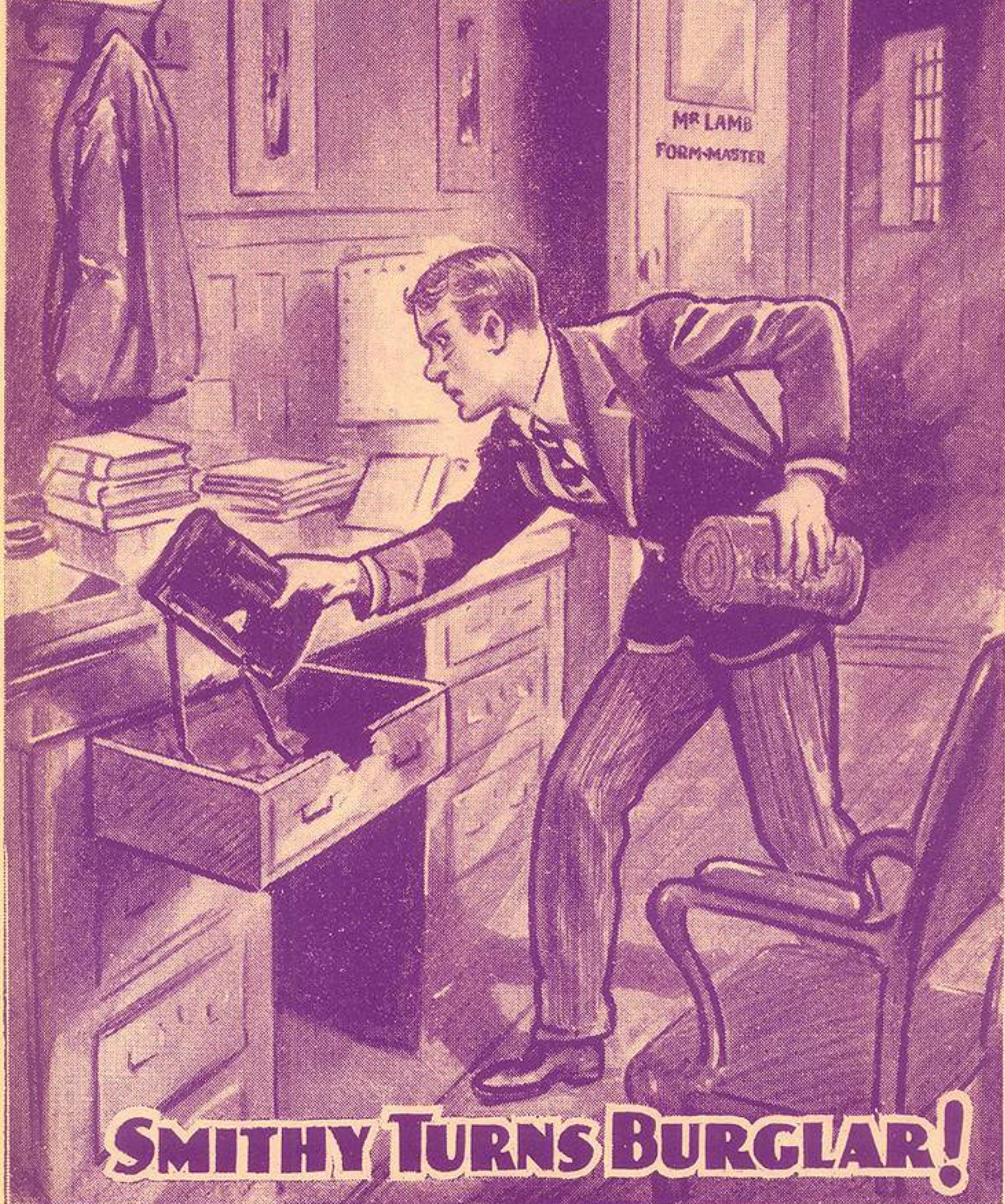


THE
MAGNET

GRAND SCHOOL YARN and MAP OF GREYFRIARS, INSIDE!

The Magnet ^{2^D}



SMITHY TURNS BURGLAR!

EVER SINCE MR. LAMB HAS BEEN IN CHARGE OF THE GREYFRIARS REMOVE HE HAS BEEN ANXIOUS TO GET RID OF VERNON-SMITH. AT LONG LAST HIS GREAT CHANCE HAS COME!

The ELEVENTH HOUR!

By FRANK RICHARDS



As the two juniors followed Mr. Lamb to the Head's study, Lord Mauleverer gave his companion a nudge. "Hook it, Smithy, you ass!" he whispered. "You can't do me any good by comin' to the Head, old bean!"

BUNTER—AND A BEAST!

"THAT beast Lamb——"
"Shut up!" hissed Bob Cherry, of the Greyfriars Remove.

"Eh?" Billy Bunter blinked at him through his big spectacles. "Ain't he a beast? That beast Lamb——"

"Quiet!" breathed Harry Wharton.

"Yah! You jolly well know he's a beast! Quelch was a beast, but Lamb is a worse beast than Quelch. What do you think he's done now?" demanded Billy Bunter indignantly. "He's asked me for my lines! On a half-holiday—just when I was going out, too! Catch me doing lines for the beast! I'll watch it!"

Billy Bunter, of the Greyfriars Remove, had a pair of little round eyes in the front of his head, but, naturally, none in the back of his head. That was why he did not see Mr. Lamb.

Bunter had rolled into the Rag in a state of great indignation. Asking a fellow for lines on a half-holiday was thick, in Bunter's opinion—very thick indeed. Standing with his podgy back to the doorway, Billy Bunter told the Remove fellows in the Rag what he thought of Lamb—happily unconscious of the fact that

Mr. Lamb had come along, and was looking in at the door.

Other fellows in the Rag could see Mr. Lamb looking in. Bunter, having no eyes in the back of his fat head, couldn't. So Bunter ran on regardless.

"Little beast, you know—cheeky little beast! I wish old Quelch was back! I can tell you fellows, I'm fed-up with that little beast Lamb!"

"He's just behind you!" breathed Frank Nugent.

"Oh, don't be an ass! Think you can pull my leg?" grunted Billy Bunter. "You fellows jolly well know, same as I do, that he's a little beast! What did he give me those lines for? He made out that I was eating toffee in class! I told him I hadn't any toffee about me! He couldn't take a fellow's word. As good as calling a chap a liar, you know. Then he made me turn out my pocket, and I had to chuck the toffee in the wastepaper-basket!"

Billy Bunter breathed indignation. Not only had he had his word doubted, which was insulting, but he had had to part with the toffee, which was worse.

It was no wonder that Bunter was wrathful, and that he was blowing off steam!

"And now," resumed the fat Owl of the Remove—"now he asks me for my lines—on a half-holiday! The little beast!"

Harry Wharton & Co. gazed at Bunter, and at Mr. Lamb in the doorway. Lamb was gazing over his gold-rimmed glasses at the back of the Owl's fat head. Bunter was in the middle of the room, but it was clear that all that he said reached Mr. Lamb's ears.

"Now he wants those lines," said Bunter. "Catch me doing them! No jolly fear! I've got to go as far as the cliff road this afternoon to see my sister Bessie! Catch me putting her off to please that little beast! I'll jolly well watch it! I say, Smithy——"

"Shut up, you blithering goat!" said Herbert Vernon-Smith.

"Look here, I've got to get out without the beast seeing me," said Billy Bunter. "He's cad enough to

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Exciting School-Adventure Yarn
Starring HARRY WHARTON &
CO., the World-Famous Chums
of GREYFRIARS.

call me back and ask me for those rotten lines again! You're always playing tricks on Lamb, Smithy! Look here, suppose you go and tell the little beast that the Head wants to see him in his house? That will get him safe away while I clear!"

The Bounder of Greyfriars grinned.

He was not likely to accede to that request—in the hearing of Mr Lamb!

The little art master of Greyfriars stepped into the room. Five or six fellows were making signs to Bunter to shut up.

Bunter did not heed them. Bunter, bursting with indignation, ran on:

"Well, I'm going! If the little brute butts in I shall jolly well tell him where he gets off, that's all! After all, he ain't my Form-master—he's only barged in while old Quelch is away. I don't think the Head ought to let him take the Remove—let him stick to his drawing-boards and his art-class, and his other rot, and let the Remove alone! We jolly well don't want him in the Remove, and I shall jolly well tell him so! You fellows hear that? I'm jolly well going out, and if that little beast Lamb stops me I shall look him in the eye and say—Yaroooh! Leggo my ear, you beast!"

Bunter roared as a finger and thumb that felt like a pair of pincers were laid on a fat ear from behind.

The fat Owl of the Remove spun round like a humming-top, roaring.

"Ow! Leggo my ear, Toddy, you beast! Oh crikey! Is—is—is that you, sir?" Billy Bunter almost collapsed as he saw who had grasped his fat ear. "Oh crikey! Oh lor'! Oh crumbs!"

"Bunter—"

"Oh jiminy!"

"I heard every word you said, Bunter!"

"Oh! I—I never said anything, sir!" howled Bunter. "I wasn't speaking at all, sir! I—I never opened my mouth! You can ask any of these fellows, sir—they all heard me!"

"You will come to my study, Bunter," said Mr. Lamb. "I shall cane you—"

"I—I wasn't calling you a beast, sir!" groaned Bunter. "I—I was speaking of another beast, sir—quite another beast—not you at all, sir!"

"I shall cane you," said Mr. Lamb, "and you will go into the detention class this afternoon, Bunter."

Mr. Lamb released that fat ear.

"Follow me, Bunter!" he said.

"Oh lor'!"

Now was the time for Billy Bunter to tell Lamb where he got off—to let him know that he was not wanted in the Remove! But Billy Bunter didn't! He seemed to have forgotten his deadly threats.

He blinked at the little art master in dolorous dismay, and rolled out of the Rag after him.

There was a chuckle in the Rag as the fat Owl disappeared.

The juniors compassionated the unfortunate Owl—booked for six in Lamb's study, and then for detention in the extra French class—on a

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fine sunny afternoon which was also a half-holiday. But, really, no fellow had ever asked for it quite so emphatically as Bunter had!

"Poor old Bunter!" sighed Bob Cherry

"The howling ass!" said Johnny Bull.

"The terrific fathead!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Lamb shouldn't poke his nose into this room!" remarked Lord Mauleverer. "Quelch always let a chap know he was comin' Quelch was pukka! That man Lamb isn't!"

"Rotter all through," said Vernon-Smith. "He doesn't seem to like our old porpoise. He doesn't like me, either."

"And you're both so nice!" murmured Skinner.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" ejaculated Bob Cherry, a few minutes later. "Bunter's signature tune!"

"Yow-ow-ow-ow-ow!" came from the passage.

Sounds of woe heralded Billy Bunter's return.

"Ow! Wow! Oh crikey! Wow! Yow! Oh lor'! Ow! Yow! Wow!"

A wriggling fat figure appeared in the doorway. Billy Bunter followed his signature-tune into the Rag. He came in wriggling like an eel, and almost doubled up.

"Yow-ow-ow-ow-ow!"

"Had it bad, old chap?" asked Bob Cherry sympathetically.

"Yow-ow-ow-ow-ow!" was Bunter's reply.

Evidently, Billy Bunter had had it bad!

THE LOST LETTER!

"OH gad!"

"What's up, Smithy?" asked Tom Redwing.

The two juniors were in the quad. Herbert Vernon-Smith, with his hands driven deep into his pockets, and a frown on his face, rather contrasted with his chum, whose looks were bright and cheery.

The Remove were playing a pick-up game that afternoon, and while Tom Redwing was thinking of Soccer to come, the Bounder was thinking of a less agreeable matter—his feud with Mr. Lamb, the art master of Greyfriars, now in charge of Smithy's Form.

Vernon-Smith came to a sudden halt, with an ejaculation of dismay. He stood running his hands through his pockets, Redwing watching him in surprise.

"Oh gad!" repeated Smithy. "It's gone!"

He drew out the lining of a pocket. There was a rather large rent in the lining. The pocket was empty.

"I knew that it was in that pocket!" he muttered. "Look! It's gone!"

"Anything special?" asked Redwing, puzzled. "You don't keep money in a jacket pocket, I suppose?"

"Don't be an ass! I had a letter in that pocket! I never knew there was a hole in the lining."

"From your father?"

"Idiot!"

Redwing smiled faintly. He was chummy with the Bounder, but he never expected politeness from him when Smithy was disgruntled.

He could not see why Smithy was so deeply disturbed. Even if a letter was lost, a schoolboy's letter could hardly be a matter of the greatest importance; moreover, it was fairly certain that someone would find it, if it had been dropped about the school. And a lost letter, found by someone else, would either be handed back to the owner, or stuck up on the notice-board to be reclaimed.

Vernon-Smith stood scanning the ground with eager, anxious eyes. No letter was in sight.

Then he glanced across at a little figure in a velvet coat, baggy trousers, and a blue tie—Mr. Lamb.

Lamb was walking in the quad that sunny, spring afternoon. He was walking along the path the two juniors had been following, but he was some distance away, and was not looking towards them.

"If he found it——" breathed the Bounder.

"My dear chap," said Redwing, "even if Lamb's all you make him out to be, he wouldn't pinch your letter. Let's go and ask him if he's seen it."

"Fool!"

Tom Redwing's face became grave. It dawned on his mind that the lost letter was one that the scapegrace of Greyfriars would not care—or dare—to let a master see.

"Look!" hissed the Bounder.

Tom Redwing looked. The little art master had stooped to pick up something from the ground. Whether it was a letter or not, the juniors could not see. But, as Lamb straightened up again, they saw that he was looking intently at whatever it was, he had picked up.

"That tears it!" muttered Herbert Vernon-Smith. "That little rat has been after me all the term! He's tried to get me sacked because he jolly well knows I've spotted some of his rotten secrets! And now——"

The colour wavered in the Bounder's face.

Redwing caught his breath.

"Smithy! You mad ass! For goodness' sake what was in that letter?" he exclaimed anxiously.

The Bounder gave a hard laugh.

"Enough to get me bunked a dozen times over, if it could be fixed on me," he answered. "It's from Bill Lodgey. And——"

"Oh!" gasped Redwing. "Have you been fool enough to let that racing rotter write to you here?"

"Don't be a goat! Think Lamb wouldn't have spotted a letter that came by post? Lodgey tipped a kid to hand it to me. I got it just after dinner. I put it in my pocket—this pocket—after reading it. I was going to deal with it after the footer. Now that spying cur——"

The Bounder gritted his teeth.

Redwing did not tell him that it was a Form-master's duty to supervise the correspondence of boys in his Form—especially of a fellow like Smithy! Whatever Lamb was—and,

according to Smithy, he was a man with shady secrets of some sort—it was his duty to look into such a matter. Tom Redwing bore, as patiently as he could, with that kink of blackguardism in his chum; and he was only anxious for Smithy's safety. He could hardly deny that Smithy deserved to be bunked, but he did not want his chum bunked!

"Was there anything—" he began.

"Only a tip about a gee!" sneered the Bounder. "Lodgey was putting me on to a good thing."

"Oh!" breathed Redwing. "Oh, Smithy, you ass! But was there anything to show the letter was yours? Did Lodgey mention your name in it?"

"He's not such a fool as that! I'm trying to think whether it could be fixed on me!" muttered the Bounder. "If it can, you can bet that Lamb won't lose this chance! He will get shut of me this time—the fellow who knows that he hikes out of the school secretly at night—who knows that he's got something on with that gangster, Nobby Parker, at Sea View on the cliff road—the fellow who knows too much about him!"

Redwing did not answer that.

Whatever Smithy knew, or fancied he knew, about the mysterious secrets of the little art master, did not affect this matter. If a letter from a racing tout could be proved to be his, he had to go up to the Head. Any master at Greyfriars School, who had found such a letter, would have taken action at once.

Mr. Lamb looked round, sighted the two juniors, and came towards them.

"Come on!" muttered Smithy. "Don't let him think we're interested."

They moved on.

"Vernon-Smith!" came the bleating voice of the Lamb.

The Bounder came to a halt again, his heart sinking. Either Lamb knew, or he guessed, that that letter was his.

"Get on!" he muttered to Redwing. "Your face will give me away, you ass! Leave me alone!"

Tom Redwing moved on, while the Bounder turned back to meet Mr. Lamb. The art master came up, with a letter in his hand. Smithy did not need telling that it was his lost letter.

He was cudgelling his brains to remember whether there was anything in that letter that could identify him as the owner. If there was, he was done for. If there was not, it could only be a matter of suspicion, and he might pull through yet, if he kept his head.

The Bounder's heart was beating unpleasantly, but he was quite cool, as the art master came up.

"Have you lost a letter, Vernon-Smith?" asked Mr. Lamb, his eyes, over his gold-rimmed glasses, glinting icily at the Bounder.

Herbert Vernon-Smith was not to be caught so easily as that! He answered coolly:

"A letter! I think not, sir! I had a letter from my father, but I don't think I've lost it!"

"Do you deny, Vernon-Smith, that this letter is yours?"

"May I see it, sir? I can hardly say whether it is mine or not, without looking at it."

"You may look at it!" said the Lamb grimly.

He held it up for the Bounder to see. But he did not give Smithy a chance of snatching it, if Smithy had thought of so desperate a measure.

Vernon-Smith read that letter eagerly enough. He could not remember it word for word; and he was glad enough to read it over again. It was a rude scrawl on a half-sheet of notepaper, with a stain of beer on the corner.

"Dear sir,—You want to keep your eye on Bobby Martin for Saturday. From what I car, he will run, and walk away from the ole field. Take my word for it, he's a good thing. If you want to be on, any time up to Fridy nite. B. L."

The Bounder drew a deep breath. There was nothing in that half-illegible scrawl to identify him.

That letter might have been written to any man at Greyfriars—of similar ways. There were few, perhaps—but the Bounder could have reeled off half a dozen names—Loder or Carne of the Sixth, Hilton or Price of the Fifth, Angel of the Fourth, and one or two others. All that that letter proved was that there was some reckless young rascal in Greyfriars School—more than that was only suspicion.

"Well?" rapped Mr. Lamb.

"I hope, sir, that there's no fellow in the Remove who has ever received such a letter as that!" said Vernon-Smith calmly.

"I cannot share your hope, Vernon-Smith!" said Mr. Lamb, with grim sarcasm. "I am informed that when Mr. Quelch was here, he had to deal with you for precisely such a transaction as this, and that you very narrowly escaped being expelled from the school in consequence."

"Yes, sir—that was a lesson to me!" said Vernon-Smith. "I have been very careful indeed since that time, sir; and I am sure that Mr. Quelch will have nothing to complain of when he comes back."

"I have not the slightest doubt, Vernon-Smith, that this letter is yours."

"Indeed, sir!"

"I shall keep this letter and inquire into the matter!" said Mr. Lamb. "I have very little doubt of being able to trace it to its owner. The matter will then be placed before your headmaster."

Mr. Lamb put the letter in his pocket, and walked away to the House. He left the Bounder of Greyfriars looking after him with a black brow.

VERY IMPORTANT!

"I SAY, you fellows—Ow!"
"Still feeling the pinch, old fat man?"

"Ow! Yes! Wow! That beast laid it on, you know! But, I say, you fellows, I've got to go into Extra at half-past two."

"Why not tell the Lamb where he gets off?" asked Skinner.

"Tell him we don't want him in the Remove!" suggested Hazeldene.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows, don't cackle! I say, which of you is going down to the cliff road to tell Bessie I can't come?"

"Eh?"

"What?"

Billy Bunter blinked inquiringly round through his big spectacles.

It was clear that Bunter had entirely given up the idea of telling Lamb where he got off, or explaining to him that he was not wanted in the Remove. He was going in to Extra French at half-past two! The appointment with Sister Bessie on the sea-road obviously could not be kept by Brother Billy.

"You see," explained Bunter, "Bessie will have started by this time! I can't leave her hanging about waiting for me, you know! Will you cut off and tell her I can't come, Bob?"

"Soccer!" said Bob Cherry.

"Will you, Wharton?"

"Soccer!"

"Will you, Nugent?"

"Soccer!"

"Will you, Inky?"

"Soccer, my esteemed fat Bunter!"

"Will you, Bull?"

"Soccer!"

"Don't keep on parroting Soccer at me!" yelled the fat Owl, in great exasperation. "I suppose one of you can stand out of the footer when it's important like this?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Famous Five did not seem to agree with William George Bunter on that point! Even the pleasure of seeing Miss Elizabeth Bunter—if any—would not, it appeared, console them for standing out of a football match.

"Well, you'll go, won't you, Toddy?" asked Bunter.

"Soccer!" grinned Peter Todd.

"Oh, you idiot! Will you go, Squiff?"

"Soccer!" said Sampson Quincy Ifley Field.

"What about you, Browney?"

"Soccer!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a certain sameness in the replies Billy Bunter received. But they were all unmistakable. Nobody who was booked for footer was going to walk two miles to tell Bessie that Billy couldn't come.

"What about you, Hazel?" asked Bunter.

"Soccer!" grinned Hazeldene.

"I say, Linley—"

"Soccer!" said Mark Linley.

"Penfold, old chap—"

"Soccer!"

"I say, Wib! Look here, Wib, you don't want to be mucking about with your theatrical props this afternoon, for once—"

"No!" agreed William Wibley.

"Not for once."

"Then will you go?"

"Soccer!" chuckled Wibley.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You, too!" howled Bunter. "Is

every silly idiot in the Remove playing footer this afternoon? What about you, Bolsover?"

"Soccer!" chortled Bolsover major.

"I say, Ogilvy——"

"Soccer!" said Ogilvy.

"Russell, old chap——"

"Soccer!" chuckled Russell, old chap!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly goats!" shrieked Bunter.

"Think you're playing Rugger?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

No fewer than fifteen men had answered the fat Owl's appeal. They all said Soccer; but, really, it sounded like Rugger.

"You see, old fat man," explained Harry Wharton, laughing, "it's a Form pick-up, and twenty-two men are playing."

"Oh crikey!" grunted Bunter. The Greyfriars Remove was a numerous Form; but twenty-two men took a very large slice out of it.

There were good-natured fellows among the footballers who would have taken the trouble to hike over to the sea-road and save Miss Bunter from hanging about in vain for her plump brother. But Soccer was Soccer—so they couldn't!

Billy Bunter had to find a non-footballer—and it was rather unfortunate that the slackers of the Form were, as a rule, rather less good-natured than the footballing fraternity. The footballers had something to do and couldn't go; the slackers had nothing to do, and wouldn't go!

"I say, Skinner, will you trot over to the cliff road?" squeaked the worried Owl.

"I can see myself doing it!" remarked Skinner. The answer was not "Soccer" this time, but it was just as bad.

"Will you, Fishy?"

Fisher T. Fish chuckled.

"I guess not!" he replied.

"Will you, Snoopey?"

"Ask me again next term!" suggested Sidney James Snoop.

"Where's Mauly? I say, you fellows, have you seen that silly idiot Mauleverer? He's fool enough to do anything for anybody! Seen him?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked the whole Rag.

Lord Mauleverer was reposing elegantly in an armchair, about ten feet from Bunter. But the Owl of the Remove had not observed him there.

His lordship smiled gently as he heard Bunter's remark. Everyone else in the Rag yelled.

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at!" hooted Bunter. "Look here, somebody's got to go. I can't keep Bessie hanging about all the afternoon in this cold weather. Mauly would go, if I asked him—if I knew where the silly idiot was——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Is he up in his study?" asked Bunter. "I'll bet that lazy beast is sprawling on his sofa—that's how he likes to spend a half-holiday, the frowsty slacker! I say, you fellows, one of you cut up to the Remove and tell Mauly I want to speak to him."

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

The high back of the armchair hid most of Lord Mauleverer from view. But every fellow in the Rag could see him there—except Bunter!

"I say, you fellows, I've got to get along to Extra soon!" hooted Bunter.

"I don't want to be late—that beast Lamb might whop me again—somebody's got to go and meet Bessie! What about chivalry, you beasts? Think a girl can be kept hanging about all the afternoon? Look here, I jolly well know Mauly would go if I asked him—you know he's soft, and——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Will one of you go and tell him?" roared Bunter. "You know, I don't like fagging up all those stairs! I never saw such a lazy lot!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked Bob Cherry. "I'll go and tell him if you like, Bunter! What shall I tell him?"

"Tell the silly idiot I want to speak to him, and it's important!"

"Right-ho!"

Bob Cherry started—not towards the door, as Bunter expected. He walked round Lord Mauleverer's armchair, Bunter blinking after him in astonishment. There he delivered the message.

"Silly idiot! Bunter wants to speak to you, and it's important!" he said.

"Oh!" gasped Billy Bunter. "Is Mauly there?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the juniors.

Billy Bunter rolled round the armchair! He blinked at the reposeful figure of his lazy lordship.

Mauly gave him a gentle grin.

"I—I—I say, Mauly, I—I never knew you were here!" gasped the fat Owl.

"I guessed that one!" murmured Lord Mauleverer.

"I—I mean, I—I don't think you're soft, Mauly—what I think is, that you're a jolly decent chap, chivalrous, and all that—the kind of fellow who would take any amount of trouble to oblige a lady! Think of Bessie hanging about in this cold weather, Mauly, old fellow——"

"Oh dear!" sighed Lord Mauleverer. He rose reluctantly from the armchair.

"You silly owl!" said Skinner.

"Are you going?"

"Yaas!" sighed Lord Mauleverer.

"After what you've heard from Bunter?"

"Yaas."

"Well, I think you're a fool!" said Skinner.

"Thanks so much!" murmured Mauleverer. "If you think I'm a fool for doin' it, old bean, I feel sure I must be doin' the right thing."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, look here, you'd better get off—you'll be late, anyhow," said Bunter briskly. "Walk up the cliff road, and you'll see Bessie—if she's got there, she'll be waiting opposite that place called Sea View—you know the place—where Smithy led the paperchase, and where Wharton had a row with the caretaker——"

"Yaas!"

"Don't dawdle!" added Bunter.

"You know what a slacker you are! If you don't dawdle, you can get back by the time I get out of extra French. And for goodness' sake don't lose the toffee!"

"The—the what?" ejaculated Lord Mauleverer.

"The toffee! They've been making toffee at Cliff House, and Bessie said she would bring me some. Barbara Redfern made it, and Bessie said it was jolly good, on the phone. She's bringing me a big wedge of it, she said. Mind you don't lose it, Mauly—you know what a fool you are, you know."

Lord Mauleverer gazed at the fat Owl of the Remove. From every other fellow came a howl of merriment.

Billy Bunter's anxiety that Bessie should not be left hanging about was fully explained now. It was not chivalry to the fair sex—it was not brotherly love—it was toffee!

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

"You you—you fat, frowsy, frabjous, footling fraud," gasped Lord Mauleverer. "I've a jolly good mind not to go!"

"Oh, really, Mauly! I say, I'll let you have a whack in the toffee!" urged Billy Bunter. "And you can't keep a girl waiting about, you know."

"I'll go!" said Lord Mauleverer. "But I think I'll kick you first, Bunter! Turn round!"

"Eh? You keep off, you beast! Wharrer you getting shirty about?" exclaimed Billy Bunter. "You—Leggo! Yaroo!"

Lord Mauleverer took the fat Owl by the collar, twirled him round, and kicked. Then he ambled out of the Rag.

"Beast!" roared Bunter, amid a howl of laughter.

After which the fat Owl rolled off to Extra French, the footballers headed for the changing-room, and Lord Mauleverer ambled reluctantly, but resolutely, out of the gates to keep that appointment on the sea-road with Miss Elizabeth Bunter.

NOT TAKING ANY!

"COME on, Smithy!"

"Leave me out!"

"W h a t?" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"Don't I speak plain English?" grunted the Bounder. "Leave me out! You don't specially want me in a pick-up game, I suppose?"

The captain of the Remove looked at him. The rest of the footballers were in the changing-room, but Smithy had not arrived there. Wharton found him in the quad with a scowl on his face.

"You silly ass!" said Harry, in measured tones. "No—you're not specially wanted in a pick-up, if you come to that; but it was fixed for you to captain one side, and now it's the last minute—and you'd have given us a song and a dance if you'd been left at. What the dickens is the matter with you?"

"Find out!" grunted the Bounder. "Another rag on Lamb?" snapped

the captain of the Remove. "Some silly trick in his study while he's gone out? Asking for it again?"

"Has he gone out?" The Bounder's look became eager. "He nearly always goes on a half-holiday—and I believe he generally goes over to that place on the sea-road to see his precious pal Nobby! But has he gone—I want to be sure?"

The captain of the Remove gave an angry grunt.

"So that's it!" he snapped. "You're chucking footer to carry on your fatheaded feud with Lamb—and you wonder that the man wants to get

And Harry Wharton tramped away to the changing-room, leaving the Bounder to his own devices.

Vernon-Smith did not heed him. He was keen enough on Soccer, and he wanted to play, especially as skipper of one side in the pick-up. But he had a worry on his mind, of which the captain of the Remove knew nothing.

He had to recover that lost letter, if he could.

Whether it was because the Pet Lamb had secrets to keep, and because Smithy had spotted some of them; or whether it was because,

fear if that letter had not been his; but it was his, and he had everything to fear from a man whose dislike for him was, as he believed, tinged with uneasiness, if not fear.

That letter had to be got rid of, somehow.

If Lamb carried it about with him, there was no chance. Likely enough he would put it in the desk in his study—it was not the sort of document a master would care to keep in his pocket.

If Lamb had, as usual, gone out that afternoon, Smithy had no leisure for football; he was going to look for



"Oh, gad!" ejaculated Vernon-Smith, turning out the lining of a pocket. "I had a letter in that pocket, Redwing, and it's gone! Look!" Tom Redwing looked in time to see Mr. Lamb pick up something from the ground.

you sacked and have done with you. No wonder when you never give him a minute's peace, if you can help it."

"That's not the reason he wants to get shut of me!" sneered Vernon-Smith. "It's because I've spotted him—"

"Oh, chuck it! Come and play Soccer, and forget all about it!" exclaimed the captain of the Remove impatiently.

"Do you know whether he's gone out or not?" snapped Smithy.

"No, I don't, and don't care a boiled bean whether he has or not! He generally does, that's all I know. Let him rip, and come—"

"Oh, rats!"

"Then go and eat coke, you silly ass!" snapped the captain of the Remove. "I'll bag another man, and ask Browney to captain your side—and you can go and play the fool, and get another flogging, and be blowed to you!"

as Wharton said, the rebel of the Remove never gave him a minute's peace, it was an undoubted fact that Mr. Lamb wanted to see the last of Herbert Vernon-Smith at the school. It was a fact that he never lost an opportunity of sending him up to the Head.

That letter, if Lamb could fix it on him, would work the oracle. Smithy had been in trouble too often to escape, if a transaction of that kind was pinned down on him.

Most of the Remove, and all the school outside the Remove, regarded Lamb as a harmless arty ass, as soft as butter. Smithy knew that he was as hard as iron and keen as sharp steel. If that letter could be fixed on Smithy, Lamb was the man to fix it. He would not be long in discovering for what name the initials "B. L." stood. He might get in touch with Bill Lodgey himself. The Bounder would have had nothing to

that letter in Lamb's study. But had he?

The Bounder had been keeping his eyes open; but he had not seen Lamb go. He might, however, have gone, unseen by Vernon-Smith. On the other hand, Lamb sometimes put in an afternoon in his study at pen-and-ink work—he did work for illustrated papers—adding a little to his salary thereby. The study might be unoccupied, if the Bounder visited it—or he might find Lamb there, pen or brush in hand.

It was easy enough for a Remove fellow to visit his Form-master's study, with some pretended question to ask. But Smithy did not think of adopting that simple device—Lamb was sharp as a razor, and would guess at once what his interest was in that study.

The Bounder hung about for some time undecided; but he walked away
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at last, in the direction of the garage. A shout from Little Side reached his ears as he went—the Remove footballers were getting busy in the pick-up. The Bounder gave an angry grunt; he wanted to be playing football, not hanging about with an eye on Lamb and his study. But he tramped on to the garage.

John Robinson, the Head's new chauffeur, was in the yard.

He gave Herbert Vernon-Smith a curious look as he came up. John Robinson had seen a good deal of the Bounder since he had been Dr Locke's chauffeur. He was interested—for reasons of his own, unsuspected by Smithy—in the Bounder's feud with Lamb, and his suspicions of that artistic gentleman.

Smithy had seen the celebrated detective, Ferrers Locke, a good many times, when Locke came to the school to visit his venerable relative, the headmaster; but he had never dreamed of recognising Ferrers Locke in the olive-complexioned, dark-haired, quiet-mannered chauffeur. To Smithy, as to the rest of the school, John Robinson was the Head's chauffeur—merely that and nothing more.

He nodded to John.

"I want to use your phone, Robinson!" he said.

"Indeed!" said John Robinson dryly. "You made the same request some time ago, Master Vernon-Smith, and I refused it."

"Look here—"

"On that occasion," said John Robinson, "you dodged into my rooms, and used the telephone without my consent, locking my door against me."

"It's not a jape on Lamb this time!" said Vernon-Smith. "Keep your wool on, my man! I simply want to find out if he's in his study—and a phone call will do it."

"I am afraid, sir, that it would not be consistent with my duty as Dr. Locke's chauffeur to let you do anything of the kind."

"You've no use for half-a-crown?" sneered the Bounder.

"Thank you, no!" answered Ferrers Locke. "Please leave this yard at once, sir—schoolboys are not allowed here."

The Bounder gave him an evil look.

He was going to use the chauffeur's telephone, if he could, as he had done on a previous occasion, and the man could like it or lump it!

On the previous occasion, however, he had taken the chauffeur by surprise. This time John Robinson had a wary eye on the reckless scapegrace. Ferrers Locke, who suspected the art master of Greyfriars much more deeply than the Bounder himself did, had no desire for Mr. Lamb's attention to be drawn in the direction of the garage.

The Bounder turned, as if to walk away; then, suddenly turning again, he cut across at a rapid run for the side door of the garage.

Rapid as he was, he was not quite so rapid as the chauffeur. The lean figure of John Robinson shot after

him like an arrow from a bow. Smithy was not getting by with this a second time!

The Bounder had not reached the door when a grasp of iron closed on his collar and jerked him back.

"Let go!" he roared furiously. "You cheeky rotter, how dare you lay your paws on me? Let go, I tell you!"

Instead of letting go, John Robinson walked the Bounder away with that iron grip on his collar.

Vernon-Smith struggled savagely and kicked out. His temper broke out uncontrolled as he was marched along in the chauffeur's grip.

"Oh!" ejaculated John Robinson, as a savage heel hacked his shin.

"Take that, you rotter, and now let go my collar!" roared Vernon-Smith.

John Robinson had taken it; but he did not let go the Bounder's collar. Instead of doing so, he twisted Herbert Vernon-Smith over by his collar and, with his other hand, smacked—hard!

Smack!

It rang like a pistol-shot!

"Oh!" roared Vernon-Smith.

Smack!

"You cheeky rotter!" shrieked the Bounder, fairly foaming with rage at being smacked on the trousers. "You—you—you—"

Smack!

John Robinson released his collar.

"Now you had better go, I think, Master Vernon-Smith!" he said evenly. "I will not report your impertinence to your headmaster; but please go at once or I shall certainly smack you again, and harder!"

Vernon-Smith stood glaring at him. He had asked for it—Smithy was always asking for it! He clenched his fists, more than half-inclined to hurl himself at the long, lean chauffeur, hitting out right and left.

John Robinson smiled faintly as he read that thought in the Bounder's furious face.

"Better not, sir!" he said gently. "I am sure you do not wish me to take you away by your ear! Please go!"

"You cheeky rotter!" snarled the Bounder. "I'll pay you out for this, Robinson, you cheeky ruffian!"

"Thank you, sir—will you kindly go?" asked John Robinson.

And the Bounder went—not looking very kindly as he went!

BEAUTY IN DISTRESS!

SCREAM!

Lord Mauleverer gave quite a start.

His lordship had walked through Friardale and reached the road that ran by the cliffs.

At the other end of that road was the village of Pegg and Cliff House School. Half-way along it was the seaside chalet called Sea View—the loneliest building on the coast, standing in an acre of unkempt grounds.

The chalet, with its high, slanting roof, was in sight when Lord Mauleverer was suddenly startled by that shrill and thrilling scream.

"Oh gad!" ejaculated his lordship.

He quickened his pace.

A scream seemed to indicate beauty in distress. Mauly was the laziest man ever; but if there was beauty in distress in the offing, he could exert himself. And he did.

In the middle of the road, a short distance from the gate of Sea View, a plump figure stood.

From the plumpness of that figure, and from the big pair of spectacles that adorned a chubby face that was ruddier than the cherry, Lord Mauleverer discerned that this was the Cliff House schoolgirl he had come to meet—no other than Miss Elizabeth Bunter, sister of William George of that ilk.

If Miss Elizabeth Bunter was in danger or distress, Mauly was the man to rush to the rescue like a knight-errant of old. Lazy as he was, no effort would have been too great for him. Whether the damsel in distress was pretty and graceful like Marjorie Hazeldene, or built on the lines of Billy Bunter like Miss Elizabeth, made no jot or tittle of difference to Mauly, who was habitually as courteous to a charlady as to a countess. So he rushed to render aid.

At the same time, he was rather puzzled to discern where the danger and distress came in.

Miss Elizabeth Bunter was quite alone. A school cap was visible at a distance—a Highcliffe cap. But—if there was anything terrifying about a Highcliffe junior—that junior was too far off, so far as Mauly could see, to be the cause of Miss Bunter's fearful scream.

And Miss Bunter was still screaming! Twice and thrice she screamed as Lord Mauleverer came panting up.

"My dear Miss Bunter!" exclaimed Mauly, as he raised his cap. "What's the matter? Is anythin' the matter?"

"Do you think I was screaming for nothing?" demanded Miss Bunter.

"Yaas! I mean, no! What—"

"My toffee!"

"Tut-tut-toffee!"

"Yes, my toffee!"

Lord Mauleverer gazed helplessly at the plumpest member of the Fourth Form at Cliff House School.

He knew there was toffee about—from Billy Bunter. And he could see there had been toffee about, from Bessie Bunter! If Bessie had been waiting for Billy, she had not been idle while she waited. Smears on a fat chin, on two plump cheeks, and round a rather extensive mouth, indicated that Sister Bessie had been consoling herself with toffee, and plenty of it, while she waited for Brother Billy.

Still, this did not explain the riddle. Mauleverer still did not know what was the matter or why Miss Bunter had been screaming.

"My toffee!" repeated Bessie Bunter. "That brute—"

"Eh, what brute?" asked Lord Mauleverer dazedly.

"That brute Ponsoby." Miss Bunter pointed a plump and sticky forefinger at the Highcliffe cap in the distance towards Pegg. Cecil Ponsoby of Highcliffe School was

strolling along with his hands in his pockets, his back turned. "He took it away from me—"

"Oh!" gasped Mauly. He thought he understood now. "That Highcliffe cad's pinched your toffee! I'll go after him, and—" Mauly started.

"Stop!"
"Oh!" Mauly turned back.
"Yaas?"

"He hasn't got my toffee! Don't be silly!" said Miss Bunter.

"Oh! Yaas! No! Quite!" gasped his bewildered lordship. "Might a fellow ask what you were screaming for, Miss Bunter?"

"Boys!" remarked Miss Bunter, "never have any sense! But I should think even a boy would have sense enough to know that I was screaming to make somebody come."

"Oh gad! I mean, yaas, quite—I understand! But—but is anything the matter?"

"Do you think I should stand here and scream for nothing?" asked Miss Bunter indignantly. "That brute took my toffee away—"

"But—but you said he hadn't got it—"

"He threw it over this fence."
"Oh!" ejaculated Lord Mauleverer.

He had got it at last! Ponsonby of Highcliffe, who was cad enough for anything, had evidently snatched Bessie's toffee in passing and tossed it over the fence of Sea View. Even Pon was not, perhaps, capable of pinching toffee from a schoolgirl; but he was malicious enough to play any mean trick when no danger was incurred thereby.

"It's on the other side of the fence now!" said Miss Bunter. "I can't get it!"

"There's a gate—" murmured Lord Mauleverer. He did not quite see why Miss Bunter could not have gone in at the gate and retrieved the toffee.

"There's a beastly man there!" explained Miss Bunter. "A brute named Parker, who made an awful row when we took shelter from the rain once under the veranda. He's the caretaker, and a bad-tempered brute! You can see his ugly face from here—he's sitting in the veranda now."

Lord Mauleverer glanced over the gate of Sea View.

Over the gate, he could see the chalet, and the grassy mound that covered the air-raid dugout at a little distance from it. In the wooden veranda in front of the chalet a man sat smoking—a stocky man with a pimply face.

"Is that Parker?" asked Lord Mauleverer.

"Yes, that's Parker! He made a fuss when we went in for shelter that day, and Harry Wharton punched him!" said Bessie Bunter. "I wish he had punched him harder! If I were a boy, I'd punch him! I'd give him a binge on the boko!"

"Oh!" gasped Mauly. "Would you?"

"I jolly well would!" declared Miss Bunter. "If my brother Billy were here, I'd ask him to. Why hasn't he come? I had some toffee for him."

"Bunter's got detention!" ex-

plained Lord Mauleverer. "He asked me to come and tell you."

"Well, you go in and get the toffee!" said Bessie. "It's a big packet—the toffee I had for Billy. If that man Parker says anything, punch him on the nose, as Wharton did."

"Oh!" murmured Lord Mauleverer. "I—I say, our beak made a fearful fuss about that, Miss Bunter—the man complained of trespassing, and Mr. Lamb handed out a whopping, and—"

"Did he? Are you afraid of a whopping?"

"Oh, no! But—"

"Then go in and get my toffee, and if Parker interferes, hit him in the eye!" said Miss Bunter.

Lord Mauleverer paused. The man Parker was watching him, and had half-risen from his seat. Apparently he was wary of more trespassing. Certainly, there was no harm in stepping into the garden to retrieve that packet of toffee; and Mauly was prepared to deal with the caretaker, if necessary, but he did not want to land in trouble with Mr. Lamb.

However, there seemed no help for it, and he put his hand on the gate to open it.

Parker started to his feet in the veranda.

"Hi!" he shouted. "Keep out of that!"

"Mayn't I come in just a minute to get somethin' that's been thrown over the fence?" called out Lord Mauleverer politely.

"I'll soon shift you, if you do!" retorted Parker, and he came down the steps of the veranda and towards the gate.

"Punch him in the eye!" advised Miss Bunter.

"Yaas!" murmured Mauly.

He pushed open the gate and stepped in.

From the gateway, Miss Bunter watched him through her big spectacles, apparently prepared for the sight of a battle between the Greyfriars junior and the surly caretaker.

Parker came hurrying down the weedy, unkempt path to the gate, with a very ugly look on his face. Then suddenly, from a distance, came a raucous, wailing note—the wail of a siren!

Parker stopped suddenly.

That wailing, raucous blast on the siren at Pegg was followed by another and another. It was the air-raid alarm signal! Parker turned and bolted like a rabbit towards the air-raid shelter, grabbing at his pocket for a key as he ran. From Miss Bunter came renewed screams—scream on scream!

IN THE DUGOUT!

MR. QUELCH, the Remove master of Greyfriars, started to his feet.

A single electric bulb burned in the air-raid dugout. By its light the Remove master was reading—it was fortunate that Mr. Quelch's tastes were for the classics, for Euripides was the only volume he had to

console him in his long and weary imprisonment.

Mr. Quelch was a great admirer of Euripides, but by that time he would probably have been glad to exchange him for Sophocles, or perhaps for the lighter pages of Aristophanes!

It was a hurried tread outside the door—the door that was always locked and bolted on the outside—that caused Mr. Quelch to rise and throw Euripides on the table.

Outside that door, as he knew, was a wooden stair leading up to the surface of the earth. The air-raid shelter was deep down. Generally, he did not hear his gaoler's steps till the man reached the door of the room in which he was kept a prisoner. Now he heard them, in wild haste and hurry.

Quelch's heart gave a jump. The man was coming in haste—in wild haste. Did it, could it mean that at long last rescue was at hand? It was clear that there was an alarm of some kind.

Mr. Quelch had not forgotten the day when he had heard the voices of Greyfriars juniors on the other side of the locked door. They had been mixed up in some shindy with the stocky man who guarded him in the dugout. Slim Jim, the man in the mask, had held him silent till they were gone—and they had departed, never dreaming that their missing Form-master was a prisoner so near at hand.

But from that, Quelch knew that he could be at no great distance from Greyfriars School—within range of a cross-country run on a half-holiday.

It was a comfort to know that he was not far from Greyfriars—it did not help him, but it seemed to make the solitude less solitary, the imprisonment less dreary. And there was always a hope in his heart that Greyfriars fellows might, perhaps, come that way again, and that by happy good fortune they might stumble on the secret of the dugout.

But since that day, nothing had happened—nothing but the regular visits of his gaoler, and the rare visits of the man in the mask—Slim Jim, the cracksman whose face he knew, and who was keeping him a kidnapped prisoner because he knew it.

But now—Mr. Quelch's face flushed and his heart beat as he heard that hurried tramping on the wooden stair—the sound of a man hurtling down, rather than descending, in mad haste. Could it mean that Ferrers Locke had made some discovery—that the police were at hand?

He heard a bump and a cuss through the locked door. The man had hurled himself down the stair in such haste that he had fallen.

Then came a hurried withdrawing of a bolt; the grind of a key in the lock. The door opened, and the stocky, pimply man burst in, red and breathless with haste.

Quelch's eyes fixed on him. Every time the man had come hitherto, he had had a muffer tied over his face—a precaution against identification, when the prisoner should be at liberty again. Now, in his haste, he had forgotten it, and the Remove master

had a full view of the stubbly, pimply, unpleasant face of his gaoler.

The man did not heed him. He slammed the door, put in the key on the inside and locked it, and then thrust the key into his pocket.

Then he stood panting for breath.

"Well?" Mr. Quelch's voice cut in sharply. "What does this mean, you rascal? Are the police coming—at last?"

The stocky man turned towards him. From his coat pocket he jerked a short loaded stick.

"Pack it up, and keep your distance!" he grunted. "You give a covey a spot of trouble, and I'll crack your nut as soon as look at you!"

He bent his head to listen. But the dugout was too deep down for sounds from above to penetrate, unless they were very near and very loud. There was silence, save for the man's own panting breath.

Mr. Quelch watched him. Something had happened—that was plain; he could not make out what. If it was Ferrers Locke—if it was the police—the man was cornered in that dugout. But was it?

The stocky man looked at him with an ugly sneer.

"Don't you worry!" he said. "Nobody ain't coming 'ere—and I've locked the top door, if anybody does! You're safe, you are—unless them blinking enemy raiders get the pair of us! And I fancy this shelter's deep enough to save our skins!"

"Oh!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

He understood now. It was an air raid, and the alarm signal had sent the stocky man pelting down in frantic haste to the shelter of the dugout.

An air raid would not have kept Mr. Quelch in that dugout had he been able to emerge. But he was powerless. He might have been equal in a struggle with the stocky man, but it was quite plain that the ruffian would carry out his threat, if pushed to it; and one blow from the loaded stick would have stretched the Remove master senseless on the planks of the floor.

Mr. Quelch clenched his hands.

He could have hoped that a falling bomb would wreck the shelter; risk of life and limb would have been as nothing compared with a chance of escape. But, as the man said, the dugout was too deep down to be in much danger. Even a direct hit would hardly have damaged it, under the high grassy mound over the top.

"An air raid!" said Mr. Quelch. "Is that it?"

"You got it!" grunted the stocky man.

He listened at the door with feverish attention—perhaps to pick up the sound of the siren, perhaps for a falling bomb.

The Remove master eyed him with cold contempt. Explosives were unpleasant neighbours, but he had only contempt for a man who trembled for his skin.

"Oooooh!" came a sudden alarmed gasp from the man listening at the door.

Crash!

"Oooooh!" gasped the man.

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"Take courage," said Mr. Quelch, with bitter scorn, "that was not a bomb! That was a knock at the upper door!"

"Oh!" gasped the stocky man.

Crash! Bang! Crash! came echoing down.

For the moment it was clear the ruffian had dreaded that it was a bomb. Loud and sharp came the heavy knocking on the upper door.

"Your confederate, perhaps!" said Mr. Quelch. "Had you not better go up and admit him?"

The man gave him an evil look.

Whether it was Slim Jim at the upper door or not, it was clear that he had no intention of leaving safety. As likely as not, the air-raid signal was a false alarm; but if bombs were falling, the stocky man preferred to remain where he was.

Bang! Crash! came the furious knocking.

So heavy and so savage was it, that it seemed that the upper door must yield under the strain.

The stocky man, as he listened, set his teeth, snarling like a wild animal. Mr. Quelch stood with glinting eyes and deep-drawn breath. Danger from falling bombs was nothing to him—less than nothing, compared with seeing the doors open, seeing the light of the sun again—seeing a chance of escape! From the bottom of his heart he hoped that the upper door would break in under those crashing blows—he would have welcomed a bursting bomb that had driven it in.

Crash! Bang! Crash!

NO ADMITTANCE!

LORD MAULEVERER stared after Nobby Parker, running like a rabbit for the air-raid shelter, and then cut back to Bessie Bunter.

Loud and wailing came the blasts of the alarming siren—and Miss Bunter screamed and screamed and screamed, as if in competition with the siren.

"Save me!" shrieked Bessie, grabbing at Lord Mauleverer. "Can't you hear the siren—"

"Yaas; but—"

Scream!

"I say, Miss Bunter—"

Scream!

"Keep cool, you know!" urged Mauly. "Ten to one there's nothin' in it—there hardly ever is, you know!"

Scream!

There was a patter of feet on the sea-road. From the distance, Ponsonby had turned, and he came running back.

Mauleverer did not glance at him—he was fully occupied with Miss Elizabeth Bunter.

An air-raid siren was a matter of which any sensible fellow was bound to take heed. Quite probably it only meant "unidentified aircraft"—but it was only common sense to get into safety until those aircraft had been identified. But it was not a matter for excitement or for losing one's head. Lord Mauleverer was perfectly cool. Bessie Bunter was not—and she

clutched him with both podgy hands and screamed—perhaps realising that this was an occasion on which she was perfectly entitled to scream, and not wishing to waste a golden opportunity!

"Look here, it's all right!" gasped Mauly. "Look here, I'll get you into the air-raid shelter—lots of time before they butt in, if they butt in at all, and ten to one they won't, you know."

Scream!

There was mist over the sea. From the mist came a droning and throbbing from unseen aircraft.

The hoots of the siren ceased, but following came the boom of gunfire down the coast. Gunfire in the distance was an almost daily experience at Greyfriars School, and even Billy Bunter had long ceased to take any special notice of it.

Patter, patter, patter! came Ponsonby's feet on the road.

The dandy of Highcliffe was running like a deer, his face white as chalk—a good deal more frightened than Bessie Bunter.

Pon, no doubt, was heading for Sea View and the air-raid shelter there—there was no other, except at a great distance; and he counted on being let in, as a matter of course. Few proprietors of air-raid shelters would have refused hospitality to anyone when the alarm signal had sounded.

Lord Mauleverer drew Bessie in at the gateway.

Bessie seemed to be of opinion that screaming was the one thing needful. However, she allowed his lordship to lead her in, and they started at a trot across the rough field towards the grassy mound in the distance.

Patter, patter! came behind him.

Ponsonby had been at a good distance, but he had covered the ground almost like lightning. He cut in at the gate, and passed Lord Mauleverer and Bessie in their race for the dugout. Miss Bunter, like Master Bunter, had a lot of weight to carry, and though she put on as much speed as possible, progress was rather to slow motion.

Lord Mauleverer helped her all he could. As Pon flashed by, he shouted to him:

"Here, Ponsonby! Take Miss Bunter's other arm, will you?"

Ponsonby did not answer or even look at him. Pon was not thinking of rendering aid to others—even to beauty in distress! Pon was thinking wholly and solely of his own skin! He shot by and raced on.

"Oh, you cur!" gasped Mauly.

He piloted Miss Bunter onward after Pon.

The dandy of Highcliffe rooted in breathless haste round the grassy mound, looking for the entrance, which was on the farther side. He disappeared from view.

Boom, boom, boom! came the heavy guns from the distance.

Lord Mauleverer put on all the speed he could—with Bessie! Much more serious than possible bombs was the danger of falling shrapnel. He had to get Bessie under shelter as quickly as he could—and he was

thankful that there was an air-raid dugout so close at hand.

Breathless with hurry, Bessie ceased to scream, which was a relief to his lordship, whose eardrums were suffering considerably from Miss Bunter's vocal efforts. They panted round the extensive mound at last, and reached the farther side, where the entrance door was sunk below the level of the earth at the bottom of a sloping pit.

Thump, thump, thump! greeted them.

Ponsonby was beating frantically on the door. Evidently, it would not open.

"Here you are, Miss Bunter!" gasped Mauly.

He led Bessie down the slope to the door. Ponsonby stared round at him with popping eyes.

"I can't get in!" he spluttered. "They won't open the door! They must be inside—there must be somebody—"

"That man Parker's inside!" answered Lord Mauleverer. "I saw him cutting off here ten minutes ago. He's gone in—"

"The villain! Why doesn't he let a chap in?" gasped Ponsonby. "What has he locked the door for? I've got to get in!"

He beat frantically on the door.

As there was no sign from within, he glared round, picked up a heavy stone, and, taking it in both hands, beat on the door with it.

Thudding and clanging made a terrific din. The door was of thick wood, partly protected by metal. The crashing of the stone must have been heard in the farther corner of the dugout below—it could have been heard at a great distance along the sea road.

"Open that door, will you?" screamed Bessie Bunter. "Mauleverer, why don't you open the door?"

"Ponsonby's doin' his best, Miss Bunter—"

"Will you get that door open?"

"Oh, the rotter!" panted Ponsonby. "The villain! Leaving a fellow outside in an air raid! I'll report this to the police! I'll—"

"Would you mind shuttin' up, Ponsonby?" asked Lord Mauleverer politely. "If you can't help bein' a rotten funk, you might at least try to remember that there's a lady present—"

"Oh, shut up, you fool!" snarled Ponsonby. "Help me beat this door in! We've a right to go in for shelter—everybody has, in an air raid."

"Yaas, but—"

"Help!" screamed Miss Bunter.

"My dear Miss Bunter—"

"Help!"

"We'll get you in if we can—"

"Help!"

Bessie being stationary again, re-started screaming, as her contribution towards the solving of the problem

Lord Mauleverer involuntarily put his hands to his ears for a moment—but he dropped them at once. Something had to be done.

Ponsonby beat and beat on the door with the stone, but it did not stir.

Either the man within was afraid to open the door, or he did not care for the peril of others. Pon squeaked and squealed with terror as he pounded.

Whether refugees from an air raid had a right to force a way into an air-raid shelter was a legal point on which Lord Mauleverer's noble mind was a blank. It had never occurred to him that anyone would be brute enough to refuse admittance. With the screaming Bessie on his hands, he decided that he was getting in—if it could be managed, regardless of knotty legal points.

But Ponsonby's pounding with the stone was producing no effect.

Mauly touched the terrified dandy of Highcliffe on the arm.

"That's no good!" he said. "Cut off to the house and see if you can scrounge an axe or a chopper or somethin'—"

"You fool!" snarled Ponsonby. "Think I'm going out into the open?" There was an arch of corrugated iron over the doorway, and Pon was careful to keep under it. Pon did not want any fragments of shrapnel on his aristocratic nut!

"You funky worm!" exclaimed Lord Mauleverer. "You make me feel ill! Look after Miss Bunter while I go."

Scream from Bessie.

"Don't you leave me!"

"Oh dear! I must go and get somethin' to bash in that putrid door—"

"Don't leave me!" screamed Bessie, grabbing Lord Mauleverer's arm. "Don't! Let Ponsonby go! I'm afraid to stay here with a coward! Don't you go!"

"Will you go, Ponsonby?"

"No, you fool!"

Lord Mauleverer's right arm was a prisoner in Bessie's frantic grasp. His left was free. With his left he gave Ponsonby a terrific clout on the side of the head, which made the dandy of Highcliffe stagger and yell. The stone went with a crash to the earth.

"Now will you go?" roared Mauleverer.

"You fool—you ruffian—you—you—"

spluttered Ponsonby.

"Will you go?"

"No!" yelled Ponsonby. "I won't take a step! I— Yaroooh!"

Smack!

Ponsonby rolled over, yelling.

"There! That makes a fellow feel better!" gasped Lord Mauleverer. "Stay there, you cur—if you get up, I'll knock you down again!"

Ponsonby, spluttering rage, scrambled up. Lord Mauleverer's knuckles landed on his nose and he went down again. This time he stayed there.

"Now, Miss Bunter, do let me go!" pleaded Lord Mauleverer. "I can get somethin' at the house to bash in that door. I'll be back in a jolly old jiffy—"

"Don't you leave me!"

"But I say—"

"Don't you go!"

"Then we shall have to stay outside—"

"I won't stay outside—"

"But—"

"Help!"

"I say, Miss Bunter, really—"

"Help!"

"Oh gad!" groaned Lord Mauleverer.

Ponsonby sat up, with a wary eye on Lord Mauleverer. He sat and held his hand to his nose, which had a rather damaged look.

From the dugout came no sound and no movement. The inmate, evidently, intended to leave them where they were—from heartless cowardice, as Mauly supposed; never guessing what secret reasons the stocky man had for not admitting strangers to the dugout.

What was to be done was simply a mystery to Mauly! It was probable that an implement could be found in the house for breaking in the door of the shelter—but Bessie would not let him go, and Ponsonby was afraid to go. Then a welcome sound came to his ears.

The long-drawn hoot of a siren was not melodious! Nobody could have mistaken it for the music of the spheres! But never had any sound been so welcome to Lord Mauleverer as was that hideous long-drawn wail!

"All clear!" he exclaimed.

"Wha-at?" gasped Bessie.

"That's the all-clear! No danger! All serene—O.K.! Cheerio! Right as rain! Nothin' to worry about! Enemy gone—if there were any! All clear! See?"

"Oh!" said Bessie. She ceased to scream. "Sure it's all clear? I can never tell one from the other."

"Yaas! The all-clearfulness is terrific, as Inky would say!" assured Lord Mauleverer. "Everythin' in the garden is lovely. Aircraft passed over—I expect they're scootin' like billy-oh with fighters on their tails, pushed for time to get home for tea. They never lose any time when a fighter goes up to take a squint at them. They get off the mark before the word go. I dare say they're as scared as Pon."

Ponsonby picked himself up at last. The danger was over; and Pon, giving Lord Mauleverer a bitter and evil look, tramped up the slope.

"Kick him!" said Miss Bunter.

"Eh? Oh, yaas! Certainly!"

Thud!

Ponsonby, with a yell, disappeared at a run.

THE BOUNDER'S CHANCE!

"I SAY, you fellows!" yelled Billy Bunter. "Hark! Oh crikey! I say, come on!"

Bunter started.

Billy Bunter was seldom quick off the mark. Getting into motion was, as a rule, a slow process with the fat Owl of the Remove. But if there was anything that could make William George Bunter change the leisurely habits of a porpoise for the rapid activity of a kangaroo it was the siren signal of hostile aircraft. On such occasions a flash of lightning had very little on Bunter.

The football match was over and the Remove fellows in the changing-
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room. Herbert Vernon-Smith had joined them there in the most disgruntled mood ever—exasperated by the outcome of his visit to the garage and his interview with John Robinson, and equally exasperated at having missed the game for nothing. Billy Bunter, released from Extra French, had rolled in, chiefly anxious to find some Remove man who was eager for good company at tea. But at the wail of the siren from afar, Billy Bunter forgot even tea! Billy Bunter would not have delayed a moment to pick up a plum cake with marzipan on top.

Bunter flew.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "That's the signal! Where's my other shoe?"

Coker of the Fifth put his head in at the door.

"Now then, keep cool!" roared Coker. "Do you hear? Keep cool! Don't lose your heads, you fags! Keep order! Keep cool! Keep—"

"Shut up, Coker!"

"Take your face away!"

"Dry up, Coker—you're drowning the siren!"

"Keep cool, I tell you!" roared Coker, in a state of great excitement. "I'll see you safe! I'll— Yarrooh!"

A football boot, landing on Horace Coker's chin, cut short his eloquence quite suddenly.

There was a regular rule at Greyfriars on these alarming occasions. Being near the south-east coast, Greyfriars got rather more than its fair share of alarms. Generally, nothing came of them—and the all-clear followed automatically. Nevertheless, it was obviously possible that something might come of them, and something extremely unpleasant, and Dr. Locke was not the man to let his boys take unnecessary chances. So when the siren sounded its unmelodious note, the prefects rallied as one man, the masters rallied also, and the whole school marched down into the ancient vaults—deep below the old school.

It was like Coker of the Fifth, who never could mind his own business, to take matters in hand. Coker thought that he could manage these things better than the prefects. His system was to get into a state of terrific excitement and tell everybody to keep cool.

But the Removites were quite cool and did not need Coker of the Fifth to tell them to keep so; and they had no use for Coker, anyhow.

So that football boot interrupted Coker. It interrupted him suddenly and unpleasantly. Coker of the Fifth sat down with the football boot resting on his knees, and spluttered.

"Man down!" chortled Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oooogh!" spluttered Coker. "I—I—I'll— Oooogh!"

"Come on!" said Harry Wharton.

"Where's my necktie?" howled Johnny Bull. "What swab's got my necktie?"

"Leave it for the enemy, old man come on!"

"I'm not going without my necktie. Blow the enemy!"

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"Now, then—" It was the voice of Wingate of the Sixth, captain of Greyfriars. "Get a move on, you kids—you know the rule!"

Johnny Bull, fortunately, found his necktie. The juniors marched out.

Wingate stared at Coker.

"What the dickens are you sitting there for, Coker?" he asked. "Tired? Haven't you heard the signal? Get a move on, you ass!"

Coker of the Fifth, with deep feelings, got a move on. He rubbed his damaged chin as he tramped out of the changing-room.

In an orderly procession the Greyfriars fellows headed for the door of the school vaults. But one junior was missing from the ranks.

This was the chance Vernon-Smith wanted—an unexpected chance which he was not going to lose.

It was easy enough for one fellow to slip away in the crowd—and the Bouncer quietly slipped away.

All the masters who were within the gates had turned up for the procession, but among them Mr. Lamb had not appeared.

Either he was out of gates, or he had not heeded the alarm signal. In the first case, his study was at Smithy's mercy; in the second, he had a good excuse for going there—to tip Mr. Lamb that the air-raid signal had sounded.

The Bouncer cut round corners, and reached Masters' Passage. Breathless, he tapped at Mr. Lamb's door and opened it.

"The signal's gone, sir," he called into the study.

There was no reply.

The Bouncer grinned, and stepped into an empty study.

He shut the door after him. Lamb had, after all, gone out—when, Smithy did not know, but he was out now—and this was Smithy's chance.

Wherever he was, he was not likely to return until the all-clear sounded. Obviously, he would take shelter somewhere till then. Even if he returned, he would not come to his study—he would head for the vaults, like the rest of the school.

Smithy had a free hand in his study—if he chose to disregard the possible peril of an air raid!

He did so choose; he did not, in fact, give that peril a single thought. He was only too glad of this chance of retrieving his lost letter.

Lamb's velvet coat was hanging on a peg inside the door.

The Bouncer gave one glance round and then pounced on that coat. It was into a pocket of that coat that he had seen Lamb thrust the letter from Bill Lodgey.

Swiftly, he searched the pockets. But the letter was not there—and he hardly expected to find it there—he was only making sure.

He turned towards Lamb's desk in

the corner by the window. He had no doubt that the letter was in that desk. Lamb was not likely to carry such a letter about with him—still less likely to change it from pocket to pocket whenever he changed his coat. Ten to one it was in that desk.

It was a heavy, strong desk, which had been placed in the study after Mr. Lamb's arrival; it had not been there in the time of his predecessor, Mr. Woosey. The larger drawers opened to the Bouncer's hand—they mostly contained drawings, in a finished and unfinished state. The Bouncer glanced carelessly through drawer after drawer—he did not expect to find that letter in an unlocked drawer.



"My toffee!" screamed Bessie Bunter. She pointed to the man who was strolling away. "That brute took it away!"

Only one drawer, in fact, was locked.

If the lost letter was in the desk at all, it was in that drawer.

Vernon-Smith did not hesitate.

What he was going to do, what he had determined to do, at the first chance, was not merely risky—it was wildly foolhardy. Smashing open a locked drawer was a proceeding of which certainly no Greyfriars fellow but Herbert Vernon-Smith would have dreamed.

Neither, indeed, would Smithy have dreamed of it, reckless as he was, had the case been less desperate. But everything was at stake.

Sooner or later—probably sooner rather than later—Lamb would succeed in tracing that letter to him. It was not a master doing his duty that the Bouncer had to fear—it was an enemy seeking to drive him away from the school. It was a man whose

secrets he partly knew, and who feared that he would discover more.

That was some excuse for his action. If Lamb pinned that letter down on him, he would be expelled from Greyfriars—Lamb would get by with it at last! Smithy was not going to be sacked if he could help it. He had to have that letter.

There was a basket of oak logs by the fireplace. The Bounder picked out one of a handy size.

He peered out at the study door for a moment. No one was in sight—no one was at hand. Only a distant hum of voices reached him from the crowd going down into the shelter of the vaults.



pointed a plump and sticky forefinger at Ponsonby, "Oh!" gasped Lord Mauleverer.

No one would hear the crash—and he needed only one. Taking the log in both hands, he crashed it with all his strength on the lock of the locked drawer.

It was a strong drawer and a strong lock. But that tremendous crashing blow knocked the front of the drawer right in.

The Bounder panted. It was a desperate act—it made his heart jump as that crash echoed through the study.

But he lost no time. He dragged open the broken drawer. It was a good-sized drawer, and contained many things. There was a leather wallet, locked, containing what the Bounder did not know, and did not care. But he was surprised to hear a clink of metal from it as he moved it to grope for a letter. Apparently, there were metallic implements of some kind in that locked wallet.

The next moment he had the letter. There it was, in the drawer, as he had expected. He grabbed it up in haste, gave one glance at Bill Lodgey's scrawl, and then cut across to the fireplace.

He thrust the letter into the embers of the fire, stirred them, and watched the letter consumed in the flames.

Then he hurried out of the study.

He had succeeded! Lamb, when he came in, would know what had happened—that the owner of that letter had taken desperate measures to get it back. He would suspect the Bounder—but what could he prove? His teeth were drawn—at least, so far as the letter itself was concerned.

Breathlessly, the Bounder cut away.

He had been hardly five minutes in Lamb's study. Half a minute after leaving it, he was in the corridor from which the door of the vaults opened. Five or six late-comers, called up from various directions, were hurrying there—Smithy hurried along with them. Mr. Prout, at the door of the vault staircase, was booming:

"Lose no time! Come, come! Lose no time!"

Vernon-Smith and the others went down. Mr. Prout remained at the door. Wingate and two or three other prefects were looking for strays, and two or three more minutes elapsed before they arrived with half a dozen breathless fags. Then Mr. Prout followed them down, and the heavy door was shut.

Mr. Prout called the roll in the dimly lit vaults. Some fellows were absent—they had been out of gates when the alarm sounded. But most of the school answered "Adsum!" to their names—among the rest, Herbert Vernon-Smith.

And the Bounder grinned as he sang out "Adsum!" He was there, with the rest—as good an alibi as a fellow could have wanted.

Lamb could suspect what he liked, but he could prove nothing—the air-raid alarm that afternoon had saved the Bounder's skin.

PUNCHING PARKER!

MR. LAMB gave a start. The art master of Greyfriars was coming along the cliff road, from the direction of Friardale.

He had left the village behind him when the siren rang its note of alarm, and he quickened his pace, doubtless thinking of the dugout at Sea View, the nearest shelter. He was in sight of the gate of Sea View when the all-clear boomed out, and he slackened pace again. Then, as he drew nearer to the gate, he started as he saw a schoolboy emerge therefrom.

It was not a Greyfriars fellow—

Lamb had never seen him before. But he knew the Highcliffe cap if he did not know the wearer. His eyes glinted at Ponsonby as he came on.

Pon did not glance towards him. He started in the direction of Pegg, and walked quickly away.

Mr. Lamb arrived at the gate a few minutes later, with knitted brows. Mr. Lamb, as some of the Remove fellows had learned by painful experience of his cane, objected very strongly to trespassing at Sea View.

But he could not deal with a Highcliffe fellow. The art master hurried in at the gate and glanced towards the chalet, where a door stood wide open on the veranda, but there was no sign of the caretaker to be seen. Mr. Lamb hurried across the mound over the air-raid shelter. He had no doubt that Nobby Parker had taken refuge there at the sound of the alarm, and was still there.

As he came round the mound a voice from the other side fell on his ears, and he gave another start. That Highcliffe junior, it seemed, was not the only one who had dodged in there were others.

Mr. Lamb set his lips as he recognised the voice of a Greyfriars fellow—a member of his own Form. With a Remove fellow, at least, he could deal, and the cold glint in his eyes told that Lord Mauleverer had something to come.

"My dear Miss Bunter"—Mauleverer's voice came clearly to his ears—"it's all over—all clear—O.K.—right as rain! May I have the pleasure of seeing you back to Cliff House?"

"That brute—" came Miss Bunter's indignant voice.

"Yaas; but—"

"He ought to have let us in!"

"Oh! Yaas! But—"

"Wait till he comes out!" said Bessie Bunter. "I'm going to tell him what I think of him!"

"Oh gad! I—I say, he's rather an ill-tempered Johnny to talk to!" urged Lord Mauleverer. "Smithy calls him a gangster, and, really, he looks it!"

"Are you afraid of him?"

"Oh, no! But—"

"Well, if he's cheeky, you hit him in the eye!"

"Oh gad!"

"If my brother Billy were here, I'd ask him to thrash him!"

"Oh scissors!" gasped Lord Mauleverer. He could not quite see Brother Billy acceding to that request. Brother Billy would have had a lot of work on his hands if he had started thrashing the stocky man at Sea View!

"Wait till he comes out!" said Bessie Bunter. "If you're afraid, you can run away! I'm not afraid of him! If he checks me, I shall scratch him!"

"Oh dear!"

Mr. Lamb came round the mound. He stared grimly at the plump figure of Miss Elizabeth Bunter and the slim figure of Lord Mauleverer standing near the door of the air-raid shelter.

Lord Mauleverer started a little at sight of him. All the Remove had

heard Smithy's talk of Mr. Lamb's visits to Sea View; but Mauly, who had a great capacity for minding his own business, had taken no interest in the matter. But it was a little startling to him to see the art master there.

He capped Mr. Lamb respectfully.

Bessie Bunter blinked at him through her big spectacles.

"Who's that?" she asked.

"Mr. Lamb—my beak at Greyfriars!" murmured Lord Mauleverer.

"What are you doing here, Mauleverer?" asked Mr. Lamb, in a cold, cutting voice. "I have received so many complaints of Remove boys trespassing here that I came in this direction this afternoon to ascertain whether the caretaker was being annoyed again. I should not have been surprised to find Vernon-Smith here. I am surprised to find you—generally a well-behaved boy."

"You see, sir—"

"I see you here!" said Mr. Lamb. "It appears that hooliganism is spreading in my Form, from the example of Vernon-Smith. How dare you trespass on private property when the caretaker at this place has already complained several times to your headmaster?"

"There was an air-raid warning, sir, and I was trying to get this young lady into shelter!" explained Lord Mauleverer.

"The brute wouldn't let us in!" squeaked Bessie. "I'm waiting for him to come out to tell him what a brute he is!"

"Am I to understand, Mauleverer, that you have not only trespassed here, but that you are waiting for the man Parker, in order to create a disturbance?" exclaimed Mr. Lamb.

"I can't very well leave Miss Bunter, sir!"

"I should jolly well think not!" exclaimed Miss Bunter. "I'm going to call that man a brute, and a beast, and a coward, and a rat, and if he says anything, I shall scratch him!"

"You had better go away at once, you foolish girl!" snapped Mr. Lamb. Bessie blinked at him.

"Who are you?" she inquired.

"Eh? I am Mr. Lamb, a master at Greyfriars—"

"I mean, who are you to order me about?" demanded Bessie. "Does this place belong to you?"

"To me? No, certainly not!"

"Then mind your own business!" said Miss Bunter.

"Wha-a-t?"

"You can order me about if Miss Primrose takes you on at Cliff House," said Bessie. "Why, you might be Miss Bullivant from the way you talk! Who are you? See? Who are you?"

Miss Bunter blinked defiance at the art master of Greyfriars. Lord Mauleverer suppressed a grin.

"You foolish, impertinent girl!" gasped Mr. Lamb.

"You foolish, impertinent man!" retorted Miss Bunter. "I'd like to see you order me about!"

Mr. Lamb gave her a look. It was an expressive look. Then he turned to Mauleverer. Really, he could not deal with Bessie; and unless he

claimed to be the proprietor of Sea View, he had no right to order her off. But he could deal with a junior in his own Form

"Mauleverer! Go back to the school this instant! Wait in my study until I return!" he rapped harshly.

"Yaas, sir! Please come away now, Miss Bunter."

"Shan't!" answered Bessie.

"I've got to go, you know—Mr. Lamb's my Form-master while Quelch is away," urged Lord Mauleverer.

"Well, I shan't! I'm going to tell that man—"

Miss Bunter was interrupted by the opening of the green-painted door.

Nobby Parker emerged, and snapped the door shut behind him. He gave a jump at the sight of three figures close at hand.

"Wot—" he began surlily. He glared at Lord Mauleverer. "Was it you banging on that there door, you cheeky young 'ound?"

"Brute!" exclaimed Miss Bunter.

"Wot!" ejaculated Nobby Parker, staring at her.

"Pig!" said Bessie.

"Eh?"

"Beastly coward! Why didn't you let us in? Skulking down in a dug-out, and leaving other people to be blown to bits!" exclaimed Bessie indignantly. "You ought to be run in! If I were a man, I'd knock you down! Rat!"

"Look 'ere!" roared Nobby Parker. "That's about enough! You roll off, you young barrel of lard—"

"He's calling me names!" shrieked Bessie. "Punch his head, Mauleverer!"

"Well, ain't you been calling me some names?" hooted Nobby Parker. "You jest get out of it, sec?"

"Brute!"

"Look 'ere—"

"Beast!"

Mr. Lamb stood quite nonplussed, his face red with angry annoyance, but evidently not knowing what to do with Bessie! Parker seemed to know what to do! He made a stride at the plump Fourth-Former of Cliff House School, with a hand upraised.

"Out of it, afore I smack your 'ead!" he roared.

Scream!

Whether Mr. Parker actually would have smacked Bessie's head or not, did not transpire! Lord Mauleverer did not give him a chance! He came at the low-browed, pimply ruffian with a jump, and hit out, catching Mr. Parker on his pimply chin.

There was a lot of strength in Mauly's slim arm! The stocky man gave a howl and went over backwards, rolling down the slope to the green door and bringing up against that door with a heavy bump and another howl.

The next moment, Mr. Lamb grabbed Mauleverer's shoulder and dragged him round, his face flaming.

"Mauleverer! How dare you! You shall be severely punished for this! Leave this place at once! I will see you off the premises! Come with me!"

"Couldn't let that brute smack a lady's head, sir! Besides, all she said

was true—he is a brute and a coward and a rat!"

"Silence! Come!"

Mr. Lamb dragged Mauleverer away!

Miss Elizabeth Bunter gave a scornful blink through her big spectacles at the spluttering ruffian sprawling at the green door, and followed.

"Let go my shoulder, please, Mr. Lamb!" said Lord Mauleverer quietly.

Lamb compressed his grip instead of letting go, and dragged him on.

Mauly, with a sudden twist, wrenched himself loose and jumped clear.

Then he walked out at the gate. Bessie Bunter rolled out after him. Mr. Lamb stepped out into the road.

"Go back to the school at once, Mauleverer!" he breathed. "I cannot deal with you here—I shall deal with you at Greyfriars! Go!"

"Yaas, sir!" said Mauleverer calmly. "Good-bye, Miss Bunter!"

His lordship raised his cap politely, and started down the road towards Friardale.

Miss Elizabeth Bunter gave Mr. Lamb a concentrated blink of angry scorn, contempt, and dislike, and rolled off towards Pegg and Cliff House.

It was not till Mauleverer was out of sight that Mr. Lamb turned and re-entered the gate of Sea View—doubtless having some business there. And it was not till Lord Mauleverer had got as far as Friardale that he remembered that he had forgotten the toffee!

THE MAN OF SECRETS!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"

Bob Cherry came to a halt and stared at the window of Mr. Lamb's study. His comrades stopped also.

All the Famous Five were surprised to see Lord Mauleverer standing at that study window, looking out placidly into the spring sunset.

"Anything up, Mauly?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Yaas."

"Well, what's up, fathead?" asked Frank Nugent.

"I am—for a whoppin'!" answered Lord Mauleverer. "The dear little Baa-Lamb has got his rag out! Frightful outsider, what?"

"The frightfulness is terrific, my esteemed Mauly!" agreed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "But what is the absurd rowfulness?"

"Lamb's out, isn't he?" asked Johnny Bull. "Did you butt into the Baa-Lamb out of gates, Mauly?"

"Yaas."

"But what's the row?" asked Harry. "You're never in a row, old chap."

Lord Mauleverer, sitting in the window, placidly explained. He had been waiting some time in Mr. Lamb's study, and he was rather glad of a chat with his friends as he waited.

Lamb had ordered him to wait in that study till his return, and Mauly was carrying out that order—but he

did not see why he should not talk to his friends at the window, as they had happened along.

Herbert Vernon-Smith came up and joined the group. He eyed Lord Mauleverer very curiously, wondering whether Mauly had noticed the damage to the desk in the study. But it was not likely, Mauly never noticed anything that did not concern him.

"What a rotter that man is!" said the Bounder, when Mauly had told his placid tale. "I'd like to know what's his jolly old connection with that ruffian at Sea View. A precious pair of them!"

"He said that he came along to see if any Greyfrairs men were trespassin' again!" remarked Lord Mauleverer.

The Bounder gave a scoffing laugh. "Did you believe that?" he sneered.

"Well, no!" said Lord Mauleverer, after a moment or two of consideration. "Not quite. He's up to something. No bizney of mine."

"I'll make it my business, if I can spot it!" said the Bounder vengefully. "I'll show that spoofing humbug up, before I'm through with him!"

"I say, you fellows, is that Mauly?" Billy Bunter rolled up. "I say, Mauly, what are you sticking in Lamb's study for? I say, have you got the toffee?"

"Sorry—no!"

"What!" yelled Bunter. "Why haven't you got it? Mean to say you ate it coming back?"

"Oh gad!" gasped Lord Mauleverer. "No! Not at all! Air-raid alarms, and punching a man's face, and all that, put it right out of my head. Forgot all about it, old fat bean!"

"You forgot it!" stuttered Bunter. "Forgot a packet of toffee! Mad?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at!" howled Bunter. "Look here, Mauly, I know you're a fool, but you ain't such a fool as that! No fellow's fool enough to forget a packet of toffee! Look here, where is it?"

"Inside the fence at Sea View, where that Highcliffe cad Ponsoby chucked it!" answered Lord Mauleverer. "But I saw Miss Bunter all right—and told her you couldn't come—"

"Don't be an idiot! I want that toffee!" roared Bunter. "Why, you silly ass, there was no need to go at all if you weren't going to bring the toffee back! Mean to say you've tramped a mile and a half out and a mile and a half back and forgotten the toffee?"

"Yaas!"

"You—you—you idiot!" gasped Bunter. "You—you dummy! You potty piffler! You blithering goat! You—you—you— Look here, you beast, if you've left my toffee behind you can jolly well go and fetch it, see?"

"I'm waiting for Lamb—"

"Blow Lamb! Bother Lamb! Leaving a fellow's toffee behind!" gasped Bunter. "I say, you fellows, one of you could cut over on a bike before lock-up—"

"I can see us doing it!" agreed

Bob Cherry. "Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here comes the giddy Baa-Lamb!"

The juniors cleared off from the window as Mr. Lamb was seen coming towards the House.

Billy Bunter shook a fat fist at Lord Mauleverer's placid face as he went. The other fellows were feeling rather concerned for Mauly, who was up for a whopping. Bunter's thoughts were concentrated on the toffee—the happy anticipation of which had consoled him all through Extra French, and through half an hour down in the school vaults. That happy anticipation was never to be realised now. That unspeakable idiot, Mauly, might as well never have gone at all—as he had come back without the toffee.

Lord Mauleverer—seemingly not at all distressed on the subject of toffee—turned from the window and waited for Mr. Lamb to enter at the door.

The art master came into the study a few minutes later.

Lord Mauleverer watched him as he came in calmly. Mauly never took the trouble to dislike anybody; but he had a repugnance for Mr. Lamb. The man was not, as Mauly put it, pukka, as Mauly knew by instinct rather than by observation.

Whether Lamb had secrets or not, as the Bounder declared, Mauly did not care a straw; but he felt a calm contempt for a man who had a cruel, cattish temper under an outward show of fluffy amiability.

Lamb was not looking amiable now. His eyes over his glasses glinted at the calm face of the school-boy earl.

"I shall punish you severely for your conduct this afternoon, Mauleverer," he said harshly. "I am very much inclined to report you to your headmaster for having assaulted the man at Sea View."

"Yaas, sir!" said Lord Mauleverer. "But, really, I couldn't do anythin' but try to find Miss Bunter a shelter in an air raid—"

"There was no air raid!" snapped Mr. Lamb.

"There was an alarm, sir, and you never know how it's goin' to turn out. The general rule is to head for the nearest shelter."

"That is a mere excuse!" said Mr. Lamb. "Again and again Remove boys have trespassed at that place, and I am tired of receiving complaints from the caretaker. On one occasion a paperchase was led across the grounds. I am determined to put a stop to this! I shall—"

Mr. Lamb broke off suddenly. His eyes fell on the desk in the corner, and on the broken drawer half-open.

Mauleverer had not noticed it—he had not even glanced at the desk while he was in the study. The Lamb was rather more observant. His eyes fixed on the broken drawer, and the colour faded from his face, leaving him so white that Mauleverer gave a start as he saw it.

Then he made a spring towards the desk, Mauleverer watching him in wonder.

Mauly heard him give a panting breath of relief as he grasped a locked leather wallet that lay in the

drawer—there was a metallic clink as he grasped it. That wallet disappeared so quickly into an inner pocket of Mr. Lamb's coat that Mauleverer hardly saw it.

The art master turned on him. His face was still pale, and it was so transfigured with rage that it startled Mauleverer.

"You young scoundrel!" Lamb's voice came hoarse and husky. "You—you have dared to break open my desk—you—you—"

Lord Mauleverer gazed at him.

"I have done nothin' of the kind, Mr. Lamb!" he said, in a distinct tone of quiet scorn. "Don't you know that the suggestion is an insult?"

"You were here—you—if it was not you, who was it?" roared Lamb.

"Haven't the foggiest!" drawled Lord Mauleverer.

Lamb's hands were twitching, as if he could hardly keep them off the junior. But he turned to the drawer again.

Why he had been alarmed, or rather terrified, by the sight of that drawer broken open, was quite a puzzle to Mauleverer. Anger would have been natural; but he had read terror—blanching terror—in the art master's face.

Whatever it was that was contained in that locked leather wallet was something that Mr. Lamb desired to keep deeply secret—that was very clear. What had he to fear if it was seen?

Mauleverer's lip curled. He knew now that the Bounder was right—this man had secrets—dangerous secrets.

Lamb groped in the drawer. Then he turned to Lord Mauleverer again, a black and bitter look on his face.

"The letter is gone!" he said venomously. "What have you done with it?"

"What letter?" Mauleverer stared blankly.

"Do not bandy words with me! I knew that the young rascal to whom that letter belonged might make some attempt to recover it; but I never dreamed of such an action as this! What have you done with the letter?"

"I know nothin' about any letter!" answered Lord Mauleverer contemptuously.

Mr. Lamb paused a moment.

"Do you mean to say that this drawer was broken open before you came into this study?" he demanded.

"I know nothin' about it."

"You will hardly expect me to believe that!" said the art master between his closed lips. "I conclude that you have destroyed the letter. It makes little difference—you will be expelled for this, Mauleverer."

Lord Mauleverer raised his eyebrows.

"If you fancy that Dr. Locke will believe that I've pinched a letter from your desk, Mr. Lamb, you're making a mistake!" he said. "The Head's a gentleman."

"You have broken open this drawer—you have taken the letter—your own letter from a disreputable racing man!"

Lord Mauleverer gave him one

look, stepped to the door, opened it, and walked out of the study.

"Stop!" roared Mr. Lamb.

Mauleverer shut the door and walked away.

FERRERS LOCKE IN LUCK!

FERRERS LOCKE stood very still.

The man with the sandy beard, who looked as unlike John Robinson as he looked unlike Ferrers Locke, stood clamped against the dark trunk of a tree in the darkness of the night. He stilled his breathing at the sound of an opening door—a faint sound, but audible to the keen ears of the Baker Street detective.

It was midnight—dim and dark. John Robinson's rooms over the garage were vacant. Ferrers Locke was keeping watch and ward, as he had done for many a long and wintry night—patient, tireless, indomitable.

Once, at least, he had had luck, when he had shadowed the dark figure that dropped from a window—shadowed it to the scene of one of Slim Jim's nocturnal raids, though the cracksman had escaped him. But from that, the Baker Street detective knew beyond doubt that the mystery cracksman was an inmate of Greyfriars School—and he did not doubt that the man was Mr. Lamb. And now—

A dark shadow passed in the dark.

It was no breaker of bounds—at midnight—not some reckless senior like Loder of the Sixth, or some young rascal like Vernon-Smith of the Remove. A breaker of bounds might be returning at midnight—hardly setting out at such an hour!

This was his man!

The dark figure that had crept stealthily out of the House at past midnight was Slim Jim—and Ferrers Locke knew it! That it was Lamb, he did not doubt; but he could not see, and he could not be sure.

That dark figure made little sound as it glided through the night. Ferrers Locke made none at all as he followed.

The detective's eyes were gleaming.

If he succeeded a second time in tracking Slim Jim to the scene of a robbery, the cracksman would not escape him again. Once his grip was on the man, he would take care of that—and the mask would be torn away, revealing the face that, so far, was known only to Mr. Quelch, the kidnapped Form-master. And if the man was not bound on another raid, why was he going, at that hour?

But to the detective's perplexity, the dark figure did not head for the masters' gate, to which Lamb, like all the masters, had a key, and by which the night prowler had gone on the previous occasion. Locke shadowed his man into the old Cloister, at a distance from the school buildings.

Was he intending to clamber over the wall there, like some fag going out of bounds? Or was this, after all, some young rascal like Vernon-Smith—whom Locke had caught one night at that very spot? Surely not—so late!

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Locke made no sound; and his ears were on the alert as he trod lightly and softly on the old flag-stones of the Cloister.

A rustling sound came through the dark. He knew that it was the rustle of ivy on the old wall. The ivy was stirring; but it did not sound as if a climber was clambering up the wall.

Locke was simply puzzled.

The man ahead had come to a halt at the ivied wall at the end of the Cloister. But he was not climbing! He had come to a halt there—and that was all! Why?

Locke listened intently

He could see nothing but the dim mass of the wall, overgrown with thick, ancient ivy. The man was fumbling in the ivy, close by one of the old stone buttresses of the ancient wall. Did it mean that there was some hide-out in some cranny of the old wall, or what?

Locke could not tell! He could only listen and wait.

The rustling ceased! A faint foot-fall was heard. It was coming back—towards the detective!

Silently, Ferrers Locke backed behind one of the old stone pillars of the Cloister, and the dark figure, half seen, passed within a yard of him.

Ferrers Locke set his lips as he followed again. It was not a raid that was scheduled for that dark night—the man had emerged from the house at midnight, crept to the old Cloister, and was now returning. What it meant, the Baker Street detective did not know.

Five minutes later, in the dark quad, Ferrers Locke listened to the faint sound of a stealthily closed door.

The man—Mr. Lamb or not—had gone in and shut the door after him. That was the end of his night prowling—and Locke was left alone in the darkness, perplexed.

For several long minutes he waited, but there was no further sound. Then, quietly, the Baker Street detective trod back to the Cloister.

Unless there was some hidden recess in that old wall, under the ivy, which Slim Jim used for his own purposes, the man's actions were inexplicable. And even so, it was difficult to understand why he had paid the spot that brief visit at midnight. But Locke was going to know.

He reached the spot at the end of the old Cloister, where the dark figure had stopped a quarter of an hour ago.

The man was safe back in the House—probably in bed by that time. There was no danger of observation. Ferrers Locke turned on a spot of light from a flash-lamp.

By the light he examined the ivy with searching eyes. It clothed the old stone wall in clustering masses. It was thickest in the corner where the buttress jutted from the wall. Locke's arm was thrust into the tangled masses, and he groped and groped.

His heart gave a sudden beat.

On the earth, packed close in the corner where the buttress jutted, completely hidden by the thick masses of ivy, an object met his groping fingers.

It lay in that dark corner, hidden, never to be discovered save by the man who had placed it there—had not the detective been on the watch that night! But Locke had found it. The ivy was so thick at that point that only his finger-tips touched the object, at armslength. He thrust his hand in farther, and grasped the hidden object, and drew it out into the light.

His eyes glinted.

It was a leather wallet—locked. The Baker Street detective stood looking at it for a few moments—guessing, perhaps, what it contained. A minute later, the lock was open—the detective was almost as skilled in such matters as Slim Jim himself. He opened the wallet.

Then he drew a deep, deep breath.

He had guessed the contents—and he was right! He knew the use of that set of bright steel implements! This was Slim Jim's outfit of cracksman's tools!

Ferrers Locke stood breathing deep. Had he needed proof that the cracksman was an inmate of Greyfriars School, he had it now.

He could understand the man's actions now. That visit to the Cloister at midnight had been to place the wallet where Locke had found it. There was no trace of damp on the leather. It had not been long in that dark corner. Locke stood thinking hard.

This was Slim Jim's outfit—the tools he needed for his night raids. He was not accustomed to keeping them in this hiding-place—that was clear! He had left the House specially that night to place them in hiding.

Hitherto, that tell-tale outfit had been in the House—no doubt safe under lock and key! Something had happened—something must have happened—to cause the man to fear that a discovery might be made if the outfit remained in its accustomed place. Somehow he had taken the alarm and found a safer hideout outside the House.

Something must have happened—the detective could not guess what it was. It was nothing in connection with John Robinson—the man had no suspicion that the Head's new chauffeur was other than what he seemed.

Whatever was the cause, Slim Jim had determined to keep that outfit outside the House—and he had hidden it in that remote corner, to remain hidden till wanted again for his nefarious work. That much, at least, was clear.

A grim smile came over the face of the Baker Street detective.

He closed and locked the wallet again, and pushed it back into the spot where he had found it. He left nothing to indicate that it had been touched—that the spot had been visited and explored. Then, quietly, the detective glided away in the dark through the old Cloister.

It was in a satisfied mood that John Robinson went back to his rooms over the garage.

Ferrers Locke's task, hitherto, had been difficult—to watch in the night a

building with innumerable doors and windows, any one of which might be used by the night prowler. More than once, he knew, the man had gone and returned, unknown to him, in spite of watchful vigilance. But now his task was simplified.

Now all that he had to do was to watch, in the dark hours, in the Cloister—to watch and wait till Slim Jim came for his tools—as he must come, the next time he planned a raid. That single spot was all that it was necessary for the detective to watch now—and sooner or later he would have his man!

John Robinson turned in that night in a satisfied mood—feeling that the end of that long, long trail was almost in sight.

SENT UP TO THE HEAD!

MAULEVERER!"
"Yaas, sir!"
"You will go to the headmaster's study after twelve."
"Very well, sir!"

All eyes in the Remove turned on Lord Mauleverer as Mr. Lamb made that announcement in the Form-room in morning school.

Maully's face was calm and imperturbable.

Being sent up to the Head was a new experience for Maully. Even Mr. Quelch, who was rather a severe master, had never found any faults in Maully, except laziness and forgetfulness. Lamb, hitherto, had taken little or no note of that member of his Form. Maully never ragged—he was always quiet and respectful; and if he had a mild dislike and a mild contempt for Mr. Lamb, he never gave expression to such feelings. This was the first time that he had come into conflict with Mr. Quelch's substitute.

Now, however, all the Remove knew that Lamb had concentrated on him—and that Maully was booked for trouble.

They all knew the cause—Maully had told his friends of what had happened in Lamb's study the previous afternoon. All the Remove were in sympathy with Maully. Even fellows who took the Pet Lamb at face value and looked on him as a fluffy, harmless little ass, now agreed with the Bouncer that he was a rank outsider.

Mauleverer did not seem at all disturbed. But then Maully never was disturbed. His patrician calm was, so to speak, undisturbable.

Mr. Lamb gave him a look—a darker and more bitter look than he had ever given even the Bouncer. But he said no more, and the lesson went on.

When the Remove were dismissed in break, Harry Wharton stayed behind.

Lamb, who was arranging papers at his desk, gave him a sharp look.

"What is it, Wharton?" he snapped. "You may leave the Form-room."

"May I speak to you, sir, as head boy of the Remove?" asked Harry quietly.

"Be brief!"

"It's about Mauleverer, sir—"

"You need say nothing on the subject of that young rascal!"

"You have not been very long at Greyfriars, sir," said the captain of the Remove. "And I dare say you haven't taken much notice of Maully. But any fellow in the Form could tell you that he is not a rascal—that he is the best fellow breathing, and that you are making a mistake."

"How dare you, Wharton!"

"I'm bound to speak, sir, as head boy of the Form," said Harry. "We've heard about it from Mauleverer. Somebody forced a drawer in your desk, to take away a letter from some racing man—is not that correct, sir?"

"Quite!" snapped Mr. Lamb.

"Maully wouldn't be found dead along with a racing man—he's never had such a letter in his life—and if he had, he would no more think of breaking open somebody else's desk than of breaking into a bank! If you knew Mauleverer as we do, sir, you'd know it was impossible."

Mr. Lamb gave the captain of the Remove a very searching look.

"The evidence is conclusive!" he said. "Mauleverer was in my study, and the desk was broken open—the letter gone. That is conclusive." He paused, and a glint came into his eyes. "When I picked up that letter in the quadrangle, Wharton, I had little or no doubt that it belonged to Vernon-Smith. If you are aware of anything of the kind—"

Wharton set his lips a little.

"I know nothing about it, and if I did, I should not tell!" he answered. "All I know is that Mauleverer knows nothing of it. It might belong to any one of a dozen fellows—not in the Remove at all, if it has no name on it to identify it."

"It belonged to the boy who broke open my desk to recover it!" said Mr. Lamb. "That boy was Mauleverer. I have no doubt Mr. Locke will expel him from the school. You may go, Wharton."

The captain of the Remove left the Form-room. It was useless to say more. He found Lord Mauleverer in the quadrangle, ambling along by the elms with his hands in his pockets, his noble visage quite unperturbed.

"That tick has got it fixed in his mind, Maully!" said Wharton. "You'll have to go up to the Head after twelve."

"Yaas. Frightful cad, ain't he?" drawled Maully.

"I can't make out why he's so bitter about it," said Harry. "You've got his goat, instead of Smithy now! Of course, any beak would be annoyed by a fellow breaking open his desk—but that isn't all."

"No," said Lord Mauleverer quietly. "He's as mad as a hatter because that particular drawer was busted. There

was somethin' in it that he was afraid may have been seen."

"Oh!" cried Harry. "Smithy's always sayin' he has secrets—"

"Smithy's got the nail on the head—he has! He grabbed a wallet out of that drawer, and it disappeared as fast as it he was doin' a conjurin' trick. Somethin' in it he was frightfully particular about. Of course, I'd never even seen it till he grabbed it! But the fellow who busted the drawer may have given it the once-over—that's what he thinks, anyhow. And that's the milk in the cocoanut!"

"But what—"

Lord Mauleverer shrugged his slim shoulders.

"I don't know! I don't want to know! But that's it! He's got secrets—and pretty juicy ones, I should think, from this! Smithy's right about that! Not that I care a boiled bean for his secrets. But"—Mauleverer's lip curled—"he wants to see the last of the fellow who may have handled that wallet! You should have seen his face—white as chalk. He thinks I'm the fellow—he will boot me out of Greyfriars if he can."

"But what the thump can be in the dashed wallet for him to be so upset about?" exclaimed Wharton. "What was it like?"

"A good-sized leather one—I think it had a lock on it, but I only saw it for a second—he was a quick worker!" said Lord Mauleverer. "Somethin' in it made of metal, that's all I know."

"How do you know that, Maully?"

"It clinked when he grabbed it up in such a hurry. He was frightened out of his wits for a minute."

"But why?"

"Better ask Smithy—he's keener at spotting secrets than I am," grinned Lord Mauleverer. "But he had a bad jolt—a blind man could have seen that. I can't make it out—and don't want to. I'd rather not know anythin' about his affairs—even if I could guess, which I can't do. But the fellow who touched that wallet is booked for the long jump, if Lamb can wangle it. And he thinks it was little me—the cad!"

"But who the dickens was it?" said Harry.

"Better ask Smithy that, too!" said Lord Mauleverer dryly. "From Lamb's description of the letter, it's the sort of chit that Smithy might get from a sportin' friend outside the school."

Harry Wharton drew a deep breath.

"Smithy's about the only man at Greyfriars with neck enough to bust open a master's desk!" he said slowly.

"Don't mention it. Bet you Smithy covered up his tracks pretty well, if he did it. No bizney of ours to give a fellow away."

"If the Head backs up Lamb in this, you're for it, Maully!"

"Yaas."

(Continued on next page.)

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"It may come to the sack, old man."

"It will—if Lamb can work it. He's givin' me his attention now, instead of Smithy! What a life!" sighed Lord Mauleverer. "All through some kidnappin' blighter baggin' old Quelch and causin' the Head to let loose that arty swab on the Remove! Most schoolmasters are pukka—Lamb's a miserable exception. Bother the man! It's a bore to be sacked!" said Lord Mauleverer plaintively. "Horrid bore for a fellow who asks nothin' of Fate but a quiet life, what?"

Lord Mauleverer was still imperturbable when the Remove went back to the Form-room for third school. He was still imperturbable when the juniors were dismissed again—and then, it being after twelve, his lordship made his way to the Head's study—still imperturbable.

IN DOUBT!

DR. LOCKE'S face was very grave.

His eyes were fixed on the calm face of Lord Mauleverer, standing before the writing-table in his study.

Mr. Lamb stood beside the table. His eyes, over his glasses, were also fixed on Mauleverer with a hard glint in them. Mauleverer did not look at him. He was standing where the Bounder had stood on more than one occasion, knowing, as Smithy had known that there was no mercy to be expected from the man who chose to play the part of an amiable ass, and who, under it, was as hard as steel.

"This is a very painful matter, Mauleverer," said the Head, breaking a long silence. "You have never been before me hitherto—and I find it difficult to believe——" He paused.

"Quite, sir!" said Mauleverer calmly. "The fact is, Mr. Lamb's dreamin', sir!"

"Wha-a-t?"

"Must be dreamin', sir, if he fancies that I get letters from racing rotters and bust open desks to get at them," said Lord Mauleverer.

"You deny that the letter was yours, Mauleverer?"

"Oh, yaas!"

"And that you forced the drawer in Mr. Lamb's desk to recover it?"

"Isn't that rather an insultin' question, sir?"

"Answer me at once!" rapped Dr. Locke.

"Yaas, sir, I deny the whole bag of tricks!" said Lord Mauleverer. "I never even noticed that the drawer was broken. Why should I?"

"It was under your eyes for more than an hour, and you never noticed it?" said Mr. Lamb.

"Yaas!" Mauleverer glanced at him. "I'm not in the habit, sir, of takin' notice of things that don't concern me. But perhaps you wouldn't understand that!"

Mr. Lamb's lips set. Mauly looked at the Head again.

"Mr. Quelch would never have dreamed of suspectin' me of this, sir," he said. "Quelch is no fool!"

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The Head coughed.

"This is a matter for evidence and proof, Mauleverer," he said. "If you have indeed deceived me, and others, to such an extent, you must leave Greyfriars. Mr. Lamb, I must ask you whether it is established beyond doubt that no other boy would have done this before Mauleverer entered your study yesterday afternoon?"

"I have, naturally, made a very strict investigation," said Mr. Lamb. "I may say that when that disgraceful letter fell into my hands, I never thought of this boy for a moment—my suspicion turned in quite another direction. But I have ascertained beyond possibility of doubt that no one but Mauleverer can have entered my study yesterday afternoon."

Mauleverer raised his eyebrows slightly.

He could see that Lamb believed what he said. But it was obviously an error as that drawer must have been forced before Mauly entered the study, as it had not been done after he entered. It was clear, however, that Lamb was convinced that Mauly was the man.

"I understand that you were out of gates, Mr. Lamb," said the Head. "Mauleverer, it seems, waited in your study an hour before you returned."

"I left the House at half-past three, sir," said Mr. Lamb. "Mr. Prout, at the time, was reading his newspaper in the window-seat at the end of the passage—the sunny window, sir, where Mr. Prout often sits. He has informed me that he did not leave that spot till the air-raid signal sounded. Then he joined with the other masters in seeing the boys into safety in the vaults. While he was there, sir, he could not have failed to see anyone enter my study."

"But afterwards?" asked the Head.

"After the school came up from the vaults, sir, Mr. Prout returned to the same spot, where he had left his newspaper, and he was still there when I came in. Only one boy had passed him—Mauleverer, going to my study!"

The Head's face became graver.

"Then, unless that act was done during the air-raid alarm, there can be no doubt that it was Mauleverer's act," he said.

"Precisely, sir! Mr. Prout called the roll in the vaults, according to rule. Certain boys were absent—it has been ascertained that they were out of gates at the time, and took shelter elsewhere. I may add that the boy on whom my first suspicion fell was not one of them. Vernon-Smith was in the vaults with the rest, and answered to his name when the roll was called."

Mauleverer gave a start as he heard that.

Such an act as had occurred had brought Smithy's name inevitably to his mind. But if Smithy had been down in the school vaults, and had answered to his name there, that seemed to eliminate Smithy

Mauly's face set a little.

It was evident that Mr. Lamb had made very careful inquiries. It was, in fact, certain that he was keen to discover the actual fellow who had forced his desk—if Mauleverer was

not that fellow, he had no animus against Mauleverer. It was because he believed that Mauly was the man who had handled that mysterious wallet that Mauly was up before the Head.

Mauleverer realised now, more clearly than before, the position in which he stood. That wild and reckless act in Lamb's study must have happened during the air raid alarm—that was clear to him now. Yet, from what Lamb had ascertained, it seemed that it could not have happened then. That left it on Mauleverer.

Dr. Locke's face was growing grim now.

"Nothing could be clearer," he said. "Mauleverer, it is now established that no one but yourself entered Mr. Lamb's study yesterday afternoon. What have you to say?"

"Only that I know nothin' about it, sir."

"Mr. Lamb's desk was forced to recover possession of the letter," said Dr. Locke. "That is clear! It appears that no one but you can have done this, Mauleverer. The letter, therefore, was yours."

"Not at all, sir! I'd never even heard of it till Mr. Lamb mentioned it to me," said Lord Mauleverer calmly.

Dr. Locke looked at him. Evidence could hardly have been more complete—yet he doubted. Mr. Lamb did not doubt, but the man who had dangerous secrets to keep did not judge with the calm detachment of the headmaster. There was a very long silence in the study.

Dr. Locke broke it at last.

"I shall take time to consider this matter," he said slowly; and Mr. Lamb compressed his lips hard as he heard. "The facts would seem to be clear—but I cannot forget that your character, Mauleverer, has hitherto been—or has at least seemed to be—irreproachable."

"Thank you, sir."

"I shall myself make the closest investigation," said the Head. "But I must warn you, Mauleverer, that if no further discovery is made, I shall have no alternative but to act on the evidence now before me. For the present, you may go!"

"Thank you, sir!" said Mauleverer again.

And, still imperturbable, his lordship left the Head's study.

A CAST-IRON ALIBI!

HERBERT VERNON-SMITH leaned back in the armchair in Study No. 4 in the Remove, crossing one leg over the other, and looked at his study mate, Tom Redwing, with a scowl on his face.

Redwing did not look at him.

He was doing some algebra, but not giving it much attention. His thoughts were elsewhere, as Smithy knew. But he did not speak, and there had been a long silence when a tap came at the door, and the captain of the Remove came in.

Harry Wharton's face was very grave.

There were a good many fellows in



"What does this mean, you rascal?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "Are the police coming—at last?"
 "Pack it up!" grunted the stocky man. "You give a covey a spot of trouble, and I'll crack your nut as soon as look at you!"

the Remove who looked unusually serious that day. Everybody knew that Lord Mauleverer was up against trouble—and everybody knew that he was a guiltless party, simply because he said so.

Even Skinner, who rather prided himself on never believing anything or anybody, did not think of doubting Mauly's word. Even Billy Bunter, whose ideas of truth and untruth were extremely vague, took it as a matter of course that old Mauly never departed by a hair's breadth from the straight and narrow path of veracity. Every man in the Remove looked on Lamb as a tick, a swab, and a rank outsider for not taking Mauly's word on the subject. They were not surprised that the Head hesitated to deliver judgment. They had rather expected him to dismiss Mauly without a stain on his character, as it were.

"Want anything?" yawned the Bounder, as Wharton came in and shut the door after him.

"Yes, Smithy," said the captain of the Remove very quietly. "I suppose you know that old Mauly's up for the sack?"

"I've heard the rumour," assented the Bounder. "Rather a bad break of the Head's—one would expect the old bean to have a little more sense."

"He doesn't seem to have settled it yet," said Harry. "But I don't see what a headmaster can do, except act on the evidence. Unless something turns up, Smithy, Mauly will have to go."

The Bounder breathed rather hard.

"Rough luck!" he remarked. "Think Mauly did it?"

"I know he did not! Mauly isn't the man to have any dealings with racing touts—and as for forcing a master's desk to get a letter, such a thought would never enter his head—and you know that as well as I do, Smithy."

The Bounder yawned.

"From what I hear, that letter was a pretty dangerous one," he said. "Man might have a spot of desperation when a beak got hold of it."

"Yes, I agree with that! Did you do it, Smithy?" asked the captain of the Remove bluntly.

Redwing gave a start, but kept his eyes fixed on his algebra.

Vernon-Smith raised his eyebrows. "I!" he repeated. "My dear chap, you're not accusin' me of bein' in touch with wicked racin' men, are you?"

"Oh, don't be a goat! You've had such letters a dozen times this term, as every fellow in the Remove knows!" exclaimed Harry Wharton impatiently. "You had something on your mind yesterday afternoon when you cut the footer. Had you lost that letter, and did Lamb pick it up?"

"Give a dog a bad name and hang him!" said the Bounder lightly. "Don't you think the Baa-Lamb would rather get me for this than Mauleverer? He seems to have jumped to it that it was Mauly, as Mauly was in the study. But think he hasn't been rooting about since then, to make sure?"

"I suppose so—in fact, I've no

doubt he has! But you're not an easy fellow to spot, Smithy."

"My dear man, I've an alibi of cast iron," said Vernon-Smith. "You've heard what Mauly says. Lamb's got it cut and dried that no other man went to his study—"

"Did you?"

"Ask Prout!" grinned the Bounder. "Old Pompous was on the spot. If he saw me goin' to the Lamb's study he would mention it. Even without Prout, I've got an alibi that would satisfy Ferrers Locke himself. It's come out that Lamb went out at half-past three. Where was I then?"

"How should I know, when I was playing football?"

"I was watchin' you do it, old bean, and wishin' that I was in the game. Ask a dozen fellows if they didn't see me on the ground right up to the final whistle—and I dare say you noticed yourself that I came along to the changing-room with your mob."

Wharton looked at him. Suspicion was strong in his mind.

"But after that?" he asked.

"Wasn't I with you in the changing-room when the jolly old signal sounded? Didn't I walk down after you into the vaults?"

"I remember you were there. But—after that?"

"After that, my young friend, I went into the gym—nine, or ten fellows about, all good witnesses. When I came out of the gym, I saw you and your pals talking to Mauly

at Lamb's window, and joined you there."

Wharton was silent.

"Mauly had been in Lamb's study a jolly long time then," added the Bounder. "I suppose he knows whether a fellow butted into the study while he was there, or not?"

Wharton remained silent.

The Bounder's alibi was, as he had said, cast-iron. There could be no doubt that Lamb had made his inquiries with a very special eye on the Bounder, and Lamb, evidently, had been satisfied.

"So, even supposing that I could have walked past under Prout's nose, without Prout seein' me, how and when could I have done it?" grinned Vernon-Smith. "Sorry to disappoint you, old bean—I know you'd rather see me sacked than Mauly! But I'm stickin' on."

"I should hate to see you sacked, Smithy; but if you're the man, you ought to get old Mauly out of this!" said Harry. "But from what you say, you can't have been."

"Every minute of my time accounted for—even if Prout had his eyes shut!" drawled the Bounder. "And he hadn't, you know! And from what Lamb says, he was on the spot all the time, except when we were down in the vaults."

"Prout's rather an old ass!" said Harry slowly. "Somebody must have gone to Lamb's study after Lamb left and before Mauly got there! Mauly never touched Lamb's desk—so that's certain. It can't have been you, I suppose—"

"Sorry!" said the Bounder ironically.

"Oh, don't be an ass! It must have been some fellow who dabbles in horse-racing and such muck—and a fellow with plenty of nerve, too, to do such a thing to get the letter back. If it was not you, it was not a Remove man at all."

"Carry your inquiries into other Forms, my dear lad!" said the Bounder. "Try Angel of the Fourth, he—"

"That rat hasn't the nerve!"

"What about Price of the Fifth?"

"He has less nerve than Angel! Neither of them would have dared crack a master's desk."

"Get going among the Sixth!" suggested the Bounder blandly. "What about jolly old Loder? We know Loder's little games."

"I—I suppose it's possible!" said Harry slowly. "Not much chance of the fellow owning up, if it was any of those you've named—they'd only be thinking of their own skins, the rotters!"

Vernon-Smith winced. But he laughed the next moment.

"And you think I wouldn't?" he asked.

"No; you're not cur enough to lie low while another man took your gruel!" said the captain of the Remove. "If it was you, Smithy, you'd stand for it when it came to the pinch. That's why I came here—to let you know how matters stand with old Mauly!"

"Thanks!" sneered the Bounder.

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Harry Wharton left the study.

The Bounder leaned back in his chair again and put his hands behind his head, his eyes fixed on Tom Redwing, who had not looked up or uttered a word while the captain of the Remove was present.

"Give it a name, Reddy!" he said suddenly at last. "Don't make out you're mugging up algebra—chuck it and give it a name!"

Redwing rose from the table with a flush in his cheeks. He stood looking at the cool, sardonic junior in the armchair. The Bounder's look was mocking.

"It was your letter, Smithy!" said Tom at length. "You can't imagine I've forgotten that you dropped it through a hole in the lining of your pocket and the Lamb picked it up."

"Are you going to shout that out all over the school?" jeered the Bounder.

Redwing's colour deepened.

"I can't say anything, and you know it, Smithy! But—it was your letter, and whoever cracked Lamb's desk was after that letter. Nobody else could have wanted it, or known anything about it, but you!"

"Haven't you heard me recite my alibi to his Magnificence, the Captain and Head Boy of the Form?" asked the Bounder. "Do you want me to sing it over again to you?"

"If it wasn't you, Smithy—"

"Haven't I proved that it wasn't? Think Lamb would let up on me if he had a chance of pinnin' it down on me? Don't be an ass!" The Bounder laughed. "I've sent the Great Paujandrum away satisfied—only to be doubted in my own study—by mine own familiar friend! Is that what you call pally, Reddy?"

Redwing's look was doubtful.

"Mauly never did it, Smithy—I know that!" he said. "It was your letter—and from what we've heard, the letter was gone."

"That isn't why Lamb's shirty! He's got secrets in that desk of his, and he fancies they may have been nosed out!" grinned the Bounder. "But whoever went to that desk seems to have lifted the letter—unless Lamb's lost it! No good askin' me what's become of it!"

Tom Redwing drew a deep breath.

"If you say it was not you, Smithy, your word's good enough for me, and it will take a lot off my mind!" he said.

"If proof isn't good enough for you, old bean, what's the good of addin' my word? Don't talk rot!"

"You never did it?"

"I've proved that I couldn't have." Redwing gave him a long, slow look and left the study without speaking again.

The Bounder shrugged his shoulders as the door shut on his chum.

He sat, with a corrugated brow, for a few minutes. Then he took a cigarette from his pocket and lighted it. In a moment, however, he flung it into the fire with an impatient gesture.

He rose to his feet and began to pace the study.

The sardonic mockery was gone

from his face now. His forehead was lined, his lips hard set.

He was not going to be sacked! First and foremost, he was savagely decided on that! He had covered up his tracks; he was in no danger—everything had gone like clockwork; till everything was spoiled by that fool Mauleverer getting mixed up in it. Mauly should have kept clear!

Nobody but Mauly would have been ass enough to walk over to the sea-road to oblige that idiot Bunter. That had caused it—the air raid alarm had done the rest and led Mauly into a row with Lamb. But for that, he would have been nowhere near Lamb's study that afternoon, and Lamb would have had all the school to pick the culprit from—the Bounder himself safe behind a cast-iron alibi! Fools had to suffer for their folly—he, Herbert Vernon-Smith, was not going to be turfed out of Greyfriars because that fool Mauleverer had played the goat!

The Bounder shut his teeth on that!

He was safe enough! Lamb did not suspect him—he had convinced Harry Wharton, the captain of the Form—half-convinced Redwing, if not wholly. He was perfectly safe, as he had planned and calculated. If another fellow blundered into a carefully-laid scheme, that fellow could take what came to him.

But though the Bounder was able to make up his mind with savage, dogged determination, he was not able to dismiss remorse and shame. It was a dogged, but tormented fellow who paced Study No. 4 with wrinkled brows till the Remove came up to prep.

NO TOFFEE FOR BUNTER!

"I SAY, Mauly, old chap!"
"Yaas!" sighed Lord Mauleverer.

In the bright spring morning, Mauly's face, though calm and placid, was not perhaps so cheerful as usual.

Unless something in the nature of a miracle happened, that was going to be Mauly's last day at Greyfriars.

It required all Mauleverer's aristocratic nonchalance to face such a blow with undisturbed equanimity.

He had been notified that he was to appear before the headmaster again, after twelve. If, in the lapse of twenty-four hours, fresh evidence had come to light, there was a chance for him. It was certain that Dr. Locke, having taken the matter personally in hand, would leave no stone unturned.

But if matters remained as they were, Mauly's number was up! He realised that very clearly.

And he had little hope of fresh evidence coming to light. He could not even surmise himself who had busted Lamb's desk and taken that letter. The Bounder's alibi convinced Mauly, as it convinced others; and he had dismissed the thought of Smithy from his mind. But if it was not Smithy, Mauly could not begin to guess who the man was—probably

some fellow not in the Remove at all; a black sheep in another Form.

Mauleverer knew what was coming to him, and he was ready to go through with it without turning a hair. But it was a hard knock. Almost every fellow in the Remove had sympathised and told Mauly that it was rough luck—and when Billy Bunter rolled up to him in the quad, just before class, he supposed that the fat Owl was going to offer condolences.

Condolences were not of much practical use, but Mauly was always irreproachably polite, and he gave Bunter his head. Instead of following his natural impulse to walk away when Bunter arrived, he stood his ground and let the fat junior run on.

"You're going into Form, Mauly?" asked Bunter, blinking at him inquiringly through his big spectacles.

"Yaas!"

"Not much use, is it, if you're going to be sacked after third school?" asked Bunter.

Mauleverer looked at him. If this was Bunter's way of expressing sympathy, that way was all Bunter's own.

"Not a matter of choice, old fat man!" said Lord Mauleverer patiently. "I'm not bunked yet, you know. Somethin' may turn up."

"Well, I don't see how it could!" argued Bunter. "I hear that they're inquiring all over the school—the Head's got all the prefects on the go. But they can't spot anybody. You're for it, Mauly!"

"Thanks!"

"Well, what I mean to say is, if you're going to be bunked after twelve, what's the good of going into class?" argued the fat Owl. "Suppose you cut class, Lamb can't do a thing. He can't whop a fellow who's just going up to be sacked, that stands to reason. What?"

"Probably not," agreed Lord Mauleverer. "In the giddy circumstances, I don't think even Lamb would want to whop a fellow—and I don't think I should let him, if he did!"

"Well, then, see what a chance it is!" urged Bunter. "We get three hours this morning, and you can cut all three and nothing happen to you. A fellow doesn't often get a chance like that!"

Mauleverer laughed.

"Thanks for the tip, old fat man, but I'm not cuttin' classes!" he answered. "I'm turnin' up like a good little man, as usual."

"Well, don't be an ass, you know!" said Bunter. "Look what a lovely morning it is—wouldn't you rather have a walk by the sea, or a spin on your jigger, than go into class?"

"Yaas."

"Tain't as if you had any chance of sticking on, you know!" Bunter pointed out. "You haven't an earthly, old fellow! If you never cracked Lamb's desk, it must have been done during the air raid alarm—and nearly everybody was down in the vaults. Half a dozen fellows were out of gates—and every one of them is going through a jolly old cross-examination. Unless one of them dodged in at the time and did it, who did."

Lord Mauleverer did not answer that. It was a mystery to him.

"And they've got it clear enough that no fellow who was out of gates did dodge in at that time," went on Bunter. "So it must have been you who did it, Mauly—and if it wasn't you, goodness knows who it was. The Head simply can't do anything but bunk you for it."

"Quite!"

"Well, then, as you haven't an earthly, why not make the best of it and cut class this morning?" asked Bunter. "Strike the iron while it's hot, you know! And I'll go halves in the toffee."

"Eh?"

"Mind, I'm not going to say anything now about you forgetting that toffee on Wednesday!" said Bunter. "It was pretty thick—but you're up against it, and I'm not going to rag you about that. I can be considerate, I hope."

"Oh!" gasped Lord Mauleverer.

It dawned on his noble mind that it was not condolence that Billy Bunter had to offer. He was not urging him to cut classes as a sort of consolation prize for being sacked. Bunter, as usual, was on the make! Bunter was thinking of the packet of toffee that had been left inside the fence of Sea View on the cliff road!

"Halves, if you get it, Mauly, old chap!" said the fat Owl, blinking at his lordship. "See? You'd like some toffee to eat in the train on your way home this afternoon, what?"

Lord Mauleverer did not answer. He just gazed at Bunter.

"I mean it," pursued Bunter. "Nothing mean about me, I hope! Of course, you were a silly idiot to leave the toffee there! But never mind that now! Ten to one it's still there, all right! I mean to say, there's nobody there but that man Parker, and I don't suppose he cares for toffee, even if he saw it. What do you think, Mauly?"

Mauly did not state what he thought. He continued to gaze at Bunter.

"If that man Parker's seen the packet and pinched it, it can't be helped," pursued the fat Owl. "But it ain't likely! I'll bet it's still lying there, just where it was, see? The weather's been dry ever since—it can't have been harmed! You cut classes this morning, Mauly—safe as houses, you know, as you're going to be sacked—and cut across to Sea View—"

"Oh gad!"

"In the circumstances, as you're going to be bunked, anyhow, it won't matter if that brute Parker complains about you trespassing there!" went on Bunter. "It's safe all round, see? Absolutely easy thing—and I'll go halves in the toffee—honest Injun! Cut off now before the bell goes, old chap!"

"Oh gad!" repeated Lord Mauleverer.

"Get a move on, you know—don't slack about!" said Bunter anxiously. "You won't be able to cut after the bell goes. Don't stand there blinking like a stuffed dummy, old chap! I tell you they can't do a thing to you for cutting class, as you're going

to be sacked, anyhow—and I say, Mauly— Yaroooh!"

Why Lord Mauleverer grasped him by the collar, swung him round, and kicked him, Billy Bunter never knew.

It was quite a surprise to Bunter.

Mauly seemed shirty about something—Bunter did not know what! It was quite an unexpected outbreak on Mauleverer's part.

"Yaroooooooh!" roared Bunter, as Mauly's boot landed. "Leggo! Yoo-hoop! Gone mad? Yarooooop!"

Thud, thud!

"Oh crikey! Leggo! What's the matter with you?" shrieked Bunter. "I say, I mean it about going halves—I mean—yoo-hoo-hooooop!"

Thud, thud!

"Oh scissors! Yow-ow-ow! Whooo-hoop!"

Billy Bunter, roaring, jerked himself away and fled for his fat life. What was the matter with Mauly, Bunter did not know; but he seemed dangerous at close quarters.

The fat Owl careered away at top speed, yelling.

Harry Wharton & Co., at a distance, looked round at the careering fat Owl.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob Cherry. He grabbed Billy Bunter and stopped him in his wild career. "Hold on, old fat man, before you burst a boiler!"

"Ooooh!" gasped Bunter. "I say, you fellows—ooogh! I say, do you think Mauly's gone mad?"

"Eh?"

"What?"

"He must be cracked!" gasped Bunter. "I say, he suddenly started kicking me because I asked him to cut class and go and get that toffee, you know, though I told him it was quite safe as he was going to be sacked—"

"You—you—" gasped Harry Wharton. "You— Here, all together, you fellows!"

Billy Bunter did not know why Mauly had booted him. Neither did he know why the Famous Five booted him.

But he knew that they did! There was no possibility of doubt about that! Yelling, the fat Owl careered away again, urged on by five boots that clumped on the tightest trousers at Greyfriars.

It was a breathless and bewildered Owl that escaped into the House—wondering dizzily whether the Famous Five had all gone mad, as well as Mauly!

UP TO SMITHY!

"YOU will remain, Mauleverer!" said Mr. Lamb.

"Yaas, sir!"

Third school was over and the Remove dismissed.

All the Form knew why Lord Mauleverer was told to remain. Mr. Lamb was to take him to the Head—for his final interview with his headmaster.

There were clouded faces in the Remove as they filed out. Hardly a fellow in the Form believed that

Mauleverer had done it; his word was good enough for them, though they could not surmise who had.

Maully was going up for the chopper. Nobody, of course, could expect the headmaster to overlook or excuse what had happened. A letter from a racing man was serious enough, but breaking open a master's desk was not merely serious—it was beyond all thought of pardon. Such an act was the limit, even for the reckless Bounder; only something like desperation could have driven even Smithy to such a step. The fellow who had done that had to be expelled; and whatever the juniors thought on the subject, it seemed to be proved beyond cavil that Mauleverer had done it.

Many glances were cast back at Maully as the Removites went. Even Skinner felt rather concerned—even Fisher T. Fish remarked that it was the elephant's side whiskers! Even Billy Bunter felt that he could forgive Maully the loss of that packet of toffee. Bob Cherry's ruddy face, usually as cheery as the spring sunshine, looked as long as a fiddle.

The Remove went out glumly enough, leaving Mauleverer in the Form-room with Lamb.

One fellow lingered in the corridor. Herbert Vernon-Smith, up to that moment, had kept his dogged determination unshaken. He was not going to be sacked—and if a fool got mixed up in the matter, that fool could take what was coming to him—so Smithy had said to himself over

and over again. But now, at the eleventh hour, the Bounder lingered by the door of the Form-room, his brow black, his lips hard set.

What Harry Wharton had told him in his study was true—he could not stand for it! He was safe—his alibi was a cast-iron one; but he could not skulk behind it, and let another man take his gruel. For what others thought the Bounder of Greyfriars cared little; but he could not face self-contempt.

Redwing glanced round and came back.

"What——" he began. Then he broke off.

He had been half-satisfied by what Smithy had said in the study. Now, as he looked at his chum's face, he knew.

"Oh, Smithy!" he muttered.

The Bounder gave a hard laugh.

"Cut off!" he said. "I'll see you again to say good-bye!"

"Smithy!" repeated Tom miserably.

"A chap never had a better alibi!" said Vernon-Smith, with a sour grin.

"That air raid alarm came like a windfall—saw me right through! Cast-iron, old man—if it was any use! Think I'd better stick behind it, and let that ass Mauleverer get the chopper?"

"No!" said Tom, in a low voice. "I can't think that, Smithy! But—but——" His voice faltered. "I'd rather Maully, or any man, went than you; but you've got to do the right thing! You meant to——"

"I never meant to!" answered the Bounder coolly. "I had it cut and dried to stick it out, and save my own skin! But——" He gave an angry shrug of the shoulders. "Cut off, Reddy—and tell Wharton and his pals that they needn't pull such long faces—it's only me who's going, not Maully!"

He finished with a bitter laugh.

Redwing went slowly down the corridor, leaving the Bounder standing by the Form-room door. His face was dark, and his heart heavy, but he was glad that Smithy was going to play up. Perhaps he had a hope, too, that the Head might go easy in view of the Bounder having owned up.

Smithy had no such hope—he knew that there was none! He was not the fellow to deceive himself with false hopes. A fellow who had cracked a master's desk had to go—it was not an act that could be condoned. Whether he was found out, or whether he confessed, such a fellow would not be allowed to remain in the school. Herbert Vernon-Smith knew that, and had no illusion about what he had to face.

A minute or two later, Mr. Lamb came out of the Form-room, followed by Mauleverer.

Maully's face was serious, but quite calm and cool. Both of them glanced at Smithy.

"Do not loiter about here, Vernon-Smith!" rapped Mr. Lamb.

He signed to Mauleverer and walked away in the direction of the Head's study.

Vernon-Smith coolly walked after him, with Mauleverer.

Maully glanced at him again, raising his eyebrows a little.

"Better totter off, Smithy!" he murmured. "You're gettin' the Baa-Lamb's rag out."

"Fat lot I care!" said Vernon-Smith.

Mr. Lamb glanced round, at the sound of voices behind him. His eyes gave a cold glint at the Bounder.

"What does this mean, Vernon-Smith?" he snapped. "What are you doing here?"

"I'm going with Mauleverer to the Head, sir!"

"My dear chap——" murmured Maully.

"You will do nothing of the kind, Vernon-Smith!" snapped Mr. Lamb. "Take a hundred lines, and go away at once!"

The Bounder looked at him mockingly. In the past things had come to him cared nothing for Lamb; the man had no further power over him, after what was going to happen in the headmaster's study.

"Do you hear me?" rapped Mr. Lamb, as Smithy did not go.

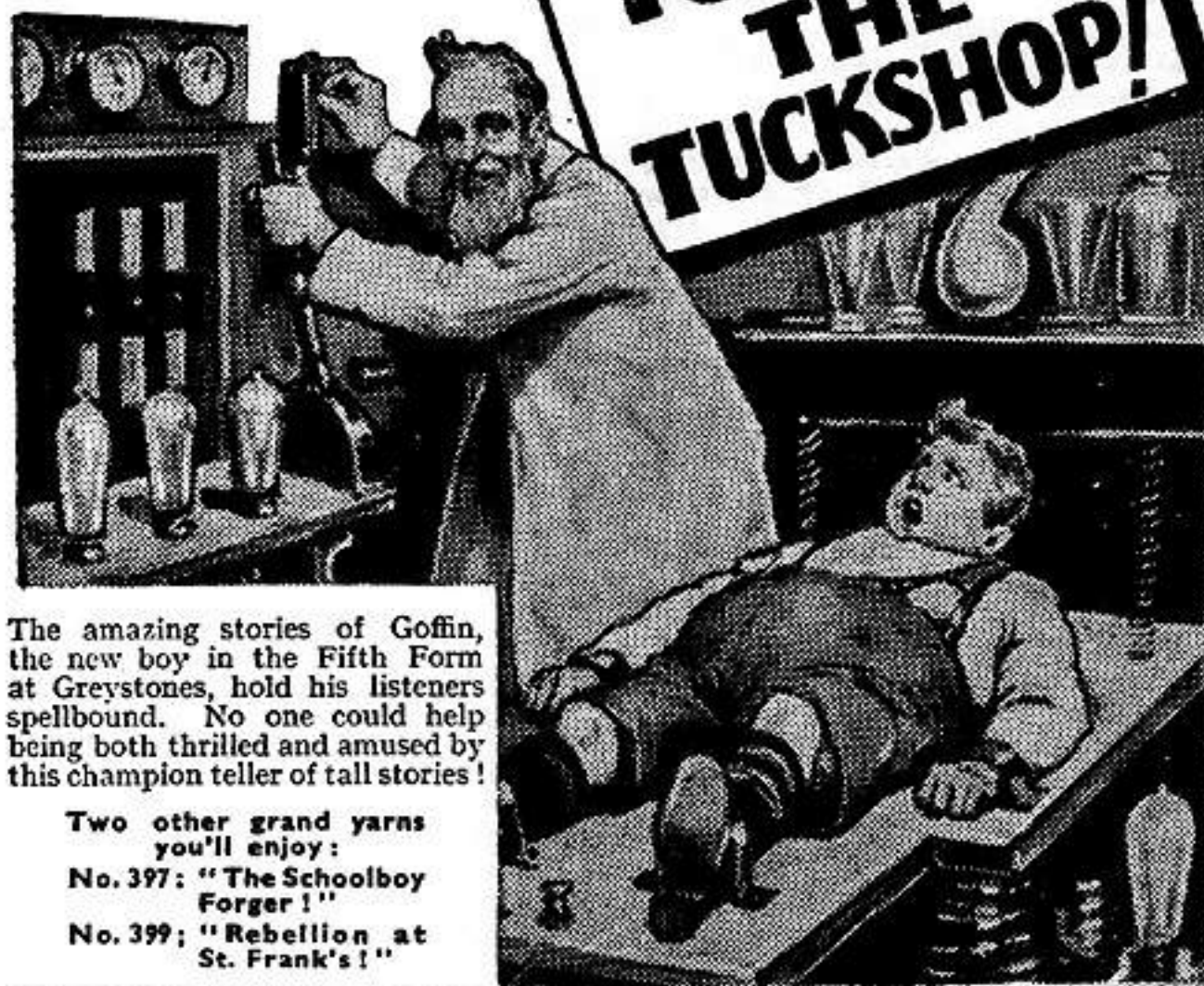
"I'm not deaf!" answered Vernon-Smith. "I hear you perfectly well, Mr. Lamb—there's nothin' whatever wrong with my hearin'."

Mr. Lamb stared at him. Quite unaware of what was in Vernon-Smith's mind, he was puzzled.

"You've told me to take a hundred lines, and to go away at once," continued the Bounder, "I shall not take a hundred lines, and I shall not go away! I'm going to Dr. Locke

Here's a tall one . . .

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with Mauleverer! Is that clear, Mr. Lamb?"

Mauleverer simply blinked. Why the scapegrace of Greyfriars was asking for it like this was as great a puzzle to him as to Mr. Lamb.

Lamb's face reddened with rage.

"Vernon-Smith! Go to my study this instant, and wait for me there!" he snapped. "I shall deal with you later."

"Will you?" sneered the Bounder. "I'm not going to your study, Mr. Lamb. I'm goin' to the Head's study—like it or lump it!"

Lamb made a step towards him. The Bounder stood like a rock, his eyes gleaming, and his fists clenched.

Lord Mauleverer gazed at him.

"Smithy!" he gasped. "For goodness' sake chuck it, old man! Do you want to be bunked along with me, or what, you ass?"

"I'm going to the Head, and that man isn't going to stop me!" said the Bounder coolly. "Hasn't a fellow a right to go to his headmaster?"

"Yaas; but—"

Mr. Lamb, for a moment, seemed about to lay hands on the rebel of the Form. But he restrained himself.

"Very well, Vernon-Smith!" he said. "I shall report this insolence to your headmaster, and you will take the consequences. Follow me, Mauleverer."

He walked on, followed by the two juniors. As they approached the door of the Head's study, Mauleverer gave his companion a nudge.

"Hook it, you ass!" he whispered. "What's the good of askin' for it like this? You can't do me any good by comin' to the Head, old bean!"

"You never know!" grinned the Bounder. "Suppose I've got some new evidence for the old bean to hear—something that will see you clear?"

"Oh gad! Honest Injun?" breathed Mauleverer.

"Honest Injun!"

"Good man!"

Mr. Lamb tapped at the Head's door and opened it. The two Removites followed him into the study.

Dr. Locke was seated at his writing-table with a knitted brow. The task before him was not an agreeable one; but he had his unpleasant duty to do. The strictest and keenest investigation had revealed nothing—and the matter had to be settled—and there was only one decision to which the Head could come.

He raised his eyebrows at the sight of Vernon-Smith.

"Why is this boy here?" he asked sharply. "Only Mauleverer was sent for—why is Vernon-Smith here, Mr. Lamb?"

"Vernon-Smith has persisted in forcing himself here, in company with Mauleverer, against my orders, sir!" answered Mr. Lamb. "I can only leave it to you to deal with this rebellious and mutinous boy."

"May I speak, sir?" asked Vernon-Smith meekly. "I have come here with Mauleverer, because I have something to tell you. I happen to know that it was not Mauleverer who cracked the desk in Mr. Lamb's study on Wednesday, and I thought that I ought to tell you, sir."



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.

TIME flies! And don't I know it! I've been wading through my mail and reading the many letters you fellows have been good enough to send me. To be candid, I opened the first letter about 9.30 this morning. I've just come to the last letter in the bundle and, believe it or not, the clock outside has just struck twelve! Unless I get a move on, there will be no chat for this week's **MAGNET**, and that won't do, will it?

"I hope I shall be reading the **MAGNET** when I'm ninety," is one of the passages in the letter I have just perused, and which comes from P. Mason, of Tilbury. I hope so, too, my chum, for your letter of enthusiasm is distinctly encouraging, and you appear to have adopted our set of Greyfriars characters for keeps. Splendid fellow!

A Birmingham chum wants to know if there is a Scout patrol at Greyfriars. There is, there are! as our Greyfriars chums would say. And if there is, continues my Birmingham correspondent, may he look forward to seeing a special scouting yarn, featuring Harry Wharton & Co.? I will discuss your suggestion with Mr. Frank Richards, chum. No doubt I shall be able to oblige at some future date.

Here are two rapid-fire replies to readers' queries:—

J. HOUGHTON (Carshalton).—Quite a number of readers have been "Magnetites" since the very first issue of the **MAGNET**—February 15th, 1908—and enjoy reading it now every bit as much as they did in their younger days. Defy all attempts to make you give it up! The average age of the Greyfriars Sixth-Formers is 17½ years.

C. YELDON (New Zealand).—Copies of the "Schoolboys' Own Library" can be obtained from London at the price of 5d. each, post

Dr. Locke stared at him hard.

"If that is the case, Vernon-Smith, certainly you have done right in coming to me," he said. "What does this boy know about the matter, Mr. Lamb?"

"Nothing, sir!" answered Mr. Lamb, between his closed lips. "His conduct now is simply of a piece with his accustomed insolence and disrespect."

"If you have anything to tell me, Vernon-Smith, I must hear you," said Dr. Locke. "Say what you have to say, and be brief."

"Very well, sir!" answered the Bounder. "It was not Mauleverer

paid. Actually, there is no reason why you should not be able to purchase the particular stories you require from your newsagent in the ordinary way. If you get "let down" again, let me know your newsagent's address.

What do you fellows think of the map of Greyfriars on page 2 of this issue? An excellent piece of work—what? Take my tip and keep it by you for reference. You will enjoy future yarns of Harry Wharton & Co. better than ever with this map in front of you. When mention is made of such places as Friardale, Popper's Island, Chunkley's Stores, the Cross Keys, and the many other places frequently mentioned in the Greyfriars yarns, a glance at the map will give you the necessary bearings. Mr. Frank Richards says that, though the cute "Magnetite" may find some little detail not quite accurate, the lay-out of the map is astonishingly like his own idea of the vicinity of Greyfriars School.

So much, then, for the map. Now for a word or two about:

"VERNON-SMITH'S LAST FLING!"

Frank Richards has let himself go "all out" in next week's great Greyfriars yarn which, for excitement and enjoyment, has all other schoolboy stories "licked to a frazzle." Vernon-Smith has got to leave Greyfriars—thanks to his enemy, Mr. Lamb. But the Bounder is determined to pack a lot of excitement into his last hours at Greyfriars—with the result that the "Baa-Lamb" is booked for a very warm time. You'll enjoy every line of this yarn, chums, believe me! Take my tip and ask your newsagent to deliver or reserve a copy for you. There's bound to be a rush for next Saturday's **MAGNET**.

YOUR EDITOR.

who cracked open the drawer in Mr. Lamb's desk, and took away the letter. That was done before Mauleverer went to the study by another fellow."

"From Mr. Prout's evidence on the subject, sir, what Vernon-Smith states is impossible!" said Mr. Lamb.

"It would seem so," said Dr. Locke, "but I must hear what the boy has to say. Proceed, Vernon-Smith."

"The fellow I mentioned went to the study during the air raid alarm," said the Bounder coolly. "He was in the changing-room, with a crowd of

others, when the signal went—and started with them for the vaults—but he dodged away for a few minutes—nobody noticing him in the crowd. He got back before everybody had gone down, and went down with the last of the crowd, and answered to his name when Mr. Prout called the roll in the vaults."

Dr. Locke looked at him fixedly.

"Do you mean to say, Vernon-Smith, that a boy had the reckless audacity to think of such an act, to carry out such an act, when at any moment enemy bombs might have been falling on the school?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, sir!"

"Preposterous!" snapped Mr. Lamb.

"I can scarcely believe this!" said the Head. "But if it is true, it certainly exonerates Mauleverer. But—"

"I can prove what I say, sir!" said the Bounder.

"Nonsense!" said Mr. Lamb.

"Please let the boy speak, Mr. Lamb! Of what proof do you speak, Vernon-Smith?" demanded the Head.

The Bounder drew a deep, deep breath.

"It was I, sir!" he said

There was a dead silence in the Head's study for a long moment. Dr. Locke seemed thunderstruck—Mr. Lamb stared at the Bounder with bulging eyes. Lord Mauleverer gave a gasp. He understood at last.

"Oh! Oh gad! Smithy!"

The Bounder's lip curled.

"Think I was going to let you stand the racket for me, you ass?" he snapped. "Don't be a goat!"

"Upon my word!" Dr. Locke gasped a little. "Vernon-Smith! You confess—"

"Yes, sir!"

"Mr. Lamb! You have told me that it was upon Vernon-Smith that your suspicions first fell when you found the letter. It appears now that it was, in fact, Vernon-Smith to whom the letter belonged. Do you confess this also, Vernon-Smith?"

"Yes, sir!"

The headmaster set his lips.

"Mauleverer! You may leave my study," he said. "I am sorry my boy, that what seemed like irrefragable evidence placed you under such a suspicion. Vernon-Smith's statement completely exonerates you—you may go."

"Yaas, sir!" said Mauleverer, in a low voice.

He hesitated a moment, looking at the Bounder.

Smithy gave him a sardonic grin.

"Cut, old man!" he said. "It's up to me now!"

"Sorry, old chap!" said Lord Mauleverer, and he quietly left the study and shut the door.

There was another long silence after he had gone. The Bounder waited—he knew what was coming—what must come.

Lamb's face had set like iron. He had not suspected this—his own investigations had cleared the Bounder. But the glitter in his eyes told that he was glad to get Smithy. Mauleverer mattered nothing to him, if Mauleverer was not the right man. It was, after all, Vernon-Smith—the rebel, the mutineer, the fellow who suspected him, who watched him, who was a danger to him. By the Bounder's own act, the man had him at last where he wanted him.

Lamb looked at the headmaster. But he did not need to speak. Dr. Locke's face was setting grim and hard.

"Vernon-Smith!" he said. "In other circumstances, I could give consideration to your act in coming here, of your own accord, to tell the truth—though only at the last moment. I will say, at least, that I am glad that, bad as your conduct has been, you shrank from the baseness of allowing another to suffer for your offence. But what you have done admits of no pardon—no excuse—no possible extenuation. You must leave Greyfriars."

The Bounder knew it, and expected it. But the words came like a knell to his ears. He paled a little; but gave no other sign.

Dr. Locke raised his hand.

"You are expelled, Vernon-Smith!" he said quietly. "You leave the school to-day. Now go!"

And Herbert Vernon-Smith, still silent, with a heart like lead, but with his chin up, walked out of the Head's study—sacked!

(Vernon-Smith has got the order of the boot at last! But the "Ban-Lamb" has not seen the last of the Bounder, by any means! Look out for more exciting situations in: "VERNON-SMITH'S LAST FLING!"—next Saturday's great Greyfriars yarn.)

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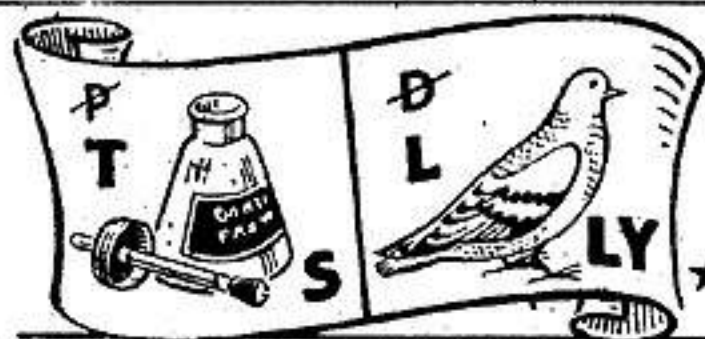
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GT 27

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room. Herbert Vernon-Smith had joined them there in the most disgruntled mood ever—exasperated by the outcome of his visit to the garage and his interview with John Robinson, and equally exasperated at having missed the game for nothing. Billy Bunter, released from Extra French, had rolled in, chiefly anxious to find some Remove man who was eager for good company at tea. But at the wall of the siren from afar, Billy Bunter forgot even tea! Billy Bunter would not have delayed a moment to pick up a plum cake with marzipan on top.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "That's the signal! Where's my other shoe?"

Coker of the Fifth put his head in at the door.

"Now then, keep cool!" roared Coker. "Do you hear? Keep cool! Don't lose your heads, you fags! Keep order! Keep cool! Keep—"

"Shut up, Coker!"

"Take your face away!"

"Dry up, Coker—you're drowning the siren!"

"Keep cool, I tell you!" roared Coker, in a state of great excitement. "I'll see you safe! I'll—Yarrah!"

A football boot, landing on Horace Coker's chin, cut short his eloquence quite suddenly.

There was a regular rule at Greyfriars on these alarming occasions. Being near the south-east coast, Greyfriars got rather more than its fair share of alarms. Generally, nothing came of them—and the all-clear followed automatically. Nevertheless, it was obviously possible that something might come of them, and something extremely unpleasant, and Dr. Locke was not the man to let his boys take unnecessary chances. So when the siren sounded its unmelodious note, the prefects rallied as one man, the masters rallied also, and the whole school marched down into the ancient vaults—deep below the old school.

It was like Coker of the Fifth, who never could mind his own business, to take matters in hand. Coker thought that he could manage these things better than the prefects. His terrific excitement and tell everybody to keep cool.

But the Removes were quite cool and did not need Coker of the Fifth to use for Coker, anyhow.

So that football boot interrupted Coker. It interrupted him suddenly and unpleasantly. Coker of the Fifth sat down with the football boot resting on his knees, and spluttered.

"Man down!" chortled Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ooogh!" spluttered Coker. "I—I'll—Ooogh!"

"Come on!" said Harry Wharton. "Where's my necktie?" howled Johnny Bull. "What swab's got my necktie?"

"Leave it for the enemy, old man come on!"

"I'm not going without my necktie. Blow the enemy!"

"Now, then—" It was the voice of Wingate of the Sixth, captain of Greyfriars. "Get a move on, you kids—you know the rule!"

Johnny Bull, fortunately, found his necktie. The juniors marched out. Wingate stayed at Coker.

"What the dickens are you sitting there for, Coker?" he asked. "Tired? Haven't you heard the signal? Get a move on, you ass!"

Coker of the Fifth, with deep feelings, got a move on. He rubbed his damaged chin as he tramped out of the changing-room.

In an orderly procession the Greyfriars fellows headed for the door of the school vaults. But one junior was missing from the ranks.

This was the chance Vernon-Smith wanted—an unexpected chance which he was not going to lose.

It was easy enough for one fellow to slip away in the crowd—and the Bounder quietly slipped away.

All the masters who were within the gates had turned up for the procession, but among them Mr. Lamb had not appeared.

Either he was out of gates, or he had not heeded the alarm signal. In the first case, his study was at Smithy's mercy; in the second, he had a good excuse for going there—to tip Mr. Lamb that the air-raid signal had sounded.

The Bounder cut round corners, and reached Masters' Passage. Breathless, he tapped at Mr. Lamb's door and opened it.

"The signal's gone, sir," he called into the study.

There was no reply.

The Bounder grinned, and stepped into an empty study.

He shut the door after him. Lamb had, after all, come out—when, Smithy did not know, but he was out now—and this was Smithy's chance.

Wherever he was, he was not likely to return until the all-clear sounded. Obviously, he would take shelter somewhere till then. Even if he returned, he would not come to his study—he would head for the vaults, like the rest of the school.

Smithy had a free hand in his study—if he chose to disregard the possible peril of an air raid! He did so choose; he did not, in fact, give that peril a single thought. He was only too glad of this chance of retrieving his lost letter.

Lamb's velvet coat was hanging on a peg inside the door.

The Bounder gave one glance round and then pounced on that coat. It was into a pocket of that coat that he had seen Lamb thrust the letter from Bill Lodgey.

Swiftly, he searched the pockets. But the letter was not there—and he hardly expected to find it there—he was only making sure.

He turned towards Lamb's desk in

secrets he partly knew, and who feared that he would discover more.

That was some excuse for his action. If Lamb pinned that letter down on him, he would be expelled from Greyfriars—Lamb would get by with it at last! Smithy was not going to be sacked if he could help it. He had to have that letter.

There was a basket of oak logs by the fireplace. The Bounder picked out one of a handy size.

He peered out at the study door for a moment. No one was in sight—no one was at hand. Only a distant hum of voices reached him from the crowd going down into the shelter of the vaults.

The next moment he had the letter. There it was, in the drawer, as he had expected. He grabbed it up in haste, gave one glance at Bill Lodgey's scrawl, and then cut across to the fireplace.

He thrust the letter into the embers of the fire, stirred them, and watched the letter consumed in the flames.

Then he hurried out of the study.

He had succeeded! Lamb, when he came in, would know what had happened—that the owner of that letter had taken desperate measures to get it back. He would suspect the Bounder—but what could he prove? His teeth were drawn—at least, so far as the letter itself was concerned.

Breathlessly, the Bounder cut away.

He had been hardly five minutes in Lamb's study. Half a minute after leaving it, he was in the corridor from which the door of the vaults opened. Five or six late-comers, called up from various directions, were hurrying there—Smithy hurried along with them.

Mr. Prout, at the door of the vault staircase, was booming:

"Lose no time! Come, Vernon-Smith and the others went down. Mr. Prout remained at the door. Wingate and two or three other prefects were looking for strays, and two or three more minutes elapsed before they arrived with half a dozen breathless fags. Then Mr. Prout followed them down, and the heavy door was shut.

Mr. Prout called the roll in the dimly lit vaults. Some fellows were absent—they had been out of gates when the alarm sounded. But most of the school answered "Adsum!" to their names—among the rest, Herbert Vernon-Smith.

And the Bounder grinned as he sang out "Adsum!" He was there, with the rest—as good an alibi as a fellow could have wanted. But he could suspect what he liked, but he could prove nothing—the air-raid alarm that afternoon had saved the Bounder's skin.

Lamb had never seen him before. But he knew the Highlife cap if he did not know the wearer. His eyes glinted at Ponsonby as he came on. Pon did not glance towards him. He started in the direction of Pegg, and walked quickly away.

Mr. Lamb arrived at the gate a few minutes later, with knitted brows. Mr. Lamb, as some of the Remove fellows had learned by painful experience of his cane, objected very strongly to trespassing at Sea View.

But he could not deal with a Highlife fellow. The art master hurried in at the gate and glanced towards the chalet, where a door stood wide open on the veranda, but there was no sign of the caretaker to be seen.

Mr. Lamb hurried across the mound over the air-raid shelter. He had no doubt that Nobby Parker had taken refuge there at the sound of the alarm, and was still there.

As he came round the mound a voice from the other side fell on his ears, and he gave another start. That Highlife junior, it seemed, was not the only one who had dodged in there were others.

Mr. Lamb set his lips as he recognised the voice of a Greyfriars fellow—a member of his own Form. With a Remove fellow at least, he could deal, and the cold glint in his eyes told that Lord Maulverer had something to come.

"My dear Miss Bunter"—Maulverer's voice came clearly to his ears—"it's all over—all clear—O.K.—right as rain! May I have the pleasure of seeing you back to Cliff House?"

"That brute—" came Miss Bunter's indignant voice.

"Yaas; but—"

"He ought to have let us in!"

"Oh! Yaas! But—"

"Wait till he comes out!" said Bessie Bunter. "I'm going to tell him what I think of him!"

"Oh gad! I—I say, he's rather an ill-tempered Johnny to talk to!" urged Lord Maulverer. "Smithy calls him a gangster, and, really, he looks it!"

"Arc you afraid of him?"

"Oh, no! But—"

"Well, if he's cheeky, you hit him in the eye!"

"Oh gad!"

"If my brother Billy were here, I'd ask him to thrash him!"

"Oh scissors!" gasped Lord Maulverer. He could not quite see Brother Billy, according to that request. Brother Billy would have had a lot of work on his hands if he had started thrashing the stocky man at Sea View!

"Wait till he comes out!" said Bessie Bunter. "If you're afraid, you can run away! I'm not afraid of him! If he checks me, I shall scratch him!"

"Oh dear!"

Mr. Lamb came round the mound. He stared grimly at the plump figure of Miss Elizabeth Bunter and the slim figure of Lord Maulverer standing near the door of the air-raid shelter.

Lord Maulverer started a little at sight of him. All the Remove had



"My toffee!" screamed Bessie Bunter. She pointed a plump and sticky forefinger at Ponsonby, who was strolling away. "That brute took it away from me!" "Oh!" gasped Lord Maulverer.

No one would hear the crash—and he needed only one. Taking the log in both hands, he crashed it with all his strength on the lock of the locked drawer.

It was a strong drawer and a strong lock. But that tremendous crashing blow knocked the front of the drawer right in.

The Bounder panted. It was a desperate act—it made his heart jump as that crash echoed through the study.

But he lost no time. He dragged open the broken drawer. It was a good-sized drawer, and contained many things. There was a leather wallet, locked, containing what the Bounder did not know, and did not care. But he was surprised to hear a clink of metal from it as he moved it to grope for a letter. Apparently, there were metallic implements of some kind in that locked wallet.

Neither, indeed, would Smithy have dreamed of it, reckless as he was, had the case been less desperate. But everything was at stake.

Sooner or later—probably sooner rather than later—Lamb would succeed in tracing that letter to him. It was not a master doing his duty that the Bounder had to fear—it was an enemy seeking to drive him away from the school. It was a man whose

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It was not a Greyfriars fellow—

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