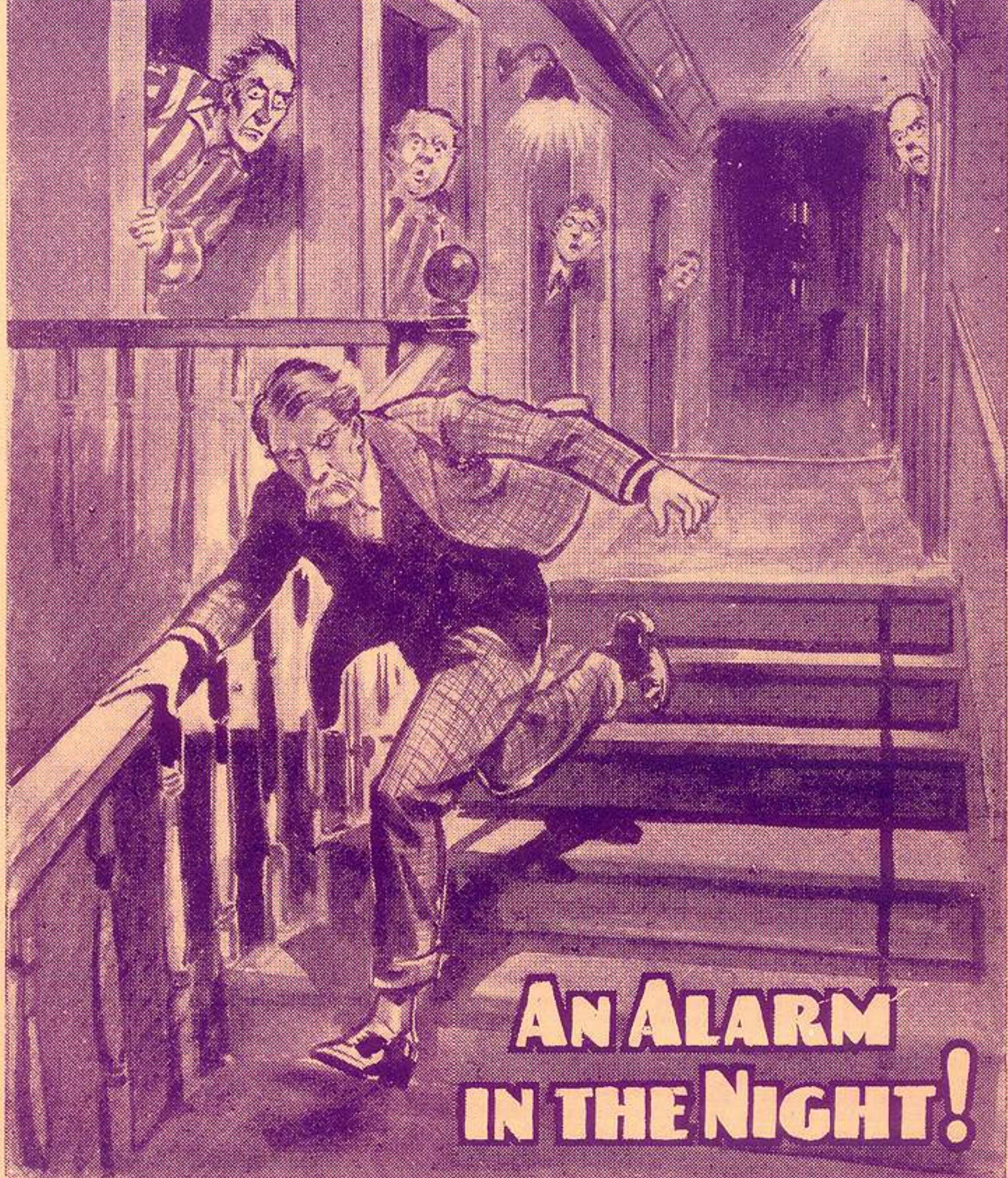


THE
MAGNET

GREYFRIARS FORM-MASTER WAYLAID IN BLACK-OUT!

SEE
INSIDE.

The Magnet ^{2^D}



**AN ALARM
IN THE NIGHT!**



The GREYFRIARS HERALD

EDITED BY HARRY WHARTON



FISH FOILED BLACK-OUT— AND WAS HE SURPRISED?

By PETER HAZELDENE

FISHER T. FISH hustled into the Rag the other evening, grinning all over his hatchet face and rubbing his bony hands together with glee.

"Where's all the guys who been yawpin' for torch batteries?" he asked. "I guess I've solved their problem—some!"

"Mean to say you can get batteries?" yelled Bolsover major incredulously.

"I'll say I got batteries—and I don't mean maybe," answered Fishy. "I guess I'm acceptin' orders right now—cash only. You takin' six?"

"What's the idea?" asked Bolsover suspiciously. "Some profiteering dodge?"

"Nope. Shop prices only—as controlled by your own Government. A guy can't say fairer than that, I guess. Who's buyin'? Don't all speak at once!"

"Look here, Fishy, we know jolly well you're no more able to get batteries than anyone else," said Wharton. "If you really have a supply then there are only two possible answers to it—either they're pinched or they're duds!"

"Waal, I swow! An' that's the gratitood I get for tryin' to do you galoots a turn," said Fishy, disgustedly. "My batteries are the goods, I'll tell the world! Every one brand noo, and full of juice. You got my word for it—ain't that enough?"

"Not exactly," smiled Wharton. "Where did you get them?"

"Right from the factory at Lantham. I made a pal of a guy who works there, an' he let me have some—see? Who wants?" finished up Fishy, brandishing his notebook and pencil.

"Put me down for three flat ones, then," said Bolsover major. "If they're duds I'll jolly well whop you!"

"O.K. with me, bo!" grinned Fishy; but it was noticeable that his grin was a somewhat wry one.

Orders soon flowed in, each order accompanied by a hair-raising threat about what would happen if the batteries were not all that Fishy claimed for them.

Fishy was pleased at the rush of orders, though at the same time he wore a slightly anxious look. Most of his customers had a feeling that he was selling them old batteries warmed up, and there was general agreement that if their suspicions proved well founded Fishy would be

warmed up even more than the batteries.

But when the batteries were dished out the fellows were pleasantly surprised. They were all obviously new and unused.

The strange thing about it was that Fishy made himself scarce as soon as he had fulfilled his orders—just as though he was afraid of complaints.

A crowd of well-satisfied customers found him barricaded inside Study No. 14. When they banged on the door Fishy gave them a defiant yell.

"Say, you guys, you travel! If those batteries ain't the goods, I guess you can put it down to the war!"

"But they are the goods!" roared Bolsover major through the keyhole. "They're jolly fine batteries, and we'd like more if you can get 'em!"

Fishy unlocked the door and looked out. He was quite pale.

"Mind sayin' that over again?" he asked.

Bolsover major said it—and proved his words by flashing his torch.

Fishy was knocked all of a heap—literally. He collapsed into a chair quite faintly!

It was not till the following day that we found out why. Then a haggard-looking citizen turned up for Fishy, and was heard to tell him that a ghastly mistake had been made.

Instead of sending Fishy the consignment of used batteries he had ordered, he had accidentally sent him new ones!

For all we know, the two conspirators are still arguing over what's going to be done about it. In the meantime, the Remove are once more using their torches!

THIS WAR'S TOO TOUGH FOR TEMPLE!

Says DICK RAKE

SPARE a thought, my 'earers, for the war-time sufferings of the Upper Ten!

To chaps like you and me, unused to the luxuries of life among the gilded rich, patriotism costs next to nothing. We can be as patriotic as we like without the slightest inconvenience.

It's a very different thing to be patriotic when you're a really posh person. If you want to know what I mean, ask Temple!

To this aristocratic ornament of the Upper Fourth, the war has been a non-stop record of hardship and self-sacrifice.

The first blow was petrol ration-

ing. Temple had to get used to doing without his pater's Rolls on half-holidays. Just imagine a chap like Temple having to spend "halfers" without a Rolls at his command! Awful!

Was Cecil Reginald dismayed? Not he!

"It's part of the price we have to pay, by gad!" he told Dabney and Fry. "An' it's jolly well worth it to get rid of that frightful outsider Hitler. What?"

Dabney and Fry supported the motion with a hearty "Oh, rather!"

Then came the news that his pocket-money was going to be reduced. Instead of receiving fivers at frequent intervals, Temple was told he would have to make shift on a fiver now and again.

If the shock caused Temple to sag at the knees, it was not for long. He gritted his teeth and clenched his fists, and told Dabney and Fry he meant to endure it without complaint.

Shock followed shock in violent succession, and Temple took it all with indomitable fortitude. The exquisite bath-salts he used were no longer obtainable; with scarcely a flicker of an eyelid, Temple bought an inferior article. At home in the hols., he could no longer follow the hounds. He repressed a shudder and went for a cycle ride instead.

As he confided to Dabney and Fry, a fellow had to take hard knocks and keep his chin up at a time like this. Dabney and Fry duly remarked: "Oh, rather!"

Of course, there are limits.

Recently, Temple was told that the elegant silk ties with which he adorns his person were running short and might not be replaced. He was visibly shaken.

"Still," as he told his faithful henchmen, "one can hardly expect things to go on just the same durin' a war like this."

D. and F. made their helpful comment.

But I think it's the last straw now. I spotted him yesterday staggering out of his tailor's shop in Courtfield, looking as white as a ghost. Dabney and Fry were holding him up to prevent him collapsing in a lifeless heap on the pavement.

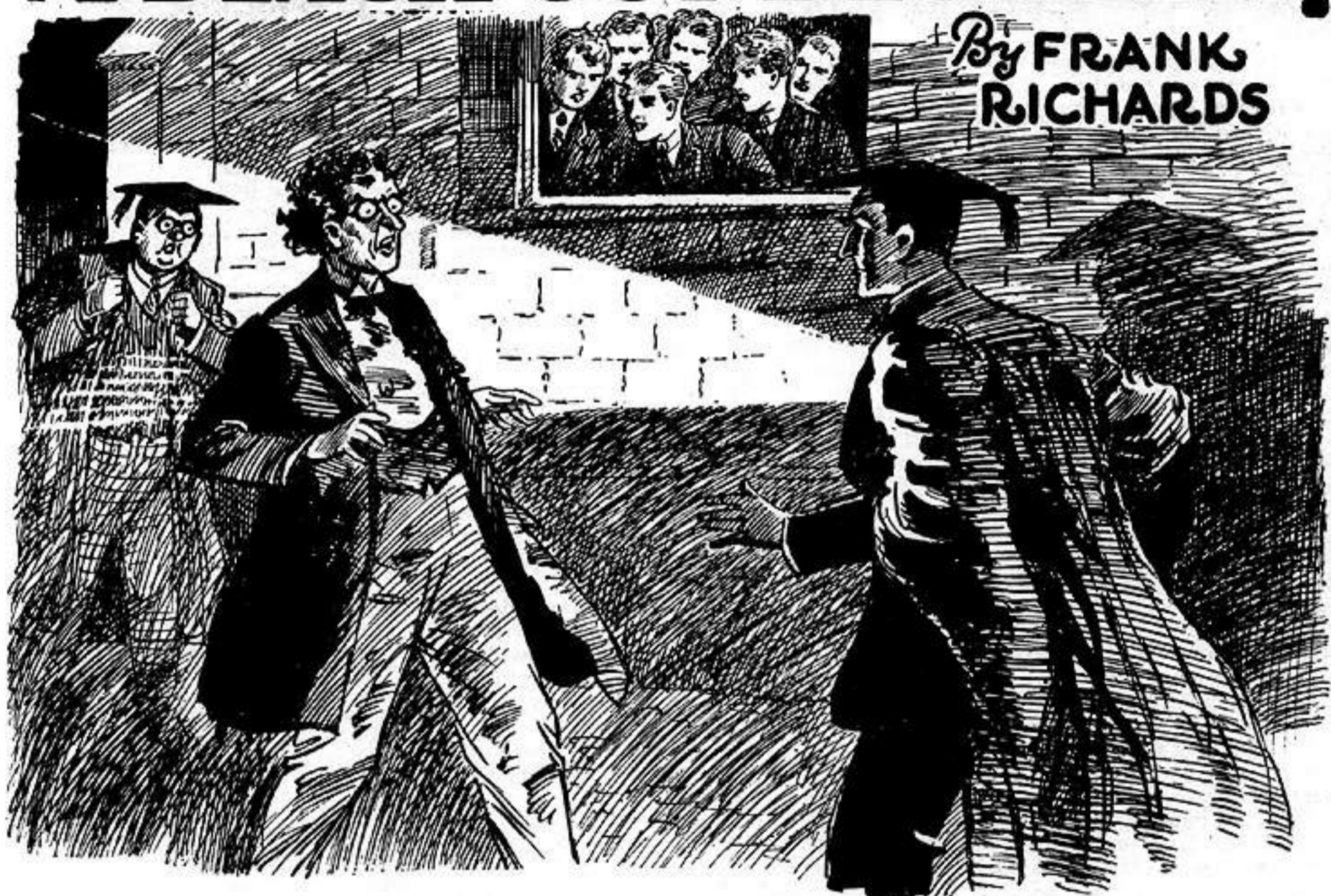
The tailor, I learned afterwards, in breaking the news that he was winding-up the business, had just told Temple that luxury tailoring was shortly to be abolished in favour of standard suits for all—and in doing so he shattered all Temple's stern resolution.

Cecil Reginald has put up with a lot, but when it comes to standard suits he is going to find the war just a trifle too tough.

DONE IN THE DARK! SOMEONE HAS LAID VIOLENT HANDS ON A GREY-FRIARS MASTER IN THE BLACK-OUT! WHO CAN IT BE?

A BLACK-OUT BLUNDER!

By FRANK RICHARDS



COKER ASKS FOR IT!

"SHAN'T!" said Coker.

It was not dignified. It was not really worthy of a Fifth Form man of Greyfriars School. It was such a reply as a fag in the Second Form might have made to another fag.

But Horace Coker, at the moment, was not thinking of dignity. Coker was angry and excited. His rugged face was red. He glared defiance at Wingate of the Sixth, the captain of Greyfriars, as he hooted "Shan't!"

And there was a buzz of excitement from about twenty fellows in the Rag!

It was raining out of doors. That was why most of the Remove had gathered in the Rag after third school. Leapfrog was going on round the big table, when Coker of the Fifth stepped in.

Fellows had to do something. Lord Mauleverer was content to lounge elegantly in an armchair. Billy Bunter was content to get as close to the fire as possible, and concentrate on a stick of toffee. More strenuous fellows required something more strenuous. Bob Cherry started the leapfrog going—Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent, Huree Singh and Johnny Bull, joined up—and a dozen Remove fellows followed suit. And there was some noise—which was inevitable.

Had Mr. Lamb or a Sixth Form prefect, looked in and said: "Less

The gleam from the flash-lamp revealed the Lamb's face, red with rage. It revealed his clothes smothered with mud. "I was suddenly seized—overthrown—struck!" gasped the Form-master.

noise there!" to hear would have been to obey.

But when Coker of the Fifth looked in and said "Less noise there!" the juniors heard, but did not dream of obeying.

Coker of the Fifth was nobody.

In his own estimation, Coker was somebody, if not, indeed, everybody. To the Removites he was nobody—less than nobody, if possible. Instead of ceasing leapfrog at Coker's behest, the Famous Five shouted, with one voice:

"Get out, Coker!"

And Herbert Vernon-Smith backed up that injunction by buzzing a cushion at Coker, catching him on his rugged nose.

Even Billy Bunter left off chewing toffee, for a second, to squeak defiance at Coker. For a Fifth Form man to throw his weight about in the junior room was quite intolerable. No Remove man was going to stand it;

HARRY WHARTON & CO.,
of GREYFRIARS, in Another
Exciting School Adventure.

for one moment. Everyone was anxious to tell Coker where he got off.

Leapfrog continued, while Coker rubbed the nose on which Smithy's missile had impinged. Then Coker, grasping the cushion, swept it right and left among the leapfroggers.

After which there was not "less noise there," as Coker had directed, but a great deal more. Leapfrog stopped—and the leapfroggers piled on Coker. The din became quite deafening. It was no wonder that Wingate of the Sixth stepped along to the Rag to put a stop to it.

Harry Wharton & Co. released a dusty and dishevelled Coker, as the Greyfriars captain stepped in. Coker stood spluttering and gasping. Wingate rapped at him:

"Get out of this, Coker!"

It was then that Coker made the retort which electrified the Rag. Glaring defiance at the captain of the school, Coker hooted "Shan't!"—at the top of a powerful voice.

Even Coker, at a calmer moment, would have realised that he could not hoot "Shan't!" at a Sixth Form man who was not only captain of the school, but head prefect—a great man who was, in the general estimation,

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only a little less important than the Head himself!

But Coker was not calm. He was angry, exasperated, and indignant. He was at boiling-point. He boiled over!

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"Ain't Coker the man to ask for it?" murmured Smithy.

Wingate stood staring at Coker. He seemed hardly able to believe his ears. Nobody had ever said "Shan't!" to the captain of Greyfriars before. Coker was making history.

"What did you say?" ejaculated Wingate, at last. "I told you to get out of this, Coker! What the dickens do you mean by coming here and kicking up a shindy in the junior room?"

That question, of course, only added to Coker's wrath.

Coker had not come there to kick up a shindy. He had come there to see that the fags made less noise. Coker, for some reason known only to himself, fancied himself as a man having authority, saying "Do this!" and he doeth it! It never even occurred to Coker that he was an obstreperous, interfering ass! This, well known to the rest of Greyfriars, was hidden from Coker!

"Don't be a fool!" said Coker.

"Wha-a-t?"

"A fool! The fags were kicking up a row! I came in to stop them! Now you know!"

Wingate gazed at him.

"Has the Head made you a prefect, by any chance, without happening to mention it to me?" he inquired.

"If that's meant for sarc, you can pack it up!" retorted Coker. "Don't you butt in, Wingate! That's all! Don't butt in!"

"Coker, you ass!" breathed Harry Wharton.

"Draw it mild, Coker!" advised Johnny Bull.

"Shall we chuck him out, Wingate?" asked Smithy.

"I'd like to see anybody chuck me out!" said Coker. "I'm going to whop you for buzzing that cushion before I go, you young sweep!"

"I've told you to go!" said Wingate.

"And I've said I shan't!" retorted Coker. "So you can put that in your pipe and smoke it!"

"Do you want to bend over and take six?" asked Wingate.

"Don't be an idiot!" was Coker's reply to that.

Coker could not quite see himself bending over and taking six from a prefect's ash. The mere idea was ludicrous, to Coker.

It was true that Fifth Form seniors, just like Lower Fourth juniors, were liable to bend over at a prefect's command. But it practically never happened. Coker could not imagine it happening to his lofty self.

Wingate drew a deep, deep breath.

There were Sixth Form prefects who rather funk'd Coker. Coker was so big, and burly, and brawny, and so unthinking and obstreperous, that some of the prefects preferred to leave

him alone. Loder of the Sixth had often been tempted to exercise his whopping privs on Coker, but the burly Horace was quite likely, in a state of angry excitement, to push Loder's nose through the back of his head if he did!

Coker, certainly, would have been expelled for such an exploit. But that would not have restored Loder's nose to its proper place. So a prefect like Loder treated a fellow like Coker with tact.

Wingate was made of sterner stuff. He raised his hand.

"Get out of this room at once, Coker!" he said. "Go to my study to be whopped!"

"Don't be a goat!" said Coker.

"Are you going?"

"Haven't I said no?"

That did it!

Big and burly as Horace Coker was, he crumpled up in the grip the Greyfriars captain laid on him. How and why he flew through the doorway, Coker never knew!

But he did! He went out of the Rag with his arms and legs flying in the air, and landed in the passage with a tremendous bump.

"Oh!" roared Coker as he landed.

Wingate followed him out. The doorway was packed with breathless juniors looking on. The Greyfriars captain glanced down at the sprawling, breathless, gasping Coker.

"I'm going to my study!" he said.

"I shall expect you there, Coker!"

Wingate walked away.

Coker sat up.

He was feeling jarred by that bump on the old oak. He tottered to his feet. He rubbed various spots that had established contact with old oak planks. He gurgled for breath. He gave the sea of faces in the doorway of the Rag a glare. But he did not return to the attack. Perhaps he realised that twenty fellows were rather long odds. Or perhaps that bump had taken some of the ginger out of Horace.

He moved away.

But he did not go in the direction of the Sixth Form studies. He went to the stairs, to go up to his own study.

"Coker, old man!" called out Harry Wharton. He was feeling quite concerned for the reckless Horace. "Wingate's waiting for you!"

Coker did not answer that.

He tramped away up the staircase and disappeared.

Evidently, Horace Coker was going to disregard Wingate's order as a trifle light as air.

Such an order could not be disregarded. Coker, if he disregarded it, had to go up to the Head to be sacked. But these considerations, clear to everybody else, were not clear to Coker's solid and impenetrable brain. Coker tramped away to his own study, regardless—leaving the juniors in a buzz of excitement.

SMITHY IN A SCRAPE!

"SMITHY!"

"You ass!"

"Get out of sight!"

Three members of the Famous Five exclaimed together.

The rain had stopped after dinner, and Harry Wharton & Co. were getting a spot of fresh air in the quad. They were sauntering along the path by the Form-room windows when they sighted Herbert Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars.

The chums of the Remove were, at the moment, discussing Coker. The great Horace was a general topic.

It was known that he had not gone to Wingate's study to take six, as commanded to do. Since then, at dinner, Coker had been seen at the Fifth Form table, with a grim expression on his rugged face, which hinted at anything but surrender. Wingate, at the high table where the prefects sat, had taken no notice of him.

But the captain of Greyfriars could not, of course, let the matter drop. Everybody—except Coker—knew that.

Whether Coker had yet been reported to the Head, whether he was booked for a painful interview with Dr. Locke, nobody knew. The matter, it seemed, was in abeyance at present. Wingate was well known to be a good-tempered and good-natured fellow, and it was likely that he was giving Coker a chance to come to his senses, as it were. But it was certain that Coker either had to take that whopping or go up to the Head before the day was out—and everybody was curious to know what the upshot was going to be.

But the Famous Five forgot Coker as they spotted Smithy of the Remove.

Smithy's head and shoulders appeared at the window of the Remove Form-room—in the act of getting out.

It was some fresh move in his campaign against Mr. Lamb, the art master. Smithy had set himself the task of making Mr. Lamb sorry that he was taking the Remove in the absence of Mr. Quelch—and in that task the vengeful Bounder was tireless.

He gave the five faces below the window a sneering glance.

"Don't yell," he said sarcastically, "I don't want half the school to see me getting out of this window!"

"You utter ass!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "We passed Lamb a minute ago—he's coming this way! Get back—quick!"

"Oh!" ejaculated Smithy.

He disappeared from the window in a flash.

Mr. Lamb was the very last person he desired to see him getting out of that window, considering how he had been occupied in the Form-room.

Harry Wharton & Co. looked back anxiously along the path. Lamb was coming that way, but, as yet, a corner of the building hid him. They had been in time to give the Bounder warning.

A few seconds more and Mr. Lamb appeared round the corner, coming along the path.

Even in the quad, as well as in the Form-room, the Lamb wore the velvet coat, baggy trousers, and blue tie which contrasted so strangely with Mr. Quelch's severe and scholarly

appearance in cap and gown. Lamb was an art master, and he affected an arty appearance, which led most of Greyfriars to look on him as rather a silly, if harmless, ass!

But there were fellows in the Remove who knew that Mr. Lamb was anything but a harmless ass. It was true that he did not often show the cloven foot, and rarely handled the cane, but when he did, he handled it in a way of which Mr. Quelch would never have dreamed. And he had a very special down on the Bounder of Greyfriars—and Harry Wharton & Co. were glad that they had happened along in time to give Smithy warning.

Mr. Lamb peered at them, in his owlish way, over his gold-rimmed glasses, as he came. The juniors moved along, anxious not to draw his attention to the fact that the Form-room window was open.

But Mr. Lamb's eyes—keen enough in spite of his owlish look—turned on the open window at once.

"Wharton!" he called.

"Oh! Yes, sir!" The captain of the Remove stopped.

"Wharton! This window is open! Did any one of you open it?"

"No, sir," answered the Famous Five, with one voice.

Mr. Lamb peered at them suspiciously. Obviously, the window had been opened by someone, and the Famous Five were on the spot, and no one else was to be seen. It looked as if someone had entered the Form-room by the door, and for some reason left it by the window. That, indeed, was what would have happened had not Mr. Lamb come along.

The little art master turned to the window. It was high from the ground, and he was not tall enough to look in. That he suspected that some trick had been played in the Form-room was clear. It would not have been the first, by many a one—and generally the Pet Lamb was tolerant in such matters. But he was never tolerant where Herbert Vernon-Smith was concerned—and perhaps he was thinking of the Bounder now!

"You have not been in the Form-room, any of you?" he asked, scanning the Famous Five.

"Not since third school, sir!" answered Harry.

"It appears that someone has," said Mr. Lamb.

The Famous Five did not answer. It was clear that someone had. Really, Mr. Lamb should have been careful to keep his Form-room door locked, if he was particular about that.

Mr. Lamb turned to the window again. The juniors could see that he guessed that the intruder in the Form-room was still there. Had Smithy had time to escape, he would have closed down the sash after him. The fact that it was still wide open indicated that the intruder was still inside—if it was not one of the fellows on the spot.

Mr. Lamb put his hands on the broad stone sill and pulled himself up, to look in at the window.

Harry Wharton & Co. watched him in silence.

They wondered what Smithy had been doing there, and whether the Lamb would spot it, whatever it was, from the window, and whether he would spot Smithy himself. The fact that Smithy had been going to leave by the window looked as if he had played some trick with the door—probably a booby-trap. If so, Lamb could not fail to spot it.

A grim, hard look came over Mr. Lamb's face as he looked in. He dropped back from the window, his eyes glinting over his glasses.

He glanced round.

In the distance, Wingate of the Sixth could be seen, walking with Gwynne of that Form.

"Wharton! Please go over and ask Wingate to step here!" said Mr. Lamb.

Harry Wharton reluctantly cut off on that mission.

In a couple of minutes Wingate of the Sixth was on the spot.

"My dear Wingate," bleated the Lamb, "I think that some Remove boy is in my Form-room without leave! Will you be kind enough to remain at this window for a few minutes while I go and investigate?"

"Certainly, sir," answered Wingate.

He remained by the window, while Mr. Lamb trotted away to the door of the House.

Harry Wharton & Co. exchanged dismayed glances.

There was no escape for Smithy now. Lamb was going to the Form-room door, while the prefect remained on guard at the window.

"Got him this time," murmured Bob Cherry. "I'll bet he guesses that it's Smithy in the Form-room!"

"Not a hard one to guess," said Harry Wharton. "But what on earth has Smithy been up to? If it's anything serious—"

He stepped towards the window.

Wingate stared at him as he caught at the sill, and pulled himself up as Lamb had done.

"Here, stop that, Wharton!" called out the Greyfriars captain.

Wharton was already looking into the Form-room.

Smithy was not to be seen there. Evidently, he had taken cover in case Lamb should look in at the window. Probably he was out of sight behind the master's high desk. Anyhow, he was out of sight. Wharton's glance went to the Form-room door, and then he knew.

That door stood a few inches ajar. On top of it was piled a stack of books resting against the lintel over the doorway. It was a booby-trap, all ready for Mr. Lamb when he opened that door to let his Form in. It was impossible for Smithy to get out by the door without first unloading that stack of books. He was still there—and Lamb was coming to that door.

As Lamb, looking in at the window, must have seen what Wharton now saw, it was not to be expected that he would fall into that trap.

"Wharton! Get down, you young ass!" came Wingate's voice.

Harry Wharton did not heea.

His eyes were fixed on the Form-room door! It was opening. Lamb had arrived.

As Mr. Lamb knew that the booby-trap was there, Wharton expected him to push the door to let the pile of books fall, keeping clear, and then enter.

To his amazement, Mr. Lamb did not do so!

Apparently in ignorance of that booby-trap, which he must have seen from the window, Mr. Lamb pushed open the Form-room door and walked in as it opened—and the whole stack came crashing down on him.

"Oh!" gasped Harry Wharton.

Bump!

Mr. Lamb, overwhelmed by falling volumes, went with a bump to the floor. He sprawled there, spluttering.

Harry Wharton dropped back from the window. He was utterly amazed. Lamb knew—he must have known—that the booby-trap was there; yet he had walked right into it and had been knocked over by the crashing stack of books. Why he had done it, Wharton could not imagine. But one thing was clear—the Bounder of Greyfriars was for it now.

CAUGHT!

HERBERT VERNON - SMITH caught his breath.

He was crouching, out of sight, behind the Form-master's desk, invisible from the window.

He had had no time to close that window. He had had barely time to dodge out of sight before Mr. Lamb came along. He waited breathlessly for a chance to escape when Lamb had passed on. He knew that he could rely on getting a signal from the fellows outside, when the coast was clear.

But the coast was not clear; and Harry Wharton & Co. could not help him. The Bounder could only wait—and, as he waited, there came that sudden crash of the falling volumes, the bump of the art master on the floor, and howl on howl from Mr. Lamb, who seemed to be damaged.

"Oh gad!" breathed the Bounder.

He hugged cover.

Mr. Lamb sat up in the doorway, amid a sea of volumes. His loud, startled howls rang far and wide, and did not fail to bring others to the spot. Portly Mr. Prout, the master of the Fifth, rolled up the corridor to see what the disturbance was, followed by Mr. Capper and five or six Greyfriars fellows.

Prout blinked at Mr. Lamb, sitting in the Form-room doorway, amid the scattered books.

"What—what—what——" boomed Prout.

"Oh! Oh dear! My goodness!" bleated Mr. Lamb. "What has happened? Something has fallen on me! Goodness gracious!"

"Are you hurt, my dear fellow?" asked Mr. Capper.

The Fourth Form master gave Lamb a helping hand to rise. It was clear that the innocent Lamb had

walked into a booby-trap, though he did not seem to grasp it yet.

"Oh dear! Thank you, Mr. Capper!" gasped the Lamb, as he staggered to his feet with Capper's assistance. "I—I am quite confused. I—I have had a very unpleasant shock—dear me! These books—where did all these books come from?"

Prout and Capper exchanged a smile.

Behind the desk in the Form-room, the Bounder sneered bitterly. Lamb was playing his part of the unsuspecting ass—a part which the Bounder was quite sure was assumed. But if the Bounder could see through Lamb's affectation of fluffy, fussy foolishness, other eyes were not so keen, or perhaps not so suspicious.

"My dear fellow, I am afraid it was what the boys call a booby-trap," said Mr. Capper.

"Shocking!" said Prout. "Really shocking! No Remove boys would have ventured to play such a prank when Mr. Quelch was here."

The Lamb gasped for breath.

"I am afraid that I do not succeed in maintaining order in the Remove to the same extent as Mr. Quelch!" he bleated. "But this—this is too much! The boy who has done this shall be taken to the headmaster."

"I should certainly recommend it, sir!" boomed Prout.

"If," smiled Mr. Capper, "you succeed in discovering him, Mr. Lamb! As the window is wide open, I conclude that the young rascal departed that way."

"Dear me!" said Mr. Lamb.

He crossed to the Form-room window, and looked out.

Wingate looked up; and the Famous Five, a little farther off, looked up also.

"Wingate!" bleated Mr. Lamb.

"Yes, sir!"

"Has any boy left this Form-room by the window?"

"No, sir!"

"Thank you, Wingate!"

Mr. Lamb turned back from the window.

Prout and Capper were standing in the doorway—behind them, half a dozen fellows—Potter and Greene of the Fifth, Temple of the Fourth, Hobson and Hoskins of the Shell, and Billy Bunter of the Remove. They were all grinning, evidently amused by the episode of the booby-trap; though Prout and Capper, being masters, politely strove to conceal their smiles.

"Is it possible that the boy is still here?" bleated the Pet Lamb.

"I should hardly think so!" smiled Mr. Capper.

The Bounder, behind the desk, gritted his teeth. It was borne in on his mind that Lamb knew that he was there! He knew, at all events, that the delinquent was there, whether he guessed that it was Smithy or not.

"No!" boomed Prout. "I hardly think it probable, Mr. Lamb! The young rascal would not be likely to linger."

Prout, of course, had no idea that Lamb had spotted the booby-trap

from the window and left a prefect on guard.

"Perhaps you will look round the Form-room, my dear Prout!" bleated the Lamb. "I am feeling so upset—I am quite out of breath—I have had a very unpleasant shock—if you will kindly look—"

"Oh, certainly!" said Prout.

He rolled into the Form-room to look.

There were only two places where an intruder could possibly have been hidden from sight—behind the Form-master's desk, or in the map-cupboard. Prout glanced behind the master's desk first. Then he gave a jump.

"Upon my word!" he ejaculated.

He stared at Herbert Vernon-Smith.

The Bounder rose to his feet with a black and bitter look on his face. He was fairly caught now.

"Oh crikey!" ejaculated Billy Bunter, as Smithy emerged from his cover. "I say, you fellows, it's Smithy!"

"That cheeky young ass, Vernon-Smith!" said Potter.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Mr. Capper. "Then the boy is still here! This is the author of the booby-trap, Mr. Lamb!"

Mr. Lamb fixed his eyes, over his glasses, on the Bounder. He had known it; at least, he had felt sure that his guess was accurate! And he had the Bounder now. Herbert Vernon-Smith could read the ruthless glint in the eyes over the gold-rimmed glasses.

"Vernon-Smith!" bleated the Lamb. "So you are here!"

"You knew I was here!" said the Bounder sullenly. "Do you think I don't know?"

Lamb's lips set hard.

"It was you who placed that pile of books over the door, Vernon-Smith?"

"You know it was!" answered Vernon-Smith.

"I know now, certainly!" said Mr. Lamb. "I am afraid, Vernon-Smith, that I am not equal to dealing with such a boy in my Form. Mr. Quelch may have been able to keep you in some sort of discipline—perhaps I lack his strength of character. I cannot deal with you. I shall refer this matter to your headmaster."

"I expected that!" sneered the Bounder savagely.

"Do not add impertinence to your offence, Vernon-Smith! I shall place this matter in Dr. Locke's hands. Go to your headmaster's study at once, and await me there!"

The Bounder, in savage silence, left the Form-room. He was for it now, with a vengeance. Mr. Quelch, had he been in his old place, would have dealt with such a prank with a very heavy hand; but that would have been the end of it. Lamb was not losing a chance of sending him up to the Head.

Billy Bunter rolled after the Bounder, as he tramped away savagely to the Head's study.

"I say, Smithy!" he squeaked.

Vernon-Smith gave him a glare.

"I say, hadn't you better pack?" whispered Bunter. "You'll get a Head's whopping, you know! Hadn't you better pack a dictionary in your bags?"

"You fat idiot!"

"Oh, really, Smithy, I was only advising you—"

"Idiot!"

"Beast!" hooted Bunter, as the Bounder tramped on.

Really, the fat Owl of the Remove had meant kindly; and Smithy's answer was far from grateful.

Billy Bunter rolled away with the news that Smithy was up for a flogging. Which dismissed Coker of the Fifth, as a topic, in the Remove.

A NEAR THING!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"

Herbert Vernon-Smith was waiting in his headmaster's study. Dr. Locke was not yet there, and the Bounder had to wait. He stood at the window, looking out into the quadrangle while he waited with a black brow. The Famous Five saw him there and came up.

"For it?" asked Frank Nugent.

"I'm waiting for the Head!" answered Vernon-Smith. "Lamb's making the most of this. He got the booby-trap, anyhow; that's a comfort—the fool walked right into it."

Harry Wharton's face was very grave.

"He walked right into it, Smithy," he answered, "but he's no fool! He knew that the booby-trap was there when he walked into it."

"What rot!"

"He looked in at the window before I did, and he must have seen it," said the captain of the Remove quietly. "I know now that he guessed that you were in the Form-room, and that's why!"

The Bounder stared.

"Think he wanted a stack of books on his napper?" he sneered.

"Yes, exactly—he thought it was worth that to land you with the Head," answered the captain of the Remove. "You've got his rag out to that extent, Smithy! For goodness' sake, be on your guard when the Head comes, and don't be mad enough to check him!"

"I can stand a whopping!" grunted the Bounder.

"It may be worse than that, you ass! You've said yourself that Lamb would be glad to get shut of you from the school. For goodness' sake be careful—don't play into his hands!"

"Oh!" The Bounder started.

"Thanks for the tip! They can't sack a man for a booby-trap; but that little rat would work it, if he could."

The Famous Five walked on, leaving the Bounder staring moodily from the window. He expected a flogging as a matter of course when the matter was put up to the headmaster. He wondered now whether it was the sack that he had to expect.

Only too well he knew that Lamb would be glad to see the last of him at Greyfriars.

He had been a thorn in the side of Mr. Quelch's substitute ever since the beginning of the term. The blame was on Lamb, in the Bounder's opinion. A master should not pretend to be a silly ass who could be ragged to any extent, and then break out into a savage temper and smack a fellow's head right and left on account of a rag. That had started it; and Smithy's feud had gone on ever since. He had given Lamb all the trouble he could that term.

But that was not why Lamb wanted to see the last of him. Fussy and fluffy as he affected to be, he was more than capable of dealing with a mutinous member of his Form.

would have taken little heed of him, and that was Lamb's fault.

The man had secrets—but what were the secrets? What was his connection with the low-browed ruffian at Sea View? Why, when he went to that lonely place on the sea road, did he descend into the air raid dugout? Why did he leave the school secretly in the small hours, when all Greyfriars slept? Smithy could not understand, but more and more it had been borne in upon his mind that there was much more in the Lamb than met the eye—that there was something shady, something perhaps guilty, behind the secrets he so carefully kept.

If it came to the sack—

He was not likely to believe that the man was, as the Bounder knew him to be, as hard as nails and as keen as a hawk, under his fluffy exterior.

It was useless to speak out to the Head—worse than useless. The Bounder realised that only too clearly—and in realising it, he realised also that in his headstrong recklessness he had played into the man's hands. The fluffy ass that Lamb affected to be would never have spotted him in the Form-room—but Lamb had made sure enough of him.

He waited with a black brow and deep uneasiness in his heart.

There were footsteps in the corridor



“What—what—what——” boomed Prout. “Oh! Oh dear! My goodness!” bleated Mr. Lamb. “What has happened? Something has fallen on me—goodness gracious!”

But the Bounder knew, or suspected, more about Lamb than the art master liked.

He knew that Lamb was a man with secrets to keep. He knew of Lamb's visits to Sea View, on the cliff road, and his acquaintance with Nobby Parker there; and he had made that little matter, which Lamb desired to keep secret, the talk of the Remove. He knew that Lamb sometimes left the school secretly at night. Lamb certainly could not be aware that he knew that—but he was aware of enough to make him wish that Herbert Vernon-Smith should stay no longer in the school. A keen, suspicious fellow watching for chances to score over him was no comfort to a man with secrets to keep.

The Bounder knitted his brows in angry thought

He suspected Lamb—of what, he hardly knew! But for the feud, he

He shrugged his shoulders angrily. It was no use telling the Head, if it came to that, that Lamb had personal reasons for wanting to get shut of him—that the man had something to hide. To the headmaster it would appear nothing but a malicious invention.

In Quelch's time, the Bounder had been called the worst boy in the Form. Quelch had more than once thought that he ought to go. What wonder that the new master took the same view?

To the Head, Lamb was a fussy, simple, yet capable man, who had come to the school as art master, and who, in Mr. Quelch's absence, had kindly offered to take the Remove, thus saving the headmaster a good deal of trouble.

To the Head, Lamb's only fault was that he was too mild and unsuspecting to handle a Form like the Remove as efficiently as Mr. Quelch.

at last, and the door of the Head's study opened.

Dr. Locke came in with Mr. Lamb. The Bounder faced them, his heart beating unpleasantly.

The Head's face was stern. Evidently he had received from Mr. Lamb an account of what had happened in the Remove room.

“You are before me again, Vernon-Smith!” said Dr. Locke, his eyes fixing on the scapegrace of the Remove.

“I am sorry, sir!” said the Bounder meekly. Wharton's advice had not been lost on him.

“It appears,” said the Head, “that you have made up your mind, Vernon-Smith, to make Mr. Lamb's task here as difficult as possible. He has very kindly consented to take charge of Mr. Quelch's Form during Mr. Quelch's unavoidable absence, and I will certainly not allow him to be

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unnecessarily troubled by unruly boys in that Form."

"It was only a lark, sir——" murmured the Bounder.

Dr. Locke raised his hand.

"This is not the first time, Vernon-Smith, that Mr. Lamb has had to report you to me. He tells me that he does not feel equal to dealing with such a boy in his Form, and I cannot be surprised at this. I remember very clearly that Mr. Quelch found very great difficulty in dealing with you, and that on more than one occasion I have come very near to sending you away from the school."

The Bounder's heart sank. It was plain now what Lamb intended to do—if he could! This was why he had deliberately walked into that trap!

"I am sorry for this, Vernon-Smith!" bleated the Lamb. There was a cold, hard glint in his eye that did not indicate that he was sorry, however. "You are beyond me—I confess it! I cannot deal with such a boy! I am sorry—but if your headmaster decides that you had better leave Greyfriars, I can say nothing against it—nothing!"

The Bounder breathed hard. He had nothing to hope from that hard, cold, implacable man, and he knew it.

If only because the talk about Nobby Parker at Sea View would die away when the Bounder was gone, the Lamb wanted him to go. But he could see that the kind-hearted headmaster had not yet made up his mind. And he had a card to play yet.

"When Mr. Quelch comes back, sir, he would not like to find one of us missing!" he faltered. "Mr. Lamb may not be taking the Form much longer, sir, and as I am not in the art class, he will have done with me."

"That is true, certainly!" said Dr. Locke. "But——" He paused.

Mr. Quelch was not only a member of his staff, but an old colleague and friend. For long weeks he had been missing—a prisoner in some unknown place, in the hands of kidnappers. Every day the Head hoped that Ferrers Locke, the famous detective, would have news of him—but day after day passed and there was no news. Mr. Lamb's charge of the Remove had lasted already much longer than the Head had expected it to do.

But some day—and it might be any day—Mr. Quelch would be back in his old place. And certainly the Head did not wish to greet him with the news that a member of his Form had been expelled in his absence. And when he came, Mr. Lamb would be relieved of the boy with whom he professed himself unable to deal. The headmaster stood silent—thinking.

Lamb's lips set in a hard line. But he did not speak. The Head spoke at last.

"I shall give you one more opportunity to amend your ways, Vernon-Smith. Mr. Lamb, I can only ask you to make one more effort to be patient with this foolish, reckless, and headstrong boy."

"You have only to ask, sir!" said Mr. Lamb smoothly.

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"But let this be clearly understood, Vernon-Smith," said Dr. Locke. "If Mr. Lamb is compelled to send you to me again, you will take the consequences, and they will be very severe. On this occasion I shall administer a flogging, and I trust that it will be a warning to you to amend your conduct. Take care that you are not sent to me again."

"Yes, sir!" breathed the Bounder.

He had escaped—and he knew that this was a defeat for Lamb. That was a consolation to the Bounder for what followed.

Mr. Lamb left the study.

Vernon-Smith left it ten minutes later—wriggling painfully as he went down the corridor. But the Bounder was tough. He could, as he said, take a whopping! The Lamb had not got by with it this time—and that was all that the Bounder cared about.

TO GO, OR NOT TO GO?

RICHARD NUGENT of the Second Form came up the staircase after class with a grin on his cheeky face.

On the study landing he glanced round him, and gave his major, Frank Nugent of the Remove, a cheery nod.

Most of the Remove fellows were coming up to the studies to tea. The Famous Five were on the landing when Nugent minor arrived there. And they looked at him with some interest—Nugent minor being fag to Wingate of the Sixth. They wondered whether he had come up with a message for Coker—who had not, so far, paid that necessary visit to the head prefect's study.

"Hallo, Franky!" called out Nugent minor. "Seen Coker?"

Frank Nugent laughed.

"In his study, I think," he answered. "I believe he came up after class."

"Is it a message from Wingate, young 'un?" asked Bob Cherry.

"What do you think?" grinned Dicky Nugent. "I say, that fathead Coker is up for a whopping, and he thinks he's too big a gun to be whopped! I say, Wingate's got his ash on the table all ready for Coker!"

And Dicky Nugent, grinning all over his face, marched up the Fifth Form passage to Coker's study.

The Famous Five smiled at one another.

"Coker hasn't gone, then!" said Johnny Bull.

"Poor old Coker!" sighed Bob. "He can't get it into his head that he can be whopped like any other man. Of course he's got to go."

"I suppose this is his last chance," said Harry Wharton. "He can't expect Wingate to wait for ever! He's had all day to think it over."

"The thoughtfulness is not the esteemed Coker's long suit!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

The Famous Five moved across the landing and glanced up the Fifth Form study passage. They were curious to see what Horace Coker was going to do, and a little concerned for the hot-headed, unreflecting Horace.

Coker of the Fifth had to toe the line like any other fellow at Greyfriars School. But Coker never seemed to be able to get that into his solid head. The fact that prefects like Loder and Walker steered clear of trouble with him helped to make Horace bumptious. But when he came up against a prefect who would stand no nonsense, Horace had to toe the line—and if he did not, the consequences were dire. Nobody wanted to see old Horace sent up to the Head and flogged or sacked.

The chums of the Remove hoped that old Horace would reflect in time, and that they would see him coming down the passage.

But there was no sign of him. Nugent minor had gone into Coker's study, but Coker had not emerged therefrom.

In that study there was, as on the banks of Tiber of old, tumult and affright. Coker's pals, Potter and Greene, were arguing with Coker.

Argument was wasted on Coker, and they were aware of it; still, they were doing their best. Coker listened to them with calm disdain.

When the captain's fag came in, Potter and Greene, knowing what it portended, were really alarmed. They realised that this was Coker's last chance.

"Coker, old man——" said Potter.

"You see, old chap——" said Greene.

Coker interrupted them.

"What does that fag want here?" he demanded. "What the thump are you butting into this study for, young Nugent?"

"Wingate's sent me!" explained Dicky. "You're to go to his study at once."

Coker was sitting in the armchair with his long legs crossed. He looked round at Potter.

"Kick that cheeky fag out, Potter!" he said.

"My dear chap——" urged Potter. He was not likely to kick out the captain's fag when he came on an official message.

"Kick him out, Greeney!" said Coker.

"Look here, Coker, don't be a goat!" said Greene. "You've got to go, and the sooner you go, the better."

"Don't be a fool, Greene!"

"Wingate's head prefect, you know," urged Potter. "I should have to go if he sent for me, Coker."

"You might!" said Coker. "Who are you?"

"Eh?"

"Nobody in particular that I know of," said Coker. "It's a bit different with me. I've got my position in the Form and the school to consider. I can't see myself bending over for a Sixth Form swab! Hardly!"

"You've got to go, old man!"

"Don't be an idiot, Potter!"

Dicky Nugent grinned from ear to ear. Potter and Greene were in a state of alarm, but Richard Nugent of the Second was only amused.

"Well, you'd better hear the rest, Coker!" he said.

"I don't want any more cheek from you!" said Coker. "If I take the

trouble to get out of this chair, you'll know it!"

"Wingate said——"

"Pack up the rest and get out, before I boot you!"

"Will you let the kid speak, Coker?" howled Greene.

"No, I won't!" said Coker. "I'll boot him if he gives me any more lip! Get out of this, young Nugent!"

Dicky Nugent retreated to the door before he finished the delivery of the message.

Coker was rising from the arm-chair, and Dicky did not want to return to the passage at the end of the biggest boot in the Greyfriars Fifth.

Grinning in at the doorway, the fag went on:

"Wingate said you're to be in his study under five minutes. Otherwise it goes to the Head! That's the lot."

Coker made a stride to the doorway, and the fag cut down the passage at a run.

He slowed down as he passed the Famous Five at the corner, and gave them a grin and wink.

"Old Coker's for it!" he remarked.

"Ain't he coming?" asked Bob.

"Too jolly high - and - mighty!" grinned Nugent minor. "He will get something soon that will cure all that!" And Richard Nugent went grinning down the stairs.

In Coker's study there was something like consternation. Potter and Greene exchanged hopeless looks.

Horace Coker did not sit down again. He stood with his hands driven deep into his pockets and a frown of grim defiance on his rugged brow.

"The check of it!" he said. "The nerve! Whop me! I'd like to see him do it! Why, I'd knock him across his study if he tried it on!"

"You get bunked for punching a prefect!" said Greene.

Coker did not answer that.

Perhaps it was dawning even on Coker's solid and impenetrable intellect that he had taken up an impossible position.

Prefects were prefects, and behind the prefects was the whole authority of the headmaster. Coker was, in point of fact, entering into a contest with the Head, in taking up his present attitude.

Even Coker knew that he was not up to the weight of that adversary if the state of affairs once became clear to his obtuse brain.

"Look here, old chap, I'd go——" pleaded Potter.

"You would, I dare say!" agreed Coker. "I'm not likely to knuckle under to a Sixth Form ass!"

"The Head backs up the prefects!" urged Greene. "You don't want to be sent up to the Head!"

Coker breathed hard.

"Think Wingate would have the cheek to go as far as that?" he asked slowly. Evidently the true state of affairs was dawning, slowly but surely, on Horace Coker.

"What else could he do?" said Potter. "If he lets one man cheek him, it won't be long before he's cheeked by everyone else. Wingate

can't let this drop now. The whole House is jawing over it."

"His giddy prestige is at stake, you see," explained Greene.

Coker breathed harder.

"After all, if he wants to see me in his study, there's no special reason why I shouldn't go!" he remarked. "Of course, a whopping is out of the question. I shouldn't think of allowing that. Wingate would hardly have the nerve to think of it, when it came to the pinch. But I don't see why I shouldn't drop into the chap's study, as he's sent his fag to ask me to."

Potter and Greene carefully suppressed a desire to smile.

They were only too glad and relieved to see Coker coming to his senses, as it were, before it was too late. A smile might have sent old Horace off at the deep end again.

Coker gave them a searching, suspicious look. Perhaps he suspected those carefully concealed smiles!

"I'm not giving in to the fellow!" he said. "I don't think much of the Sixth, and never did! I'm not the man to knuckle under to a Sixth Form ass!"

"Of course not," agreed Potter hypocritically. "I'd just go."

"I might go!" admitted Coker.

"I'd go now!" hinted Greene.

"I don't see that there's any hurry," answered Coker. "I'm not in a hurry at all, so far as I'm concerned. Still, I might as well go, if Wingate wants to see me, and get it over before tea."

And Coker went.

Potter and Greene did not smile till he was safely out of the study. Then they smiled—from ear to ear!

Coker tramped down the passage. Coker was not going to be whopped. He was still quite clear on that point. He did not even admit to himself that he was going down to Wingate's study before the time limit of five minutes expired! He was just going, that was all. However, he went quickly enough to do it within the five minutes.

Harry Wharton & Co., at the corner, were glad to see him pass on his way. They, like Potter and Greene in the study, suppressed their smiles. They were glad to see old Horace toeing the line that he had to toe! Coker gave them a glare as he passed, not unmindful of the row in the Rag, which had been the cause of his present distressful position.

He tramped down the stairs.

Not till he had disappeared below did the Famous Five chuckle.

COKER TAKES IT!

WINGATE of the Sixth gave Coker a nod as he came in. He was glad to see Coker.

It was a relief to the captain of Greyfriars to discover that the headstrong Horace had a saving spot of common sense somewhere in his thick head. The contest having once been entered upon, it was impossible for the prefect to give way if he was ever going to carry on as a prefect afterwards. But, really, he did not want

to land the fathead of the Fifth in a row with the Head.

"Oh, here you are, Coker!" said Wingate. He rose from his chair, and picked up the ashplant from his table. "Bend over that chair, will you?"

Coker stood and looked at him.

"Nugent mi. said you wanted to see me," he said stiffly.

"Yes; you know why! Don't waste time!"

"I think it's you that's wasting time," remarked Coker. "You don't want to see me about the football?"

"The football?" repeated Wingate. "Why the dickens should I want to see you about the football, Coker?"

"Well, you might have sense enough to put a good man into the first eleven," suggested Coker. "I don't expect it of you—but you might."

Wingate gave him a fixed look.

"That will do, Coker!" he said briefly. "I've sent for you to take six! Will you bend over that chair?"

"You fancy you can lick a Fifth Form man?" asked Coker.

"I won't argue that point with you," said the Greyfriars captain. "Will you bend over that chair or not? I've no more time to waste on you! You can please yourself—as every fellow can! If you don't, the matter goes before the Head, and you'll deal with him instead of me. I'd be glad to have done with you. Now, then, yes or no?"

Coker looked at him.

He did not bend over the chair—he did not stir.

Wingate waited a moment or two, and then laid the ash on the table again.

"That's that!" he said. "You can go, Coker! Head's study at half-past six. Shut the door after you."

Coker of the Fifth gave him a look—a long look. He turned to the door. But he did not arrive at the door. He turned back.

"If you mean this, Wingate——" said Coker very slowly.

"Leave the study, please."

"If you mean this——" choked Coker.

"Will you get out of my study?" asked the Greyfriars captain.

Coker gave a sort of gasp. Now that it had come to the pinch, Coker realised the fact. The fact was that he had to bend over, like any other fellow, lest worse should befall him.

"If you mean it, I—I—I'll bend over!" he gasped.

"Well, don't waste any more time, for goodness' sake!" said Wingate. "What a long-winded chap you are, Coker!"

He picked up the ash again.

Coker, with deep feelings—the very deepest—bent over the chair. It was an unimaginable position for Coker—Horace James Coker of the Fifth Form! But there it was!

Even yet, bending over the chair in the captain's study, Coker could hardly believe that the captain of Greyfriars was going to have the cheek, the nerve, the audacity, to whop him.

But the captain of Greyfriars was!

Difficult as it was for Coker to

understand it, the Greyfriars captain regarded him only as a cheeky, obstreperous fellow, whose cheek had gone beyond the limit, and who had to be whopped. It was a little matter that Wingate would dismiss from his mind after the execution. It was far from seeming to him the tremendous affair it was to Coker. To Coker, this was almost an epoch in the history of Greyfriars; to Wingate, it was a trifling matter all in the day's work.

Whop, whop, whop!

The ash came swiping down on Coker's trousers.

It was like an awful dream to Coker. At the same time, it was real—painfully real! They were real swipes—only too real!

Whop, whop!

If Coker of the Fifth had been asked, at the beginning of the term, whether he would bend over and take six from a prefect's ash, like a fag, Coker would have laughed at the idea.

Now he was doing it.

Thus were the mighty fallen. Seldom or never were Fifth Form seniors whopped like Lower boys. Most Fifth Form men had sense enough not to ask for it. But if a Fifth Form man lacked that sense, and asked for it, there it was, for the asking. Now Horace was getting that for which he had asked.

Whop!

The final whop came down. Wingate did not lay it on very hard. Still, a whop was a whop!

Not that the actual whopping troubled Coker very much. It was the blow to his dignity—the jolt to his prestige—the knock-out to his self-esteem. It was the shocking discovery that he, Horace James Coker of the Fifth, could be whopped like young Cherry of the Remove, or young Temple of the Fourth, and the grim realisation that, when it came to the pinch, he was not going to knock Wingate across the study—he was going to take it just like any other fellow did.

Wingate threw the ash on the table.

"Cut!" he said, just as he might have told Billy Bunter or Sammy Bunter to cut after an execution.

Coker rose to his feet.

He gave Wingate a look. That look revealed volumes of indignation and wrath and fury—it was a devastating look. Unfortunately, it was wasted on Wingate, who had turned to take a book down from the shelf. Being through with Coker, Wingate had a spot of work to do before tea, and he was getting Euripides down for that purpose.

Coker's concentrated look of indignant fury was a total waste on the back of his head.

Coker moved slowly to the door.

Wingate did not look at him again. He sat down at the table.

Horace Coker passed out of the study. His hand lingered on the door. He was going to slam that door with all his force to show Wingate, at least, how little he cared for him and the Sixth generally.

But he paused before he slammed.

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Coker's brain—perhaps spurred on by that whopping—worked in time. Suppose Wingate called him back and gave him another whop for slamming the door? He might! He was evidently cheeky enough! He had the nerve!

Coker decided, quite rapidly, that it would be more dignified to leave in a quiet, scornful manner, without slamming the door.

He closed it quietly, and went.

Loder and Walker were in the passage. They grinned at Coker, as he passed. Evidently, they knew what had happened.

He passed them with burning cheeks. At the foot of the staircase he passed Billy Bunter, who favoured him with a wide grin and a fat giggle.

Bunter barely dodged Coker's boot, and the Fifth Form man went up the staircase. On the study landing, Hobson of the Shell called to him.

"Had it bad, old man?"

Coker disdained to heed the question or the questioner. He went on to his study.

Potter and Greene eyed him as he came in. They could read inexpressible feelings in Coker's rugged face.

Coker threw himself into the arm-chair. Then he rather hastily jumped up from it again. For a little while, Coker preferred to stand.

He stood, leaning on the study mantelpiece, surveying his chums with a gloomy look.

Potter broke a rather painful silence.

"What about tea?" he asked.

"Tea!" said Coker bitterly.

Evidently Coker despised tea! What was tea, in such an hour of tragedy?

"Well, it's tea-time!" remarked Greene.

"I've been whopped!" said Coker.

His voice thrilled as he said that. It thrilled with inextinguishable indignation. But it was easy to see that Potter and Greene did not realise how serious the matter was.

"Oh, you'll soon get over that!" said Potter.

"I don't suppose Wingate laid it on hard, did he?" remarked Greene.

Coker's feelings were beyond speech! He simply glared. There was another long silence.

"Well, if we ain't going to have tea—" said Potter, at length, restively.

"Don't talk to me about tea!" said Coker.

He breathed very, very deep.

"Let him wait!" he said. "Just let him wait. I've been whopped! Well, if a fellow whops me, I whop him! Let him wait! That's all!"

Coker, it seemed, was thinking of retaliation—of vengeance!

Potter and Greene left him to think of it while they went to scrounge a tea in Blundell's study.

Coker was left brooding!

AN ALARM IN THE NIGHT!

FERRERS LOCKE opened the side door of the Greyfriars garage and stepped out into the dark, closing the door softly behind him.

The half-hour had chimed dully through the dim, damp February night. Had there been any eyes to observe the Baker Street detective at that late hour, such an observer would have expected to see John Robinson, the Head's chauffeur, emerge from that doorway when it opened, as John Robinson was the only resident in the rooms over the garage.

But the man who emerged did not look like the dark-haired chauffeur; neither did he look like the lean, clean-shaven Baker Street detective. He had a shaggy complexion, a shaggy, sandy moustache, and thick, sandy eyebrows.

Greyfriars fellows would never have recognised him as John Robinson, the chauffeur. Even the hawk-eyed crook, Slim Jim, would never have known him as Ferrers Locke.

None but the Head knew that Ferrers Locke was at Greyfriars School. And even the Head did not know that Locke's suspicions had fixed on Mr. Lamb, the art master. Ferrers Locke was keeping his own counsel till his case was complete.

There were no eyes to see and no ears to hear at half-past eleven at night! The Baker Street detective glided silently through the gloom and stopped at length at a door. To that door he had a key, to give him admission to the House whenever he desired to enter—though the Head, certainly, never dreamed that his quest of Slim Jim the cracksman could ever lead him into the House.

This was the first time that Locke had entered to keep watch. Many a night, since he had played the part of chauffeur at the school, he had watched the building, waiting and watching for the suspected man to emerge. Now he was, at length, getting to closer quarters.

Ferrers Locke knew now that Slim Jim was an inhabitant of the school. Only a few days ago he had watched and followed a dark figure that dropped quietly from the window of Mr. Quelch's old study in the dark, and very nearly had he snapped the handcuffs on the wrists of the little man in black at the scene of his latest robbery.

But Slim Jim had escaped—a narrow escape. And since that night the Baker Street detective had watched for him in vain.

It was from Vernon-Smith that he had learned that Mr. Lamb left the House at night by Quelch's study window. The Bouncer had little dreamed what it meant to John Robinson when he had told him that! Smithy's idea had been to tip the chauffeur to catch the art master in the act one night and show him up as a night-prowler! Ferrers Locke's ideas on the subject were very different!

But after the narrow escape of the mysterious cracksman that night at Hogben Park, Locke had watched in vain by the study window. Night after night he had watched, but that window had never opened.

And then came the news of another crib cracked, a mile from the school. Locke knew then that the cracksman—Mr. Lamb or not—had another

mode of egress. He must have left the House and returned some other way while the Baker Street detective was watching that study window in vain.

The man was as wary as a wolf. That he was watched at Greyfriars he could have no idea, no suspicion. He had not known that he had been shadowed from that study window.

It was from his habitual caution that he changed his mode of egress from time to time. There were innumerable windows and doors to choose from—and he had chosen another way.

Several times, Locke suspected, he had used the door of the Sixth Form lobby; and twice, at least, the window of Quelch's old study. But it was like the cunning rascal to break fresh ground every now and then, guarding against the merest possibility of observation or suspicion.

So far, Ferrers Locke had waited and watched outside the House. Now, at last, he was going nearer his quarry.

He let himself into the House without a sound.

There was no glimmer of light; the black-out curtains shut out the pale glimmer of the few stars in the murky sky. But Locke seemed to be able to find his way in the dark like a cat—and he knew his way well enough about the interior of the House. John Robinson seldom or never entered it; but Dr. Locke's relative, Ferrers Locke, had visited Greyfriars often enough.

He paused at the foot of the staircase and listened.

All was dark, silent, and still! At half-past eleven the last door had closed, the last light had been extinguished.

Locke trod softly up the stairs.

He paused again on the dormitory landing to listen. More than once, in his vigils for Slim Jim, he had encountered breakers of bounds—and he had to be wary.

But there was no sound and he crossed the landing on tiptoe, groping his way to the passage where the masters' rooms were situated.

Mr. Lamb's room was the last in that passage.

That the wanted man was Lamb, Ferrers Locke was assured. He had so far no actual proof; but the certainty was fixed in his mind. He could not have said that the dark figure that had dropped from Quelch's window at night was Mr. Lamb's, but he did not doubt that it was.

There could be no doubt if he spotted Lamb actually emerging from his room in the small hours, and shadowed him out of the House. And that, if he could, he was going to do.

At the end of the passage was a deep window heavily curtained at night for the black-out. All he had to do was to reach that window and take cover behind the thick, heavy curtains.

From that point he could not see in the dark, but he could hear, and he knew that he would be aware if Mr. Lamb's door opened at an hour when all Greyfriars slept and all was silent and still.

The blacked-out window at the end

of the passage was not more than three yards past Lamb's door, the last in the passage.

Ferrers Locke was treading lightly; but he trod more lightly than ever when he had passed the other doors and approached Lamb's.

The man, if he was stirring that night, was not likely to stir before midnight or later. Slim Jim was a late worker. But if he had planned a raid for that night he was not likely to be sleeping. And if the little art master really was Slim Jim, as Locke believed, he was as cunning as a fox, as alert as a badger. The least sound would be sufficient to alarm him.

Locke made no sound—till he was within six or seven feet of the art master's bed-room door.

Then, for a moment, he hardly knew what happened.

It was pitch dark in the passage. He was moving along quickly but noiselessly, in the middle of the passage, when his feet suddenly caught in something.

That a cord was stretched across the passage in the dark, a few inches from the floor and fastened on either side, was not likely to occur to him—or to Lamb, if he had come out of his room.

He did not, for one startled moment, know what it was. All he knew was that his feet suddenly caught, and that he pitched forward headlong.

He made a desperate effort to retain his balance—but in vain! He dropped heavily on his hands and knees, his hands saving his face, which had a narrow escape of tapping on the old oak-planks.

Bump! Locke panted.

He was up in a twinkling. His palms had slapped hard on the oak, his knees had banged; but he did not heed the pain in hands and knees. He listened.

There was a sound of a movement

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in the room he had nearly reached! Lamb was up!

That sudden bump in the passage outside, loud in the silence of the night, had reached his ears, as it could hardly have failed to do, even if he had been asleep, unless he slept very soundly.

Locke shut his teeth.

Some young rascal had played this trick—doubtless to catch Lamb!

As Lamb's was the last room in the passage, no other master was likely to stumble over the cord. Lamb could not come out of his room without stumbling over it, if he came in the dark.

It was a schoolboy jape—on Lamb; evidently by someone who knew that he might come out in the dark—Vernon-Smith, most likely. It could not have happened more unfortunately for the Baker Street detective.

The alarm had been given! Lamb—whether he was Slim Jim or not—was awake. He had heard. His door would open!

Locke groped with his foot for the cord over which he had tripped, stepped over it, and shot down the passage to the landing. From two other rooms he heard sounds of stirring. Two other masters, as well as Lamb, had heard that sudden, heavy, startling bump in the passage.

Locke had been just in time! There was a blaze of sudden illumination as the electric light was switched on in the passage he had left. It shone out across the landing. Voices came to his ears.

"What—what was that?" It was Mr. Prout's boom. "Is that you, Mr. Capper? Did you hear—"

"I certainly did!" came Mr. Capper's voice. "A sound like a heavy weight falling in the passage."

"My goodness! What is the matter?" It was the bleat of the Pet Lamb. "Is it an alarm? Is it an air-raid? Was that a bomb?"

"No, no!" Prout's boom had a note of contempt. "Nothing of the kind, Mr. Lamb! It was certainly not a bomb! It sounded like a fall—yet no one is here! I fail to understand— Yarooooooh!"

Bump!

Ferrers Locke started. Then he smiled! Prout, evidently, had found that taut cord with his feet—not observing it, even when the light was on! A roar followed the bump!

"Oh! Ah! Oh! Ooogh! What is that? I—I have stumbled over—over something! Whoo-hoop!"

Prout had been approaching Mr. Lamb at his door—perhaps to reassure him on the subject of bombs. He had walked into the cord. Prout's weight, smiting the old oak, sounded like the delivery of a ton of coals in bulk. His roar sounded like that of the Bull of Bashan, of olden time, who was famed for his roaring.

"Oh! Ah! Oh! Ooooh!" roared Prout.

"Upon my word! There is a cord!" came Mr. Capper's excited squeal. "A cord across the passage! Bless my soul!"

"My goodness!" came the Lamb's bleat.

"Oh! Ooooh! Ow! Woooooooh!" roared Prout. "Who has done this? This is a trick! This is a prank—a dastardly prank! Who has—wow!—done this—oooooh?"

Ferrers Locke slipped silently down the stairs. The three masters were left to elucidate the mystery of the cord on their own. The Baker Street detective lost no time in clearing off the spot, lest their investigations should extend far afield.

It was not in the best of tempers that John Robinson returned to his rooms over the garage.

SIX FOR SMITHY!

HERBERT VERNON-SMITH was up before rising-bell in the morning.

The Bounder left the Remove dormitory while the rest of the Form still slept, and went quietly down to the landing and across it to the passage that led to the masters' rooms.

At the corner he stopped and cast a keen glance up the dim passage. All was silent, no master was yet up, and the Bounder tiptoed up the passage.

He halted suddenly, suppressing a whistle.

There was no longer a cord stretched across the passage near Lamb's door. Smithy lost no time in getting out of that passage!

He grinned as he went back to the Remove dormitory.

For three or four nights Smithy had left the dormitory silently and fixed up that cord after all Greyfriars slept. Every morning he turned out before rising-bell to remove it before it was discovered. Sooner or later, the Bounder had no doubt, that cord would make a catch.

Now he knew it had made one! It had been removed—that meant that someone had tripped over it in the night, and he had no doubt who that someone was! That trap had been laid, night after night, for Lamb, and who but Lamb could have fallen into the trap?

Tom Redwing was awake when the Bounder came back into the dormitory. He peered at Smithy in the gloom.

"Smithy, you ass——" he began.

The Bounder chuckled.

"Luck at last, old man!" he said. "The cord's gone! The dear little Baa-Lamb came a cropper last night, I fancy!"

"Ten to one he will suspect you, Smithy."

"You mean a hundred to one!" said the Bounder coolly. "What is he going to do if he does? He can't prove anything, to begin with—and do you think he wants to shout out all over Greyfriars that he trots out of his room after midnight to sneak secretly out of the House? Not in your lifetime, old scout! He never said anything the night I chucked crackers into his room when he opened his window at midnight! He won't say anything now! I get right away with this!"

And the Bounder laughed gleefully.

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"I've got to be careful," he went on. "The cur's watching for a chance to send me up to the Head and get me bunked—and why? Because he knows I've got an eye on him—because I've found out some things, and he's afraid I may find out others. Well, now he's tripped over that cord he may guess that I know more than he fancied—but what can he do?"

And the Bounder laughed again.

Vernon-Smith was in great spirits when the Remove went down that morning. That someone had taken a tumble on that cord was certain, and he had no doubt that it was Lamb! This was something back for the flogging of a few days ago. And if Lamb guessed, from that incident, that someone in the House suspected his night prowlings, it would be a jolt for him—and Herbert Vernon-Smith's mission in life at present was to give Lamb all the jolts he could. That it would make the man's enmity more bitter and unsparing he cared nothing.

He glanced curiously at Mr. Lamb at the Remove table at breakfast. If Lamb had taken that tumble, he showed no signs of it—but Smithy did not expect him to; he expected him to keep the incident dark. It could not possibly suit him for his nocturnal ramblings to become known in the school.

Mr. Lamb took no special note of Vernon-Smith. He was the good-tempered little Baa-Lamb at breakfast, seemingly quite undisturbed.

"I say, you fellows!" squeaked Billy Bunter, when the Remove went out after breakfast. "Seen old Prout?"

"Prout?" repeated Bob Cherry. "What about Prout?"

"He, he, he! He's got a game leg!" chuckled Bunter. "I've seen him—dot-and-carry one!"

Which caused the Famous Five to look round for the Fifth Form master and note the fact that Prout was limping. He did not seem exactly to have a game leg, as Bunter described it, but he had a limp, as if one of his plump knees had sustained damage.

When the Lamb let his Form into the Form-room that morning lessons did not immediately begin. Mr. Lamb picked up a cane from his desk, and stood facing his Form with the cane in his hand.

"My boys," bleated the Lamb, "a very disagreeable incident occurred last night—a very serious matter which I cannot possibly overlook."

The Bounder caught his breath. Was the man going to make a fuss about it after all? But if he did, what could he prove?

"Some boy," went on the Lamb,

"appears to have left his dormitory at a late hour and fastened a cord across the passage near my door. Mr. Prout, unfortunately, fell over it, and was somewhat hurt."

"Oh!" breathed Vernon-Smith. It was not the Lamb he had caught, after all.

"From the position in which this cord was placed, I have no doubt that it was intended for me to fall over when I came out of my room in the morning," resumed the Lamb. "As it happens, Mr. Prout was awakened, and came out during the night—and fell over the cord. I have promised him that the offender shall be strictly punished."



Coker's victim went down, and Coker got in so swi-pe, swi-pe! A frantic yell pealed

The Remove sat silent. Some of them knew the offender; the others could guess.

Smithy's face set sullenly. He wondered savagely what had caused that old goat Prout to turn out and spoil everything. He was sure that if Lamb had fallen over that cord in his night prowlings he would have kept the incident dark. Now, however, he had no reason for keeping it dark.

"Some Remove boy was guilty of this reckless trick!" said Lamb. "I command that boy to step out before the Form."

There was a brief pause.

"Vernon-Smith!" rapped the Lamb.

"Yes, sir!" muttered the Bounder. "Stand out before the class, Vernon-Smith!"

The Bounder, breathing hard, stepped out. There was no proof—

not a jot or tittle of proof. But the Lamb seemed to intend to dispense with it.

"I am assured, Vernon-Smith, that this was your work!" said the Lamb, peering at him over his glasses. "I shall cane you, Vernon-Smith!"

The Bounder's eyes gleamed.

"You've no right to pick on me," he said sullenly. "It might have been any fellow in the House."

Mr. Lamb nodded.

"Quite!" he assented. "And if you prefer the matter to go before your headmaster, Vernon-Smith, I shall accede at once. I shall state



some quick, solid work with Prout's cane. Swipe, and from the recipient of those swipes!

my belief to Dr. Locke that you are the guilty party, and leave it to him to investigate and judge. You may take your choice, Vernon-Smith."

The Bounder did not answer that. He knew that he was, so to speak, in a cleft stick. He did not want to go before the Head again, after Dr. Locke's warning at his last interview.

The Lamb smiled—a grim smile.

"If you desire your headmaster to be the judge, Vernon-Smith, I will take you to him now," he said. "Otherwise, you will bend over that desk."

In savage silence, the Bounder bent over that desk.

Six swipes rang through the Form-room like six pistol shots. The Lamb put plenty of beef into it. The Bounder went back to his place, choking with rage.

THE MOUSE AND THE LION!

"ALL right in blacker!" said Horace Coker.

"Eh?" said Potter.

"What?" asked Greene.

Coker of the Fifth had been thinking. This unaccustomed process on Coker's part had led ultimately to the remark that puzzled his study-mates.

Coker nodded, as if in assent to his own thoughts, whatever they were. Tea was over in Coker's study. Already the February evening had set in dim and dark. Black-out reigned, or blacker, as the Greyfriars fellows called it. Coker, it seemed, was planning something in blacker.

That, of course, was like Coker. No fellow was allowed out in the black-out without special leave. But Coker of the Fifth was a law unto himself.

"I dare say," went on Coker, in a sarcastic tone, "that you fellows fancy that I've forgotten Wingate's cheek."

"Well, dash it all, you've got over that whopping long ago!" said Potter. "Why, it's days since you were whopped, old man!"

"I don't expect you to understand, George Potter," said Coker. "You're too dense. A fellow like me can't be whopped. Wingate took a rotten mean advantage of being a prefect and whopped me! What did I say afterwards?"

"Eh? Did you say anything?" asked Greene. It seemed that Coker's pals had forgotten Coker's subsequent remarks—which, of course, was like them!

"I said let him wait!" said Coker. "That's what I said, Billy Greene! Well, now I've thought of a way. I should prefer to walk into Wingate's study, grab his ash, and whop him with it! But what would happen if

I did?"

"Early train home," said Potter. "You can't whop a prefect!"

"Exactly," said Coker. "Wingate's got me there! Being a prefect, and taking a mean advantage of it, he's got me all along the line. Well, I don't want to be bunked! My Aunt Judy would be upset, for one thing! I've got to think of the school, too!"

"Oh!" gasped Potter and Greene.

"Besides that," added Coker frankly, "I don't want to be bunked. See?"

Potter and Greene admitted that they saw.

"All the same, if a fellow whops me, I whop him!" said Coker. "That's a fixed and settled thing, like the laws of the Swedes and Nasturtiums, you know. You can take that as read. Well, how do I do it? Wingate's going to be

whopped. If he knows I whopped him, I get bunked. What do I do? I whop him without him knowing it was me? See?"

This time Potter and Greene did not see.

They gazed at Coker in bewilderment.

"Surprised you?" asked Coker.

"Well, just a few!" gurgled Greene. "Are you going to ask Wingate to open his mouth and shut his eyes while you whop him?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Potter.

"Don't be an idiot, Greene! Don't cackle like a turkey with the croup, Potter! I'm going to get Wingate in blacker!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Will he see who whopped him in blacker?" demanded Coker.

"You're going to ask him to walk out of the House in blacker to be whopped?" asked Potter. "Are you going to mention that it's so that he won't know you did it?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Greene.

"Don't be a pair of gurgling idiots!" said Coker. "It means strategy, of course. I'm the man for strategy, I think! The Head's in his house after tea. He comes back to his study later. But he's there now, and will be there for some time—he always is, or generally. Suppose he wanted to see Wingate?"

"He often does, Wingate being his head prefect," said Potter. "But what the thump—"

"He sends a message," said Coker. "When Wingate's told that the Head wants to speak to him, what does he do? Naturally, he goes out—in blacker—and walks over to the Head's house."

"Oh!" said Potter and Greene.

They gazed at their great leader. Coker had been thinking—to some purpose. A deep and deadly scheme had evolved from the depths of Coker's solid brain.

"All that's necessary," continued Coker, "is for Wingate to get that message. See? That's where you fellows come in!"

"Eh?"

"What?"

"Of course," explained Coker, "I dare say you can see, dense as you are, that it would be no use my giving Wingate that message personally. He might smell a rat. He's rather a fool; but he might guess afterwards who was laying for him in blacker if I gave him the message!"

"He might!" gasped Potter.

"Oh crikey, yes, he might!" gurgled Greene.

"That's where my strategy comes in," said Coker. "One of you fellows gives him the message."

"Wha-a-t?"

"I don't mind which," said Coker liberally. "One of you. You can settle between yourselves which, I don't mind at all!"

Potter and Greene looked as if they minded a little. But they did not speak. They only gazed at the great Horace.

"I dare say you've heard the fable of the mouse and the lion," went on

Coker. "In this case, I'm the lion and one of you fellows is the mouse, see—the little animal that helps the monarch of the forest, you know!"

Coker did not heed the expressions on the faces of his pals. Had he done so he might have discerned a marked lack of enthusiasm. They did not look keen at all on playing the part of mouse to Coker's lion. But Coker never paid much regard to the thoughts or feelings of lesser mortals.

"One of you gets this message to Wingate," said Coker briskly. "He goes out in blacker, and I'm waiting for him with a cane! I know how to borrow old Prout's cane—that's all right! I bag him in the dark and whop him. There the whole thing ends!"

Coker made a gesture, as if dismissing the matter.

"You—you—you ass!" gasped Potter. "Don't I keep on telling you that you'd be sacked for whopping a prefect?"

"I suppose you can't help being a fool, old chap!" said Coker. "I mustn't expect too much of you. I've explained that I shan't be spotted—leave it at that! If you can't understand, never mind! No need for you to understand—all you've got to do is to carry out instructions."

Coker rose.

"Now it's settled," he said.

"Settled!" gurgled Greene. "Is it settled?"

"Yes—now it's settled, I've got to pinch old Prout's cane and get out of the House, ready for Wingate!" said Coker. "Don't give him that message till half an hour from now, to give me plenty of time."

"But—"

"Don't jaw, Potter!" exclaimed Coker impatiently. "You're like a sheep's head—all jaw! It's half-past six. Give Wingate that message at seven."

"But—"

"Not before seven!" said Coker. "The darker it is, the better. It's rather important for him not to see me, as I dare say even you fellows can understand. Have you got it clear? You're not to give Wingate that message before seven. Understand that?"

"Yes; but—"

"That's all, then!" said Coker. "Settle it between yourselves which gives him the message—I don't mind which, as I said."

"But—" shrieked Greene.

It was useless for Greene to shriek! Coker was tired of useless jaw, when he had given his instructions with perfect clearness, and there was really nothing more to be said. He went out of the study and shut the door. Potter and Greene were left gazing at one another helplessly.

"The ass!" said Potter, at last.

"The idiot!" said Greene.

"The dummy!" said Potter.

"The frabjous chump!" said Greene.

"Which of us is going to pull Wingate's leg and get him out in blacker, for that dangerous maniac

to get himself sacked?" asked Potter.

"Which?" grinned Greene.

Coker of the Fifth was getting hold of Prout's cane—and getting out of the House in blacker with great caution. Coker, evidently, had no doubt that the mouse was going to play up, as directed by the lion! Coker took that for granted. Coker often took too much for granted.

At seven o'clock, while Coker lurked in the black-out with Prout's cane in a deadly grip, Potter and Greene were in the games study, talking Soccer with other Fifth Form men. They did not think of seeking the Greyfriars captain and sending him forth to his doom with a spoof message from the Head! They did not dream of it! If Coker fancied—as evidently he did—that Potter and Greene were going to play up in this remarkable scheme. Coker had another guess coming.

As seven chimed, Potter and Greene remembered Coker—and exchanged a grin.

They wondered how long he would linger in the damp and dismal shades of the black-out, waiting! Coker was a sticker—he might wait half an hour—a whole hour! Potter and Greene charitably wished him joy of it.

SAFE!

"SAFE enough!" said the Bounder.

"You utter idiot!"

Tom Redwing spoke in measured tones. He could hardly control his angry impatience.

Herbert Vernon-Smith laughed. He was standing in the doorway of Study No. 4 in the Remove, glancing up and down the passage.

At the landing end, the Famous Five could be seen, in a group. In the doorway of No. 7 was the fattest figure at Greyfriars School. Coming down the passage was the bony figure of Fisher T. Fish. So the Bounder waited—he did not want eyes on him when he made a move.

Redwing, in the study, was addressing the back of Smithy's head. Smithy looked round at him, laughing.

"Don't be an ass!" he said. "It's safe as houses! Think anybody will spot a chap in blacker?"

"You dummy!" said Redwing. "Lamb's watching you like a cat! What happened the other day about that booby-trap shows that he wants to get shut of you—"

"Because I've spotted some of his secrets!" sneered the Bounder.

"All the more reason why you should be careful, if you're right in that! Anyhow, he's fed up to the back teeth with you, and he will get you turfed out if he can! You know it."

"Don't I?" agreed Smithy.

"And now you're giving him a chance! Suppose you're spotted out of the House in the black-out? Suppose you're missed—"

"Safe enough till prep. And I'm not going far—only as far as the old spinney, to speak a word to a man."

Redwing gave a grunt of disgust.

"Bill Lodgey, I suppose—or Joe Banks!" he snapped. "Haven't you any sense, Smithy? If you can't be decent, you might be careful! Suppose Lamb comes up to the studies—he does at times? You've said yourself that he comes up on the chance of catching you out."

"I'm wise to that!" grinned the Bounder. "But Lamb won't be coming up to the studies this time."

"How do you know?"

"Because he's dining with the Head this evening!" answered Vernon-Smith. "Even Lamb can't pop off from the Head's table to keep an eye on me."

"Oh!" said Redwing. "Are you sure?"

"Quite! If you used your eyes, you'd have noticed that he had his boiled shirt on at roll. Lamb will be in the Head's house—and I shall be back long before he's back! What about that, you old croaker?"

Redwing was silent. Smithy was, after all, not so reckless as usual; he had timed this escapade for the evening when Lamb would be in the Head's house, safe off the scene.

It was risky enough—it was always risky to break out after lock-up; but Lamb, at all events, had not to be reckoned with.

"You're a fool to go, Smithy!" said Tom, at last. "It's never safe—and it's a rotten game, as you know without my telling you. I can't understand a fellow risking getting booted out of his school for the sake of dabbling in putrid blackguardism like backing horses—"

"Man must have a spot of excitement!" yawned the Bounder. "I'm on to a good thing, too! Lucky Lucy is sure to win on Saturday—weather permitting."

"Oh, chuck it!" exclaimed Redwing, in disgust. "You ought to be jolly well ashamed of yourself!"

"Taken as read!" grinned the Bounder, and he stepped out of the study.

Harry Wharton & Co. had gone downstairs—Billy Bunter had rolled after them—Fisher T. Fish had disappeared; and the passage was, for the moment, vacant.

Smithy cut along to the box-room stair. Plenty of fellows in the Remove knew all about the manners and customs of the scapegrace of Greyfriars; but it was safer, all the same, to have no eyes on him, when he went. He disappeared up the box-room stair.

Tom Redwing left the study, with a frowning brow. He was angry with his chum—but anxious for him, too.

Mr. Lamb's bleat came to his ears as he came down.

He glanced over the banisters, and saw the art master talking to Mr. Prout.

Lamb, as the Bounder had described it, had his boiled shirt on; he was in evening clothes, and the spotless shirt gleamed out from under his overcoat, which he was buttoning as he talked to Prout.

"Did you say ten minutes past, Mr. Prout?" he bleated. "Dear me, then I must be moving—the Head

dines at half-past, I think. Yes, I am sure it is half-past—is it not?"

Prout smiled indulgently. In a patronising way, Prout was kind to that little ass, Lamb. It was like that artistic little man, with his mind deep in "arty" matters, to forget the time the great man dined!

"Yes, that is right, Mr. Lamb!" said Prout. "Half-past seven! You have ample time—it is little more than ten minutes past."

Mr. Lamb nodded.

"I must not be late," he bleated. "I am sometimes late, Mr. Prout—I am, I fear, a little absent-minded at times—just a little absent-minded. But I must not be late on such an occasion as this—I really must not! The Head would be displeased, I am sure! No, no, I must not be late."

Redwing passed the two masters unheeded. It was difficult, listening to that fussy little man, to believe that he was not genuine—that he was, under that outward manner, hard and cold and relentless, as the Bounder believed. Yet towards the Bounder, at least, he was relentless—Redwing knew that.

Tom went into the Rag. He was glad that Lamb was now going—Vernon-Smith had already been gone ten minutes or more, and if it had occurred to Lamb to suspect him, and look for him, he would have been found missing from the House. However, that was not likely, as Lamb was now due to start for the Head's house.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" called out Bob Cherry, as Tom came into the Rag. "Where's Smithy? We want Smithy to make up four."

Boxing-gloves were piled on the table in the Rag. There was going to be a four-handed mill, and the Famous Five, Squiff, and Tom Brown were ready.

Redwing coloured. Smithy was not available; but he did not feel disposed to explain where Smithy was—on his way to the old spinney in Friardale Lane to meet a sporting friend about a horse!

"Isn't Smithy coming down?" asked Harry Wharton.

"No; I'll take his place if you like," said Tom.

"Right-ho! Shove on the mittens, then."

There was rather a noise in the Rag, with four pairs of boxers going strong. But that did not prevent the juniors from hearing a sudden sound that came from outside.

It was a loud, startled yell.

"I say, you fellows, what's that?" squeaked Billy Bunter.

"What the thump——" exclaimed Bob.

The boxing stopped at once. Yell on yell came from the quad. There was a rush to the window.

"Remember black-out!" called out Harry Wharton.

And the light was shut off before the juniors dragged the blinds aside and opened the window, to stare out into the dim, dusky quad, wondering what on earth was happening there. Something evidently was, for wild yell on yell came from the darkness.

O.K.!

HORACE COKER grinned.

It was a vengeful grin. His grip closed harder on Prout's cane! Coker of the Fifth was ready—ready and watching, waiting for his man. And now his man was coming!

Coker was some strategist! Strategy, Coker thought, was his long suit! Wingate had whopped him, and Wingate had to have that whopping back—that, as Coker had said, was as fixed and immutable as the laws of the Medes and Persians. Coker simply could not rest till he had handed back that whopping.

Now he was going to hand it back.

It was dark! Coker had chosen the darkest spot. Wingate, when he got that spoof message from the Head, would walk across to the headmaster's house. There was nothing unusual in that—no reason why Wingate should smell a rat; no reason why he shouldn't come, if Potter or Greene had faithfully delivered that spoof message as directed by their great chief.

He would enter the Head's garden gate, and walk up to the Head's house. That garden gate was deeply shadowed by trees—leafless, but very shadowy on a dim February night. In that darkest spot lurked Coker.

Wingate was not likely to carry a light. He knew the well-trodden way as well as he knew the back of his hand; moreover, A.R.P. rules were strictly enforced at Greyfriars. Wingate would come in the dark.

How was he going to know that it was Coker who collared him all of a sudden, up-ended him, and whopped him?

He couldn't know!

Coker, as he had said, would have preferred to do this deed in the light of day! Greatly would he have preferred to stalk into Wingate's study and whop him there with his own ash. But that meant the sack—and Coker did not want to be sacked. The deed had to be done in darkness, if done at all—and it had to be done—that was fixed like the laws of the ancient people to whom Coker referred as the Swedes and Nasturtiums.

And here he came!

Coker, of course, could not see him. Coker was no cat, to see in the dark. But he heard him!

From the direction of the School House came footsteps, heading for that gate! Whose footsteps but Wingate's—dispatched by that spoof message that the Head wanted to see him in his house?

Coker, never doubting for a moment that the mouse had played up to the lion, as directed, never doubted that it was Wingate coming! Coker knew nothing of the art master's appointment to dine with the Head that evening. Coker hardly noticed the existence of the art master at Greyfriars at all, and certainly knew nothing of his engagements or movements.

All, so far as Coker knew, was going according to plan. It did not even occur to him that neither Potter nor Greene had delivered that

spoof message to Wingate. Had he not directed them so to do?

So Coker grinned—a vengeful grin, and gripped Prout's cane. He peered in the dark. Something like a black shadow loomed up in the darkness.

That was enough for Coker.

He rushed.

A sinewy, muscular arm was thrown round a coat-collar, and the dim figure was instantly up-ended. It was tipped over on its face. So sudden, so unexpected, was that attack in the dark, that the wariest fellow could not have been on his guard, and could not have failed to be taken utterly by surprise.

Coker's victim certainly was! He gave a startled gasp as he went down. Then he was prone on the earth; and Coker was getting in some quick, solid work with Prout's cane.

Swipe, swipe, swipe!

A frantic yell pealed from the recipient of those swipes. They landed on the tail of an overcoat, but they landed hard. They landed fearfully hard. Horace Coker had plenty of beef, and he put it all into those terrific swipes.

Swipe, swipe, swipe!

Yell on yell roared out in the dark.

Coker darted away.

He had handed out six—a rapid six—the same that Wingate had handed out to him. Coker was satisfied.

Prompt retreat was indicated as the next move. Those fearful, frantic yells must have been heard in the House! The sooner Coker was off the scene, the less likely Coker was to catch an early train in the morning!

Coker flew.

Flying, in the black-out, was an uncomfortable business. Coker crashed into a tree, then a fence, then into a wall, then stumbled over a buttress, and rolled. But he rallied every time and rushed on.

In the distance a door had opened. A flash-light gleamed into the darkness. Those wild yells, evidently, had been heard.

Coker cut round the buildings. He stumbled, bumped, and banged—but he kept on, regardless. He reached the back window that he had left open for his return. He tumbled in headlong.

He closed that window, and strolled away—he could stroll now.

Very likely they would hunt for any fellow who was out of the House in blacker. There might be a roll-call, to ascertain if any fellow was out! Coker's promptness had made him safe! He was not out—he was in! He was, in fact, going to be very much in evidence, in readiness for inquiry!

"Anything up, you kids?" asked Coker, as he came on several startled juniors coming down the staircase.

"Didn't you hear?" asked Temple of the Fourth. "Something's happening out in the quad—an accident in blacker, I think!"

Coker nodded, and went on up the staircase! He grinned as he went. He found the door of the Fifth Form games study open, and some of the Fifth there.

Blundell called out to him.

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"Hallo, Coker! Know what's up?"
 "A fag's just told me something's happened to somebody out in blacker," answered Coker carelessly.

Potter and Greene looked at him. They looked at him in silent, horrified, dismayed inquiry.

Coker gave them a wink.
 "You fellows coming to the study?" he asked.

They came!
 Inside the study, Coker closed the door, and smiled at the chums.

"O.K!" he said.
 "You — you — you——" Potter babbled. "Have you—— Oh crikey! For the love of Mike, Coker, what have you done?"

"Worked like a charm!" said Coker. "I didn't have to wait very long. What are you fellows blinking at? You knew what I was going to do! Didn't I make it clear? Wingate's had it!"

"He—he—he's had it!" gabbled Greene.

"Yes; your message sent him along all right, and I was ready for him! He's had six on the bags—with Prout's cane! Easy as falling off a form! I fancy I can put up a little strategy when required!" said Coker complacently. "He's had it—same as he gave me—a spot harder, perhaps!"

"You — you — you've actually whopped Wingate, the captain of the school!" said Potter faintly.

"Didn't I say I would? Wharrer you mean? You knew what he was going to get when you gave him the message——"

"You born idiot, we never gave him the message!" hissed Greene. "If you had the sense of a bunny rabbit you'd know we wouldn't."

Coker started.
 "You didn't!" he ejaculated.

"No, you ass! No, you fathead! No, you chump! No, you blithering burbler!"

"Well, that's pretty thick," said Coker. "Letting a man down! Not that it matters, as it's turned out—he came all the same. The Head must have sent for him if you never gave him the message—he came all right, and I got him."

"You got Wingate?"
 "Yes. Tipped him over, gave him six of the very best, and left him yelling!"

"Oh crumbs!"
 "Oh crikey!"

"Keep it dark!" said Coker. "I'd rather Wingate knew, really; but, as I've said, it wouldn't do! Owing to the swab being a prefect, I can't let this become known. You've let me down, not giving him that message, but as it's turned out all right, I'll overlook that! I got him—O.K!"

Potter and Greene just gazed at him; they could not speak. Coker seemed to have dumbfounded them.

Coker smiled at them cheerily. They had let him down—failing to play mouse to his lion. But, as it had turned out all right, Coker could afford to overlook that. Coker had no doubt that it had turned out all right.

Potter and Greene, judging by

their looks, seemed to doubt it—but from Horace Coker's point of view, at least, it was O.K.

ONE MAN MISSING!

"I SAY, you fellows! It's Lamb!"
 "Oh, my hat!"
 "What the thump——"

The juniors, crowded at the window of the Rag, glimpsed a figure that loomed up in the dusky quad, coming towards the House. A light gleamed on it—a flashlamp in the hand of Mr. Capper.

That gleam revealed the Lamb's face, red with rage. It revealed his clothes, smothered with mud.

Something, it was clear, had happened to the Lamb.

"What on earth——" breathed Bob Cherry.

"Taken a tumble in blacker," said Skinner. "Must be an ass! Capper oughtn't to be showing that light—and him a jolly old Air Warden, too! He ought to run himself in for that light!"

Mr. Prout loomed up, and the startled juniors heard him boom.

"My dear Lamb! What has happened—what——"

"I have been attacked!" The Lamb's voice came hoarse with fury, very unlike its usual bleat. "I have been attacked——"

"What?" gasped Prout.

"My dear fellow——" ejaculated Capper.

"I was suddenly seized, overthrown—struck!" The Lamb fairly stuttered. "Some boy—I think I can guess who—was lying in wait for me——"

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Mr. Capper. "Take my arm, my dear fellow—let me assist you——"

He shut off the light.

The three masters progressed towards the door of the House, Lamb spluttering between Prout and Capper.

Harry Wharton shut the window of the Rag. Nugent switched on the light again. The juniors gazed at one another.

"Here's a go!" murmured Bob.

"I say, you fellows," squeaked Billy Bunter, in great excitement, "that ass Smithy——"

"Shut up, you fat chump!" said Harry Wharton hastily.

The same thought was in his own mind—and in a good many others. If anything had happened to Lamb, it was natural for the fellows to think of Smithy at once.

"The mad ass!" breathed Nugent.

"For goodness' sake, not a word!" exclaimed Harry. "If that fathead has made a fool of himself, the less said the better."

Redwing's face was pale and startled.

"It wasn't Smithy," he said.

"Smithy has nothing to do with it."

"Where is he?" asked Johnny Bull.

"If he's in the House, the sooner he shows up the better. You heard what Lamb said—he was bound to think of Smithy first shot. Somebody got him in the dark——"

"Call him at once, Reddy!" said Lord Mauleverer. "The more wit-

nesses he has that he was in the House, the better."

Redwing did not answer that. He could not call Smithy—Smithy was out of the House—out of the school, too, if he had gone to the old spinney. But a doubt was creeping into Redwing's mind. Had Smithy come on Lamb in the black-out, and had this followed?

All eyes turned on Redwing's troubled face.

"Isn't Smithy in the House, Reddy?" asked the captain of the Remove quietly. "If he isn't——"

"Least said, soonest mended," said Bob Cherry, as Redwing did not answer. "If it was that mad fathead, keep it dark if we can!"

The clang of a bell interrupted the excited discussion in the Rag. The door was thrown open, and Loder of the Sixth looked in.

"Hall, at once!" he called out.

The bell was ringing for an extra roll call. All the juniors knew what that meant. Names were to be called to ascertain whether any fellow was out of the House in the black-out. If any fellow was, it would not be necessary to look further for Lamb's assailant.

"That tears it!" murmured Bob.

"Unless Smithy's got back!" muttered Harry.

"Well, he's had time—it's five minutes since Lamb started to yell. Smithy wouldn't let the grass grow under his feet!"

"Bet you he's back, and ready to make out that he's never been out," grunted Johnny Bull.

The Removites joined the rest of the school, assembling in Hall for calling-over. Redwing's heart was like lead as he went—Vernon-Smith was not to be seen in the crowd.

Surely, if he had done this mad thing, he would have given up his intended excursion and cut back at once. But he was not present.

"Not here," whispered Skinner, when the Remove were in Hall. "Man missing, my beloved 'earers!"

"I say, you fellows, Smithy ain't here!"

"Oh, the fool!" muttered Bob. "The silly chump!"

There was a buzz of excitement in Hall as the Forms gathered in their places. News was spreading of the startling happening—all Greyfriars knew that a master had been waylaid in the black-out. The whole school thrilled with excitement, wondering who was going to be bunked for it. Somebody, it was certain, was!

If the Remove fellows had had any doubt, it would have vanished when Vernon-Smith failed to appear in his place. Only one member of the Remove was missing, and that was Herbert Vernon-Smith.

"Here's the Head," whispered Bob.

There was a hush as Dr. Locke entered by the upper door. His face was very stern. Mr. Lamb did not appear. But evidently the matter had been reported to the headmaster, and Dr. Locke had come in person to call the roll. The grim frown on his face boded no good to the offender when discovered.

Most faces were excited. In the Fifth two were as dismayed as

excited. This news came like a thunderclap to Potter and Greene of the Fifth.

They looked at Wingate, standing with the prefects, and certainly not looking as if he had lately been whopped in the dark quad.

But somebody had been whopped.

That idiot Coker had got the wrong man in the black-out! It seemed certain to Potter and Greene.

They looked at one another in a ghastly sort of way, and looked at Coker.

Coker seemed quite cheery and self satisfied.

The awful suspicion that had occurred to his chums had evidently not occurred to Horace Coker.

Potter breathed a whisper into Horace's large ear.

"Are you sure it was Wingate you got?"

Coker stared at him.

"Don't jaw about it here, you ass!" he answered. "Do you want all the school to hear?"

"Are you sure?" hissed Potter.

"Eh, of course."

"He doesn't look like it! Look at him!"

Coker smiled serenely.

"I dare say he won't mention it," he said. "Prefects' swank, you know. I dare say he won't shout out all over the school that he's had six on the bags!"

"You silly owl, he would raise Cain—any man would!"

"That's rot! You can see he hasn't! Looks to me as if he's going to say nothing about it! Not that I care, if he does."

"Did you get Lamb in the dark?" breathed Potter.

"Don't be an ass!"

"Did you?" hissed Greene.

"Don't be a fool!"

"But—"

"Silence!" called out Wingate of the Sixth. The Head was about to call the roll.

"Silence!" echoed the other prefects.

Potter and Greene were silent. They had a doubt—an awful, horrid doubt.

Coker hadn't! Coker was quite sure that he had got his man! Was Coker the fellow to make potty mistakes? Obviously not! If anything had happened to Lamb, as well as Wingate, it was merely a coincidence with which Coker had no concern.

The Head's deep voice called name after name.

"Adsum!" came promptly to every name—with one exception. Vernon-Smith failed to answer when his name was called.

Dr. Locke paused, glanced over the Remove, and repeated that name very distinctly. Still there was no answer.

With compressed lips, the headmaster went on with the roll. It finished—no other man was missing! Then the school was dismissed.

Coker of the Fifth gave his pals a sarcastic smile as they went out.

"Young Vernon-Smith!" he said.

"He's the man they want! Cheeky little rotter! Fancy pitching into his beak in the black-out!"

Potter and Greene did not answer

that. Really, they did not know what to think.

If Wingate had had that whopping, as Coker firmly believed, he showed no signs of it, and was evidently not going to do a song and dance about it—which was amazing. On the other hand, a member of Lamb's Form was missing—and must have been out of the house when Lamb was assailed in the dark.

Whether Coker had made an idiotic mistake, or whether young Vernon-Smith had been larking with his beak, Potter and Greene really could not tell. They could only hope that Coker was right!

SMITHY IS FOR IT!

"IS that you, Vernon-Smith?"

The Bounder's heart leaped almost into his mouth.

He had returned—utterly unaware of what had been going on at the school during his absence. Quietly, he clambered in at the box-room window and shut the window after him. Then from the darkness came that startling voice—the voice of Wingate of the Sixth.

The Bounder stood quite still, peering in the gloom, his heart thumping.

He was caught!

Somehow he had been missed from the House a search had followed, and the unfastened window discovered. He understood that at once. The head prefect had waited at that window for his return. He was caught as he came in—not that that mattered, as it was evidently known that he was out.

Caught!

For a long moment the Bounder stood as if stunned—overwhelmed by the outcome of his reckless folly. But he pulled himself together. He needed all his coolness now.

"Is that you, Wingate?" His voice was cool, though his heart was thumping.

"Yes—come!"

Wingate left the box-room, and Vernon-Smith followed him down the stair into the Remove passage.

That passage was crowded with Remove fellows. All eyes turned on Vernon-Smith as he appeared at Wingate's heels.

The Bounder glanced at them. They had known that Wingate was waiting for him, having discovered the unfastened window. They could not have warned Smithy—not that it would have been of any use if they had.

"Follow me, Vernon-Smith!" said Wingate quietly.

"Hold on a minute, Wingate!" The Bounder breathed hard. "I've been out in blacker—you know that! I know it's against the rules—but it's not exactly a crime! Can't you handle it?"

Wingate looked at him.

"I mean there's no need to march me to Lamb!" said the Bounder. "Fellows have gone out in blacker before and had six from a prefect! I shan't raise the roof if you give me six! I don't see that you need

drag Lamb into it. Besides, as he's dining with the Head—"

"What?"

"Perhaps you haven't heard of the giddy distinction for our beak," said the Bounder. He was quite cool now. "I happen to know that he's dining with the Head. Don't keep a report in cold storage till he comes back! Give me six and have done with it!"

"Then you knew that Mr. Lamb was dining with the Head this evening!" said Wingate slowly. "That's how you knew where to wait for him, is it?"

The Bounder stared.

"I knew—a dozen fellows knew," he answered. "It's no secret when a beak dines with the Head, that I know of. I don't know what you mean about waiting for him. Catch me waiting for him."

"You needn't say any more! You'd better keep it till you see the Head," said the Greyfriars captain. "Come on."

"You're not taking me to the Head, Wingate?"

"Yes."

The Bounder's eyes blazed.

"And why?" he demanded. "Haven't fellows cut out in blacker before? Is it the first time it's happened? What are you making a special mark of me for?"

"It's the first time that a young rascal has laid for his beak in the dark and knocked him over, I think," said Wingate dryly. "Follow me!"

"Knocked him over! Gone mad?" asked Vernon-Smith in sheer wonder. "Who's laid for a beak and knocked him over?"

Wingate did not trouble to answer. He signed to Vernon-Smith to follow him, and moved down the passage.

Vernon-Smith cast a startled look round at staring faces. For the first time he understood that something must have happened in his absence of which he knew nothing.

"Reddy! Has anything happened while I've been out?" he asked sharply.

"Oh crikey!" ejaculated Billy Bunter. "I say, you fellows, hark at him! He doesn't know what's happened! He, he, he!"

"Innocent as a jolly old dove!" murmured Skinner.

"Shut up!" muttered Bob Cherry.

"Yes, Smithy!" Tom Redwing answered his chum. "Somebody knocked Mr. Lamb over in the black-out, and he came in smothered with mud!"

"Oh!" gasped the Bounder.

"Didn't you, Smithy?" asked Hazeldene.

Vernon-Smith gave Hazel a fierce look.

"No, I didn't! I never saw anything of Lamb! I never knew anything had happened! Does the cur make out I did it?"

"You were missed at call-over—they had a special roll after it happened," said Harry Wharton. "That puts it on you, Smithy."

"Oh!" The Bounder caught his breath. "Lamb wouldn't lose a chance like this. What fool can have pitched into him in the dark? Does

he say he saw me? It's a lie if he does!"

"That will do, Vernon-Smith!" interrupted Wingate. "Are you coming, or do you want me to take you by the collar?"

The Bounder's eyes flashed at him. "Answer me this!" he shouted savagely. "I tell you I never saw Lamb—never went near him! I've been out in blacker, that's all—it had nothing to do with Lamb! I thought he was at tiffin with the Head. I shouldn't have gone out at all, but for that. Does Lamb say he saw me?"

Wingate gave him a very curious look.

"Mr. Lamb has said nothing, except that he was knocked over and struck in the dark," he answered. "You're to go to the Head because you were out of the House at the time. That's all; now come."

"It wasn't you, Smithy?" exclaimed Redwing.

"Of course it wasn't! Think I'd give the man such a chance at me, when he's pining to see me sacked?" exclaimed the Bounder bitterly. "Did it really happen, or is he telling lies?"

"Draw it mild, old man!" muttered Bob Cherry. "He came in raging, smothered with mud—we all heard him yelling when he went down."

"I never did it! I——"

Wingate's hand dropped on the Bounder's shoulder.

"Come!" he said.

And Herbert Vernon-Smith was led down the passage, and went downstairs with the Greyfriars captain.

The Remove passage was left in a buzz of excitement.

"This is the finish for Smithy!" muttered Bob Cherry dismally. "He must have been mad to do it!"

"He says he did not!" snapped Redwing.

"What's the good of talking rot?" said Bolsover major. "You know Smithy did it, same as we all do! He's been on Lamb's track all the term. Now he's gone a bit over the odds—just like Smithy!"

"Of course he'd say he didn't!" chuckled Billy Bunter. "Catch any fellow saying that he did!"

"Not likely!" grinned Skinner.

"I'm afraid it's pretty clear, Reddy!" said Harry Wharton. "Smithy was the only man out of the House——"

"The man had plenty of time to cut back! Smithy had plenty of time—if he had done it! Why should he stay out and get spotted?"

"Um! Yes! But——"

"Well, why was Smithy out if he wasn't laying for Lamb?" asked Johnny Bull. "He knew where to lay for him—he's let that out to Wingate. Why else was he out of the House at all?"

"Not for that!" muttered Redwing.

"Pub-crawling?" asked Johnny, with a snort. "Well, it won't do him much good to tell the Head that! He'd be sacked as fast for that as for knocking a beak over."

"I say, you fellows, Smithy's number's up!"

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"The last, long jump!" sighed Skinner.

Redwing went into his study and shut the door. The rest of the Remove remained in the passage, in an excited buzz, till prep. But when they went into the studies to prep, preparation was rather neglected by most of the Remove. Smithy reigned supreme as a topic—and there was hardly a fellow in the Form who doubted that this was his last night at Greyfriars School.

SACKED!

"VERNON-SMITH, sir!" said Wingate.

Smithy stepped into the Head's study.

"Thank you, Wingate!" said the Head.

The Greyfriars captain withdrew, and closed the door—with rather a compassionate glance at the junior as he went. The fellow was a reckless young rascal; but he was up for the sack.

Mr. Lamb was with the Head. His eyes fixed on Vernon-Smith, with a look in them like cold steel.

The Bounder faced the headmaster at his writing-table. He was still cool—realising only too clearly that he needed all his coolness, all his presence of mind, now. But his heart was heavy. Lamb, he knew, would not spare him. And the Head's expression told plainly enough that his mind was made up. This was the last time that the scapegrace of Greyfriars was to appear before him.

"I have but a few words to say to you, Vernon-Smith!" said the Head icily. "The last time you came before me I gave you a very serious warning, which you have refused to heed. Now you are before me again—on the most serious possible charge—that of actually attacking your Form-master! You are expelled, Vernon-Smith!"

The Bounder panted.

"I——" he began.

"Do not interrupt me! But for the lateness of the hour, I should send you to your home to-night!" said the Head sternly. "That is impossible—but you will leave by the earliest available train in the morning. You will pack your box immediately after breakfast to-morrow. That is all! You may now leave my study!"

"Will you let me speak, sir?" panted Vernon-Smith.

"It is futile for you to speak—there is no possible or imaginable excuse for your action! You have given Mr. Lamb incessant trouble ever since he was kind enough to take Mr. Quelch's Form. Only a few days ago, you were brought before me—and I prevailed on Mr. Lamb to do his best to tolerate you in his Form! I made it perfectly clear to you that unless you amended your conduct, you would have to leave. Now——"

"I never touched Mr. Lamb in the black-out, sir."

The Head gave a little start.

"Bless my soul!" he ejaculated. "Do you mean that you are venturing

to deny your own action, Vernon-Smith?"

"I never touched him—never knew anything had happened, till I came in, and was told!" exclaimed the Bounder passionately. "Mr. Lamb cannot say that it was I—he cannot say that he saw me."

Lamb peered at him over his glasses.

"That is certainly correct," he said. "I saw no one in the darkness. I had no doubt that it was you, Vernon-Smith, as I do not believe that there is another boy in this school capable of such an act. But——"

"The fact that Mr. Lamb did not see you is quite immaterial," said Dr. Locke. "It was impossible to see anyone in the black-out, and that obviously is the reason why the black-out was chosen for the time of the attack. You need say no more, Vernon-Smith."

"I never touched him, sir! I thought he was dining with you, or I shouldn't have gone out in blacker at all."

"Certainly, the person who attacked me knew that I was going to Dr. Locke's house," said Mr. Lamb dryly, "otherwise, he could not have waylaid me."

The Bounder bit his lip. The Lamb had turned his own words against him.

Did the man believe that he had done it?

There was little doubt that he did! Indeed, the Bounder could hardly have expected otherwise. The black-out had been picked for the attack, so that the assailant could escape unrecognised. Lamb, therefore, could not have seen who his assailant was. It was natural that he should suspect the member of his Form who had carried on a feud against him from the beginning of the term.

Suspicion, certainly, would not have been enough in a matter involving the expulsion of a Greyfriars man. But Smithy had been out of the House at the time. He had been the only fellow out—or, at all events, who was known to have been out.

Lamb, as a matter of fact, had a vague impression that it was a bigger and burlier fellow than any in the Remove who had grasped him in the dark and pitched him over. But that impression was vague, and he gave no heed to it. As the Bounder had bitterly said, he was not likely to lose this chance.

What was the hapless scapegrace to say?

Dr. Locke made a gesture to the door. The matter was decided and done with; he was waiting for Vernon-Smith to go.

But the Bounder did not go.

"I never touched Mr. Lamb, sir!" he said huskily. "I swear I never did! I never knew it had happened, or——"

"What were you doing out of the House, Vernon-Smith?" asked Dr. Locke icily.

The Bounder could not tell him. If he told the Head that he had scudded along to the old spinney to see Bill Lodgey, and put a quid on Lucky



Redwing gave his chum a quick look of inquiry. "Sacked?" he almost whispered. "Yes!" muttered Vernon-Smith. "I'm going—in the morning!"

Lucy, it certainly would not have helped him. What could he say?

"Fellows have cut out in the blacker before, sir!" he faltered. "I—I know it's against the rules, but some fellows think it a lark."

"Indeed!" said the Head dryly.

The Bounder's heart sank. He knew that the Head would not believe that he had cut out in blacker for a lark—it was the best he could say, but it was no use. And the truth he dared not tell.

"If that is all you have to say, Vernon-Smith—"

"I never touched Mr. Lamb, sir! I never went near him—never even knew—"

Dr. Locke raised his hand.

"That is sufficient, Vernon-Smith!" he said. "Leave my study; and, in the morning, carry out the instructions I have given you."

"Then I—I—I'm sacked?" stammered the Bounder.

"You are expelled from Greyfriars! Now go!"

The Bounder gave him a last look—and went! It was useless to linger—useless to repeat, again and again, that he had not done what the Head had not the slightest doubt that he had done—what, in fact, he might have done in a reckless temper.

He did not look at Lamb—but he knew that the man smiled as he went. The man believed this—but whether he believed it or not, he would make the most of it! This was the end of his feud—the Lamb had got shut of him at last.

Slowly—very slowly—the Bounder went up to the Remove studies. The

juniors were at prep by that time; and he was glad not to see a crowd awaiting him. He went quietly into Study No. 4.

Redwing was sitting at the table. He gave his chum a quick look of inquiry.

The Bounder nodded, and Redwing caught his breath.

"Sacked?" he almost whispered.

"Yes!"

"Oh! Smithy!"

The Bounder threw himself into a chair. His face was haggard; his brow black and bitter.

"He's got by with it at last!" he said. "The man with secrets to keep—he's got by with it at last! I'm going—in the morning." He gave a savage laugh. "I never did it! That makes no difference!"

"If you hadn't been out, Smithy, and—" faltered Tom.

"If!" jeered Smithy. "Fat lot of good saying that now. I'm sacked! That rat has done me at last! He's afraid of me—afraid of what I may find out—and he won't be afraid—after to-morrow! He's done me."

Redwing sat miserably silent.

Lamb, no doubt, had not lost his chance. But he could not have taken a chance if the Bounder had not given him one. The Head's judgment followed, as a matter of course, when it was known that Vernon-Smith had been out of House bounds at the time. The Bounder could not explain where he had been—the truth would have earned him the sack, as surely as the supposed attack on the art master. He could not say why he had got out in blacker—so what was the Head to conclude?

Neither, as Redwing could see if the Bounder could not, was the sentence unjust. If he had not, in truth, attacked Lamb, he was sacked for what he had not done—but he had done enough; his sentence would have been the same, had the Head known that he had gone out to meet a racing man.

But the knowledge that his chum had asked for it—that he deserved it—was no comfort to Tom Redwing. "Sacked!" repeated the Bounder. "What will my father say?"

And he sat silent. It was too late to think of that now; and, now that it was too late, he was thinking of it.

ALL RIGHT FOR COKER!

"YOU young ass!" said Coker reprovingly.

Vernon-Smith gave him a glare. After prep the Remove fellows were coming down from the studies.

Smithy had done no prep—on his last night at Greyfriars. All the Remove knew now that he was sacked—it had come, at last. But the Bounder's manner was cool, and he looked his usual self as he came across the study landing. Many eyes were upon him, and it was a matter of pride with the Bounder to keep his chin up. Whatever his feelings were like, Smithy was not the man to wear his heart upon his sleeve.

Coker and Potter and Greenc of the Fifth were on the landing. The two latter glanced curiously at Vernon-Smith.

They could not help having a horrid THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,671.

doubt in their minds. It was such an extraordinary coincidence for a Remove man to have pitched into his beak about the same time that Coker had lain in wait to pitch into the captain of the school.

Still, he had been out of the House, and they had heard that that special member of the Remove was always in rows with his beak. He was just the cheeky kind of young sweep to have done such a thing. Anyhow, it was up to the Head to judge; and if the young rascal had anything to say for himself it was certain that he could rely on his headmaster for justice. Certainly it looked as if he had gone out specially in blacker to lay for Lamb—and had not had the luck to get back before he was missed.

Horace Coker gave the Bounder a severe look. Coker, as usual, was troubled by a constitutional inability to mind his own business.

This sort of thing, Coker thought, was pretty thick—a kid laying for his beak in blacker, and pitching into him. The fact that Coker had lain for a prefect in blacker, with the same intention, was on a very different plane. Whatever Coker of the Fifth did was, naturally, right in the eyes of Horace James Coker! Cheek on the part of a junior was a very different matter.

"I suppose you're sacked, young Vernon-Smith!" said Coker sternly. "Blessed if I ever heard of such a thing! From what I hear, you knocked your beak over—actually knocked him over. Are you bunked?"

"Find out, you fool!" was Smithy's answer.

Coker frowned.

"No lip!" he said warningly. "If you're bunked, I won't whop you—but no lip! What did you want to pitch into that tame little rabbit Lamb for, you young ruffian? From what I hear, he lets you kids do exactly as you like—a bit different from when Quelch was here."

"Oh, shut up!" said Vernon-Smith. "Keep your jaw for the Fifth, Coker!"

"Things are coming to something in this school!" said Coker, addressing Potter and Greene. "Prefects fancy they can whop Fifth Form men—and perhaps they're sorry for it afterwards, too! Remove kids lay for their beak in the dark and knock him over! Pretty state of affairs—this school is going to pot, if you ask me."

"It was you who pitched into Lamb, young 'un?" asked Potter. A doubt still lingered in the back of his mind.

"Did the Head sack you?" asked Greene.

Vernon-Smith did not take the trouble to answer—he walked on towards the stairs.

Coker reached towards him, grabbed him by the shoulder, and jerked him back.

"Can't you answer, you cheeky young sweep?" demanded Coker. "Think you can cheek the Fifth, as well as knock your beak over? If you're not sacked, I'll jolly well whop you for your cheek! If you are, I'll—Yarooooh!"

Thump!

Smithy, in his present mood, was not averse from a row. In fact, a row came as a relief to his bitter feelings. Certainly he had no patience to waste on the obtuse and obstreperous Horace.

His fist landed on Coker's brawny chest, taking him by surprise, and sending him staggering backwards.

"Oh!" gasped Coker.

Bump!

Coker sprawled on his back.

"Have another, you cheeky fool?" asked the Bounder, his eyes glittering at the sprawling Fifth Form man. "You've only got to ask!"

"I—I—I—" Coker spluttered, as he scrambled up. "I—I—I'll spifficate you! I'll—I'll—"

Coker hurled himself like a ten-ton Tank at the Bounder. But he did not reach him. There were a dozen Remove fellows on the study landing—and they rushed to Smithy's rescue as one man.

The Famous Five grasped Coker in a bunch. Squiff, Peter Todd, Tom Redwing and Bolsover major had hold of him the next moment.

Coker bumped on the landing again, harder than before. He bumped and roared.

"Here, stop that, you kids!" said Potter.

"Yes—stop it!" said Greene.

But they left it at that. They were not keen on a shindy with a mob of fags, if Coker was.

"Bump him!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Bump him terrifically!" exclaimed the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Urrgh—leggo—I'll pulverise the lot of you! Leggo! Potter—Greene—yarooooh!" roared Coker.

Bump!

"Oh crumbs! Oh crikey! I'll—"

Bump!

"Oooooogh!" spluttered Coker, breathlessly.

"Come on, Smithy, old man!" said Bob Cherry; and the Bounder, laughing, went down the staircase with the crowd of Removites.

Coker sat up, in a winded state! He sat and gurgled till Potter and Greene kindly gave him a hand up, and he resumed the perpendicular.

"I—I—I'll—" spluttered Coker. "Where's that cheeky young scoundrel? I'll mop him up—I'll—Where is he?"

"Never mind him!" said Potter soothingly. "Leave the kid alone. Coker—if he's bunked, he's got enough!"

"Serve him jolly well right if he's bunked!" hooted Coker. "Nice state of affairs—a fag knocking his beak over in blacker—"

"Worse than knocking a prefect over?" asked Potter sarcastically.

"Don't be a fool, Potter!"

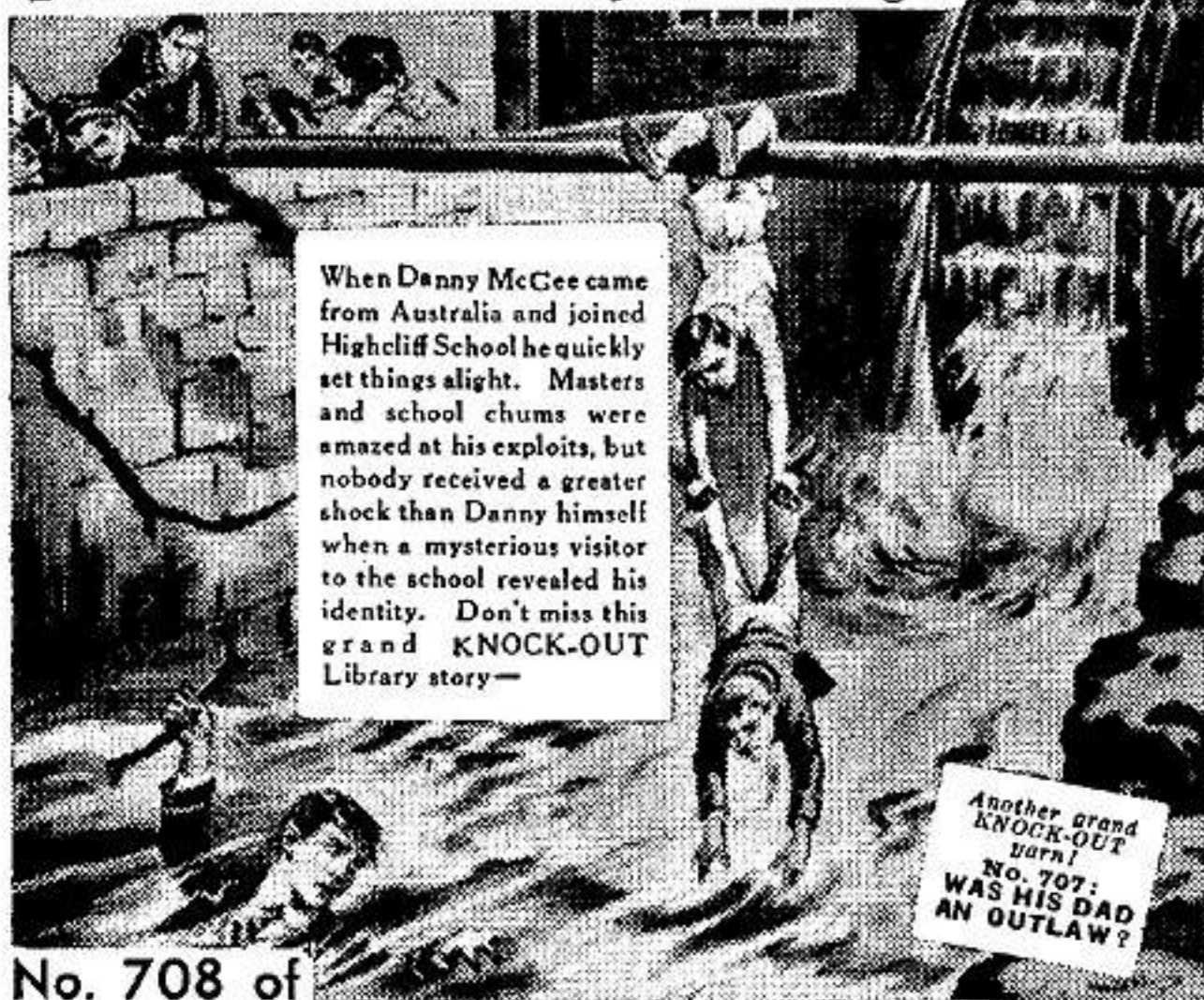
"I suppose he did it!" muttered Greene uneasily.

"Think the Head would bunk him for nothing?" snorted Coker. "Don't be a fool, Greeney! I've a jolly good mind to go after him and whop him and the lot of them! And if he isn't bunked—Here, young Mauleverer, is that young sweep Vernon-Smith bunked or not?"

"Yaas," answered Lord Mauleverer as he passed.

The AUSSIE AT HIGHCLIFF

by T. C. Bridges



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"Bunked for pitching into his beak?" asked Potter.

"Yaas."

"That settles it, I suppose!" said Potter, as Mauleverer went down. "But I couldn't help thinking—it's a dashed queer coincidence—the same time, too, or nearly—it's dashed queer."

"The cheeky little rotter!" said Coker. "Might have run into me out in blacker—cheeky little beast! I never knew any fag was out of the House, of course—I might have run into him. Might have made it risky for me!" added Coker indignantly. "Blessed if I know what Lower boys are coming to these days. This school is going to the giddy bow-wows! Well, the Head was right to sack him for it—I will say that! I don't always agree with the Head—but I'm bound to say that he's right this time."

"Which would buck him no end, if he knew!" murmured Potter. And Greene giggled.

"I don't see anything to snigger at!" said Coker. "Are you coming down, or are you going to stand about on this landing for ever?"

They went down.

At the foot of the staircase, Wingate of the Sixth was standing, talking to Gwynne of that Form. Both of them had grave faces. They were, as a matter of fact, discussing the expulsion of Vernon-Smith—both of them feeling sorry for the reckless young rascal who had come such a mucker.

Coker winked at Potter and Greene. They walked on rather hastily—they did not want to linger in the office, if the prefects were discussing Coker's exploit. Potter dragged at Coker's arm—but he dragged in vain. Coker detached himself, and lingered as his friends went on. Coker's exploit in blacker had to be kept a secret—a deep, dark, deadly secret. Coker understood that! But old Horace had his own way of keeping secrets.

"Feeling in the pink, Wingate?" he asked blandly.

The Greyfriars captain glanced round him in surprise.

"Eh? Yes," he answered. "Why not?"

"Oh, no reason why not!" chuckled Coker. "No reason at all! Ha, ha, ha!"

And Coker of the Fifth walked on, chuckling, leaving Wingate and Gwynne staring after him.

Why Coker had asked that question, and why he chuckled, was a mystery to them—certainly they never dreamed that it was because Coker fancied that he had whopped Wingate in blacker! As Wingate had not been whopped, and had not the faintest idea that the egregious Horace had ever planned to whop him, naturally he did not suspect that.

"That chap Coker seems a bigger idiot than ever!" said Gwynne. "What the dooce is he sniggering about?"

"I suppose he can't help being an ass!" said Wingate.

And the two great men forgot Coker's existence the next moment.

Coker, that evening, was in high feather. He had avenged that whopping in the captain's study—at least, he believed that he had! If Wingate chose to keep it quiet and not let fellows know that he, George Wingate, captain of the school, had been whopped on the bags, let him! Coker did not mind. He had done it, as he had said that he would—and that was that! That evening, Coker of the Fifth was heard to chuckle and chuckle, over and over again. But he did not tell fellows why he was chuckling. His exploit, gratifying as it was, had to be kept dark—he did not want to catch the same train as that young sweep, Vernon-Smith, in the morning!

JOHN ROBINSON INTERVENES!

"GOOD-MORNING, sir!"

John Robinson touched his peaked cap respectfully.

There was a faintly curious expression on the chauffeur's olive face as he looked at Herbert Vernon-Smith.

The Bounder was tramping in the quad, his hands driven deep into his pockets, his brow black and knitted. A less keen eye than Ferrers Locke's would have discerned at a glance that the schoolboy had had a knock—and a very hard knock. Anger and bitterness were in the Bounder's face—but with them was deep trouble.

The bell for first school had gone; the Greyfriars fellows were in the Form-rooms. Only the Bounder was out. Perhaps John Robinson was surprised to see a Remove man tramping in the quad, when all others were in Form.

The Bounder, with his eyes fixed on the ground, looked up at the chauffeur's voice, and though his face did not relax, gave him a nod.

He tramped on without speaking, John Robinson's eyes following him. John Robinson was standing near the gate of the Head's garden—the spot where the attack on Mr. Lamb had taken place the previous evening in the black-out. Some interest in that spot seemed to have drawn John from the garage.

While the school was in class, doubtless John had expected to have that spot to himself. The Bounder came rather unexpectedly into the picture.

The Baker Street detective stood looking after Vernon-Smith. He had seen quite a good deal of that junior while he had played the part of the chauffeur at Greyfriars. He had learned some interesting details from him regarding Mr. Lamb—the Bounder, of course, being quite unaware that he was affording information to a detective.

Locke's opinion of that particular junior was not, perhaps, very high.

But he knew that, along with an arrogant temper and a spot of blackguardism, Herbert Vernon-Smith had some good and sterling qualities—neither could he condemn

him for his suspicion and dislike of a man whom the detective himself suspected to be the mysterious crook, Slim Jim.

That grim trouble in the schoolboy's face touched Locke. Likely enough, the reckless young rascal had landed himself in bad trouble by his own fault; at the same time, his look showed that if he had done wrong, his punishment was heavy enough.

Locke had been stooping on the damp and muddy path by the gateway, when Vernon-Smith came along, and he had straightened up at once. Smithy had not noticed his occupation—whatever it was. Now the detective stood looking after the junior—noting how his head drooped unconsciously. After a few moments' thought, he hurried after Vernon-Smith.

"Excuse me, sir!" he said, as he reached him.

The Bounder looked round.

"What the dooce do you want?" he asked ungraciously.

"Nothing, sir!" answered John Robinson civilly. "But if you will excuse me, sir, you look as if something had happened to you—and you are out of class! I hope, sir, that it is no very serious trouble."

Vernon-Smith gave a bitter laugh.

"Only the sack!" he answered.

"So bad as that, sir?" asked John Robinson.

"Yes—just so bad as that!" snapped the Bounder. "That man—that cur—that rotter you've heard me talking about, has got me at last—got me for something I haven't done! Now you know! It's partly your fault, too," he added savagely.

"My fault, sir?" said John Robinson, in surprise.


"Yes, yours!" snapped Vernon-Smith. "Didn't I tell you that man Lamb was a night-prowler, and ask you to watch for him at the window he used for getting out at night secretly, and to show him up? I'd have tipped you pretty well if you'd done it! Why shouldn't he be shown up? If you'd done what I asked, this wouldn't have happened—the Head wouldn't have let a man stay here who was in the habit of sneaking out of the school at midnight. Think he would?"

"I really cannot say, sir!" answered John Robinson, eyeing the Bounder very curiously. "But you said a moment ago, sir, that you were punished for something you had not done. If some error has been made, sir, surely it may be possible to set it right?"

"Oh, my game's up here," said the Bounder bitterly. "I've asked for it often enough—now I've got it for nothing! I dare say it serves me right! I don't blame the Head—he thinks he's got the right man—I

(Continued on next page.)

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don't see how he can think anything else. Even Lamb thinks so, I believe, but he'd make the most of it, whether he did or not, to get me turfed out. I can't imagine, myself, who handled the brute. I'd be glad to do it myself, but I can't think of any other chap in the whole school who would."

"Someone handled Mr. Lamb, sir?"

"Yes—knocked the cad over, in the black-out last night, and pitched into him, from what I hear."

"But in the black-out, sir, you would be in the House, and surely it would be easy to prove—"

"Oh, don't be an ass! Think the Head's a fool? I was out of the House!" snapped the Bounder. "I never knew what had happened till I got in. But who's going to believe that?"

John Robinson smiled slightly.

"It would want some believing, sir, if you were out in the black-out when Mr. Lamb was attacked, and your dislike of him so very well known," he said.

Vernon-Smith gave him a glare.

"Think I'm taking the trouble to tell lies to you, Robinson?" he snarled. "Think I care a hoot what you think of me? Go and eat coke!"

He swung angrily away.

But the next moment John Robinson was at his elbow again. It was certain enough that Vernon-Smith would not take the trouble to tell lies to John Robinson, chauffeur, from which Ferrers Locke was able to draw his own conclusions.

"One moment, sir!" said John.

"Oh, leave me alone!"

"Perhaps I may be able to help you, sir!" said John respectfully.

The Bounder stopped and stared at him.

"How the thump could you help?" he snapped. "Don't be an ass!"

"I am only a chauffeur, sir," said John Robinson, in his respectful way, "but it is said that two heads are better than one. I believe what you have told me, sir, and if I could help—"

"You can't!" grunted the Bounder. "Unless you were out in the black-out last night yourself, and happened to be on the spot, and can see like a cat in the dark!" he added sarcastically.

"I am certainly aware that something occurred in the black-out yesterday, sir!" said John Robinson. "I heard loud cries from the direction of the gate of Dr. Locke's garden, and came out of the garage. But there was nothing to be seen when I came—"

"That was Lamb yelling when the fellow got him," grunted Vernon-Smith. "He was heard as far off as the House—a dozen fellows heard him. Pity you didn't see who it was."

"I heard someone running, sir, but did not see anyone. I am not a cat," said John Robinson, with a smile. "It appears, then, that Mr. Lamb was attacked by some unknown person near the Head's gate."

"Yes—and I'm fixed for it!" grunted Vernon-Smith. "I'm catching the ten train at Courtfield—with a prefect in tow! I'm sacked—I don't go into Form again! Whoever it was you heard running was the man! Goodness knows who it was—I can't even guess."

"It was not you, sir!"

"I don't see how you know it wasn't!" retorted the Bounder. "I wish the Head knew! How the thump do you know it was not I, if you never saw the chap?"

"I have that opinion, at all events, sir!" said John Robinson. "It is very unfortunate that you were out in the black-out! Perhaps, sir, you may derive a lesson from this, to observe the rules of the school more carefully in the future."

"You cheeky ass!" said Vernon-Smith. "Do you think that I want a sermon from you? And what the thump are the rules of the school to me, when I'm going by the ten train? Mind your own business!"

With that, the Bounder tramped away, turning his back contemptuously on the chauffeur.

This time, John Robinson did not follow him.

He stood for a long minute looking after the Bounder as he tramped on aimlessly, savagely, killing the weary time till he had to go and catch his train. He turned at last and walked away.

He walked back to the gate of the Head's garden, unheeded and unnoticed by Vernon-Smith. At that spot, John Robinson stooped and scanned the ground—and for ten minutes or more he remained there, scanning and searching. Then, once more, he straightened up and walked away to the House.

In the Remove room, the Remove were in Form with Mr. Lamb—many of them thinking of the Bounder, whom they did not expect to see again. In the deserted quad, Vernon-Smith tramped and tramped, wearily and savagely, anger in his face, despair in his heart. Not one was thinking of John Robinson, the Head's chauffeur—little dreaming how much depended on John Robinson.

SAVED BY FERRERS LOCKE!

"MY dear Ferrers!" exclaimed Dr. Locke.

The chauffeur was standing in the headmaster's study.

Dr. Locke, called away from the Sixth Form room, came in eagerly. He shut the door and fixed his eyes in keen inquiry on the chauffeur.

"News?" he exclaimed. "News of Mr. Quelch?"

"I am sorry—not yet, sir."

Dr. Locke's face fell.

"I suppose—" he began. "Is it some other matter that you have to speak to me about, Ferrers?"

"Quite another matter, sir—but one of some importance, or I should not have ventured to interrupt you in class!" said Ferrers Locke.

"Sit down, my dear fellow."

Dr. Locke sat down, but the chauffeur remained standing. John Robinson never forgot for a moment that he was a chauffeur at Greyfriars.

"I am here, sir, as a detective, to track down Slim Jim, and through him to discover and release Mr. Quelch," said Ferrers Locke. "I am not here to intervene in matters connected with the school. Yet, in the present circumstances, I beg you to allow me to do exactly that."

Dr. Locke looked puzzled.

"I do not quite understand," he said. "But pray proceed, my dear Ferrers."

"I learn, sir, that a junior here is under sentence of expulsion for an attack on his Form-master."

"Yes; Vernon-Smith of the Remove," said Dr. Locke. "But I quite fail to see—"

"I feel sure, sir, that if an unintentional act of injustice has occurred, you would be glad to learn the facts—and forgive me for butting into a matter which is not really my concern."

"Most certainly," said the astonished headmaster. "But you cannot mean, Ferrers, that you know anything of this matter and that you have a doubt of Vernon-Smith's guilt?"

"That is my meaning."

Dr. Locke's face became very grave.

"I must hear you, of course," he said. "But, actually, there is no doubt in the matter, Ferrers. This boy Vernon-Smith has had the audacity to set himself against Mr. Lamb in every possible way. He has been punished again and again for it. Now, at length, he has carried his rebelliousness to the extent of actually laying violent hands on a master."

"If he has done that, sir—"

"He was out of the House in the



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black-out when the incident occurred. He was able to give no explanation of any kind. The facts are perfectly clear. Really, my dear Ferrers—”

The Head spoke rather warmly. “That this boy has foolishly, recklessly, and mutinously placed himself under suspicion is clear,” said Ferrers Locke. “But it is not the fact that he was the person who attacked Mr. Lamb at your garden gate, sir.”

“If this is a matter of your actual knowledge, Ferrers, I must take notice of it.”

“Let me explain, sir! I did not know at the time that it was Mr. Lamb—but I heard the loud cries when the attack occurred. It is my business here to take note of any unusual occurrence. I came out of the garage at once.”

“You saw—”

“Nothing, sir! I heard someone running in the distance for a moment. A few minutes later all was quiet, and I returned to the garage.”

“Well?”

“This morning, sir, I have looked further into the matter, with the assistance of the daylight,” said Ferrers Locke. “It was a puzzling occurrence which I intended to elucidate. I have done so.”

“I quite fail to see—”

“You are a schoolmaster and I am a detective,” said Ferrers Locke, with a smile. “Your natural line of investigation would be quite different from mine. You may have noticed that these February days are damp, and—”

“Eh? Yes! But—”

“And the earth retains very perceptible traces of footprints—especially of heavy ones!” said Ferrers Locke. “The path by your garden gate, sir, is somewhat muddy in this damp weather.”

The Head gazed at him.

“This morning I have reconstructed exactly what happened last night by that garden gate,” said Ferrers Locke. “Some person waited there for some time—evidently waiting in cover in the shadow of the trees. Someone else came along later and fell over—or, as I know now, was knocked over—the spot where he fell is easy to trace.”

“That is precisely what occurred,” said Dr. Locke. “Mr. Lamb was coming to my House, and Vernon-Smith was lying in wait for him.”

Locke shook his head.

“I traced, sir, with great accuracy, the prints left by the person who waited,” he said. “He moved about from time to time—but most of the time he waited under a tree, leaning against the trunk.”

“Unless you are a magician, Ferrers, how do you know all this?”

“Very easily, sir! At the spot where he stood leaning on the tree the prints of his boots are perfectly plain—the heel-marks very deep, showing that he was leaning back—and in the bark of the tree are shreds of some rough material rubbed off from a thick overcoat.”

“Oh!” ejaculated the Head.

“I feel sure, sir, that you will not doubt my capacity in my own line of business!” said the Baker Street de-



COME INTO the OFFICE, BOYS AND GIRLS!

Your Editor is always pleased to hear from his readers. Write to him: Editor of the “Magnet,” The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

ONE of my readers, who signs himself “Black and White,” tells me that he wishes to become a black-and-white artist, his ambition being to draw for the Press. I would advise you, “Black and White,” to join a drawing-class—I have no doubt there is one somewhere near you—where the art master will soon discover your talent, if you have any, and you will do well to follow his advice. If the art master decides that you have the makings of a black-and-white artist, you should stick to your work, and when you can begin to think of submitting sketches to papers, you must carefully study the market you intend to appeal to. You can either send your sketches by post to the Editor of the paper you think you are best suited for, or you might endeavour to obtain an interview with him. Most Editors will be pleased to see you and inspect your work. They will probably find little faults with your sketches, but if you follow out the instructions they give you, I have no doubt that you will achieve success. Go ahead, “Black and White,” I trust that at some future date I shall have the pleasure of seeing some of your work.

Talking of drawing, reminds me that I have a pleasant surprise for you fellows. In next Saturday’s MAGNET I am publishing a map of Greyfriars, and the surrounding district. As this map will satisfy a much-felt want—hundreds of readers have asked for it—I should advise regular readers of the MAGNET to make sure of their copy by placing an order with their newsagent today. This map will prove of great use when you are reading future stories of Greyfriars, and will give an added interest to the exciting adventures of Harry Wharton & Co., by enabling you to follow them up with

geographical accuracy. This map will be something to keep by you permanently, both for use and as an interesting souvenir.

Now for a few

RAPID-FIRE REPLIES

to readers’ queries:

P. THORP (Leeds).—Bob Cherry has the biggest feet in the Remove, and Jimmy Vivian—with the exception of Wun Lung, the Chinese junior—the smallest.

R. DANIELS (Reading).—Billy Bunter has worn check-trousers and a bow tie ever since he has been at Greyfriars. Why shouldn’t he?

J. HUDSON (Bournemouth).—Many thanks for getting new readers. Harry Wharton & Co. are true-to-life characters—created by Mr. Frank Richards himself.

Judging by the numbers of letters I receive each week, complimenting me on Frank Richards’ grand stories, they are getting better and better. It takes some doing to keep a reader’s interest unflagging for so many years, doesn’t it? Frank Richards has got heaps more treats for you yet. Take next week’s yarn, for instance:

“THE ELEVENTH HOUR!”

There are the right amount of thrills and chuckles in it to suit everyone’s taste. For some weeks now Mr. Lamb has been trying to get Vernon-Smith kicked out of Greyfriars because he knows that the Bounder has spotted some of his secrets. Next week, an opportunity comes the “Baa-Lamb’s” way. Does he take advantage of it? Betyer life! Look out for an unusual twist in this latest masterpiece by famous Frank Richards in next Saturday’s MAGNET.

And so, until we meet again,

Chin, chin, chums,

YOUR EDITOR.

detective. “What I have now told you is definitely the fact.”

“I do not doubt it for one moment, Ferrers! But how does it affect Vernon-Smith?” asked the perplexed Head. “It is known that he waited there—”

“I will tell you, sir! The person who waited left clear tracks, as I have said—and his tracks were those of a person whose feet are very nearly twice the size of Vernon-Smith’s!”

“Oh!” exclaimed the Head again.

“I have seen Vernon-Smith this morning, sir. He is walking in the quadrangle, and I had the curiosity to note some tracks he left in some patches of mud. I have searched for

similar tracks near your gate. Not one is to be found.”

“Oh!” said the Head again.

“There are many footprints, sir—those of Mr. Lamb and those of the unknown person who waited for him. Had Vernon-Smith been on the spot, he could not have failed to leave similar traces. He left none! He was not there, sir!”

There was a long silence in the headmaster’s study.

Ferrers Locke broke it at length.

“I have little doubt, sir, from what I have observed, that I could trace the culprit!” he said. “But that is not my duty here. I will only say

that it was a much bigger person than Vernon-Smith. Certainly it was not Vernon-Smith, and cannot have been."

"There was another long silence. This time it was the Head who broke it."

"I am bound to accept your conclusions, Ferrers," he said. "What you have told me is a complete surprise. I have not heard from Mr. Lamb that any other boy has such a malicious antipathy towards him—I cannot imagine who can have done this unless it was Vernon-Smith."

"It was not Vernon-Smith, sir." "He was absent from the House in the black-out at the time," said Dr. Locke. "His own conduct has condemned him. But on your assurance, Ferrers, I must conclude that his absence was only a coincidence. I will not ask you if you are sure of what you say—"

Ferrers Locke smiled. "I have some little reputation as a detective, sir. I will stake it on the accuracy of what I have told you."

"Then I can only thank you," said Dr. Locke. "This boy brought his sentence upon himself by rebellious and headstrong conduct, and by a reckless disregard of authority. Nevertheless, I am glad—more than glad, that you have told me this in time—that he is, in this matter at least, guiltless. I shall, of course, rescind his sentence. Thank you, my dear Ferrers."

And Dr. Locke shook hands with his chauffeur.

A few minutes later John Robinson, on his way back to the garage, passed Vernon-Smith. The Bounder gave him a scowl as he saw him. John Robinson smiled as he went on to the garage.

Herbert Vernon-Smith wondered whether he was dreaming.

When he was called into the headmaster's study, the Bounder supposed that it was to be handed over to a prefect, to be taken to the station. Instead of which—

"Vernon-Smith! Certain facts have come to my knowledge which exculpate you in connection with the outrage in the black-out last night," said Dr. Locke. "I have explained this to Mr. Lamb. Your sentence is cancelled, and you will now go to your Form-room."

The Bounder blinked at the Head in surprise.

"You have yourself to thank for your very narrow escape from expulsion," said the Head. "In the circumstances I shall overlook your reckless escapade in going out in the black-out, and I have asked Mr. Lamb to do so. I trust that this may be a warning to you! You may now go!"

The Bounder went—like a fellow in a dream.

How the Head had discovered that he had not done it he could not begin to guess. Evidently the Head had. The sudden change in his prospects made him feel almost giddy.

But he pulled himself together. A grin dawned on his face as he made his way to the Remove Form-room.

There was a startled buzz in the Remove room as the door opened, and Herbert Vernon-Smith came in.

Billy Bunter gave an excited squeak:

"I say, you fellows, here's Smithy! I say, ain't you sacked, after all, Smithy?"

"Gratters, old bean!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, forgetting that he was in class.

"Silence in the class!" thundered Mr. Lamb. "Cherry, take a hundred lines! Bunter take a hundred lines! Vernon-Smith, go to your place this instant!"

"Yes, sir!" said the Bounder. He went to his place, smiling.

Nobody in the Remove knew how Smithy had pulled through. His luck, which was a proverb in the Form, seemed to have befriended him again. But everybody was glad—except Mr. Lamb.

Coker of the Fifth, when he heard, declared that it was rather thick to let the young sweep stick on after knocking over his beak in the black-out! Potter and Greene surmised that there must, after all, have been a blunder in the dark, and that Wingate hadn't had that whopping, and that Lamb had, and that the Head had somehow got wise to it. Still, nothing happened to Coker—and old Horace himself, at all events, had no doubts. It was rather fortunate for old Horace that John Robinson did not consider it his duty to carry his investigations a little further.

THE END.

(Next week's yarn of Harry Wharton & Co. is better than ever. Note the title: "THE ELEVENTH HOUR!" The wise reader will order his copy to-day!)

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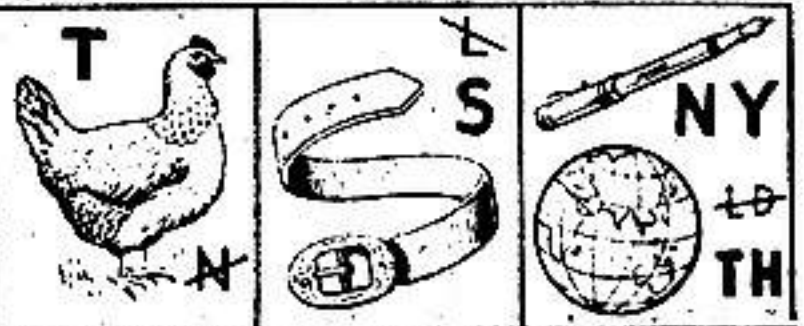
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"Oh! Ooooh! Ow! Wooooooh!" roared Prout. "Who has done this? This is a trick! This is a prank—a dastardly prank! Who has—wow!—done this—oooooh?"

Ferrers Locke slipped silently down the stairs. The three masters were left to elucidate the mystery of the cord on their own. The Baker Street detective lost no time in clearing off the spot, lest their investigations should extend far afield.

It was not in the best of tempers that John Robinson returned to his rooms over the garage.

SIX FOR SMITHY!

HERBERT VERNON-SMITH was up before rising-bell in the morning.

The Bounder left the Remove dormitory while the rest of the Form still slept, and went quietly down to the landing and across it to the passage that led to the masters' rooms.

At the corner he stopped and cast a keen glance up the dim passage. All was silent, no master was yet up, and the Bounder tiptoed up the passage. He halted suddenly, suppressing a whistle.

There was no longer a cord stretched across the passage near Lamb's door. Smithy lost no time in getting out of that passage!

He grinned as he went back to the Remove dormitory.

For three or four nights Smithy had left the dormitory silently and fixed up that cord after all Greyfriars slept. Every morning he turned out before rising-bell to remove it before it was discovered. Sooner or later, the Bounder had no doubt, that cord would make a catch.

Now he knew it had made one! It had been removed—that meant that someone had tripped over it in the night, and he had no doubt who that someone was! That trap had been laid, night after night, for Lamb, and who but Lamb could have fallen into the trap?

Tom Redwing was awake when the Bounder came back into the dormitory. He peered at Smithy in the gloom.

"Smithy, you ass—" he began.

The Bounder chuckled.

"Luck at last, old man!" he said. "The cord's gone! The dear little Baa-Lamb came a cropper last night, I fancy!"

"Ten to one he will suspect you, Smithy."

"You mean a hundred to one!" said the Bounder coolly. "What is he going to do if he does? He can't prove anything, to begin with—and do you think he wants to shout out all over Greyfriars that he trots out of his room after midnight to sneak secretly out of the House? Not in your lifetime, old scout! He never said anything the night I chuckled crackers into his room when he opened his window at midnight! He won't say anything now! I get right away with this!"

And the Bounder laughed gleefully.

"I've got to be careful," he went on. "The cur's watching for a chance to send me up to the Head and get me bunked—and why? Because he knows I've got an eye on him—because I've found out some things, and he's afraid I may find out others. Well, now he's tripped over that cord he may guess that I know more than he fancied—but what can he do?"

And the Bounder laughed again.

Vernon-Smith was in great spirits when the Remove went down that morning. That someone had taken a tumble on that cord was certain, and he had no doubt that it was Lamb! This was something back for the flogging of a few days ago.

And if Lamb guessed, from that incident, that someone in the House suspected his night prowlings, it would be a jolt for him—and Herbert Vernon-Smith's mission in life at present was to give Lamb all the jolts he could.

That it would make the man's enmity more bitter and unsparring he cared nothing.

He glanced curiously at Mr. Lamb at the Remove table at breakfast. If Lamb had taken that tumble, he showed no signs of it—but Smithy did not expect him to; he expected him to keep the incident dark. It could not possibly suit him for his nocturnal ramblings to become known in the school.

Mr. Lamb took no special note of Vernon-Smith. He was the good-tempered little Baa-Lamb at breakfast, seemingly quite undisturbed.

"I say, you fellows!" squeaked Billy Bunter, when the Remove went out after breakfast. "Seen old Prout?"

"Prout?" repeated Bob Cherry. "What about Prout?"

"He, he, he! He's got a game leg!" chuckled Bunter. "I've seen him—dot-and-carry one!"

Which caused the Famous Five to look round for the Fifth Form master and note the fact that Prout was limping. He did not seem exactly to have a game leg, as Bunter described it, but he had a limp, as if one of his plump knees had sustained damage.

When the Lamb let his Form into the Form-room that morning lessons did not immediately begin.

Mr. Lamb picked up a cane from his desk, and stood facing his Form with the cane in his hand.

"My boys," bleated the Lamb, "a very disagreeable incident occurred last night—a very serious matter which I cannot possibly overlook."

The Bounder caught his breath. Was the man going to make a fuss about it after all? But if he did, what could he prove?

"Some boy," went on the Lamb, stepped out.

"appears to have left his dormitory at a late hour and fastened a cord across the passage near my door. Mr. Prout, unfortunately, fell over it, and was somewhat hurt."

"Oh!" breathed Vernon-Smith. It was not the Lamb he had caught, after all.

"From the position in which this cord was placed, I have no doubt that it was intended for me to fall over when I came out of my room in the morning," resumed the Lamb.

"As it happens, Mr. Prout was awakened, and came out during the night—and fell over the cord. I have promised him that the offender shall be strictly punished."

The Bounder's eyes gleamed.

"You've no right to pick on me," he said sullenly. "It might have been any fellow in the House."

Mr. Lamb nodded.

"Quite!" he assented. "And if you prefer the matter to go before your headmaster, Vernon-Smith, I shall accede at once. I shall state

THE MOUSE AND THE LION!

ALL right in blacker!" said Horace Coker.

"Eh?" said Potter.

"What?" asked Greene.

Coker of the Fifth had been thinking. This unaccustomed process on Coker's part had led ultimately to the remark that puzzled his study-mates.

Coker nodded, as if in assent to his own thoughts, whatever they were. Tea was over in Coker's study.

Already the February evening had set in dim and dark. Black-out reigned, or blacker, as the Greyfriars fellows called it. Coker, it seemed, was planning something in blacker.

That, of course, was like Coker. No fellow was allowed out in the black-out without special leave. But Coker of the Fifth was a law unto himself.

"I dare say," went on Coker, in a sarcastic tone, "that you fellows fancy that I've forgotten Wingate's cheek."

"Well, dash it all, you've got over that whopping long ago!" said Potter. "Why, it's days since you were whopped, old man!"

"I don't expect you to understand, George Potter," said Coker. "You're too dense. A fellow like me can't be whopped. Wingate took a rotten mean advantage of being a prefect and whopped me! What did I say afterwards?"

"Eh? Did you say anything?" asked Greene. It seemed that Coker's pals had forgotten Coker's subsequent remarks—which, of course, was like them!

"I said let him wait!" said Coker. "That's what I said, Billy Greene! Well, now I've thought of a way. I should prefer to walk into Wingate's study, grab his ash, and whop him with it! But what would happen if I did?"

"Early train home," said Potter.

"You can't whop a prefect!"

"Exactly," said Coker. "Wingate's got me there! Being a prefect, and taking a mean advantage of it, he's got me all along the line. Well, I don't want to be bunked! My Aunt Judy would be upset, for one thing! I've got to think of the school, too!"

"Oh!" gasped Potter and Greene.

"Besides that," added Coker frankly, "I don't want to be bunked. Potter and Greene admitted that they saw."

"All the same, if a fellow whops me, I whop him!" said Coker.

"That's a fixed and settled thing, like the laws of the Swedes and Nasturtiums, you know. You can take that as read. Well, how do I do it? Wingate's going to be



Coker's victim went down, and Coker got in some quick, solid work with Prout's cane. Swipe, swipe, swipe! A frantic yell pealed from the recipient of those swipes!

my belief to Dr. Locke that you are the guilty party, and leave it to him to investigate and judge. You may take your choice, Vernon-Smith."

The Bounder did not answer that. He knew that he was, so to speak, in a cleft stick. He did not want to go before the Head again, after Dr. Locke's warning at his last interview.

The Lamb smiled—a grim smile.

"If you desire your headmaster to be the judge, Vernon-Smith, I will take you to him now," he said.

"Otherwise, you will bend over that desk."

In savage silence, the Bounder bent over that desk.

Six swipes rang through the Form-room like six pistol shots. The Lamb put plenty of beef into it. The Bounder went back to his place, choking with rage.

"I am assured, Vernon-Smith, that this was your work!" said the Lamb, peering at him over his glasses. "I shall come you, Vernon-Smith!"

The Bounder's eyes gleamed.

"You've no right to pick on me," he said sullenly. "It might have been any fellow in the House."

Mr. Lamb nodded.

"Quite!" he assented. "And if you prefer the matter to go before your headmaster, Vernon-Smith, I shall accede at once. I shall state

whopped. If he knows I whopped him, I get bunked. What do I do? I whop him without him knowing it was me? See?"

This time Potter and Greene did not see.

They gazed at Coker in bewilderment.

"Surprised you?" asked Coker.

"Well, just a few!" gurgled Greene. "Are you going to ask Wingate to open his mouth and shut his eyes while you whop him?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Potter.

"Don't be an idiot, Greene! Don't cackle like a turkey with the croup, Potter! I'm going to get Wingate in blacker!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Will he see who whopped him in blacker?" demanded Coker.

"You're going to ask him to walk out of the House in blacker to be whopped?" asked Potter. "Are you going to mention that it's so that he won't know you did it?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Greene.

"Don't be a pair of gurgling idiots!" said Coker. "It means strategy, of course. I'm the man for strategy, I think! The Head's in his house after tea. He comes there now, and will be there for some time—he always is, or generally. Suppose he wanted to see Wingate?"

"He often does, Wingate being his head prefect," said Potter. "But what the thump—"

"He sends a message," said Coker. "When Wingate's told that the Head wants to speak to him, what does he do? Naturally, he goes out—in blacker—and walks over to the Head's house."

"Oh!" said Potter and Greene. They gazed at their great leader.

Coker had been thinking—to some purpose. A deep and deadly scheme had evolved from the depths of Coker's solid brain.

"All that's necessary," continued Coker, "is for Wingate to get that message. See? That's where you fellows come in!"

"Eh?"

"What?"

"Of course," explained Coker, "I dare say you can see, dense as you are, that it would be no use my giving Wingate that message personally. He might smell a rat. He's rather a fool; but he might guess afterwards who was laying for him in blacker if I gave him the message."

"He might!" gasped Potter.

"Oh, crickey, yes, he might!" gurgled Greene.

"That's where my strategy comes in," said Coker. "One of you fellows gives him the message."

"Wha-a-t?"

"I don't mind which," said Coker liberally. "One of you. You can settle between yourselves which, I don't mind at all!"

Potter and Greene looked as if they minded a little. But they did not speak. They only gazed at the great Horace.

"I dare say you've heard the fable of the mouse and the lion," went on