House, Loder?" asked the Lamb, in a dangerously quiet tone.

"It must have been near midnight, sir!" answered Loder. "I heard a noise in the quadrangle, and guessed that someone was out of the House, and came out to look."

That was the best Loder could do to explain the fact that he had himself been out of the House! Certainly he could not explain that he had been on his way back from the Cross Keys, where he had backed Blue Peggy with Bill Lodgey!

"And you found Wharton?" asked Mr. Lamb. His eyes turned on Harry, with a cold, hard gleam in them.

"I was suddenly seized in the dark, sir, and tipped over," said Loder. "I

think there must have been more than one of them. I am certain that one was this boy, Wharton."

"That is a lie!" said Harry Wharton coolly.

Loder's face became almost livid.

"Wharton!" rapped the Lamb. "How dare you use such an expression to a prefect of the Sixth Form?"

"I have said that it was a lie because it was a lie, sir," answered Harry. "I dare say Loder thinks it was I, but he cannot be sure, for he cannot have seen who it was, or he would know that it was not I."

"Do you deny having been out of the House?"

"Certainly I do!"

"You are sure of what you have stated, Loder?"

Loder could hardly say that he was not. He was committed to it now! He was sure enough, anyway.

"Yes, sir," he answered. "There is no doubt whatever about the matter!"

"That is decisive," said Mr. Lamb. "You may leave this matter in my hands, Loder. Kindly hand me your cane!"

Loder stepped out of the study, picked up the ash, and handed it to the master of the Remove.

Half the Remove were crowded round the doorway now, and they looked on breathlessly.

Harry Wharton's lips were set.

"I have told you, sir," he said, "that Loder is not telling the truth. I was not out of the House!"

"I am afraid, Wharton, that I cannot listen to you," said Mr. Lamb. "I am bound to act on the positive statement of a prefect. You will bend over that table, Wharton!"

"I tell you—"

"I have said that I cannot listen to you, Wharton! I am, I hope, a mild master—indeed, I have been considered too mild. My colleagues in Common-room have told me so more than once. But such a matter as this I am bound to deal with severely. You might be expelled for this, Wharton. No doubt it was only for what you call a rag that you left the House—"

"I did not leave the House."

"No doubt it was with more or less harmless intentions," continued the Lamb, as if Wharton had not spoken. "I do not suspect you of bad conduct—only of a thoughtless act, which, however, you must learn not to repeat."

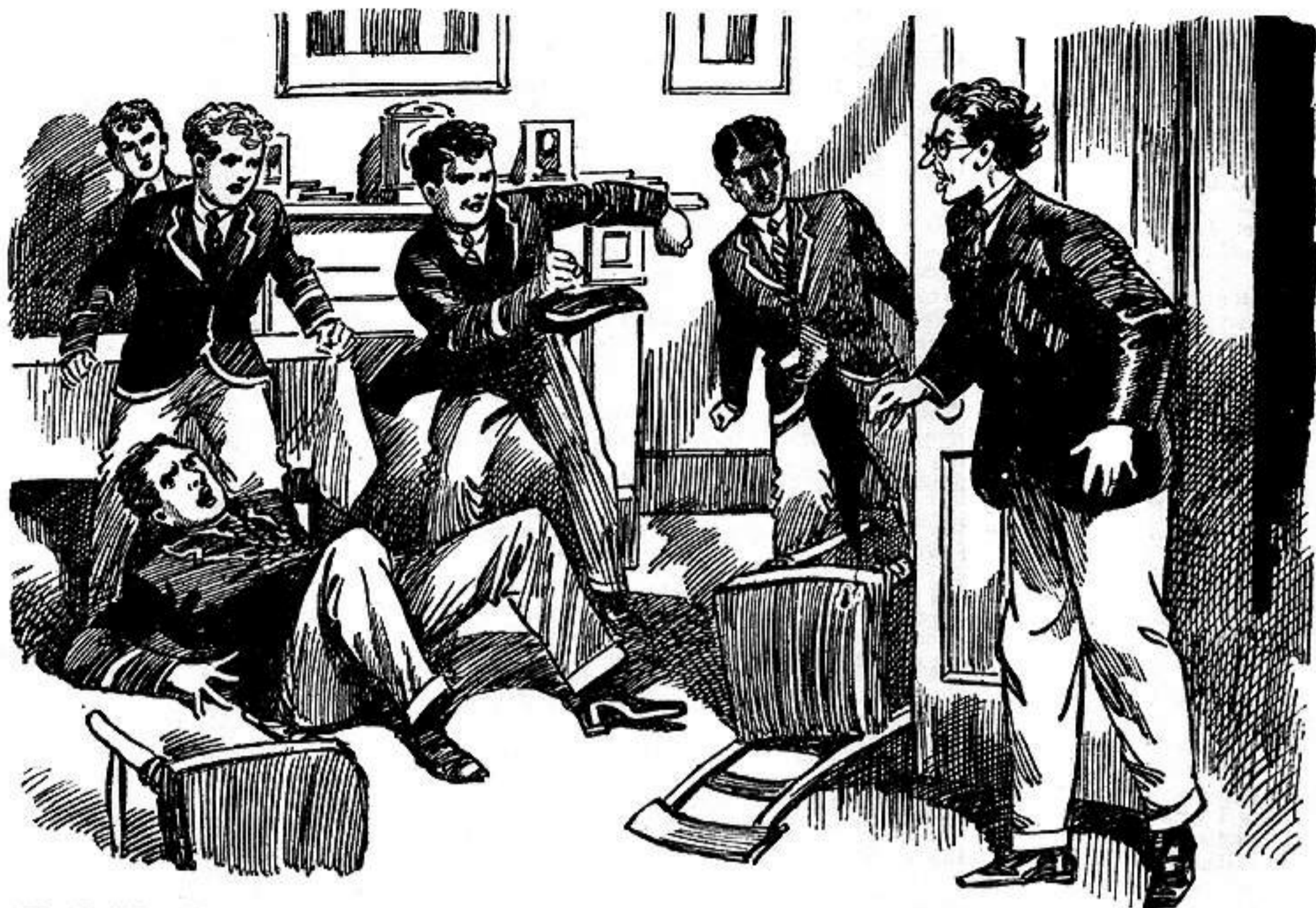
"I did not!"

"I have told you to bend over that table, Wharton! You appear to have resisted a prefect's authority—I trust that you will not think of resisting that of your Form-master. If you are so ill-advised, I shall take you to your headmaster with a request that you shall be immediately expelled from the school for rebellion against authority! I am waiting, Wharton!"

Harry Wharton drew a deep, deep breath.

Loder had lied! Nevertheless, Lamb was bound, as he had said, to act on a positive statement from a Sixth Form prefect. And resistance to the authority of a Form-master meant expulsion from Greyfriars.

In silence, his face pale with rage,



The Pet Lamb's eyes opened wide at the sight of Loder sprawling on his back and Harry Wharton standing over him with clenched fists and panting for breath. "What is all this about?" he bleated. "I came here to give Wharton six for breaking out at night!" spluttered the prefect.

the captain of the Remove bent over the table.

A breathless crowd looked on as the Lamb laid on six—with a hard and heavy hand.

Loder, from the doorway, watched the punishment, not wholly with satisfaction. He was certainly glad to see that cheeky young rascal going through it; but he was not quite satisfied with his own proceedings in the matter. Loder had some sort of conscience.

There were six swipes in the study that sounded like pistol-shots. Then Mr. Lamb handed the ashplant back to Loder.

"Thank you!" he said.

Loder walked down the passage, with his ash under his arm.

There was a hiss in the Remove passage as he went.

"Silence, please!" said Mr. Lamb. "Let this be a warning to all of you—I shall deal with anything of this kind in the most severe manner." His glance dwelt for a moment on Herbert Vernon-Smith. "Take warning from this, Wharton, and all of you—any recurrence of such conduct will be dealt with with the greatest severity."

And Mr. Lamb walked out of the study and followed Loder of the Sixth down the staircase.

Harry Wharton stood leaning with one hand on the table, his face white.

"Rough luck, old chap!" mumbled Bob.

"The roughfulness is terrific," murmured Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"I—I suppose the Lamb believed that cad, Loder," said Nugent.

"Did he?" jeered the Bounder. "I fancy he didn't care much. He's going to take jolly good care that nobody breaks out at night, if he can. He's got his reasons!"

"That cur Loder!" Harry Wharton choked. "He was lying—he knew he was lying! It's what happened last term that put it into his head! He was lying, the cur! By gum, I'll make Loder sorry for this somehow!"

"And we'll jolly well help," said Johnny Bull.

Frank Nugent shut the door of Study No. 1. There was tea in that study, but it was not a happy tea! Four fellows sat down—one preferred to stand. And there was one topic over tea—it was agreed that Gerald Loder had to be made to sit up for his sins, and the only question was—how?

SOLVING THE PROBLEM!

"I SAY, you fellows—Ow!"

Billy Bunter came into the Rag with a woebegone, fat face and a fat paw pressed to a fat ear.

Apparently, that fat ear had a pain in it.

"I say—ow! Wow!" continued Bunter. "My ear—wow! That beast Loder—Wooh! Wow!"

"Loder?" said Harry Wharton, looking round.

It was the following day, and most of the Remove were in the Rag after class. The Famous Five, in a group, were discussing a matter of deep interest to them—their "state of

war" with Gerald Loder of the Sixth Form.

Loder was going to get that for which he had asked—that was settled. But so far the chums of the Remove had not discovered how.

After the lapse of twenty-four hours, Loder probably regarded the matter as over and done with. He was going to discover, sooner or later, that it was by no means over, and far from done with. But how remained as yet a problem.

"The beast pulled my ear!" moaned Bunter. "Fancy pulling a fellow's ear—my ear, you know! Wow! Beastly bully! Wow! Wow! As if I'd listen to a chap talking to a—Wow—wow!"

"You fat frog!" growled Bob Cherry. "Serve you jolly well right if Loder caught you spying!"

"I wasn't!" roared Bunter. "How could I help hearing what he said to Walker when I had stopped to look out of the window? If they choose to talk while a fellow's looking out of a window just behind them, it ain't my fault, is it, you beast? And he pulled my ear!"

"I hope he pulled it hard!" remarked Johnny Bull.

"Beast!"

Bunter rubbed that fat, suffering ear, and moaned! It seemed that Johnny's hope was well founded—Loder had pulled it hard.

"I've a jolly good mind to go to the Head and give him away!" said the fat Owl! "Only perhaps the Head wouldn't believe it of a prefect! I

wonder what the Big Beak would think of a Sixth Form man—a prefect, too—breaking out at night? Wow!”

“Breaking out at night?” grinned Vernon-Smith. “By gad! Lamb would like to hear about that!”

“Well, Lamb ain’t his beak!” said Bunter. “Besides, he mightn’t believe me. Lamb’s rather a cad! He’s often doubted my word—just like old Quelch, you know! Ow! Loder saw me suddenly, you know, and made out I was listening to him and Walker. Of course, I wasn’t! I never heard a word they said, and if I did, I suppose a fellow can stand in a passage and tie up his shoe-lace if he likes.”

“You found out that Loder’s breaking out at night without hearing a word they said?” asked the Bounder.

“Ha, ha, ha!”

“Well, he jolly well is, anyhow!” hooted Bunter. “He told Walker that Blue Peggy had let him down. I don’t know what he meant by that!”

“Ha, ha, ha!” roared the Bounder. “I fancy Blue Peggy is a gee!”

“Oh!” said Bunter. “I see! Shady rotter! He said he had to see Lodgey, and he was going to-night! Ow! Wow! Then he spotted me, and I never heard any more—not that I was listening, you know. Not the sort of thing I would do! I should think that a fellow can stop to pick up a pencil without a fellow suspecting a fellow of— Wow! Wow!”

“Bunter’s got wonderful ears!” remarked Skinner. “He hears all sorts of things without listening!”

“Ha, ha, ha!”

“Beast!”

Billy Bunter rolled to an armchair and plumped therein, mumbling and rubbing that fat ear. Bunter seemed to expect sympathy—but he did not receive very much! Loder was a bully and a bit of a blackguard, but nobody blamed him very much for pulling a fat ear that had been listening surreptitiously.

The Famous Five resumed their discussion, heedless of the indignant fat Owl.

Vernon-Smith had a very thoughtful expression on his face. He came over to the group by the window.

“Got it yet?” he asked.

“Got which?” inquired Bob Cherry.

The Bounder grinned.

“Think I don’t know what you’re conflabbing about? If you haven’t got it yet, I’ll give you a tip!”

“Go it, Smithy!” said Harry Wharton at once. “We’re going to make that lying cad Loder sit up, and if you can help—”

“You heard what Bunter said?”

“Blow Bunter!” grunted Johnny Bull.

“Don’t be an ass!” said Vernon-Smith. “This is the chance of a lifetime. You can’t handle a prefect without asking for the sack—except in very special circumstances.”

“What circumstances?” asked Nugent.

“Such as copping him out of bounds late at night!” grinned the Bounder. “Think Loder would kick

up a row if we got him out of the House in the middle of the night?”

“Oh!” exclaimed Harry.

“He might take it out of some of us afterwards,” said Vernon-Smith, “but that needn’t worry us a lot—he does that, anyhow! May as well have the game as the name.”

Harry Wharton nodded.

“Loder spun a yarn of hearing a noise and going out to see what it was,” continued Smithy. “He had to say something! I know jolly well that he was out of bounds himself—that’s why he was out of the House at the time.”

“I—I suppose so!” agreed Harry. “I hadn’t thought of it, but I suppose it’s plain enough really.”

“The plainfulness is terrific!” agreed the Nabob of Bhanipur, with a nod of his dusky head.

“If we get him, it’s O.K.!” said the Bounder. “I’ll come—it will be no end of a lark! Somebody seems to have ragged Loder last time he went on the tiles, and he put it down to the Remove, and got you a whopping from Lamb. Well, let it be the Remove next time, what—little us?”

“What-ho!” said Bob.

“He fancied, last time, that some of us got down from the dorm and laid for him in the dark,” said Smithy. “Well, this time some of us will! What?”

“Smithy, old man, you’re the right man on the right spot!” said Johnny Bull. “This is where we come in, you fellows!”

There was a general nodding of heads. The Bounder’s happy suggestion solved the knotty problem. Obviously Loder, if he was caught out of the House late at night, could not come the prefect!

“Easy as falling off a form,” said Nugent. “We know how he goes out, the dingy worm! The Sixth Form lobby is only a step or two from his study—that’s where we caught him last term.”

“That’s the spot!” agreed Harry Wharton. His eyes gleamed. “By gum! All we’ve got to do is to get down from the dorm and wait outside that door—”

“And grab him as soon as he’s outside!” said Bob.

“Once he’s outside, we’ve got him!” said Nugent. “If he kicks up a row and wakes the House—”

“Catch him doing it!” said Smithy. “Whatever happens to him, he will want to keep quiet! That yarn he spun Lamb was pretty thin—think he could spin the same thin yarn twice? Loder won’t want to have to explain to the Head what he was doing out of the House at night.”

“Hardly!” grinned Bob.

The Bounder’s eyes were dancing. This was a scheme in full accord with the reckless nature of the scapegrace of Greyfriars. And—in the circumstances—the Famous Five were as keen as the Bounder.

“Loder’s got to have a lesson,” went on Smithy. “There’s an old sack in Gosling’s wood-shed—”

“What?”

“It had coke in it once,” said Smithy. “Bit grubby, I fancy, but good enough for Loder! We have

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that sack ready and slip it over his head—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"And tie a rope round it!" said the Bounder. "Then we leave him to enjoy his night out! What?"

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Bob Cherry. "We can't leave Loder out of doors all night in January."

"Why not?" said the Bounder coolly.

"Well, there's a limit, old bean! But we can jolly well leave him in the lobby! When they find him in the morning, he can explain what he was doing there—if he wants to! I fancy he will keep it as dark as he can!"

"I'd leave him out—"

"Oh, rats! You wouldn't! But we'll jolly well park him in the lobby and leave him to be found in the morning! Trotter will find him, and I'll bet he will tip Trotter to keep it dark!"

"Bet he won't dare say a word!" said Johnny Bull. "If the Head knew him as we do, he would be sacked! He wouldn't risk it!"

"That's that!" said Harry. "He may think twice next time, before he accuses a fellow and tells lies to back it up! Loder's going through it this time, in a way he won't forget in a hurry!"

And, at the idea of Loder of the Sixth passing the night in a sack in the lobby, and tipping the page to keep it dark when he was found, the juniors chuckled loud and long.

Loder had asked for it—begged for it—and Loder was going to get that for which he had asked, and begged—and the chums of the Remove charitably hoped that it would be a lesson to him!

WATCHERS OF THE NIGHT!

"**W**AS that—"

"What—"

"I thought I saw something!" said Harry Wharton.

"Too jolly dark to see anything!"

"Quiet!"

It was dark—black as a hat! It was bitterly cold—a freezing January night!

For the darkness and the cold, the six fellows who were out of the House cared nothing. But there were other things for which they had to care—the penalty for getting out at night was severe. And as Harry Wharton fancied that he saw a shadow stir in the dark, the whole party came to a halt, peered round, and listened.

Six beds were empty in the Remove dormitory. Six fellows had dressed quietly and left the dormitory without waking any of the rest of the Form. One by one, they had slipped out at the window of the Remove box-room—left unfastened for their return.

Now they were stealing quietly round the school buildings in the dark, heading for the spot where they were going into action.

Smithy had a folded sack under his arm—it had been parked in the box-room ready. Bob Cherry had a coil of cord over his wrist.

If Loder of the Sixth emerged from

the Sixth Form lobby that night, he was going to be thoroughly sorry, for once, that he disregarded the rules that, as a prefect, he was so keen to enforce.

"Nothing!" said Nugent, at last, as there was no sound from the shadows. "Come on!"

And the six trod softly on their way.

They were very wary of beaks and prefects, or of old Gosling prowling about. But certainly it did not

Another

PARODY by PENFOLD

THE SLAVE'S DREAM!

BESIDE the unpolished boots
he lay,
Far down the kitchen
stair;

His eyes were closed in slumber
sweet,
For nobody was there
To see our page-boy's inky face,
Our Trotter's grimy hair.

Wide through the landscape of
his dreams
His favourite heroes stride;
There's Six-gun Sid of Grisly
Gulch,
With his cannon at his side,
Spurring his mustang o'er the
plains
Where the Roughstuff Rustlers
ride.

He changes into a pirate barque
With the sign of the Skull and
Bones.

"Hamstring the dogs!" shouts
Blackcap Bert,
In harsh and sinister tones.
The cannons roar, and the
Spanish ship
Goes gliding to Davy Jones.

Then Hickson Hawk, the famous
sleuth,
Comes prowling on the scene,
Investigating all the clues
In the Case of the Bloodstained
Bean!
And runs the criminal down to
earth
With the ease of an oiled
machine.

So Trotter dreams, and pays no
heed
To the house-dame's angry
shout,
Till Mrs. Kebble comes to see
What the stupid boy's about.
Then Trotter wakes, and his
carhole's red
From a swift and sudden
clout!

occur to them that John Robinson, the Head's new chauffeur, was likely to be abroad in the dark night. They did not even remember the existence of John Robinson.

As they crept on, they did not know that a dark shadow stalked them. Neither had they any idea of the exasperated feelings of Ferrers Locke—again interrupted in his watch by Greyfriars fellows getting out at night!

"Here we are!" murmured Bob.

The darkness was deep by the door-

way of the Sixth Form lobby. It was half-past ten, and most of Greyfriars was asleep in bed. But if lights still burned they were hidden in the black-out.

That Loder, if he went, would go by the door of the Sixth Form lobby. The juniors had no doubt. He had been caught doing so once, and it was the quickest and easiest way out and in for a Sixth Form man.

Naturally, it did not occur to them that, after the happening on Thursday night, of which they knew nothing, Loder had decided to give that door a wide berth, in case of another such happening.

In point of fact, if they had only known it, Gerald Loder was making quite different plans.

But they did not know that, and naturally did not guess. They gathered in the deep gloom by the lobby door.

The Bounder unrolled the sack and opened the neck of it, all ready for Loder. Bob loosened the coil of cord in readiness.

"Let's hope he won't be long!" murmured Nugent. "It's a bit parky out here."

"The parkiness is terrific!"

"May have to wait till eleven," said the Bounder. "Loder has to be jolly careful at this sort of game! He would be sacked like a shot if he was spotted."

"Pity he isn't!" grunted Johnny Bull. "The sooner the blackguard is kicked out of Greyfriars the better."

"Well, he's going to be sacked—though not by the Head!" chuckled the Bounder. "We're jolly well going to sack him—with this sack."

And there was a chuckle.

"Somebody must have larked with him, last time he got out!" said Bob Cherry. "I wonder who it was?"

An unseen figure, lurking in the dark, and listening to every whispered word, could have answered that question. But Ferrers Locke made no sound.

There was a faint smile on the face of the Baker Street detective.

He knew now who the bunch of fellows were, and he knew why they were there. He had hoped that the lesson he had given Loder would keep the black sheep of the Sixth from breaking out again at night. It had not had that effect; for it was clear that these juniors knew that Loder was getting out again—and were going to rag him when he did!

In which Ferrers Locke had no desire to intervene. The more Loder of the Sixth was dissuaded from getting out of the House at night, the better it was for the plans of the Baker Street detective.

Having satisfied himself as to what was going on, John Robinson glided away silently, to take up his vigil in other quarters—leaving the juniors in happy ignorance that anyone had been near them at all in the darkness.

They waited.

It was cold, it was dark, it was not comfortable. But they waited patiently till eleven o'clock.

There was no sound—the door had not opened. Nothing had stirred.

"By gum," murmured the Bounder at last, "if that fat idiot Bunter got it wrong, I'll jolly well scrag him tomorrow."

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Bob. "This is a nice time of day to think of that, Smithy!"

"Doesn't seem as if he's coming!" mumbled Johnny Bull. "Still, he might be late—"

"The lateness is better than the neverfulness!" remarked Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"Stick it out!" said the Bounder.

"We're going to stick it out!" said Harry Wharton quietly. "Anything might have delayed the cad—he has to be jolly careful! I'm not going before midnight, anyhow, if we have to wait as long as that."

"Good for you!" said the Bounder.

It was weary waiting—and the cold seemed to grow more and more bitter as the night grew older. And there was no doubt that they were sleepy. The minutes seemed to crawl.

But they were determined! They had not expected to have to wait so long; but they were going to wait till Loder came, or, at least, until they had to give up hope of Loder coming! Having set their hand to the plough, as it were, they were not going to turn back.

It was possible that the fat and fatuous Owl of the Remove had got it wrong—though they did not think so. It was more likely that Loder had some reason for being specially cautious, and was leaving it late. Wingate might be still up, and the black sheep afraid to pass his door till he turned in. Anyhow, they were going to wait.

Certainly they did not guess that Loder had a reason for choosing another mode of exit, and still less, that while they were waiting there, the black sheep had left the House by a back window—as ignorant of their watch on the lobby as they were of his departure.

And still less did they guess that, as midnight approached, the sportsman of the Sixth had returned, coming nowhere near the spot where they waited; that he had climbed in again at that back window, and had now gone to bed. Not the faintest suspicion of that crossed their minds, as they waited with grim patience at the lobby door.

Midnight passed.

"I—I say—" whispered Bob Cherry, stilling the chattering of his teeth. "I say, think he can be coming?"

"It's frightfully late!" muttered Nugent. "Look here, you fellows, if Loder's given it up for the night—"

There was a rather dismal silence. If Loder was not coming it was obviously useless to wait there longer in the cold. On the other hand, it was fearfully annoying to have waited so long for nothing—especially with the knowledge that, if they went, Loder might emerge a minute after they were gone!

"Blessed if I know!" said the Bounder at last. "What do you think, Wharton?"

"Blessed if I know, either!" said Harry. "I—"

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He broke off suddenly as there was a sound in the silence of the winter night.

Every heart beat. The sound came from the lobby door, and it was the sound of a key that turned back softly and stealthily.

SACKED!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. stood silent, still.

It was so dark that they could hardly see one another, and the doorway of the lobby was pitch black. Only their ears told them that the door was opening, and the sound was so faint that they would not have noted it had they not been listening intently.

In the blackness a blacker patch loomed—hardly visible, but evidently a figure that had stepped silently out. The door closed, and there was a faint snap as it locked again.

Another moment and the dark figure would have been gliding away in the night.

But in that moment the Bounder made a swift movement. He had the sack already raised, the neck open—and with instant quickness he slammed the open neck of the sack over the head of the half-seen figure at the door.

There was a sudden gasp of startled affright—shut off by the sack as it descended and enveloped the figure. A clink sounded sharply as a key dropped on the stone doorstep.

Five pairs of hands, almost at the same moment, were laid on the figure struggling in the sack—for the struggle began on the instant. Within the enveloping sack the prisoner was wrenching wildly.

But he had no chance—not a spot of a chance. The sack, so suddenly and unexpectedly slipped over his head, descended to his knees. The juniors were gripping it all round him. His head, his shoulders, his arms, were all imprisoned in the sack, rendering him helpless.

"Got him!" breathed Bob Cherry.

"You bet!" chuckled the Bounder.

They had got him, there was no mistake about that! Never had anyone been so efficiently and completely got!

Muffled gasping came from within the sack. The Bounder coolly jammed the sacking close over the face inside to stifle a yell, if the prisoner thought of yelling.

Loder of the Sixth could not want to wake the House and call general attention to the fact that he was out of bounds at midnight. But in the alarm and excitement of the moment he might do what he did not want to do—and Smithy took care that he didn't. Whatever might happen to Loder if he was spotted, it was certain that severe trouble would happen to juniors discovered out of the House at midnight. There was not going to be any alarm by Loder—intentional or unintentional.

Only a faint gurgle came through the thickness of the sacking, as Smithy jammed it on the unseen face.

"The cord!" whispered Smithy.

The struggle in the sack was furious. Thick and strong as it was, it almost seemed as if the sacking would be wrenched asunder by the desperate, frantic efforts of the prisoner within. Even sacked as he was, the juniors had plenty to do to hold him.

They would never have guessed that Gerald Loder was so hefty.

Not for a moment did it occur to any of them that this was not Gerald Loder. They had been waiting for Loder—and someone in the dark had come creeping stealthily out of the door where they waited for Loder. Who else could it be—who but Loder? Not a doubt crossed their minds.

Bob Cherry whipped the cord round the sack, and knotted it round the knees of the prisoner inside. Then he whipped another length of it round the arms that were wrenching within, and if the prisoner had had any chance of bursting the sacking, that put paid to it.

"Safe as houses!" murmured Johnny Bull.

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

"It was worth waiting, after all!" said the Bounder. "We've got him—got him where we want him!"

"Shove him in!" said Bob.

Harry Wharton turned on a spot of light and picked up the dropped key. He unlocked the lobby door and pushed it open.

The sacked figure was lugged into the lobby, and the captain of the Remove shut the door and locked it on the inside. There was no need for the raiders to go round the House again and climb in at the window of the Remove box-room. They had a shorter cut home now.

The sacked figure lay wriggling on the floor, in the dark. The Bounder was no longer holding the sack close over the prisoner's mouth. If Loder liked to yell now, he could—the raiders could get clear before anyone came. But no yell came from within the sack.

The Bounder gave a low chuckle.

"Dear old Loder doesn't want to wake the House!" he murmured. "On second thoughts, he'd rather not bring the beaks and the prefects here, to ask him why he went out to hear the chimes at midnight."

And the Famous Five chuckled, too.

They could quite understand that the prisoner in the sack, as soon as he got his wits back after the first shock, was as keen as themselves on keeping quiet.

There was too much to be explained if the whole affair came to light. He knew—he must know—that he was the victim of a rag, but he could not have the faintest idea who the ragers were. Probably he hoped to squirm out of the sack and get away when he was left to himself.

At all events, there was no sound from the interior of the sack, except that hurried, breathless gasping. There were two or three holes in the old coke-sack, over the prisoner's face, and his gasping was plainly heard. But there was no other sound from him.

"Think Loder will be a bit grubby

when he gets out of that, in the morning?" asked the Bounder.

There was a gurgle of merriment. The interior of an old coke-sack could not have been very clean! It was highly probable that the prisoner would be more than a bit grubby when he emerged at last.

"Come on!" said Smithy. "We're through here."

"Hold on a minute!" said Bob.

Ho turned on a flash-lamp.

The juniors grinned at the wriggling sack at their feet.

Bob, who was always considerate, hooked down two or three coats that were hanging in the lobby, and threw them over the sacked figure. It was a cold night!

"Like to put a pillow under his dear little head?" asked the Bounder sarcastically.

Bob grinned.

"Why not?" he answered; and he folded another coat and shoved it under the head in the sack.

"Now kiss him good-night on his baby brow!" jeered Smithy.

"Fathead!"

"Come on, you ass, if you're through!"

The juniors moved away, with a speck of light to guide them.

Harry Wharton paused a moment at the inner door of the lobby, and looked back. But he set his lips hard. Loder did not deserve compassion. He had lied—he had made a false charge and stuck to it, and even yet the captain of the Remove could feel the twinges of that six in Study No. 1!

Lamb had been a brute; but it was all due to Loder and his lying! He deserved what he had got, and more, and he could take what came to him!

Harry Wharton followed his comrades, and the sacked figure was left in the lobby.

Softly and silently, the six juniors trod through a sleeping House, and ascended the staircase to the study landing. There five of them waited, while one cut away to the Remove box-room to refasten the window.

Then they crept quietly up the second staircase to the dormitory.

All was silent when they entered.

Wharton closed the door with hardly a sound.

Quietly, they threw off their clothes in the dark.

"Mum's the word!" said the Bounder. "We're rather late to bed—but I can tell you fellows, I shall be up at the first tinkle of the rising-bell—I'm fearfully keen to see dear old Loder again!"

And the Remove raiders chuckled and turned in.

THE MAN IN THE SACK!

"L ODER!"

Six fellows uttered that name all at once. Six fellows stared, in puzzled astonishment.

Those six fellows had turned out at the first clang of the rising-bell in the winter morning. They were first down of the Remove.

Naturally, they were keen for news of Loder. Trotter, they supposed,

must have found him already—and released him—it was practically certain that the House page would be the first to find him. After his uncomfortable night in a sack, Loder, they supposed, would be in a fearful temper—all the more fearful because prudence would restrain him from

making public what had happened. But now—

There was Loder, walking in the quad with Walker of the Sixth. Nothing seemed to be the matter with Loder!

Certainly he did not look like a fellow who had been through it to such an extent as the Removites supposed. He was chatting with Walker as he walked—obviously not in the least in a perturbed state.

They gazed at him.

That surprised stare of six pairs of eyes caused Loder to take notice. He glanced at the juniors—and then stared at them. Clearly, he did not know what was the cause of their fixed and concentrated interest in him.

He gave them a frown, and walked on with Walker.

He left them dumbfounded.

Nothing had happened to Loder. It was perfectly plain that nothing had happened to Loder! That fact leaped to the eye! Yet, in the dark of the night they had collared Loder—or somebody—and headed him up in a sack! It made the juniors feel quite dizzy.

"Oh gad!" breathed the Bounder.

"It—it must have been Loder!" stammered Bob. "We got him all right."

"We got him in the sack!" muttered Nugent.

"He doesn't look it!"

"By gum—he doesn't!"

"We—we expected him to keep it dark; but—but—but he was bound to show some signs of it!" said Harry Wharton. "He couldn't carry it off like that if—if—if—"

"But it was the esteemed and ridiculous Loder!"

"It must have been! But—"

"We never saw who it was!" breathed Johnny Bull. "But nobody else could have been sneaking out like that on tiptoe in the middle of the night."

"One of his pals going, instead, perhaps—" muttered Smithy.

"Oh crumbs!"

"Was that it? But—"

"Blessed if I make this out!" said Bob. "Whoever it was, he jolly well deserved what he got for getting out at night; but, dash it all, it must have been Loder! Only—only it looks as if it wasn't!"

The chapel bell rang, and the school went in for early prayers.

Six fellows in the Remove looked over the Sixth Form with interest—wondering whether it was some pal of Loder's who had got that sack by mistake in the dark.

But all the Sixth were present; and none of that Form showed any unusual signs of perturbation. Only one person was missing at prayers that morning, and that was a master—Mr. Lamb.

"Well, it beats me!" said Bob Cherry, when the juniors came out into the quad again. "We got somebody—"

"We did!" grinned the Bounder. "Whoever it was, we got him all right! No doubt on that point, my beloved 'carers!"

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COME INTO THE OFFICE, BOYS AND GIRLS!

AN interesting letter, and one I really must answer this week, comes from Robert Young, of Exeter. Apparently, "Bob" thinks he has caught me out. He asks: When was Greyfriars founded? He says that he has read that it was founded in 1716, and yet he has read a story about Greyfriars in 1657! Curiously enough, both statements are correct. Greyfriars, as it now stands, was founded in 1716. It was originally used as a school for poor but studious boys, whose parents could not afford to have them educated, in 1551. Fifty years later an extensive college was built for gentlemen's sons. The only reminders we have of the original building are now in complete ruin.

The next letter comes from Charles Woburn, of Reading, whose praises regarding the *MAGNET* are indeed highly flattering. He writes me to say how he wishes the Old Paper could be published at least twice a week, and then goes on to say: "I would never tire of reading stories of Harry Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars."

I wonder if my chum is aware of the fact that a spanking fine 65,000 words story of these popular chums appears in the "Schoolboys' Own Library" every month?

And now for two

RAPID-FIRE REPLIES

to readers' queries.

What Has Happened to "Kipps"? ("Conjurer," of Cornwall).—Kipps, the conjurer, is still at Greyfriars, and going strong! I shall endeavour to get Mr. Frank Richards to introduce him again in a later story.

Who is the Best "Fighting" Man in the Greyfriars Remove? ("Sportsman," of Shropshire).—Bob Cherry.

I suppose you are all wondering what I have in store for you next week. Well, you'll certainly enjoy:

"THE JAPER OF GREYFRIARS!"

By Frank Richards,

the next yarn in our grand series featuring the mysterious Mr. Lamb. "Crooked as a corkscrew" is Vernon-Smith's opinion of the new Remove master, and the Bounder of Greyfriars is more determined than ever to carry on his feud and make the Lamb sick of the Remove. As to what actually happens in this exciting yarn I leave you to learn in due course. Believe me, chums, you'll find it a real top-notch!

Cheerio until next time,

YOUR EDITOR.

"But—but who—" stammered Nugent.

"Let's ask Trotter!" suggested Bob Cherry, at last. "It must be Trotter who found him—we can catch Trotter after brekker—"

The Famous Five went in to breakfast in a distinctly worried mood. Who was it that they had collared and sacked in the dark? More and more it was borne in upon their minds that it was not, as they had never dreamed of doubting, Loder of the Sixth.

After breakfast they looked for the House page.

Trotter was found, and beckoned into the Rag—vacant in the morning. Bob shut the door.

Vernon-Smith opened the proceedings by dropping a half-crown into Trotter's willing palm.

"We want you to tell us something, Trotter," said Harry Wharton.

"Yessir!"

"And we want you to forget that we asked you!"

"Eh!"

"Mum's the word!" explained Bob Cherry.

Trotter grinned.

"Yessir," he answered.

"Did you find anything out of the common in the Sixth Form lobby this morning?" asked the Bouncer.

Trotter jumped.

"Oh!" he gasped. "Oh, Master Vernon-Smith, was it you? Oh dear! Don't you say anything, sir—Mr. Lamb was terribly angry, sir—"

"Lamb needs't worry," said Johnny Bull. "He's got nothing to do with it. Look here, Trotter, did you find somebody in a sack?"

"Yessir!" gasped Trotter. "I was that surprised, I almost fell down, sir, when I saw him! Wriggling in the sack, he was! And he wasn't too pleased, either, when I got him out! I don't think he liked anybody seeing him like that! Never so much as said 'thank you,' he didn't! Just glared, and rushed off as soon as he got out of the sack—"

"It wasn't Loder?"

"Eh? No!"

"That settles it!" said Smithy. "Of course, we don't know anything about this, Trotter—you understand that—"

"Oh, Master Vernon-Smith!"

"But we've got a sort of idea that some fellows thought they were heading up Loder of the Sixth in a sack!" said Smithy. "If these fellows made a mistake in the dark—and it seems that they did—we're rather curious

to know whom they got! Who was it?"

"Mr. Lamb, sir!"

"What?"

Six fellows gasped.

"Mr. Lamb, sir!" said Trotter. "And I can tell you he was wild!"

"Lamb!" moaned Bob Cherry.

"Oh, my hat! Lamb!"

"Forget that we asked you about it, Trotter!" said Harry.

"Yessir; you rely on me, sir!" said Trotter, and he went out of the Rag, leaving the Removites gazing at one another.

The Bouncer's eyes glittered. He, at least, was not sorry to hear that it was the Lamb who had been sacked. And, after the first shock, he was no longer surprised. It seemed to crystallise all his vague but deep suspicions of the art master of Greyfriars.

"The Lamb!" he said, between his teeth. "I suspected it before—I was jolly sure—now we know! The Lamb sneaks out quietly at night! Why? I told you he was a man with secrets to keep! But now—what?"

"What can it mean?" said Harry Wharton. "What—"

"I'm going to know!" said the Bouncer. "There's something fishy about that sportsman—too jolly fishy, and I tell you, I'm going to know."

Mr. Lamb was not seen by the Remove till he came to let his Form into the room for first school. And in the Remove room that morning he was not the mild and docile Lamb the Removites knew. Quelch in his sternest mood had never been anything like what the Lamb was like that morning. Hacker, who was called the Acid Drop, had never been like it! The Lamb's bitter, savage temper was rather an eye-opener to the Greyfriars Remove that morning; and only six fellows in the Form knew the reason. And it was a comfort to those six that the Lamb's eye did not specially single them out!

"I say, you fellows," squeaked Billy Bunter, when the Remove went out in break. "I jolly well wish Quelch was back! Fancy any fellow wishing Quelch was back, you know! But I can tell you I jolly well do!"

And, for once, all the Remove were in agreement with Billy Bunter!

THE END.

(Special for next week: "THE JAPER OF GREYFRIARS!" Don't miss it, chums!)

"MAGNET" PEN PALS

A free feature which brings together readers all over the world for the purpose of exchanging views on matters of mutual interest. If you wish to reply to a notice published here you must write to the Pen Pal direct. Notices for publication should be accompanied by the coupon on this page, and posted to the MAGNET Pen Pals, Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

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G. Parkin, 8, Barr Lane, Staincross, Barnsley, Yorks; 13-15; films, books, and general topics; anywhere.

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E. Brown, School Hill, Walton-le-Wolds, nr. Loughborough, Leics; 13-16; France and the British Isles.

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D. Bridges, 36, Whatley Road, Clifton Bristol; 14-16; photography, drawings, films, and classical music; anywhere.

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PEN PALS' COUPON
27-1-40

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All applications for Advertisement Space in this publication should be addressed to the Advertisement Manager, The MAGNET, The Fleetway House, Farringdon St., London, E.C.4.

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do a song and a dance like other fellows!"

Whack!

"Whoo-ooo-hooooop!"

The Famous Five grinned. Bunter was doing a song and a dance—a song on his top note and a perfectly frantic dance. He seemed to have forgotten his advice to the Famous Five on how to stand a whopping. He danced, he pranced, he bellowed, and he roared.

Whack, whack, whack!

"Oh crickey! Oh crumbs! Will you leave off, you beast?" roared Bunter. "I'll go to Quelch—I mean Lamb—I'll go to the Head—I'll—Yaroooh!"

Whack, whack, whack!

Whack, whack, whack!

Whack, whack, whack!

Whack, whack, whack!

Whack, whack, whack!

Whack, whack, whack!

Whack, whack, whack!

Whack, whack, whack!

Whack, whack, whack!

Whack, whack, whack!

Whack, whack, whack!

Whack, whack, whack!

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Whack, whack, whack!

Whack, whack, whack!

Whack, whack, whack!

Whack, whack, whack!

Whack, whack, whack!

Whack, whack, whack!

Whack, whack, whack!

Whack, whack, whack!

Whack, whack, whack!

Whack, whack, whack!

"Ow! Wow! Yow! Yow! Yow! Yow!" "Dash it all, a whopping's only a whopping, Bunter!" said Harry Wharton. "What about taking it like a man?"

"Ow! Yow! Yow! Yow! Yow! Yow!" howled Billy Bunter. Evidently Billy Bunter's good advice was of no use to himself. Billy Bunter was making more fuss than the Famous Five all put together—about ten times as much.

That Slim Jim was still in the vicinity was known—at least, once a week his activities were traced. Under what name—under what outward aspect—he passed, no one knew or could guess—unless Ferrers Locke had at last put his finger on a clue. It was upon Mr. Lamb, the art master of Greyfriars, that his suspicion was fixed—and yet he had to admit that the circumstances that had led him to fix his attention upon Lamb, though worth following up, were far from clear or certain.

And yet—

That night last week when Lamb had opened his window at midnight, what had been his intention? If it had been to leave the House by that window, he had given it up when Vernon-Smith had played his reckless trick of tossing a bundle of fireworks in at the window. Since that night the Baker Street detective had watched many nights—in vain.

If the man was Slim Jim, one alarm of that kind was enough for him. He would never use that window again as a mode of egress. The remotest chance of being observed would stop that. But if he was indeed the mysterious cracksmen who worked with a masked face, he had to leave the school at night. By what window or door, among hundreds?

Only patient waiting and watching could answer that question. But the Baker Street detective was patient. His patience had been unrewarded, so far—but it was, at length, to be rewarded. For as he moved, silent as a shadow in the darkness, a faint sound came to his ears in the gloom, and he knew that it was the sound of a stealthily opened door.

Locke stood quite still, his heart beating for a moment. Then he moved quickly.

It was a quarter-past eleven, and someone was leaving the building. Swiftly, but silently, the Baker Street detective moved in the direction of the sound. He guessed—and soon he knew—whence it had come—the door of the Sixth Form lobby, which opened on to the quad. He heard the sound—soft but unmistakable—of that door closing again, and glimpsed a dark muffled figure that moved away from it.

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in the gloom—but his ears were equally keen, and they were on the strain.

Slim Jim might believe, as he did believe, that the Baker Street detective had abandoned the case of the kidnapped Form-master. But Mr. Quelch, in the prison dugout, had guessed more correctly. Ferrers Locke was very far from having abandoned the case. But whether he was on the trail, as Mr. Quelch hoped, the detective could not be sure.

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That muffled figure moved away quickly in the dark. Locke followed silently.

Who it was—whether man or boy—he could not tell in the dark. It was not, at all events, a junior, like that reckless young rascal who had spoiled everything by his trick with the fireworks at Lamb's window. The figure was at least as tall as Lamb's—it seemed a trifle taller, if anything. It was impossible to make a guess at its identity.

Locke followed silently.

The muffled figure headed for masters' gate, near the big gates. To that private gate, masters and prefects at Greyfriars had keys. Lamb, as a master, had a key. And whether the muffled figure was Lamb's or not, he was going to that gate.

Locke heard a click. The gate had opened and shut. Whoever it was, he was now outside in the road.

There was no click as Ferrers Locke opened and shut the little gate in his turn. The detective had a key.

Outside, all was dark. But Locke's ears told him what his eyes could not see, and in another moment he was following that muffled figure through the dark.

If it was Slim Jim, the direction he was taking was unexpected. It was Friardale Lane, which led to the village and to the cliff road beyond.

Locke would have expected Slim Jim to head for the town of Courtfield, or for one of the wealthy mansions in the neighbourhood. But he followed.

If this was Lamb, he was going to know Lamb's business outside the school in the dark hours of the night. If it was Lamb—and if Lamb was the mysterious masked cracksmen—Slim Jim was going to crack his last crib that misty night—and the rescue of the kidnapped Form-master would follow the arrest of the kidnapper.

At a little distance from the school, the muffled figure, hitherto cautious, seemed to neglect caution. He made no further attempt to move silently—and Locke was easily able to pick up the sound of his footsteps on the frozen earth of the lane.

Apparently, the muffled man was heading for the village—where there certainly was no crib worth Slim Jim's while to crack. But he stopped before he reached the village at the gate of a building a little back from the road.

No gleam of light came from that building; but Locke knew the Cross Keys—a far from savoury resort.

The muffled figure moved up the lane beside the inn, stopped, and tapped at a side door.

Locke, with a feeling of disappointment growing in his heart, stood in the darkness and watched.

Was this Slim Jim? Was he there to meet some confederate in secret? For it was certain that the man of mystery had confederates. Was he there to hand over the loot of his last midnight raid to other hands? Locke watched in silence.

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The Famous Five were wriggling very painfully when Billy Bunter came up the Remove staircase. "Brace up, you fellows!" said the fat junior broadly. "I shouldn't make a fuss about a licking! Take it in your stride, you know!"

Whether Loder's tummy was all right again or not after the shock of the morning, it was clear that his temper was not all right. Forgetting the immemorial rule that six was the limit, he whacked and whacked and whacked, and Billy Bunter bellowed and bellowed and bellowed.

Loder seemed tired at last—though not so tired as Bunter. Breathing hard after his exertions, he tucked his ashpant under his arm and went down the staircase. He left the Owl of the Remove uttering frantic sounds of woe.

"Brace up, old fat man!" advised Bob Cherry.

"Yaroooh!"

"If you knew how funny you look, wriggling like an eel—"

Frank Nugent.

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"You'd laugh!" grinned Johnny Bull.

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