

THE  
MAGNET

VERNON-SMITH'S LAST FLING!

Exciting School-Adventure  
Yarn of Greyfriars.

# The Magnet <sup>2<sup>D</sup></sup>



**HAMPERED!**



## DR. BIRCHEMALL'S BRAVE DEED!

Sensational St. Sam's Story, Starring Jack Jolly & Co.

By **DICKY NUGENT.**

**J**OLLY, Fearless, Merry, and Bright, the chums of the Fourth Form at St. Sam's, stood on an old rustick bridge and lissened to the mermer of the River Ripple, as it glissened in the cheery sunshine

"Spring's on the weigh, you chaps!" cried Jack Jolly.

"It's a topping afternoon, anyway," said Frank Fearless. "Everything seems so peaceful and quiet and—"

Clatter! Bang! Crash!

"Great pip! What's that?"

The chums gave up thinking about the passing of winter and gave a spring in the air instead. It sounded like a lorry-load of tin cans overturning behind them.

When they looked round, they saw that it was only Dr. Birchmall, the revered and majestick headmaster of St. Sam's, riding up to them on his somewhat ancient bicycle.

"What price old iron?" merrered Jolly, sotto vocey.

"What's that you say, Jolly?" snapped the Head, as he dismounted.

"Ahem! I was saying you looked like a nice old lion!" grinned Jolly. "I was just paying you a condiment, sir!"

"Condiment or not, I must konfess I feel rather like a lion at present—and a lion on the warpath, too!" growled Dr. Birchmall. "Has anybody here seen Barrell?"

"Yes, rather, sir!"

"Oh, good! Where did you see him, Fearless?"

"In the Form-room, this morning, sir!"

Jolly, Merry, and Bright chuckled, and the Head glared.

"You footling yung fathead! What's the good of telling me that when I want him now?"

"Give it up, sir—I'm no good at conundrums!" replied Fearless, with a wink at his chums. "What has Tubby been doing now, sir?"

"You may well ask, Fearless!" snorted the Head. "The yung raskal has snaffled over a hundred jam tart ration coupons from the cook's cupboard!"

"Oh crums!"

"There will be preshus few crums left if Barrell uses those coupons!" remarked the Head, with grim yewmer. "Unforchuntly, he happens to possess the wherewithal to use them—having just won the first prize of one pound in the Ugliest Face Com-

petition, at the Muggleton Picture Pallis!"

"It's more than he deserved, sir!" cried Jolly indignantly. "There are plenty of people who could have licked him hollow. Take yourself, sir!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"Your face would take first prize for ugliness anywhere, sir, and if Tubby had had to contend with you, there would have been a very different story to—"

"Silence, you disrespectful yung welp!" roared Dr. Birchmall, cullering fewriously. "How dare you suggest that I have an ugly face when I'm as handsome as any film star? Stick to the subject under diskussion, which is—'hem! Blessed if I haven't forgotten it now!"

"Has anybody here seen Barrell?" grinned Fearless.

"Ah, yes! Barrell must be stopped at all costs from getting into town with those ration coupons. Once he finds a shop where they'll take those coupons, it won't take him long to skoff the entire school's jam tart rations for a week!" said the Head, with a skowl. "The problem is to nab him before he gets there. I have all the roads covered by prefects, but Barrell may sneak through the woods, or reach the town by some other—My hat!"

To the serprize of the juniors, Dr. Birchmall suddenly flung away his jigger, rushed to the side of the bridge, and looked down at the river.

When Jack Jolly & Co. joined him they soon saw why he was so egg-sited. Rowing down the river towards the bridge was the very person he was looking for—Tubby Barrell of the Fourth!

"Got him!" muttered the Head, with a leer; then he bawled out: "BARRELL!"

The effect of that cry on the fat Fourth-Former was electrick. Barrell dropped his oars and jumped up in the boat, rocking it violently.

"Ow! Ye-es, sir!" he gasped, looking up at the Head with an egg-spression of sheer dismay on his face.

"Get out of that boat at once!" roared the Head. "You are coming back to St. Sam's with me to be birched black-and-blue for the crime of snaffling jam tart coupons! Do you hear, Barrell?"

The next moment, Dr. Birchmall's commands changed into a yell of alarm as he lost his balance and started diving head-first into the

River Ripple. At the same instant, to make things worse, Tubby Barrell made a grab at one of his oars, overturned the boat in doing so, and fell into the water with a fearful splash!

As things turned out, the dubble calamity ended quite forchuntly. Jack Jolly & Co. managed to klutch at the Head's ankles just in time to stop him finishing his diving act; and Tubby Barrell, coming to the surfiss below the bridge, was able to seeze the Head's beard and save himself from drowning!

"All together, you fellows!" cried Jack Jolly. "Heave!"

The Co. gave a long pull and a strong pull, and slowly hauled Dr. Birchmall back to safety—with Tubby Barrell following on behind, clinging like grim deth to the Head's whiskers!

It was by no means a comfortable jerney for Dr. Birchmall, and he yelled feendishly till Tubby's klutches were at last relaxed. After that, however, the juniors were plezantly serprized to find that the old fogey's mood was quite a jeenial one. The reason, they soon learned, was that he saw in this insident the chance of boosting himself as a hero!

"Is the boy quite safe?" he asked patronisingly. "Good! It's nice to know that suxxess has crowned my dawntless heroism!"

"Grate pip!"

"Many a man would have slunk away rather than brave the fearsome dangers I faced!" grinned Dr. Birchmall. "Not so me! I think I deserve a medal for this—and I shall see to it that I get one, too!"

"Ye gods!"

"Now we will take Barrell back to St. Sam's for a change of clobber," went on the Head briskly. "I will overlook your crime, Barrell, in view of what has happened. To-nite, boys, I shall assemblull all Forms and give a thrilling account of my amazing act of curridge; and the whole school shall give me three rousing cheers and join in the strains of 'Sec, the Conkering Hero Comes'! Let's go!"

The Head then led the way back to St. Sam's; and the Fourth-Formers followed—stuffing their handkerchiefs into their mouths to stifle their larfter over Dr. Birchmall's Brave Deed!

### Do You "Tumble" To This?

"The nightly bronco-riding contest at the Courtfield Empire is tremendously popular," writes Tom Brown.

And yet we've been told on good authority that the audiences are "falling off!"

**FUN AND ADVENTURE WITH HARRY WHARTON & CO.! VERNON-SMITH,  
THE BOUNDER OF GREYFRIARS, HAS GOT THE BOOT! BUT HE MAKES  
THINGS HUM BEFORE HE GOES!**



**THE REBEL OF THE REMOVE!**

**H**ERBERT VERNON-SMITH walked along Masters' Passage at Greyfriars School with his hands in his trousers pockets—whistling.

Smithy's whistle was not very musical, but it was loud. It could be heard at a great distance. It was audible in every study in that passage.

A dozen Remove fellows from the end of the passage watched Smithy with bated breath.

"Ain't he a card?" murmured Bob Cherry.

"Ain't he the limit?" grinned Johnny Bull.

"Smithy's last kick!" said Harry Wharton. "Smithy's going with his cars up!"

Loud and sharp sounded that whistle in the sacred precincts of the masters' studies.

Probably in all the history of Greyfriars, no junior had ever been heard to whistle in that passage before.

Whistling in any passage was side, duly punished by six from a prefect's ash. But in that particular passage it was unheard-of—undreamt-of.

Juniors never came to that passage at all unless they were sent for. When they were, they were expected to tread lightly. Any fellow going to a master's study walked delicately, like Agag of old.

Smithy, with his hands in his pockets, walked with a swagger—and whistled. The skies might have been expected to fall when any Greyfriars junior did that.

Even the Bounder of Greyfriars, reckless and cheeky as he was, would never have dreamed of such a proceeding—but for one reason.

Smithy was going that afternoon. Smithy was sacked. Smithy had nothing more to fear from anybody. So Smithy was letting himself go.

Doors opened in the passage. Amazed and indignant faces looked

Whiz! Vernon-Smith flung the school-book and caught Mr. Lamb on the side of the face. The art master tottered and lost his balance. "He, he, he!" gurgled Bunter. "Watch him bump!"

out. Mr. Prout, the master of the Fifth, glared speechlessly at Smithy. Prout had retired to his study after lunch for his usual forty winks in a deep armchair by the fire. That loud shrill whistle outside his study roused out Prout. Like Macbeth, it murdered sleep.

"Boy!" boomed Prout, as soon as he found his voice.

Smithy came to a halt and gave him a careless glance.

"Hallo, old bean! What's biting you?" he asked.

Mr. Prout gazed at him.

Prout was a senior master. He

was portly, he was pompous. His importance, in his own eyes at least, was practically unlimited. And Smithy addressed him as an old bean, and asked him what was biting him.

The Fifth Form master doubted his cars.

Never before had Mr. Prout been addressed as an old bean. Never before had any Greyfriars fellow inquired what was biting him.

"What?" gasped Prout. "What? Do I hear aright?"

There was a chuckle from the end of the passage.

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Harry Wharton & Co. and half a dozen other Remove fellows were gathered there, looking on. Most of them were sorry that the chopper had come down on Smithy and that he was going. But the Bounder did not seem to be in want of sympathy. He seemed chiefly bent on making a sensation before he went.

"Getting deaf, Prout?" asked Smithy.

"Wha-a-t?"

"Anything biting you, Old Pompous?"

"Upon my word!" gasped Mr. Prout.

Prout may have known that he was called Old Pompous in the Fifth, but certainly he had never expected to be so addressed.

"You — you — you impertinent young rascal!" spluttered Mr. Prout. "I shall report this to your headmaster. I shall request Dr. Locke to expel you for this insolence, Vernon-Smith!"

"Too late!" grinned the Bounder. "I'm sacked already! Think I should be talking to you like this if I wasn't, you old donkey?"

"Wha-a-at?"

Prout gurgled. He stood in his study doorway, speechless, gurgling.

Herbert Vernon-Smith walked on and left him to gurgle.

"You impertinent young rascal!" Mr. Hacker, the master of the Shell, was looking out of his study and he barked at the Bounder. "Leave this passage at once, Vernon-Smith!"

"Forget it, Acid Drop!" answered Smithy.

"Ha, ha, ha!" came from the end of the passage.

Mr. Hacker's bony face flamed. He made a clutch at the Bounder.

Vernon-Smith dodged that clutch and walked on—whistling again.

The Acid Drop glared after him with deep feelings.

From a doorway farther up the passage, Mr. Lamb was looking out, his eyes fixed on the Bounder, glinting over his gold-rimmed glasses.

Smithy, it seemed, was heading for his study. He came to a stop outside Mr. Lamb's door, and gave the art master of Greyfriars a cool nod.

"How dare you come here, Vernon-Smith?" exclaimed Mr. Lamb.

Lamb, who was called the "Pet Lamb" in the Remove, generally spoke in a mild voice, not unlike the bleating of that animal. Now, however, his voice came hard and sharp.

"Why not?" asked the Bounder coolly. "I'm bunked! Can't I speak a word to my Form-master before I go?"

"You have nothing to say to me."

"Oh, lots!" answered Vernon-Smith. "Not that you're my Form-master. Quelch is my Form-master, and you're only a rank outsider who's butted in where he isn't wanted!"

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Bob Cherry.

The Bounder's loud voice came the length of the passage. It was intended to be heard by all within range.

"Lamb will skin him before he goes!" murmured Frank Nugent.

"The skinfulness will be terrific!" grinned Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh.

"I say, you fellows, the Lamb looks shirty, don't he?" chuckled Billy Bunter.

Mr. Lamb did not look merely shirty. His face was red with wrath and his eyes glittered.

Vernon-Smith watched him warily. He was well acquainted with the savage temper which the art master generally concealed under a fussy, amiable manner.

"You've got by with it at last, Lamb!" went on the Bounder coolly. "You've been trying to get me sacked all this term—now you've done it! I gave you a chance and you jumped at it—what?"

Mr. Lamb glanced back into his study—probably for a cane.

In an hour's time, Vernon-Smith was to be taken to the station by a Sixth Form prefect and put on his train for home. Mr. Lamb no doubt considered that a whopping before he went would do him good. Half a dozen other masters, looking out of their study doorways, probably agreed with Lamb.

"Nobody to keep an eye on you when I'm gone!" continued the Bounder. "Nobody to spot your giddy secrets, Lamb! You'll be glad to see the last of me—what?"

Mr. Lamb, with set lips, turned in his doorway to step to his study table for a cane.

The Bounder's next action made the group of juniors at the end of the passage jump. It made the staring masters bound.

Smithy made a sudden spring and, as Lamb turned his back, butted him suddenly between the shoulders.

The little art master went flying in at his doorway to sprawl headlong on his study carpet with a bump and a yell.

"Oh!"

"Oh crumbs!"

"Oh scissors!"

"Smithy!"

Lamb's yell, as he landed headlong on his carpet, rang down the passage.

The Bounder stepped swiftly in at the doorway. He grabbed the key from the inside of the lock, jammed it in the outside, and slammed the door. The key turned on the outside with a swift click.

The next moment it was pulled out and disappeared into the Bounder's pocket. A moment more, and there was a wrenching at the door-handle inside.

But Mr. Lamb was too late. He was locked in his study!

"Open this door, Vernon-Smith!" came an enraged roar through the keyhole.

"Bow-wow!" answered the Bounder.

He turned and walked down the passage.

Half a dozen masters in the doorways gazed at him as if mesmerised. Only Mr. Hacker had the presence of mind to jump out to stop him.

"Give me that key!" snapped the Acid Drop, grasping Vernon-Smith by the shoulder. "Give me— Oh!"

Mr. Hacker had not expected Smithy to return grasp for grasp; though, really, he might have expected anything of the scapegrace of Greyfriars in the present state of affairs.

Vernon-Smith gripped him, hooked his leg, and sent the Acid Drop spinning.

Mr. Hacker measured his length on the floor.

Vernon-Smith walked round him, and walked down the passage.

Hacker sat up, blinking.

"Oh, Smithy!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Smithy, you mad ass!" breathed Harry Wharton.

The Bounder laughed.

"What's the odds?" he drawled. "They can't sack me twice over, I suppose? May as well leave the beaks somethin' to remember me by!"

Mr. Hacker staggered to his feet.

"Stop that boy!" he spluttered. "Wharton, Cherry, Nugent, Hurree Singh, Bull, Bunter, Mauleverer—stop that boy—stop him!" Hacker came cutting down the passage, spluttering wrath.

"Cut, Smithy, old man!" murmured Lord Mauleverer.

Vernon-Smith, grinning, cut away—nobody stopping him. He had disappeared before Hacker, panting, reached the end of the passage. From Lamb's study came a sound of loud knocking on the inner side of the door. From Mr. Prout came a deep boom:

"Amazing! Unprecedented! Unparalleled!"

Prout was right—it was! There was no doubt that Smithy's last kick was giving the beaks something to remember him by!

#### WHERE IS SMITHY?

"I SAY, you fellows—Lamb's late!" chuckled Billy Bunter.

And the Remove fellows chuckled, too.

The juniors were gathered at the door of their Form-room, waiting for Mr. Lamb to let them in for class. They had been waiting some minutes.

It was by no means uncommon for Mr. Lamb to be a little late. He was nothing like so punctual as Mr. Quelch had always been. Seldom, or never, had Mr. Quelch kept his Form waiting. Lamb often did.

But on the present occasion, all the fellows knew why. Mr. Lamb was, or affected to be, a little absent-minded, as became an art master with an artistic temperament. But it was not absent-mindedness this time. Lamb was locked in his study—and the key of that study was in Herbert Vernon-Smith's pocket. And nobody knew exactly where Smithy was.

Wingate of the Sixth, the captain of Greyfriars, was looking for the Bounder. He was due now to start for Courtfield to catch his train home. Wingate was hunting him high and low—and it looked as if that train would be lost. Plainly the rebel of the Remove was going to give all the trouble he could before he finally went.

"Lamb will have to get out of his

study window!" remarked Bob Cherry. "Or else stick where he is! Ain't Smithy a card?"

"The cardfulness of the esteemed Smithy is truly terrific!" chuckled Hurrec Jamset Ram Singh.

"Where the dickens is he now?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Keeping doggo somewhere, to give Wingate a hunt!" said Frank Nugent. "Goodness knows where."

"O where and O where can he be?" sang Skinner.

"Poor old Smithy!" said Lord Mauleverer. "It's a rough luck on old Smithy! I wish old Smithy wasn't goin'."

"Same here!" agreed Johnny Bull. "But if a fellow ever asked for it, Smithy did! Sat up and begged for it!"

"Yaas—but—" Mauly shook his head. "Smithy's got his ways, but he ain't a bad sort. He owned up like a little man, when he could have left it all on me—lots of fellows wouldn't have, I'm afraid."

"Smithy's one of the best!" said Tom Redwing. "It's a rotten shame to sack Smithy."

Redwing was looking pale and troubled. He was losing his best chum, and he seemed to be harder hit than Smithy himself.

"Well, I don't see what else the Head could do, Reddy!" said Harry Wharton. "Smithy's been jolly near it a good many times—now he's gone over the edge. He owned up to breaking open Lamb's desk to get at a letter from a racing man that the Baa-Lamb had picked up in the quad. A man couldn't stay on after that."

"I know! But—that fool Lamb fancied Mauleverer had done it—and Smithy could have held his tongue, if he'd liked."

"Yaas, it was frightfully decent of Smithy," said Lord Mauleverer. "But they couldn't let a man stay after what he did, all the same." Mauly shook his head again. "They just couldn't! But it's rough on poor old Smithy!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here comes Wingate!" exclaimed Bob.

All eyes turned on the Greyfriars captain as he came striding up the corridor with a knitted, frowning brow. Hunting for the elusive Bouncer did not seem to be improving George Wingate's temper.

He glanced over the crowd of Removites—perhaps expecting to spot Vernon-Smith among them.

"Not here, Wingate!" grinned Bob. "Even old Smithy wouldn't turn up for class after being sacked!"

"Any of you kids know where Vernon-Smith is?" demanded the prefect.

"Haven't the foggiest!"

Wingate gave a grunt and stalked away. He left all the Remove grinning—with the exception of Tom Redwing. Redwing's heart was too heavy for him to derive any entertainment from the Bouncer's last kick.

"Here comes the giddy Baa-Lamb!" murmured Peter Todd.

Mr. Lamb appeared on the scene at last.

Generally, Mr. Lamb looked amiable—deserving his nickname of the Pet Lamb in the Remove. But

he did not look amiable now. The Bouncer's latest proceedings were having a perturbing effect on the Pet Lamb. No master could have liked having to clamber out of his study window because a reckless fellow had locked him in.

His eyes glinted over his glasses at the waiting juniors—the look in them warning the Remove that it was no time for merriment.

He jammed the key into the lock of the Form-room door and opened it.

Billy Bunter grinned from one fat ear to the other behind Mr. Lamb.

"I say, you fellows, ain't he shirty?" whispered the fat Owl of the Remove.

Mr. Lamb spun round.

"What did you say, Bunter?" he rapped.

Billy Bunter jumped. He had rather forgotten that the Pet Lamb's ears were very keen.

"Oh! Nothing, sir!" he gasped.

"I never said a word! I—I don't think you look shirty, sir! Not at all! I—I think you look very good-tempered, sir! I—I—yaroooh!"

Smack!

Billy Bunter roared! That sudden smack on his fat ear made his fat head ring.

Evidently, Lamb was very shirty. Some of the juniors gave him grim looks—Lord Mauleverer's lip curled. Fellows' heads were not smacked at Greyfriars—but this was Lamb, all over. He was, as Lord Mauleverer described it, not pukka.

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!" roared Bunter.

"Silence!" snapped Mr. Lamb.

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!"

"If you make another sound, Bunter, I shall cane you."

"Yow-ow—I—I mean, yes, sir!" gasped Bunter. And the fat Owl made an effort to suppress the sounds of woe.

Lamb threw the door open wide, and the juniors marched in to take their places, Billy Bunter rubbing a fat ear in anguish.

"Rotten cad!" murmured Lord Mauleverer. "By gad, I wish old Quelch was back. I'm fed-up with that outsider!"

"Oh crikey!" exclaimed Bob Cherry suddenly.

His eyes fixed upon an unexpected object in the Form-room.

At the end of the room was the tall cupboard in which maps and easels and such things were stacked. The top of that cupboard almost reached the high ceiling. And on the summit—packed between that top and the ceiling—was a fellow who grinned down at the Remove.

Mr. Lamb, who had gone to his desk, stared round at Bob as he uttered that startled ejaculation at the sight of the Bouncer.

"Cherry! Take a hundred lines!"

"Oh! Yes, sir!" gasped Bob.

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Harry Wharton, as he spotted the missing Bouncer on top of the Form-room cupboard. "Smithy!"

Lamb had not seen Vernon-Smith—yet! There was a suppressed chuckle in the Remove as the juniors looked up at him.

The mystery of the Bouncer's disappearance was explained now. He

was in the Remove Form room, having evidently obtained admittance by the window. That was where he had been keeping doggo while the captain of the school hunted for him all over Greyfriars.

Mr. Lamb eyed his Form with a frowning brow.

His back was to the cupboard on top of which the Bouncer was ensconced, and he had no suspicion that the missing junior was in the Form-room. But he could see the suppressed merriment in the Remove and was not pleased thereby, in his present angry and irritated temper.

"Cherry!" he rapped.

"Yes, sir!" stammered Bob.

"You seem amused!" said Mr. Lamb grimly. He picked up a cane from his desk, and stepped towards the class. "The Form-room, Cherry, is not the place for jesting and laughter! Step out before the Form!"

Bob Cherry ceased to be amused on the spot. His face was quite grim as he stepped out. This, again, was Lamb all over; he was taking it out of the first victim that came to hand, because the offender was out of his reach. No doubt he would rather have laid that cane round Herbert Vernon-Smith.

"Bend over that desk, Cherry!" said Mr. Lamb harshly.

Bob, in silence, bent over.

The cane swished in the air as Mr. Lamb swept it up for a swipe.

Whiz!

From the top of the bookcase a book suddenly shot. It came across the Form-room like a bullet, accurately aimed for Mr. Lamb's head.

Crash!

There was a startled yell from Mr. Lamb! That sudden and unexpected knock on his head completely up-ended him.

He staggered, stumbled, and pitched over, falling on the floor with a resounding bump! The cane dropped from his hand—the book fell beside him. He sat and spluttered. And from all the Remove came a roar:

"Ha, ha, ha!"

#### LIVELINESS ON THE REMOVE FRONT!

MR. LAMB sat and blinked at his Form.

He put his hand to his head and rubbed it. The astonishment in his face made the juniors yell.

He scrambled to his feet at last, red with rage, clutching up the cane with one hand, the book with the other.

"Who threw that book?" he roared.

The Greyfriars Remove could hardly recognise their Pet Lamb at that moment. All his mild and fluffy amiability had vanished. Mr. Lamb, just then, looked exactly what he was—a man with a fierce and savage temper, now quite uncontrolled. His eyes blazed over the gold-rimmed glasses that slanted on his nose.

The laughter in the Form died away. Nobody was keen to catch

those gleaming eyes. But nobody answered.

Lamb, still ignorant of the Bounder's presence in the Form-room, naturally supposed that the book had been thrown by one of Bob's friends, to interrupt the whopping! He glared in turn at the other members of the Famous Five.

"Wharton!" he roared. "Did you throw that book?"

"No, sir."

"Did you, Nugent?"

"No, sir."

"Was it you, Bull?"

"No, sir."

"Was it you, Hurree Singh?"

"No, esteemed sahib!"

"It was one of you!" snarled Lamb. "And I shall very soon ascertain which one it was!"

He grabbed open the book in his hand. All school books at Greyfriars had to have their owner's name written on the flyleaf. Lamb glared at the name written in that algebra, and started. The name he read there was H. Vernon-Smith!

"Oh!" he ejaculated. "This book belongs to Vernon-Smith! He should have packed his books! Some boy has brought this book, belonging to Vernon-Smith, into the Form-room. I order that boy to stand out."

Nobody stood out. All the Remove, who could see the Bounder crouched on top of the high cupboard, knew who had brought that book into the Form-room—Smithy himself! Other fellows had brought their books in for the lesson. Smithy, it seemed, had brought his for ammunition.

But Mr. Lamb, with his face to the class and his back to the cupboard at the end of the room, was still blissfully unconscious of the expelled junior's presence.

His eyes glinted over the Form. Whoever had brought that book into the Form-room had buzzed it at his head, but he could not guess which member of a numerous Form it was. But he had no doubt that it was one of Bob Cherry's pals, and all the Remove knew that Lamb never waited for proof when his angry temper was excited.

"Wharton, Nugent, Hurree Singh, Bull, stand out before the class!" he rapped.

Four members of the Co. joined Bob Cherry. The rest of the Remove looked on breathlessly, wondering how long it would be before Mr. Lamb spotted the Bounder. Nobody, certainly, was going to tell him that the sacked Removite was there. Smithy's last kick was adding a welcome spot of excitement and hilarity to lessons in the Remove room.

"Unless you tell me at once which of you threw that book, I shall cane you all!" snapped Mr. Lamb.

"None of us, sir!" answered Harry Wharton.

"Do not tell me palpable falsehoods, Wharton!"

The captain of the Remove looked the art master full in the face.

"I am doing nothing of the kind," he answered, "and you have no right to say so, Mr. Lamb."

"I see that Vernon-Smith's example

of mutinous insubordination is spreading in this Form!" said Mr. Lamb, between his closed lips. "Fortunately that rebellious young rascal has now been expelled, and is gone——"

There was a sudden giggle in the class.

Billy Bunter could not help it.

Lamb evidently believed that the Bounder was gone. It was long past the time that he had been booked to start for the station. It struck Bunter as funny—with the Bounder there in full view of his little round eyes and his big round spectacles.

Lamb's eyes shot round at him.

"Bunter! Stand out before the Form!"

"Oh crikey! I—I wasn't laughing, sir! I—I was only coughing. I—I've got a bad cough, sir——"

"Stand out at once!"

"Oh, really, sir! I never laughed, sir. I—I never felt more serious in my life, sir!" groaned Billy Bunter.

"I—I was only sneezing, sir——"

Swipe!

Mr. Lamb reached over, and the cane landed.

Billy Bunter yelled, and hopped out of his place in a great hurry.

Other fellows in the Remove were careful not to laugh! Lamb, evidently, was not to be trifled with now.

Six delinquents were now standing out before Mr. Lamb. He faced them, gripping the cane.

"Now that Vernon-Smith is gone, I shall do my best to eradicate his influence in this Form!" he said. "Wharton, I shall cane you first! Bend over that desk!"

The Bounder was stirring again. He had another book in his hand—this time a large and heavy dictionary. Some of the Removites were watching Lamb—others watched the Bounder in breathless intentness.

His arm swung, and the dictionary flew through the air—accurately aimed, and timed, to fall on Mr. Lamb's head from above, as if it had dropped from the ceiling.

Bang!

"Oh-gum!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The dictionary dropped fairly on Mr. Lamb's cranium.

That cranium was not even protected by a mortar-board. Lamb did not wear cap and gown in the Form-room like Quelch—he wore his velvet coat and blue tie, looking, in the opinion of the juniors, an arty ass! Perhaps Mr. Lamb, for good reasons of his own, liked to be taken for an arty ass! But at that moment a mortar-board would have come in useful.

As it was, the heavy dictionary clumped on Mr. Lamb's rather long hair and banged hard on his head, causing him to sit down suddenly on the Form-room floor for a second time.

Bump!

The dictionary fell on his knees as he sat. There was a shriek of irrepressible merriment from the Remove.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Even the fellows who were waiting to be whopped joined in the roar. Mr. Lamb's sudden downfall was

quite comic—from the point of view of the spectator. To Lamb himself, probably, it did not seem funny.

"Oh! Ah! Ow! Ooogh! What—who—ah! Oh!" spluttered the art master.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Lamb bounded to his feet. He glared at the dictionary, and then at the class.

"Did you throw that book, Mauleverer?" he roared.

"Oh gad! No, sir!" gaped Lord Mauleverer.

"Then who was it? You must have seen who it was, if it was not you, Mauleverer. Give me his name at once!"

Lord Mauleverer did not give Mr. Lamb a name. He gave him a look of cool contempt.

"Do you hear me, Mauleverer?"

The enraged Lamb almost raved.

"I hear you, sir!"

"Will you give me the name of the boy who threw that book?"

"No, sir!"

"What?" spluttered the Lamb.

"What?"

"Not done, sir!" explained Lord Mauleverer calmly. "We don't sneak in the Remove! Not done!"

Mr. Lamb gave Lord Mauleverer one look, and made a strike at him, cane in hand.

As he did so, a Latin grammar came with a whiz and a deadly aim, catching Lamb fairly on the back of the head.

He pitched forward and fell across Mauleverer's desk, the crown of his head tapping Mauly on the waistcoat!

"Oh gad!" ejaculated his lordship.

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

Mr. Lamb sprawled across the desk, spluttering. Then, whirling round, he stared behind him.

That missile, having struck him on the back of the head as he faced the class, evidently came from behind him, and Lamb realised that it could not have come from a member of the Form.

He understood at last that some extraneous person must be in the Form-room, and he glared round for him, in a state of infuriated exasperation. But as he did not, for the moment, think of looking upwards, he did not see the Bounder.

"Who was that?" roared Mr. Lamb. "Who is here? Wharton, you are concerned in this! Who——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Will you answer me?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh!" exclaimed Mr. Lamb. Failing to spot any extraneous person in the Form-room he lifted his gaze at last, and beheld the grinning face looking down from the high top of the cupboard.

His eyes almost popped at the sight of Herbert Vernon-Smith who, up to that moment, he had believed to be catching his train at Courtfield Station.

The Bounder, cool as a cucumber, winked at him.

Mr. Lamb, clutching his cane, strode towards the cupboard. He glared up at the Bounder—several feet above the head of the little art

master, and quite out of reach of his cane.

"Vernon-Smith! You young rascal! Come down!" he roared.

#### AT CLOSE QUARTERS!

**H**ERBERT VERNON - SMITH remained where he was. He grinned cheerily down at the red, enraged face of Mr. Lamb.

The Bounder of Greyfriars was enjoying this. His last kick before he went was likely to be remembered in the Remove. The Bounder had always loved the limelight—and he was getting it in full measure now.

"Go it, Lamb!" encouraged the Bounder: "Take that to go on with!"

Whiz!

Mr. Lamb took the whizzing volume—on his nose! He staggered back, foaming. A squirt suddenly appeared in the Bounder's hand.

Swissssh!

A sudden jet of ink from the squirt caught Lamb full in the middle of his features as he staggered. It splashed and spread over his face, transforming him with startling suddenness into a very good imitation of a native of Central Africa.

another cut. But this time the Bounder crammed himself back against the wall, and escaped the swipe of the cane.

"Will you come down?" roared Lamb.

"Not a lot!" grinned the Bounder. "I'll keep this up as long as you do, Lamb! Hadn't you better go and get a wash?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Lamb stood glaring up, dabbing his inky face. Another school book came hurtling down, landing on that inky face, and the Lamb yelped.

He rushed across to his desk and



"Have you anything to say?" exclaimed Mr. Lamb. "Oh, lots!" answered Vernon-Smith.

"You're not my Form-master—you're only a rank outsider who's butted in where he isn't wanted!"

He had to go—there was no help for that. But he was packing a lot of excitement into his last hour at Greyfriars School.

"Will you come down at once, Vernon-Smith?" roared Mr. Lamb.

"Not at all, old bean!" answered the Bounder politely. "Come up for me, if you want me!"

"Oh crumbs!" breathed Bob Cherry.

The Remove gazed on breathlessly. It would not have been easy for Lamb to reach the Bounder without a ladder. They would have enjoyed the view of Lamb trying to climb up—with the Bounder above shoving him down! Smithy had another volume in his hand—ready for Lamb!

Crash! went the cane as Mr. Lamb, standing on tiptoe, swiped at the Bounder.

But the cane only lashed the top of the cupboard; it was easy for Smithy to keep back out of contact.

"Urrrrrrggh!" spluttered Mr. Lamb. His mouth was open—and some of the ink went inside. "Googh! Ooogh! Groogh!"

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

Lamb turned a black and furious face upon them for a moment. As he did so another jet caught him in the back of the neck. It streamed down inside his collar, and Lamb spun back towards the Bounder.

"You—you—" he gasped. "I—I—I will—"

He made a jump, and lashed with the cane. The little art master seemed as active as a kangaroo; it was quite a high jump, and the cane, this time, landed!

Vernon-Smith gave a yell.

"Ha, ha, ha!" howled the Removes. The sight of the art master jumping like a kangaroo to get at the Bounder was too much for them. They howled, and yelled, almost in hysterics by this time.

Lamb jumped again, and made

grabbed the high chair that stood behind it.

There was a buzz of excitement in the Remove as Lamb carried that high chair towards the cupboard. Mounted on that chair, the Lamb would be within easy swiping distance of the junior on top of the cupboard. His look showed that the swipes were going to be hard and heavy.

"That tears it!" murmured Bob Cherry. "Smithy's number's up now!"

"I guess the Baa-Lamb will sure cinch that guy this time!" remarked Fisher T. Fish.

"Look out, Smithy!" exclaimed Bolsover major.

Mr. Lamb paid no heed to the Remove. He was concentrated on the junior on top of the cupboard.

His eyes had a deadly glint, as he planted the chair in front of the cupboard door and mounted upon it.

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The Remove watched with breathless eagerness. Lamb had the Bounder within range of the cane now. His arm was flung back for a terrific swipe.

Whiz! came a school-book from the Bounder, catching Mr. Lamb on the side of the face. It was a hard knock—and the art master tottered.

Tottering, on top of a high chair, was a dangerous business. The chair rocked and tumbled over.

"Oh gum!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"I say, you fellows, he's going!" gurgled Billy Bunter. "He, he, he! I say, you fellows, watch him bump!" Bump!

Mr. Lamb landed on the Form-room floor. The chair crashed and Lamb crashed, and both lay at full length. Louder than the bump on the floor came Lamb's yell as he established contact with hard old oak planks.

But the little art master was up like a jack-in-the-box. He bounded to his feet, grabbed the chair, and set it up, and fairly leaped upon it.

This time there came no missile from Vernon-Smith. He had come to the end of his ammunition.

Swipe!

The Bounder strove to dodge—but the cane landed across his legs.

Smithy gave a yell.

Swipe!

The cane landed a second time. Lamb had the Bounder now where he wanted him. Under swipe after swipe, the rebel of the Remove had no choice but to jump down from his perch.

That the Bounder did—but with a result rather unexpected by Mr. Lamb. He swung by his hands and dropped, and crashed into the high chair on which the art master stood.

The high chair rocked over a second time, and Mr. Lamb went headlong on the floor, roaring.

As he sprawled, the Bounder grabbed the cane from his hand.

Swipe, swipe, swipe!

The Remove fairly gasped. This was the limit. They gazed, as if mesmerised, at the sight of Smithy caning his Form-master!

Smithy got in three—all good ones! He did not stop for more. He threw the cane aside and then cut across to the Form-room door. Even Smithy seemed to recognise that it was time he went. And he went swiftly.

"Hook it, Smithy!" gasped Bob.

"Cut, old man!" breathed Lord Mauleverer.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Lamb staggered to his feet. His inky face was convulsed with fury. The Form-room door was open—the Bounder disappearing through the doorway.

Lamb rushed after him.

Herbert Vernon-Smith disappeared from sight—Lamb disappeared in pursuit. The Remove were left yelling with laughter.

It was nearly half an hour before Mr. Lamb came back—and he came back washed clean. Whether he had caught the Bounder or not, the juniors did not know—but he had evidently realised that he needed a wash, and had stopped for the same.

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And he did not come back in a good temper. The cane had never been given so much exercise in the Remove Form room as it was given during the next half-hour.

From the bottom of their hearts, the Greyfriars Remove wished that Ferrers Locke would succeed in tracing their kidnapped Form-master, and that Mr. Quelch would come back to his old place. They were more than tired of the Pet Lamb.

## GONE!

"YOU young sweep!"

George Wingate of the Sixth Form made a rush and grabbed the Bounder of Greyfriars by the shoulder.

The school had long been in class; but Wingate of the Sixth was stopping out. He had to find Vernon-Smith and take him to the station; and he had been hunting the elusive Bounder all over the school. The taxi which had been waiting had waited quite a long time, and at last driven away. But the Greyfriars captain spotted the elusive junior at last.

He spotted him on the window-sill of Mr. Lamb's study.

Apparently the expelled junior had designs on that study. But he had no time to carry them out. Wingate's rush was swift and his grasp not to be argued with.

"Oh!" ejaculated Smithy. He stared round at Wingate's frowning face as he was grasped. "You've got me, old bean—no need to crunch my shoulder!"

Wingate jerked him down from the window-sill.

"You young rascal!" he growled. "I've a jolly good mind to give you six before you go! Now, come with me!"

The Bounder grinned.

"We've lost that train," he said. "The taxi's gone, too! Are you walking me to the station, Wingate?"

"No!" grunted Wingate.

He walked the Bounder away in the direction of the garage—still with a firm grip on his shoulder. Now that he had captured the young rascal he was not giving him a chance to dodge again. Smithy's extraordinary proceedings on his last day at Greyfriars had an exhilarating effect on the Remove—but Sixth Form prefects did not see eye to eye with the Lower Fourth.

"Taking the Head's car?" asked the Bounder. "Think the old bean will like it, with petrol rationed, and all that? I shouldn't mind walking."

Wingate made no reply to that! He had no doubt that if he walked the Bounder to Courtfield the elusive rascal would find an opportunity of dodging on the way. And the Greyfriars captain was chiefly anxious to see Herbert Vernon-Smith safely landed in the train for home, when his responsibility would end.

They entered the garage yard; Wingate's grasp still on the Bounder's shoulder.

"Robinson!" yelled out Wingate.

"Here, sir!"

John Robinson, the Head's new chauffeur, came out of the garage. The rather long and lean chauffeur touched his cap to Wingate and cast a curious glance at Herbert Vernon-Smith.

That John Robinson, chauffeur, was in reality Ferrers Locke, the famous detective of Baker Street, Wingate did not know, any more than Smithy did. The olive-skinned chauffeur, with his dark hair and slightly foreign look, bore no resemblance to that relative of Dr. Locke who had been often seen at Greyfriars.

"The car's wanted," said Wingate. "I've the Head's leave, Robinson—I have to take this junior to the station."

"Yes, sir!" said John Robinson.

"I'm sacked, old bean!" said the Bounder coolly. "This is my last trip! The Head has lost his taste for good company."

"I am sorry, sir," said Robinson.

His keen, dark eyes, as they scanned the Bounder's face, had a compassionate look in them.

Under the reckless bravado of the scapegrace of Greyfriars, Ferrers Locke could easily read other feelings—he knew that the junior had had a hard knock and that his heart was heavy, though he was determined not to let it be seen if he could help it.

That the Bounder had been sacked was hardly a surprise to Locke, who had seen a good deal of him since he had played the part of the Head's chauffeur at Greyfriars School.

Once, while keeping his vigil in the dark hours for Slim Jim, the mystery cracksman, he had caught Vernon-Smith out of bounds after lights out. He knew the ways of that particular member of the Remove, and he could not be surprised that the chopper had come down at last.

But he was sorry for him. Ferrers Locke could read the Bounder's character like an open book. He knew that under his recklessness, his mutinous rebelliousness, his spot of blackguardism, the junior had good qualities—that the good in him far outweighed the bad.

And it was from the Bounder, too, that Ferrers Locke had gained the clue that had placed him on the track of Slim Jim, the kidnapper of the Remove master. The Bounder's feud with Mr. Lamb had had results of which the Bounder never dreamed.

"I am really sorry that it has come to this, sir!" said John Robinson. "I will run the car out at once, Mr. Wingate."

"Will you fetch Vernon-Smith's box to put on the car?" said Wingate. "I will wait here with him."

"Certainly, sir!"

John Robinson went for the box.

Wingate waited in the garage yard, still holding Vernon-Smith by the shoulder. The Bounder gave one wrench—and then gave it up! He had no chance of getting away.

Wingate, as a matter of fact, was sorry for the young rascal who had come such a mucker at school. But he had a prefect's duty to do. He



was not letting go the Bounder till he had him safe in the car.

The chauffeur returned with the box, which was placed on the car. Then the Head's car was run out of the garage and Robinson opened the door.

"Get in!" said Wingate.

He pushed the Bounder to the open doorway of the car.

Vernon-Smith stepped in and the prefect released him.

He stepped in after Vernon-Smith.

As he did so, the Bounder turned suddenly on him and barged him full in the chest! Wingate went over backwards like a ninepin. He sprawled on his back on the earth, taken utterly by surprise.

Vernon-Smith made a rapid bound from the car—jumping clear across the astonished senior as he sprawled.

Another second and he would have been in full flight—to carry on with his last kick at the school before he was rounded up again.

But in that second John Robinson's arm shot out and a hand of iron gripped the Bounder by the collar.

With a single swing of that powerful arm, John Robinson swung the Bounder back into the car.

Vernon-Smith plumped down on a seat inside with a gasp.

"Sorry, sir!" murmured John Robinson.

"Oh!" gasped the Bounder. "Oh! You meddlin' rotter!"

"I understand, sir, that there is a train to catch!" said John Robinson, unmoved. "Why waste time, sir? That can do no good."

"Mind your own business, you fool!" roared the angry Bounder.

Wingate scrambled up.

"Thanks, Robinson!" he gasped. He brushed dust from his clothes and stepped into the car. "Vernon-Smith, you cheeky young rascal—"

"Like to send Robinson for your ash?" asked the Bounder coolly. "I'll wait in the car while he fetches it, if you like."

"If you weren't sacked," said Wingate, "I'd give you the whopping of your life! You young rascal, you'd better be thinking of what you will say to your father when you get home, instead of playing the goat up to the last minute."

"I should have to use the Atlantic phone to say anything to the pater when I get home!" retorted Vernon-Smith. "And I don't suppose the pater would care to pay for the call to hear the happy news that his son has been sacked from school!"

"Get off, Robinson!" said Wingate, sitting down beside the Bounder.

"Yes, sir!"

Robinson started up and the car drove out of the yard.

As it turned into the road the Bounder cast a look back at the grey old buildings of Greyfriars and the ancient tower against the blue sky of spring. Then he shrugged his shoulders and set his lips.

He was sacked—he was going home! He was not going to see his father—Mr. Samuel Vernon-Smith was absent in the United States on a war commission of the Government. Smithy was glad of it—bad news

could not be too long in travelling. But he was glad of it, too, for another reason! Sacked and taken to the station by a prefect, Smithy was not done with Greyfriars yet. There were thoughts in his mind which Wingate did not dream of guessing.

The car bowled rapidly along the Courtfield road.

It stopped at last at the station, and Wingate stepped out with the expelled junior—taking hold of Smithy's arm.

John Robinson touched his cap respectfully to the Bounder and Wingate marched him into the station.

Not until he had landed Vernon-Smith in a carriage did Wingate let go his arm. Then he shut the carriage door and stood waiting outside it till the train started.

The Bounder grinned at him from within. He let down the window and leaned out.

"Not giving me a last chance, old bean?" he asked.

"I've got to see you off!" answered Wingate.

"Sorry I'm going?" grinned Smithy.

"I'm sorry you're sacked!"

"Perhaps Lamb will be sorry, too!" said the Bounder. "It's what he wanted, and he's got by with it at last. But he may be sorry before the finish! Hallo, we're off! Good-bye, old thing! Go after your hat!"

The Bounder reached out and knocked the Greyfriars captain's hat off, as the train moved on.

Wingate made a plunge after his hat. The Bounder's mocking laugh rang back from the train as it moved out of Courtfield Station.

The Greyfriars captain breathed hard as he recaptured his hat and jammed it on his head.

He got back into the car and set off on the return journey to Greyfriars School—sorry for the expelled junior, but not sorry, perhaps, that he had seen the last of the reckless young rascal!

And certainly he did not dream of guessing that when he stepped out of the car at Greyfriars, the Bounder was stepping out of the train at Redcliffe Station.

Herbert Vernon-Smith was gone. Greyfriars knew him no more; and fellows who thought of him, thought of him as speeding away in the train for home. He was in the minds of all the Remove; but not a man in the Form guessed how near he still was.

#### SO NEAR, YET SO FAR!

"If you please, sir—"

"What is it, Bunter?"

Mr. Lamb spoke in his accustomed mild bleat.

It was the day after the Bounder's departure, and the Pet Lamb seemed quite the old Pet Lamb again.

In second school he was taking the Remove in geography, and he was his old amiable self—even more so than usual. He was, indeed, hard to recognise as the same man whose savage temper had broken out so

uncontrollably in dealing with the Bounder.

Perhaps it was a relief to him that the rebel of the Remove was gone at last.

If he had, as a good many fellows suspected, desired Vernon-Smith to be expelled, and done his best to bring it about, it could not, at any rate, be denied that Smithy had asked for it and left his headmaster little choice in the matter.

A fellow who received notes from racing men knew what to expect if he was found out. But that was not all that Smithy had done. He had burst open a drawer in Lamb's desk in his study to get at a note from Bill Lodgey which had fallen into Lamb's hands. It was hard to blame any master for thinking that such a reckless young rascal ought to leave the school.

Even Tom Redwing, bitterly as he missed his chum, could not say that Smithy's sentence was unjust. However much Lamb had wanted him to go for personal reasons, he could never have succeeded in getting any Greyfriars fellow expelled, unless that fellow had given offence that his headmaster could not possibly overlook. And that Smithy had done.

All the Remove missed Smithy—Redwing most of all. And the captain of the Remove had to think of the gap left in the Remove eleven. He had lost one of his best men. Still, nobody could maintain that the Bounder had had undeserved hard measure.

Lamb that morning had his old amiable smile on, and seemed the old good-tempered, unsuspecting ass that the Remove knew so well. Bolsover major banged his desk lid—by accident, of course—and made him jump—without getting even lines. Wibley projected an ink-ball which caught Bob Cherry in the car and made Bob utter a sudden howl—and neither Wibley nor Bob was called to account. Lord Mauleverer yawned in class, unrebuked; Skinner and Snoop whispered, and Lamb did not seem to hear.

Which encouraged Billy Bunter. Bunter had a special reason that day for desiring to wander forth in the House while everybody else was in class—a reason not unconnected with a hamper recently received by Coker of the Fifth from his Aunt Judy.

So when geography began, Bunter carefully slipped his map under his desk, held up a fat hand, and squeaked. All the Remove had been told to bring in a map for that lesson, and they had all done so. But with Lamb in this happy state of unsuspecting amiability the fat Owl of the Remove saw his chance.

"If you please, sir, may I go and fetch my map?" asked Bunter, blinking at the art master.

"Dear me! Have you forgotten your map, Bunter?" asked Mr. Lamb. "You must be more thoughtful, Bunter! You may go and fetch it, but lose no time, Bunter!"

"Oh, yes, sir!" gasped Bunter, hardly believing in his good luck.

He rolled to the door.

Fellows near Bunter, who had seen the fat Owl slip his map under his desk, grinned.

"Jevver see such a goob?" murmured Fisher T. Fish. "I'm telling you that that guy Lamb is the goof from Goofsville!"

"Soft as butter!" agreed Hazeldene.

Harry Wharton looked curiously, and rather contemptuously, at the art master. He did not believe for a moment that Mr. Lamb was a goob, or that he was soft as butter.

Wharton had been unwilling at first to share the Bounder's belief that Lamb was playing a part—that he was a hard, determined man, who for some reason known only to himself preferred to give the impression that he was a harmless ass. But the captain of the Remove had had to admit that Smithy was right—that he had read Lamb's character correctly.

Why the man took the trouble to play such a part, Wharton did not know—any more than he knew why Lamb sometimes left the school secretly at night—a fact that the Bounder had discovered—or why he paid visits to Sea View on the cliff road to see the low-browed ruffian, Nobby Parker, who was caretaker there. But Harry Wharton knew that Lamb was, as Smithy had declared, a man with secrets to keep, and he knew that his fluffy softness was a sham. Now he was playing his part again, that was all.

Little cared Billy Bunter what Lamb's motives might be as he rolled away from the Form-room and headed for the stairs.

The Fifth were in Form—the Fifth Form studies deserted—and in Coker's study was the hamper from Aunt Judy. That was Bunter's objective.

The fat Owl heaved his weight up the staircase and rolled along to Horace Coker's study. His fat face was wreathed by grins of happy anticipation.

Coker's Aunt Judy, always thoughtful for her dear Horace, feared that dear Horace might feel the effects of rationing—dear Horace having a good and healthy appetite. Not for worlds, of course, would Miss Coker have exceeded the rationing laws by a hair's breadth; but there were all sorts of enticing things that were unrationed, and of such things Horace was never likely to go short. Neither was Billy Bunter—if he could get at Coker's hamper!

Coker was an open-handed fellow—he fed his friends royally, so long as the good things lasted. Bunter, unfortunately, was not one of his friends—though Bunter would have been glad to extend the heartiest friendship to any fellow who had a hamper in the lean war days.

Bunter's present visit was a friendly one, in a sense. He was, at all events, going to have a whack in that hamper, just like one of Coker's friends!

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He rolled into Coker's study, and shut the door.

His eyes behind his big spectacles glistened at the hamper. It stood in a corner of the study. It was one of those big, round hampers—of huge size. If Aunt Judy had packed it full of good things, she had provided enough for a whole brigade of Horaces.

Bunter shot across to that hamper. Visions of cake, jam-sponge, cream-puffs, chicken jelly, all sorts of delightful things floated before Bunter's fat mind. Lamb was likely to have to wait a long time for that member of his Form, if Bunter once got going on that hamper!

The flat lid was shut.

Bunter grabbed it to lift it. Then, as the poet remarks, a change came o'er the spirit of his dream.

The lid did not lift.

There was a clink of a padlock on a chain, that was all. Billy Bunter blinked at that padlock with a blink that almost cracked his spectacles.

"Beast!" he hissed.

Who ever thought of padlocking a hamper? Perhaps, owing to war conditions, Aunt Judy had fancied that a hamper of tuck would travel more safely with a padlock on it. Anyhow, there it was. The hamper had a padlock. And Billy Bunter blinked at that padlock with the deepest feelings.

He could have wished at that moment that he had the skill of Slim Jim, the mysterious cracksman, who had been active for weeks in the vicinity of Greyfriars School. Slim Jim could have dealt with that padlock at a moment's notice.

But William George Bunter did not resemble Slim Jim in any respect.

"Beast!" hissed Bunter again.

It is much to be feared that the fat Owl was referring to that estimable lady, Miss Judith Coker!

"Oh crikey! Beast!" breathed the disappointed fat Owl. "Suspicious beast—padlocking it, just as if somebody might get after the tuck! Yah!"

Bunter stood blinking at that hamper. The good things inside were within reach—if he could have reached them—so near, yet so far! His capacious mouth watered for those good things. But the thick, strong cane lid of the hamper was not to be penetrated! The padlock, which would have been child's play to Slim Jim, defied Billy Bunter.

Slowly, sadly, the fat Owl turned away.

Then he turned back and grabbed the hamper. Quite a desperate idea had come into his fat brain of carting off the hamper whole, and parking it in a box-room till he could deal with it. In matters of tuck, Billy Bunter was simply a Bolshevik—the rights of property did not appeal to him in the very least.

But that desperate expedient proved futile. The hamper was very large and heavy. So far from carting it off, the fat junior could not even move it. It was big enough for a fellow to get inside!

Gasping for breath, Billy Bunter gave it up.

And the fat Owl, still hungry, rolled out of the study and rolled slowly and sorrowfully back to the Remove room.

Mr. Lamb peered at him over his glasses as he came in.

"Dear me! Where is your map, Bunter?" he asked.

"Eh?" Bunter had forgotten by that time his excuse for getting out of the Form-room. "Oh! I—I—"

"You have not brought your map, Bunter!" bleated the Lamb.

"I—I—I couldn't find it, sir!" stammered Bunter. "I—I've looked everywhere! I—I don't know where it is, sir—all I know is that it ain't under my desk!"

"What?" ejaculated Mr. Lamb.

There was a chuckle in the Remove. Mr. Lamb joined in it!

"Bunter, you absurd, untruthful boy, go to your place!" he said; and Billy Bunter, glad and relieved that the Lamb was in such a good temper, rolled to his place and sat down.

But he did not give much attention to geography. His fat thoughts lingered on Coker's hamper and the contents thereof, till the end of the lesson. Though, as it happened, he was destined to have something to think of, after that lesson, which was going to drive even Coker's hamper from his mind.

#### THE BOUNDER'S BIG IDEA!

JOHN ROBINSON raised his eyebrows.

Ferrers Locke was not easily surprised, but the sight of Herbert Vernon-Smith strolling into the garage yard in the sunny spring morning surprised him.

John Robinson, like everyone else at Greyfriars, took it for granted that when the expelled junior was gone, he was gone for good. Certainly he had never expected to see him at Greyfriars School again. Now he saw him.

The yard had a gate on the lane that ran by the school wall. It was by that gate that the Bounder came in. No Greyfriars eye was likely to fall on him there, except John Robinson's.

He grinned and nodded at the astonished chauffeur.

"Good-morning, Robinson!" he drawled.

"Good-morning, sir!" answered John, touching his hat respectfully. "May I ask, sir, whether you have permission to come here?"

"That's an easy one," answered the Bounder. "No!"

The car was in the yard, and Robinson was removing specks of mud from a mudguard. He stood with the rag in his hand, gazing at the Bounder.

Vernon-Smith stood with his hands in his pockets, facing him.

"Have you not been home, sir?" asked John at last. Ferrers Locke was really concerned about that reckless schoolboy.

"I wasn't specially anxious to see Larkin!" drawled the Bounder. "The jolly old butler," he added.

"But your father, sir? You should have gone to him."

"The pater's in the United States,

buying planes for the Government. I hardly think he would expect me to make the Atlantic trip—with all those jolly old submarines about, too!" grinned Smithy.

"If you are seen here, sir—"

"Don't you worry—I shan't be seen here," answered Vernon-Smith. "I'm sacked—I'm done with Greyfriars—as a school! I'm not done with it yet, in some other ways! I've a spot of business to put through here before I disappear over the giddy horizon."

"I don't quite understand you, sir."

"I'll make it clear. I've been sacked!" The Bounder gritted his teeth for a moment. "I'm not whinin' about that! I've risked it often enough, and I always banked on my luck to pull me through. This time, it's let me down with a bump! I've got no kick comin'—I asked for it, and got it! I've got sense enough to see that the Head couldn't do anythin' else, once it all came out."

Ferrers Locke nodded slowly.

That was the practical view he expected Vernon-Smith to take, from what he had seen of him.

Smithy had taken chances—long chances. He had gone his own headstrong way, regardless of anything but his own wilful will. He had known what he was risking, and faced the risk. He was not the fellow to whine and fancy that he had a grievance when the knock-out came.

But if that was the way the expelled Removite was taking it, it was all the more puzzling to see him back at the school. He was done with Greyfriars, and Greyfriars was done with him.

"Then why—" began John Robinson.

"Think I've come back to crawl and whimper?" sneered the Bounder scornfully. "The Head wouldn't listen to me if I did—and if I would! Think I can't take a knock, you ass?"

"I am glad to hear that you can, sir!" said John Robinson. "But may I ask why you are here—and in my quarters?"

"Last night," said Vernon-Smith, "I put up at an inn near Redclyffe. I've walked across this morning to see you, Robinson, and ask if we can fix up an arrangement. I dare say you've heard that I've got plenty of dough."

John Robinson smiled faintly.

"I have heard that you have a good deal more money than is good for you, Master Vernon-Smith," he answered.

"I shouldn't wonder!" said the Bounder coolly. "Anyhow, I've got it! I don't know what your screw is here, Robinson, but I'll give you as much as the Head pays you, if you'll stand by me."

"If you will be a little more explicit, sir—"

Vernon-Smith waved his hand towards the rooms over the garage.

"You've got your quarters there," he said. "Nobody else ever butts in. You've got two rooms—sitting-room and bed-room—I've been inside, you know, the time I bagged your telephone to rag Lamb. There's a small room, too—sort of box-room, I suppose, opening off your landing. I'll pay you anything you like to let me have it for a week or two."

John Robinson's eyes opened wide.

"Board and lodging!" grinned the Bounder. "I won't worry your rations—any old thing will do for me. Bed and board—and a still tongue, see?"

The Head's chauffeur gazed at him.

He understood now why the expelled junior was there—apparently to remain secretly at the school; his presence known only to the chauffeur, who was to put him up at the garage.

Whether any chauffeur that Dr. Locke had ever employed could have been bribed to accede to such an astonishing proposal or not, it was not likely that Ferrers Locke could!

"That's the big idea!" said Vernon-Smith. "I'll tell you why! That cur Lamb got me sacked! I've owned up that I asked for it, and I'm not whining. The Head did his duty! Lamb did not! Lamb had his own personal, private reasons for getting rid of me—not schoolmaster reasons at all. Three or four times already he has done his best—or his worst—to drive me out of the school, when I hadn't asked for it. It was not a matter of duty with Lamb—it was a dirty trick, because he's afraid of me!"

"Afraid of you, sir!" murmured John Robinson.

"That's it, in a nutshell! I've told you some things about that man!" said the Bounder, with bitter emphasis. "I told you he left the school secretly at night, and offered you a good tip to catch him at the window he used to sneak out by when everybody was asleep! You never did it."

Ferrers Locke did not speak.

He was not likely to tell Smithy that he had watched, and that he had shadowed Lamb in the darkness of the night, and that he had found almost conclusive proof that the art master of Greyfriars was the man who, with a mask on his face, was the man known to the police as Slim Jim.

Smithy, deep as his suspicions were, did not suspect that, or dream of suspecting it. All he knew was that Lamb had some mysterious game on that would not bear the light.

"What the man's game is I don't know," went on Vernon-Smith. "But he's up to something—and something pretty shady! I know that! Art masters, as a rule, don't sneak out of windows in the middle of the night—they don't have gangster acquaintances like that man Nobby Parker. They don't turn as white as chalk if a drawer in their desks is busted open. By gum, I wish I knew how to get in touch with Ferrers Locke!"

"With whom, sir?" murmured John Robinson.

"You've heard of Ferrers Locke, the detective! He's supposed to be hunting for our Form-master, Quelch, who's been missing all this term. I dare say he's chucked it, though—he's not been seen here this term—and old Quelch has never been found. I suppose the man's over-rated—"

"Indeed, sir!"

"But I'd like to speak to him—about Lamb, and see what he thinks, as a detective," said the Bounder, between his teeth. "I fancy a detective would want to know what Lamb was up to if he knew as much about him as I know."

Ferrers Locke made no reply to that. It was an undoubted fact that he did want to know, very keenly indeed, what Mr. Lamb was up to.

"I'm going to give Lamb tit for tat—a Roland for an Oliver," went on the Bounder. "I busted the drawer in his desk to get my letter back. There were other things in it—I never took any notice of them—I'm not a spy. But think the cur would believe that? He was frightened out of his wits when he saw that drawer cracked open. I've had that from Mauleverer, the fellow who was in the study at the time. What was in that wallet, I wonder?"

"That wallet?" repeated John Robinson.

"There was a leather wallet in the drawer with a lock on it. He fancied I had been handling it—he would!" sneered the Bounder. "Little enough he cares whether I had a letter from a sporting man or not! He wanted to get shut of me, to keep his own rotten secrets, whatever they are!"

John Robinson stood silent. He was thinking of a dark night when he had shadowed a shadowy figure that crept away from the House, to bide a locked leather wallet in a recess of the old Cloister.

He knew now from the Bounder why Slim Jim had found that new hiding-place for his cracksman's outfit.

"Now do you understand?" demanded the Bounder. "I've been kicked out of this school. So far as the Head goes, I deserved it, and I've got no kick coming. So far as Lamb goes, I've been like a fly in the grip of a spider—he got me where he wanted me, and got shut of me. Nobody left now to spot his secrets, or to keep the fellows talking about his precious Nobby Parker, and about his midnight jaunts. He feels safe now! He's not so safe as he thinks. He's going to be kicked out—same as I've been! See?"

"Oh!" exclaimed John Robinson.

"You needn't worry," added the Bounder, with a sneer. "When I get that rat tabbed and show him up, the Head will be glad enough to know what kind of a man he is. I think he'd have him in the school at all if he knew? Well, he's going to know! See?"

Ferrers Locke did not speak.

"He got the Head to sack me—I'm going to get the Head to sack him," said Vernon-Smith. "One good turn deserves another. I'm going to watch that villain till I spot his game, whatever it is, and show him up to the whole school. To do that I've got to keep at Greyfriars for a time! Got it now?"

"Yes, sir," said John Robinson slowly. "But—"

"If he's an honest man, he's got nothing to fear from me, or from anybody else," sneered the Bounder. "Honest men don't have anything to fear. If he's not, the sooner he's shown up, the better!"

Locke smiled faintly.

He could understand the expelled junior's feelings, and, to a certain extent, sympathise with them. But certainly he did not want a vengeful

fellow on the spot butting into his difficult task. It was necessary, above all, for Slim Jim not to be put on his guard if Ferrers Locke was to succeed in tracking him.

If Mr. Lamb, as Locke believed, was the mystery cracksman, it was very necessary indeed for Mr. Lamb not to take the alarm.

"Well, is it a go?" asked Vernon-Smith. "I've got sense enough to keep it dark that I'm here—not a soul will know. I'm sticking on till I've shown that man up in his true colours. Nothing against your jolly old conscience in helping a chap to show up a rogue. I'll make it worth your while, as I've said. Is it a go, Robinson?"

John Robinson shook his head.

"I am afraid that I could not consent to anything of the kind, sir," he answered.

"Oh, don't be a fool!" snapped the Bounder. "Where's the harm? I'll stand you anything you like, within reason, to help me out in this! Will you?"

"I am afraid, sir, that—"

"Yes or no!" snarled the Bounder savagely.

"No, sir!" said John Robinson quietly.

The Bounder stood looking at him with a dark brow.

He had thought out this plan, and he had counted on John Robinson's co-operation. He could, as he had said, have made it worth the man's while.

But there was nothing doing. John Robinson's manner was very respectful, but it was very firm.

"Hang you, then!" snapped the Bounder savagely at last. "I'll manage without you, Robinson. And if you give me away—" He paused. "I've been speaking to you in confidence, Robinson. I suppose you're decent enough not to betray a chap behind his back."

John Robinson coloured a little.

"I certainly feel bound not to repeat what you have said to me, Master Vernon-Smith," he answered. "But—"

"You can cut out the buts!" snarled Smithy.

And he turned his back contemptuously on the chauffeur and walked away.

But he did not go as he had come—by the gate on the lane. He went in the direction of the quad—and John Robinson stood looking after him as he went with a knitted brow.

### BAD LUCK FOR BUNTER!

MR. LAMB gave quite a jump. Having dismissed the Remove, the art master had gone to his study.

His face wore its amiable expression as he came up the passage, and he paused once or twice to exchange remarks with Mr. Hacker and with Monsieur Charpentier. Then he went into his study—and jumped!

Had Herbert Vernon-Smith been still at Greyfriars School, Mr. Lamb might not have been so surprised at what he saw. But he did not, of

course, think of the expelled junior, who had been sent away from Greyfriars the previous day, in connection with what he beheld in his study.

Mr. Lamb stared over his gold-rimmed glasses, and the amiable look faded off his face as if wiped off by a duster.

Someone had been in that study during class. It had been in its usual order when Lamb left it to go to the Remove room. Now it was far from being in its usual order. A ragger had been at work.

On Mr. Lamb's table lay several sheets of Bristol board, which he used for his pen-and-ink work. Most of them had unfinished drawings on them. Lamb, who was known in the Remove to do illustrations for picture papers, generally had half a dozen drawings in various stages of progress. Lamb was a clever artist, and it was rumoured in the Remove that he made more by work for the Press, with pen and brush, than he made as art master at Greyfriars. Often and often fellows who had come to the study had seen cheques lying among the drawings—which, according to the Bounder at least, was a part of Lamb's affectation of an artistic, Bohemian sort of character.

Lamb had left half a dozen unfinished drawings there—now some unknown hand had finished them for him.

The hand that had finished them had not been an artistic one!

That unknown hand had dipped a brush into Indian ink and daubed the most absurd daubs. A picture of Herr Hitler had been finished off with a top hat in Indian ink. A sketch of a milkmaid had been adorned with a pair of huge moustaches. A drawing of a group of Army recruits had had all the faces blacked out, transforming them into negroes. Every one of the drawings had been daubed in more or less the same way.

Mr. Lamb stared at them—he glared at them!

Who had done this?

It did not take him long to guess. It had been done during class—and only one Remove fellow had been absent from class during lessons.

But for that absence of Bunter's, Mr. Lamb would have been driven to believe that he was the object of the enmity of some fellow in another Form—for he certainly did not think of Herbert Vernon-Smith, now presumably at home in his father's mansion at Courtman Square, London.

But, naturally, he thought of Bunter at once. Bunter had been out of class—on an untruthful excuse. Bunter had done this!

With set lips, Mr. Lamb stepped to the study window and threw it open.

The Remove fellows were out in break, and Mr. Lamb beckoned to the nearest, who happened to be Hazel-dene.

"Hazeldene! Find Bunter at once and tell him to come to my study!" rapped Mr. Lamb.

"Yes, sir," answered Hazel—and he went off in search of the Owl of the Remove.

Mr. Lamb stepped back to his table and picked up a cane. He gripped that cane hard as he waited for Bunter to appear.

In a few minutes the fat Owl came rolling in. He blinked rather uneasily at Mr. Lamb through his big



Vernon-Smith barged Wingate full in the chest. Bounder made a rapid bound from the car—jumping as he sprang.

spectacles. Bunter had lines overdue—he generally had! He supposed that he was sent for on account of those lines.

"I—I—I haven't had time yet, sir," stammered Bunter, before Mr. Lamb could speak. "I was going to do them last night, sir, only the fellows were making such a row in the passage—"

"Bend over that chair, Bunter!" Mr. Lamb swished the cane.

"Oh crikey! I—I was really going to do the lines, sir!" gasped Bunter. "I—I—I mean, I—I did them, sir! I did the whole hundred, sir, only—only Toddy used them by mistake to light the study fire, and—and so—"

"Now that Vernon-Smith has been expelled, Bunter, I shall certainly allow no boy in the Remove to imitate and repeat his conduct!" said Mr. Lamb grimly. "You have done

very serious damage in this study—"

Bunter jumped!

"This study, sir! I haven't been in this study!" he stuttered. Bunter realised that it was not the matter of the lines.

"Indeed!" said Mr. Lamb, in the same grim tone. "You did not make that untruthful excuse about your map, Bunter, in order to visit this study during class and damage the drawings on my table?"

"Oh crumbs! No, sir!" gasped the bewildered Owl. "I—I never went near this study, sir—I went upstairs to Coker's—I mean, I—I never went to any study at all."



and sent him sprawling on his back. Then the big clear across the astonished captain of Greyfriars crawled!

"Then who," said Mr. Lamb, pointing to the disfigured drawings with his cane, "did that?"

Billy Bunter blinked at the daubed drawings! Bunter was no artist; but he could see that something had happened to those drawings.

"I—I don't know, sir!" he gasped. "I—I never came here at all. I never came near the study! I—I—"

"If you were the most truthful boy in the Form, Bunter, instead of the most untruthful, I should hardly believe that statement," said Mr. Lamb. "This was done during class—"

"I—I didn't—I—I wasn't—I—I never—" howled Bunter.

For once, the hapless fat Owl was telling the truth. It was not a thing that often happened; still, even Billy Bunter told the truth sometimes, and he was doing it now.

But, really, Mr. Lamb could hardly

be expected to believe Bunter. A fellow who had just told him that he had not had time to do his lines, and that he had done them, and that Toddy had used them to light the study fire, could hardly look for implicit faith in his statements. And the fact that Bunter had been out of class, and no one else had, settled the matter.

Mr. Lamb swished the cane again.

"I am waiting for you to bend over that chair, Bunter!" he rapped.

"But I never did!" wailed Bunter. "I never—I didn't—I wasn't—I wouldn't—I—I— Yaroooh!"

Whop!

Bunter yelled as the cane rapped on podgy knuckles.

That was a hint that Mr. Lamb was tired of waiting for him to bend over. The unfortunate fat Owl bent over the chair.

Whop, whop, whop!

"Oh!" roared Bunter. "I never—yaroooh! I didn't—yarooop! I wouldn't—wow!"

Whop, whop, whop!

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

"You will go into Extra School this afternoon, Bunter!" said Mr. Lamb, as the fat Owl wriggled away from the chair after the final whop.

"Ow! Wow! I was in Extra School on Wednesday, sir!" moaned Bunter. "Ow! I tell you I never—"

"Go!"

"But I never—"

Whop!

"Yooo-hoop!"

Bunter departed—in haste.

He went wriggling down the passage. He yowed and wowed as he went. Bunter had had Extra on Wednesday, now he was getting Extra again on Saturday—and he had been whopped—and he had done nothing—except go after Horace Coker's hamper.

The fat Owl rolled out into the quad in a state of inexpressible woe and indignation—and during break that morning, he did

not bestow a single thought on Coker's hamper—he spent break in wriggling and twisting and telling other Remove fellows what an unspeakable beast the Pet Lamb was.

#### HELP REQUIRED!

"POOR old Smithy!" said Harry Wharton.

"Ass to get himself sacked!" grunted Johnny Bull.

After dinner that day, the Famous Five were thinking of football.

There was a match due with the Shell that afternoon, and Hobson & Co. of the Shell were rather a tough crowd for a junior Form at Soccer. There was no doubt that Herbert Vernon-Smith was going to be missed from his accustomed place in the front line. The Bouncer was a good man at Soccer—one of the best in the Remove.

"It's rotten!" said Frank Nugent, and he spoke sincerely enough, though it was settled that he was to play in Smithy's place, and he was keen enough to get a place in the Remove eleven. "Poor old Smithy!"

"The rottenfulness is terrific!" agreed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"We shall miss Smithy!" sighed Bob Cherry. "Not only at Soccer, either! He was a good chap—in his own way! He never really cared for that horse-racing muck—it was only a sort of wrong-headed swank! I jolly well wish he was back at Greyfriars."

"Same here!" agreed Johnny Bull.

"Quelch won't like it, when he comes back, finding a Remove man sacked," said Bob. "Still, I suppose it might have happened just the same if Quelch had been here instead of that little beast Lamb. Smithy risked it often enough in Quelch's time. Blow Lamb, anyhow!"

"Well, we've got to make up our minds to it," said Harry, "and we shall have to fill Smithy's place at Soccer—"

"I say, you fellows—" Billy Bunter rolled up to the Famous Five. "I say, I'm in Extra this afternoon."

"We've heard that one!" answered Bob.

"Oh, really, Cherry! It's frightfully unjust, you know!" said the fat Owl. "That beast Lamb made out that I was ragging in his study—"

"And weren't you?"

"No!" roared Bunter. "I told him so, but the man was cad enough to doubt my word. These schoolmasters are a suspicious lot. Quelch used to doubt my word, just like Lamb."

"I wonder why?" said Bob Cherry thoughtfully. "Can any of you fellows guess why a beak should doubt Bunter's word?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! I've had six, and I've got to stick in Extra. And I never did anything—anything at all. I haven't the faintest idea who ragged Lamb's study this morning!" asserted Bunter. "Must have been a man in another Form."

"Likely, isn't it?" remarked Bob.

"I hope you don't doubt my word, like that beast Lamb, Bob Cherry!"

"Hopeful nature, Bunter's!" remarked Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beast! I never did it!" howled Bunter. "I'd like to rag the cad all right, but he ain't safe! Makes out that he's a purring kitten, and then changes all of a sudden into a scratching cat. I wish Quelch had never been kidnapped!"

"Not really!" ejaculated Bob.

"Yes, really!" declared Bunter. "It seemed rather a stroke of luck at first; but Lamb turns out to be a worse beast than Quelch!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, cackle!" snorted the indignant fat Owl. "I can tell you it's pretty thick if fellows are going to be whopped for nothing. I've a jolly good mind to go to the Head about it! I could go to the Head

and say— Don't walk away while I'm talking to you, blow you!"

Bunter rolled after the Famous Five.

"I say, you fellows, do listen to a chap!" he urged. "I'm for it, and you might be a bit sympathetic."

"Stony!" answered Bob sadly.

"Beast! I say, you fellows, how would you like a stunning feed—cold chicken, and jelly, and cakes, and jam, and sponge, and all that?"

"Eh?"

"What?"

"I know where to get the stuff," said Bunter, blinking at the astonished five. "I'll go fair whacks—nothing mean about me, I hope! All I want is somebody to carry the hamper to the box-room for me."

The Famous Five regarded Billy Bunter with surprise and some interest.

War-time rations were quite sufficient for health; but cold chicken and jelly, cakes and jam. Undoubtedly they were prepared to lend a hand with the hamper if that was all that was required in order to share in such a feast of the gods.

"Where's the hamper?" asked Bob.

"In Coker's study—"

"What?" yelled the Famous Five in chorus.

"Don't yell at a fellow," said Bunter peevishly. "Making a chap jump! I say, you fellows, what do you think? There's a padlock on the hamper, so I couldn't get it open when I went to the study this morning in second school—"

"You went to Lamb's study in second school, you fat fraud!"

"Don't I keep on telling you I didn't?" howled Bunter. "I went up to Coker's study. The hamper was there all right, but it had a padlock on it! Coker's aunt must be a suspicious old cat, you know! She must have fancied somebody would be after Coker's tuck. Low, I call it!"

"Eh? You've just said that you were after it!" gasped Bob.

"Oh, don't jaw; I've got to get into Extra soon. Look here! Potter and Greco are playing Soccer this afternoon with the Fifth—I've seen their names up. All you've got to do is to keep an eye on Coker himself. If he goes to the study, one of you can tell him that Prout wants to see him—see?"

The Famous Five gazed at Bunter. They understood now where that hamper was obtainable—and whose it was. Their looks did not seem to indicate that they shared Billy Bunter's Bolshevistic proclivities.

"Well, one of you keeps Coker out of the way and the other four grab that hamper and get it off to the Remove box-room!" explained Bunter. "It's a bit heavy—but four of you can manage it easily enough. Bob had better take his tool-chest to the box-room—for the padlock, you know! Mind, you're not to start on the stuff till I get out of Extra! Start fair, you know!"

"You fat, frabjous, foozling fat—"

head—" began the captain of the Remove.

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"You piffing, pilfering porker—" said Johnny Bull.

"Look here, I think you ought to do the fair thing!" argued Bunter. "I've put you on to this. It's only fair not to begin on the tuck till I come. Equal whacks all round! Ain't that fair?"

"Gentlemen, chaps, and sportsmen," said Bob Cherry, "it's no good talking to Bunter! Besides, actions speak louder than words! Get going!"

And the Famous Five went into action.

"I say, you fellows, wharrer you up to?" roared Bunter. "I say—Yaroooh!"

Bump!

"Oh crikey! Leggo! I say—"

Bump!

"Ow! Beasts! I say, you can begin on the hamper before I come, if you like!"

Bump!

"Yaroooh! Will you leggo?" shrieked Bunter.

Bump!

Hary Wharton & Co. walked away to the changing-room, leaving Billy Bunter sitting on the hard, unsympathetic quad and roaring.

Why the Famous Five had bumped him was not clear to Bunter's fat intellect. But it was clear to him, at least, that he was not going to get any assistance from the Co. in annexing that hamper from Coker's study.

It was hard. Extra School would not have seemed so dolorous had Bunter been able to look forward to Coker's hamper when it was over.

As it was, it was a dismal fat Owl that rolled into Extra School. That Extra was fearfully unjust, which was bad enough—and it kept him away from Coker's hamper, which was worse. Bunter could only hope that he would have a chance at that hamper after Extra; and, if he had, Bunter was not the man to let his chances like the sunbeams pass him by.

### THE HAMPER RAIDERS!

"ROTEN slackers!"

Coker of the Fifth made that remark.

Coker, coming across the study landing to go downstairs, glanced at a group of Remove fellows idling by the banisters.

Skinner, Snoop, and Stott were, undoubtedly, slacking—as they generally did when they had a chance so to do.

Skinner and Snoop stood leaning on the banisters; Stott stood with his hands in his pockets, facing them.

They were talking when Coker of the Fifth appeared in the offing, and at his remark they looked round at him—not pleasantly.

Certainly they might have found something better to do on a bright spring afternoon than loafing and lounging about indoors. Still, it was no business of Horace Coker's; though old Horace seemed to suffer

from the delusion that everything that went on at Greyfriars School was more or less his concern.

"Get out of it!" went on Coker, pausing to address the three slackers for their own good. "Can't you get into a fag game, or something?"

"We're not big games men like you, Coker!" remarked Skinner in his sarcastic way; and Snoop and Stott chuckled.

Coker frowned.

The Fifth were playing the Sixth that afternoon, and both Coker's chums, Potter and Greene, were in the Form eleven. It was well known that Coker had jawed Blundell, the captain of the Fifth, almost blind and deaf in his endeavours to wedge into the team. Coker fancied himself as a footballer—but nobody else did.

Coker was going down now to see how the footballers were getting on. He was going to tell Potter and Greene later how rottenly they had played. But at Skinner's sarcastic remark Coker turned away from the staircase and came towards the three slackers of the Remove. Coker had no use for cheek or sarc from juniors. He had a short way with fags when they were cheeky.

"That's enough from you, Skinner!" said Coker. "Get out of this! I won't see fags loafing about in this slack way on a half-holiday!"

"Can't you mind your own business?" inquired Snoop.

Smack!

It was a natural question, in the circumstances; but Sidney James Snoop rather wished that he had not made the inquiry the next moment. Coker had a large and heavy hand, and it smacked hard.

Snoop yelled and dodged the next.

"Look here, you bully—" began Skinner.

Smack!

"Yaroooh!"

Skinner dodged also.

"Now, then, you want some?" demanded Coker, glaring at Stott. "I've told you to get a move on! Stop this frowsting, see?"

"You meddling ass—" began Stott, glaring back at him. Frederick Stott was rather tougher than his two associates, and he glared defiance.

Coker had no use for defiance from a fag. He reached out to smack Stott's head—and smacked. At the same time, Stott punched—landing one on Coker's rather prominent nose.

"Oh!" gasped Coker.

The next moment, Frederick Stott was strewn on the landing.

Coker, very much annoyed by that tap on his nose, rushed at Skinner and Snoop, grasped one in either hand, and distributed them, yelling; over Stott.

Three juniors sprawled and yelled. Coker grinned.

"That's a tip for you!" he said genially; and, leaving it at that, Horace Coker went down the staircase—only pausing a moment half-way down to cuff Billy Bunter, whom he encountered on the middle landing. Not that Bunter had done any-

thing, but Coker's idea was that cuffing was good for fags, especially fat and lazy ones.

"Ow!" roared Bunter. "Beast!" Coker, smiling serenely, disappeared down the stairs.

Billy Bunter rubbed a fat ear and resumed his ascent.

The frown on his fat face changed into a grin at the sight of Skinner & Co. sorting themselves out on the study landing, in a state of red breathlessness and fury.

"He, he, he!" chortled Bunter.

Three savage glares were turned on him.

"Boot that fat frog!" snarled Skinner.

"Look here, let's go after that swanking ass Coker and collar him all together!" exclaimed Stott.

"Oh, don't be an ass! Coker's too big!" snapped Skinner. "But that giggling, gurgling gargoyle—"

"I say, you fellows, that beast Coker's just smacked my head!" exclaimed Billy Bunter hastily. "I say, I can tell you fellows how to get even! I say, now the beast's gone out, there's nobody in his study! I say, he's got a hamper there—simply stacked with things!"

Billy Bunter blinked eagerly at the three.

Bunter had just got out of Extra, and he had been heading for Coker's hamper like a homing pigeon. This looked like a good chance to the fat tuck-hunter of Greyfriars!

He needed aid in dealing with that hamper if it was still padlocked, and Coker could not have smacked the heads of Skinner & Co. at a more opportune moment—for Bunter.

"Oh!" said Skinner. "Sure?"

"I've seen it!" said Bunter eagerly. "Only it's got a lock on it. I say, you fellows, nobody's about in the Fifth now; they're all down at the football. You help me get that hamper away to our box-room, and we'll all go equal whacks all round—what?"

"I'm on!" said Stott at once.

And Skinner and Snoop nodded. Coker had smacked their heads all round—and they could not handle the big, burly Fifth-Former. This looked like a chance of getting their own back on Coker. Billy Bunter had found the aid he needed at last.

"Hold on, though!" said Skinner. "Make sure the coast's clear! We don't want to run into any Fifth Form men!"

The four crossed the landing to the Fifth Form study-passage. The door of the games study at the end was open—nobody was there! Nobody was visible in the passage. Never had the coast been so clear—Coker, in fact, had been the last man up in the studies, and now Coker was gone. Eleven men of the Fifth were playing football and most of the others were watching them do it.

"Come on!" said Skinner, and he trod lightly up the passage to Coker's study.

Stott and Snoop followed him, and Billy Bunter brought up the rear, grinning.

Once more the fat Owl's eyes and spectacles dwelt on that huge

hamper. Skinner & Co. exchanged a joyous grin.

"By gum what a whacer!" murmured Snoop. "Coker does well in the food-hogging line!"

"We'll give him food-hogging!" said Stott, rubbing his head. "I suppose that's from his old sketch of an aunt!"

"I say, you fellows, buck up!"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"Oh, really, Skinner! I say, Price might be in his study—he often smokes in his study on a half—he might come out—"

"Get her moving!" said Skinner.

That hamper was large. It was heavy. But three fellows together made easy work of it!

Skinner, Snoop, and Stott grasped it and swung it to the door.

"See if anybody's coming, Bunter!" breathed Skinner.

Billy Bunter rolled back to the corner of the passage. The coast was still quite clear, and the fat junior made signs to his confederates to come on.

They rushed the hamper down the passage to the landing. In hot haste, they rushed it up to the Remove landing and into the Remove passage.

There, at a more leisurely pace, it was carried up the passage to the box-stair at the other end.

Up that stair it went, to the little landing above. From that landing opened the Remove box-room, and a disused garret, which was never entered even by a housemaid with a broom, and which was kept locked. The garret, like the box-room adjoining, had a window looking out over Mr. Mible's kitchen-garden at the back of the school buildings.

Skinner & Co. dumped the hamper down on the box-room landing and paused for breath. Then Skinner gave a little start and looked round suddenly.

"Nobody about here, surely!" he exclaimed. "I thought I heard—"

"I say, you fellows, come on—"

"Nobody in the box-room," said Snoop, looking in at the door.

"It sounded like somebody in the garret!"

"Only spiders!" said Bunter. "Come on!"

There was no further sound, if indeed Skinner had heard a sound at all.

The juniors grasped the hamper again, heaved it into the box-room and shut the door.

"I say, I don't know about busting a padlock!" said Stott dubiously.

"Don't you?" jeered Skinner. "Bit late to think of that, my pippin! Got anything to bust it with, Bunter?"

"There's an old poker in the grace here," said Snoop.

"Good—hand it over!"

Skinner wielded the poker.

After several attempts he succeeded in jamming it into the padlock and wrenching the lock open. He chuckled as he threw down the poker.

"That's that!" he remarked. "Dear old Coker may be sorry for smacking Remove fellows' heads when he finds this hamper here—empty! We don't know anything about it, of course!"

"Not a thing!" chuckled Snoop.

"I say, you fellows, let's get it open!" gasped Billy Bunter. He grasped the hamper lid with two fat paws.

But he did not lift it! He paused and stared round at the door. On the box-room stair sounded the hurried tread of rapidly ascending feet! The fat Owl gave a suppressed squeak of terror.

"Oh crumbs! I say, you fellows, is—is—is that Coker coming?"

Skinner & Co. did not reply! They had no doubt that it was Coker—on the trail of his hamper—and they stood staring at the box-room door in dismay—waiting for it to open and reveal the wrathful and avenging Hor. ce!

### ROUGH LUCK!

"OH!" gasped Mr. Lamb.

"Oh!" repeated Mr. Hacker, like an echo.

Lamb's hat flew.

Mr. Lamb wore a soft hat with a slouched brim on his rather long head of hair. That hat had been safely perched in its accustomed place—till, all of a sudden, it flew in the most remarkable manner.

Lamb was walking with Hacker that sunny half-holiday. The two masters were taking a walk round the school precincts. At the moment they were following a path which skirted an extensive potato-patch where Mr. Mible, the gardener, was at work with a hoe. A number of Greyfriars fellows, in shirtsleeves, were at work on the school allotments next to the potato patch. In the war days almost every fellow in the school took his regular turn at work on the allotments. Most of them, when they came to do it, found growing food an interesting business as well as a patriotic duty.

Hacker and Lamb had paused to look at the busy scene. It was then that Lamb's hat flew off under a sudden impact.

The two masters ejaculated simultaneously.

Something had struck that hat—dislodging it. The hat flew two or three yards away and dropped to the earth. Something else dropped at Mr. Lamb's feet. It was the something that had struck the hat—nothing more nor less than an ancient, disused boot!

Mr. Lamb rubbed his head! The hat had taken the force of the impact, but Lamb had had rather a crack on the head, all the same.

"What—?" exclaimed Mr. Hacker. "Who—?"

He spun round and stared up at the building!

Mr. Lamb did so even more rapidly. He did not need telling that that old boot had been dropped out of a window above—and he was anxious to spot the window and the dropper of the ancient boot!

High up were two small windows—one smaller than the other. The larger one was the window of the Remove box-room, the smaller one that of the disused garret adjoining.

Lamb's eyes, over his gold-rimmed glasses, glittered up at the box-room window! It was shut—but he had no doubt that it had been open a few minutes ago when the boot had been tossed down. Some Remove fellow who did not like Mr. Quelch's substitute was there—and he had taken prompt advantage of Lamb's appearing in the offing.

"Upon my word!" exclaimed the Acid Drop. "Mr. Lamb, that—that object must have been flung intentionally—"

"I am aware of it!" said Mr. Lamb, between his set lips. "Excuse me, Mr. Hacker—I must lose no time!"

The art master hurried away leaving Hacker staring up at the box-room.

Mr. Lamb ran fast till he reached the quad, where he dropped into a walk, but a very rapid walk. He was anxious to get up to the Remove quarters before the boot-hurler could get off the scene.

He almost shot into the House and scudded up the staircase.

So swift was Mr. Lamb that hardly more than two minutes had elapsed after the hurling of the old boot before he was in the Remove passage.

His eyes glittered along that passage! Nobody was in sight there. The Remove fellows were almost all out of doors on a half-holiday—the football match with the Shell had not yet ended.

Mr. Lamb hurried up the passage to the box-room stairs at the other

end. He hoped that he was in time to catch the culprit. If he found nobody in the box-room, he was going to make a very keen and searching inquiry in the Remove! But it was quite probable that the boot-hurler might yet be on the spot, so swift had Lamb's movements been. Mr. Lamb trod swiftly up the box-room stair.

Had Herbert Vernon-Smith been still at the school, Lamb would have taken it for granted that Smithy had hurled that boot. As Vernon-Smith was gone, he had no doubt that it was some part of the Bounder's. Whoever it was, he was going to pay dearly for that crack on Mr. Lamb's head if the art master succeeded in spotting him.

He tramped across the little landing to the box-room door and hurled it open. There was a startled squeak as he did so.

"I say, it wasn't me, you know! I never—"

Billy Bunter broke off suddenly!

He had expected Coker of the Fifth to burst into the box-room. But it was not Coker of the Fifth! It was the Pet Lamb—with a look on his face more terrifying than any expression that had ever been seen on Horace Coker's rugged countenance.

Skinner & Co. stared blankly at Mr. Lamb. They were glad that it was not Coker, as they had dreaded; but they could not guess what had brought the art master up to the box-room.

Lamb's eyes gleamed from face to face.

He did not take any notice of Coker's hamper. Probably, if he heeded it at all, he supposed that it was an empty hamper left there with boxes and trunks. He was not interested in hampers, but in boot-hurlers.

"Was it you, Bunter?" he roared. Suspicion fastened first on Bunter, as the fellow he had whopped that morning.

"Eh? Oh, no, sir!" howled Bunter. "I never touched it, sir!"

Bunter was alluding to the hamper—supposing that Lamb was! Bunter knew nothing about a boot!

"Was it you, Skinner?" hooted Mr. Lamb. "I find you all here—you will all be punished! All of you follow me to my study!" He rubbed his head. "I should never have supposed that any Remove boy would venture upon such an outrageous action, now that Vernon-Smith is gone! How dare you?"

"It—it was only a lark, sir!" stammered Skinner.

Like Bunter, he supposed that Lamb was alluding to the hamper—being blissfully unconscious of anything to do with old boots.

"What!" thundered the art master. "I have had a severe blow—"

"Eh?"

"What?"

"I have been struck on the head by an object hurled from this window!" roared Lamb. "I shall endeavour to make you realise that you will be wise not to follow the example of the mutinous young rascal who has been expelled. Come!"

"But I—I say—" gasped Bunter. "We never—" stuttered Skinner.

The four gazed at Mr. Lamb in dazed amazement. Certainly no one of that quartet had thrown anything from the box-room window. Somebody, it seemed, had thrown something from some window, and it had tapped Lamb's nut! Skinner & Co. certainly hadn't!

"Follow me!" roared Mr. Lamb.

"But we never—the window hasn't been open!" gasped Snoop.

"We haven't—" babbled Stott.

"I say, I never—" yelled Bunter.

"Enough! Follow me this instant!"

Mr. Lamb turned and strode out of the box-room.

The four Removites, in astonishment and dismay, followed him.

Lamb rubbed his head as he strode on in advance—it seemed that he had had a rather painful crack there. It was plain that the cane was going to be featured in the next scene when they arrived at the art master's study. Even Billy Bunter forgot Coker's hamper, in the astonishing and harrowing circumstances. They trailed dismally down the stairs.

Lamb led his unhappy flock into his study. There he picked up a cane from the table.

"You first, Skinner!" he snapped.

"I never—"

"Bend over that chair!"

Skinner had six. He rose from that infliction with a set, savage face. Skinner often deserved whoppings he

# The Schoolboy Forger!

To his schoolfellows—Harry Wharton & Co., of the Greyfriars Remove—Jim Valentine is just a new boy. To certain lawless characters outside Greyfriars, however, he is known as Dick the Penman, a forger of considerable skill. How Jim Valentine fares in his new surroundings is told in this super story of Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars.

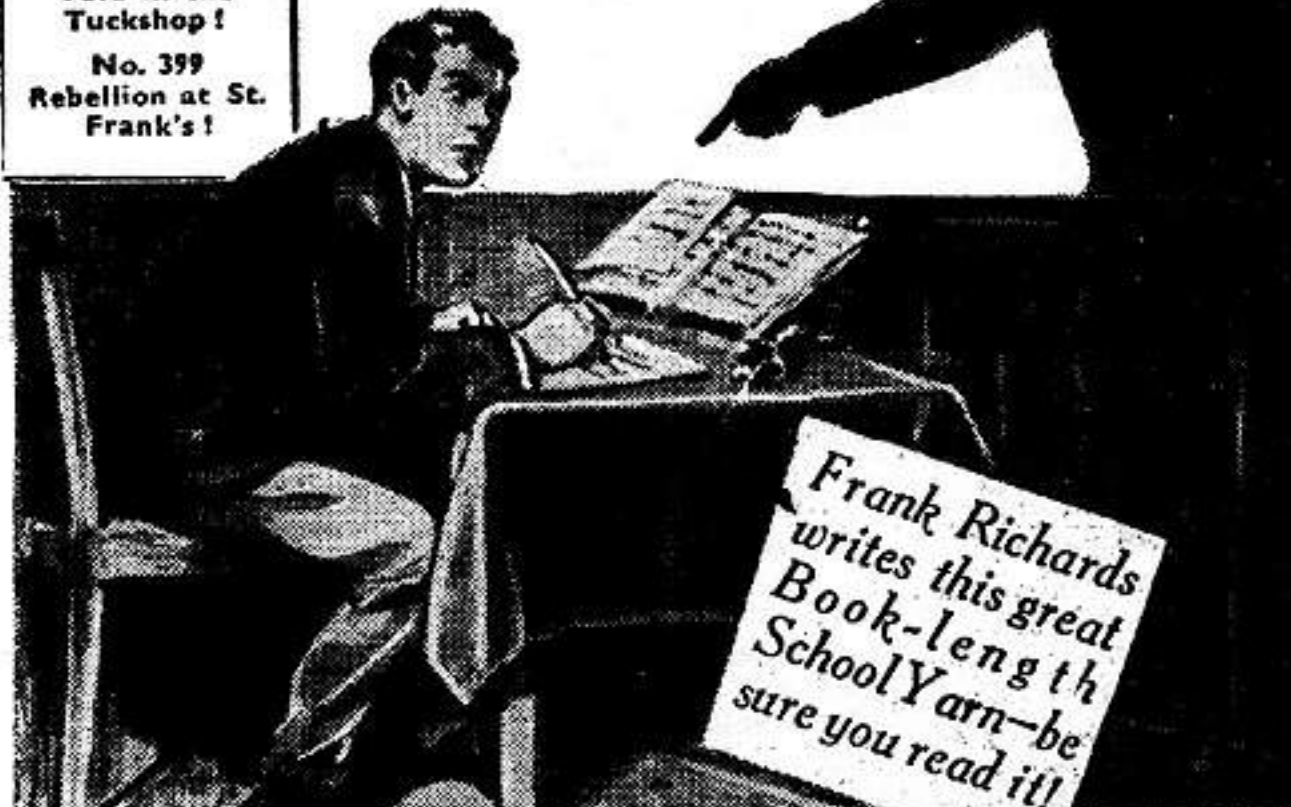
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did not get; now he had got one that he did not deserve. He stood panting with rage and anguish.

"Snoop—"

"I never did anything, sir—I never knew—"

"Bend over that chair instantly!"

Sidney James Snoop took his six, and stood wriggling beside Skinner while Stott took another six. Then came Billy Bunter's turn.

"I say, sir, I never—nobody did—there wasn't anything chucked from the box-room!" howled Bunter. "It must have been some other window, sir—"

"Bend over, Bunter!"

"But it wasn't me, sir!" squeaked the dismayed fat Owl. "I—"

Mr. Lamb made a step towards him, and the fat junior bent over the chair and took his second six that day. Four hapless juniors seemed to be understudying the young man of Hythe who was shaved with a scythe and did nothing but wriggle and writhe! But Lamb was not done with them yet.

"Now," he said, "I shall take you to the Form-room! You will be in detention until six o'clock."

Yell, from Bunter.

"We shall miss tea, sir—"

"Quite!" said Mr. Lamb grimly.

"Oh crikey!"

The hapless four wriggled after Mr. Lamb to the Form-room.

There they were left, with detention tasks to keep them fully occupied till six o'clock. By which time, Billy Bunter was wishing, from the bottom of his fat heart, that he had never heard of Coker's hamper.

### WRATHY!

"**B**EAISTS!"

"Eh?"

"Rotters!"

"What?"

"Pigs!" yelled Billy Bunter.

Harry Wharton & Co. simply stared. William George Bunter took them quite by surprise.

The Famous Five were at tea in Study No. 1, after the match of the Shell. They were discussing that match, which had ended in a draw of one all. They agreed, sadly, that with the old Bunder in the ranks the scale would have been tipped in their favour, and it would have been a win.

Hobson & Co. of the Shell perhaps had a different opinion. But the heroes of the Remove had no doubt about it. They missed Smithy, and missed him sorely.

But Smithy and Soccer were quite driven out of their minds as the door of the study was flung wide open and William George Bunter appeared there—in such a state of excitement as seldom happened with the fat Owl. Wild wrath flushed the fat face of the Owl of the Remove and flashed from his big spectacles. He brandished fat fists at the astounded five.

What was the matter with Bunter was quite a mystery to them. They had not seen the fat junior since they had bumped him for his sins before the football match. They had, in fact, forgotten that there was such a chap

at Greyfriars at all. So why he suddenly raged and roared into the study had them guessing.

"Beasts! Pigs! Rotters!" roared Bunter "Greedy pigs! Yah! Cads! Beasts!"

"Mad?" asked Harry Wharton, staring blankly.

"Is the madfulness terrific, my esteemed potty Bunter?" inquired Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, in wonder.

"Hand it over!" roared Bunter.

"Eh?"

"Some of it, anyhow! You can't have scoffed the lot yet! Pigs!"

"Mad as a hatter!" said Bob Cherry. "Would you mind going mad in your own study, Bunter?"

"Beast! Where is it?" shrieked Bunter. "You haven't got it on the table—you can't have bolted the lot. Where is it?"

"Where's what, you potty porpoise?" roared the captain of the Remove.

"The tuck!" raved Bunter.

"Tuck! What tuck?"

"Oh, you beast! Oh, you rotter! Making out that you wouldn't touch Coker's hamper—and then bagging the lot. Look here, is there any left?" yelled Bunter. "There was tons of it—tons and tons! I jolly well know that hamper was nearly full—and look at the size of it! You've cleared it out to the last crumb—"

"Coker's hamper! You fat chump, what on earth are you driving at?" exclaimed the captain of the Remove. "Do you think we've raided Coker's hamper, you gorging, guzzling gander?"

"I know you have!" howled Bunter. "And I've taken all the risk of getting out of detention for it, and it's all gone and you've had it! Where is the tuck, you greedy pig? Do you want the lot?"

Five or six Remove fellows gathered round the doorway of Study No. 1, drawn by Billy Bunter.

"What on earth's up?" asked Peter Todd. "Has that prize porpoise gone batty, or what?"

"I think he must have," said Harry Wharton. "The howling ass wanted us to help him raid Coker's hamper this afternoon, and we bumped him. Now he seems to think we've done it—goodness knows why."

"So you have!" roared Bunter. "I tell you I've just been up to the box-room, and there's nothing left."

"Is Coker's hamper in the box-room?" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "How the jolly old thump did it get into the box-room?"

"I told you I was going to get it there!" howled Bunter. "That's how you knew where to look for it, you swabs. I say, you fellows!" Bunter blinked round at the gathering Remove fellows in the passage. "What do you think? They made out that they wouldn't touch Coker's hamper—and after I came out of Extra, I got some other chaps to help me, and we got it to the box-room, and—"

"Oh gad!" murmured Lord Mauleverer. "Better not let Coker hear that, old fat bean! Coker might be cross!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blow Coker! I tell you we got it there, and then that brute Lamb came up, made out we'd chucked something at his silly head, took us down to his study and whopped us, and then put us in detention," roared Bunter, "and I chanced getting out before six—and that means a whopping if I don't get back before Lamb spots me, and—and they've cleared out that hamper, and—"

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

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Everything gone!" roared Bunter. "The hamper's still there, but it's as empty as a drum! They've scoffed the whole lot! Bagged it all, while I was in detention, and—"

"You potty ass!" roared Bob Cherry. "We never even knew that Coker's hamper was there, and we haven't been there—and do you think we're pilfering grub-hunters like yourself, you fat fozzler?"

"It was you!" roared back Bunter. "Nobody else knew about the hamper, except Skinner and Snoop and Stott—and they're still in detention. I got out first to—to—"

"To scoff the hamper!" grinned Squiff. "How much would you have left for Skinner, Snoop, and Stott?"

"I tell you there was tons!" howled Bunter. "I'd have had it this morning, only it was too heavy to shift! It's light enough now—there's nothing in it! They've cleared it right out!"

"We haven't!" bellowed Johnny Bull.

"Who has, then?" yelled Bunter. "All the tuck's gone!"

The fat Owl glared accusingly at the Famous Five.

It seemed clear enough to Bunter. The Famous Five knew all about that hamper, because he had told them his plans. They had snaffled the loot—he had no doubt of it!

And the fat Owl had taken the risk of getting out of detention half an hour before time was up, in order to have a first go at that hamper. He had found it empty! No wonder Billy Bunter was enraged!

He brandished fat fists at the chums of the Remove.

"Cads! Swabs! Beasts!" he bawled. "Hand it over! Whack it out! Do you want the whole lot, you greedy pigs?"

The Famous Five rose to their feet.

They had forgotten Coker's hamper as completely as they had forgotten Bunter. Now they learned for the first time that the grub-raider of the Remove had obtained other aid in annexing that hamper. Somebody, it seemed, had cleared it out while Bunter was in detention. They certainly had not! What had become of Coker's tuck was a pressing matter to Billy Bunter. To the Famous Five, it was not a pressing matter at all. They did not care a boiled bean what had become of it. They did not feel called upon to deal with that matter at all. But they did feel called upon to deal with William George Bunter.

Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry grasped the fat Owl together. With  
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a swing of their arms, they tossed him, face down, into the study armchair.

Bunter roared and kicked.

"Now get a shovel, Franky!" said the captain of the Remove. "We warned this fat oyster to leave Coker's tuck alone, and if he's snaffled it, he wants another warning."

"Here you are!" Frank Nugent handed over the shovel from the fender.

"Now, you fat frog——"

"I say, you fellows, leggo!" shrieked Bunter, struggling frantically in the armchair. "I say, I'll go fair whacks with the tuck! I meant to let you fellows have some——"

Whack!

"Yaroo! I say, I only want my whack!" howled Bunter. "That's fair, ain't it—give me a whack——"

"Here you are!" answered Harry.

Whack!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow! Wow! Leave off, will you?" roared Bunter. "I say, you fellows, you can keep the lot—I think you're a set of greedy pigs, but you can—yarooop!"

Whack!

"Now, you guzzling gargoyle," said the captain of the Remove, "that's three for raiding a Fifth Form man's tuck. Now——"

"Ow! Beast! Leggo!"

Whack, whack, whack!

"That's three more——"

"Yarooop!"

"For fancying that we had it! Now chuck him out!"

Billy Bunter bumped in the Remove passage, and the door of Study No. 1 closed on him.

The Famous Five resumed their interrupted tea and their interrupted discussion of the match with the Shell. Outside, in the passage, the voice of William George Bunter was heard on its top note.

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### SKINNER SEES IT ALL!

SKINNER, Snoop, and Stott, sitting at their desks in the Remove Form room, looked up rather unpleasantly as the Form-room door opened and a fat figure wriggled in.

It was ten minutes to six. Bunter had squirmed out at half-past five—taking the risk of being spotted out of detention by Mr. Lamb—and Skinner & Co. could guess why! Now he squirmed in again—and they expected to see smears of jam on a fat face, indicating that he had had a first and extensive whack in the contents of Coker's hamper.

But there was no jam on Bunter's fat face. There was no trace of other comestibles. There was a frown—a frightful, fearful, frantic frown, like that of the Lord High Executioner.

Bunter had come back in time to escape being caught out by Lamb. But he did not look as if he had been enjoying life.

"You fat porker!" growled Skinner.

"Have you left any for us?"

"Catch him leaving anything!"

grunted Snoop.

"I'll jolly well scrag him if he

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hasn't!" said Stott, staring at Bunter. "I'm fearfully hungry! There was lots in that hamper."

All the detained juniors were fearfully hungry, having missed their tea. They were thinking with yearning of getting at Coker's hamper, after six.

"I say, you fellows!" gasped Bunter. "It's all gone!"

"What?" howled the three.

"I believe Wharton's lot had it! Anyhow, it's all gone—the hamper's empty!" gasped Bunter. "Cleared right out!"

The three gazed at him.

"You gormandising guzzler!" gasped Skinner. "Mean to say that you've scoffed about half a hundred-weight of tuck in a quarter of an hour?"

"I haven't touched it!" howled Bunter. "It was gone when I got there—all gone! Wharton's gang has——"

"Oh, don't talk rot!" snapped Skinner. Skinner knew, if Billy Bunter did not, that the Famous Five would not have snaffled the purloined tuck. "If it's gone, I know who had it, all right! That's why you sneaked out, is it? I thought you'd gone to start on it—but if you've bagged the lot——"

"Look out, when we get out of here!" said Stott. "If you've parked all that tuck somewhere, Bunter, we'll jolly well make you cough it up! You can't have eaten it all."

"I tell you——" shrieked Bunter.

"Oh, pack it up!" said Snoop. "Mind he doesn't get away, you fellows, when Lamb lets us out of this! He's got to cough it up!"

"You bet!" said Skinner, with emphasis.

Billy Bunter blinked at them in great exasperation. He had suspected the Famous Five of snaffling that cargo of tuck which had so mysteriously disappeared. Skinner & Co. suspected him!

Indeed, it was more than suspicion. They had no doubt of it! And the hungry three gave him looks almost like hungry wolves!

There was a footstep in the corridor.

Billy Bunter bolted for his desk and grabbed up his pen!

He was deep in his detention task when the Form-room door opened to admit Mr. Lamb. He came across to look at the papers.

Evidently, he did not suspect that one of the four had been out of the Form-room, which was a relief to Billy Bunter. The Pet Lamb seemed to have recovered his temper by that time. He glanced carelessly at the detention papers, and dismissed the juniors.

Skinner & Co. carefully closed round Bunter as they left the Form-room.

They were not letting the fat Owl get out of their sight. Skinner slipped a hand under one fat arm—Snoop slipped a hand under the other. Stott walked behind, watchful.

"I say, you fellows——" gasped Bunter.

"Come on!" said Skinner.

"I tell you it's all gone——"

"You'd better tell us next where it's gone, then!" said Skinner pleasantly. "You've got a bad time coming, if you don't!"

"I tell you Wharton and his lot——"

"Oh, chuck it!"

Skinner & Co. walked Bunter up the stairs.

As they reached the study landing, they heard an excited voice from the direction of the Fifth Form passage. It was the voice of Horace Coker—and they caught the word "hamper." Old Horace, it seemed, had missed that hamper.

Coker's voice died away astern as they walked Bunter up the Remove passage to the box-room stair. They walked him up that stair to the box-room. They walked him into that apartment.

There was the hamper where they had left it when Lamb marched them down. But now the lid was wide open. One glance into the interior was enough—it was empty!

Exactly what had been in that hamper they did not know, but they knew that it had been full of enticing things—jars, bottles, packets and packages, boxes and cartons—all sorts of excellent things in enormous quantities, packed by the affectionate hands of Aunt Judy for her beloved Horace.

Bunter, it was certain, could not have scoffed such a quantity. He could not have scoffed a quarter of it, or an eighth. Bunter, actually, was not so big as that huge hamper—so it was perfectly certain that even Billy Bunter could not contain the contents of the hamper! His stowage space was extensive, but even Bunter had a limit—and he was not made of elastic and could not stretch indefinitely.

So it was all clear to Skinner & Co.—they saw it all! Bunter had scoffed as much as he could in the time and parked the rest somewhere for another feed later—that was his game! And if Bunter fancied that he could play a game like that on Skinner & Co., Bunter had another guess coming.

"I told you so!" squeaked Bunter. "Look! The whole lot gone—not a crumb left! Look!"

"Where is it?" asked Skinner.

"How should I know?" howled Bunter.

"I fancy you know better than anyone else! Look round for it, you chaps," said Harold Skinner. "He may have parked it in some of the boxes."

Skinner took a tight grip on Bunter's collar to keep him safe while his comrades searched for the missing tuck. They looked into every empty box in the box-room; they looked into every corner; but they found no tuck! They gave Bunter grimmer and grimmer looks.

"What have you done with it?" demanded Skinner.

"I say, you fellows, I keep on telling you that I found that hamper empty when I came up!" wailed Bunter.

"You can keep on telling us that till you're black in the face, and it



"Who did that?" rapped Mr. Lamb, pointing to the disfigured drawings with his cane. "I—I don't know, sir!" gasped Bunter. "I—I never came here at all. I never came near the study!"

won't make any difference!" said Skinner. "Have you parked it in the garret next to this? Go and look, Snoopey."

Sidney James Snoop went out of the box-room. He was heard to rattle the doorhandle of the adjoining garret. Then he came back.

"It's locked!" he said.

"The key's always in the lock!" said Stott.

"It isn't now!" answered Snoop.

"So that's it!" said Skinner. "Have you parked the tuck in that garret and taken away the key, Bunter?"

"No!" howled Bunter. "I tell you—"

"That's not it," said Stott. "I noticed that the key wasn't there when we came up with the hamper, Skinner—when you fancied you heard something—"

"Then he's taken it down to his study!" said Skinner.

"Toddy wouldn't stand for it," said Stott. "He wouldn't let that fat tuck-pincher park it in Study No. 7."

"Well, he's parked it somewhere!" said Skinner. "Blessed if I know where—but Bunter's going to tell us. Where is it, Bunter? We're all hungry!"

"Leggo my collar, you beast! I keep on telling you that it was gone when I came up!" howled Bunter.

"Are you going to tell us where it is?"

"How can I, when I don't know!" roared Bunter. "Wharton and his gang must have had it—they were

the only fellows who knew that it was here—"

"Scrag him!" said Stott.

"Scrag him bald-headed!" hissed Snoop.

"Last time of asking, Bunter!" said Harold Skinner grimly. "You must fancy we're soft if you think you can spoof us like this! Are you going to shell out that tuck, fair whacks all round, or not?"

"I tell you—"

"That's enough!" said Skinner. "Tip him into the hamper, you chaps! We'll give him half an hour to think it over—in the hamper."

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Snoop and Stott.

"I say, you fellows!" howled Bunter. "I tell you—I say— Yaroooh! Leggo, you beasts! I say— Oh crikey! Grooogh!"

Bump!

Bunter was tipped into the big hamper. There was just about room for Bunter, but it was a fairly close fit. He blinked up at the three in horror and dismay as Skinner grasped the lid to close it.

"Ow! I say! Lemme out!" raved Bunter. "I say, I shall be suffocated. I—"

Bang!

The lid came down.

There was no danger of suffocation—there were plenty of interstices in the plaited canework of the big hamper. But it was fearfully uncomfortable. Bunter was packed tight! He yelled frantically as the lid banged down.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Are you going to tell us what you've done with the tuck?" demanded Skinner.

"Ow! Beast! I haven't—"

"That does it!" said Skinner. He adjusted the padlock, fastening the lid. That padlock had been snapped open; but Skinner secured it with a piece of wire from his pocket. It was left as secure as if still locked.

From the interior of the hamper came a frantic roar.

"I say, you fellows! If you leave me here I'll yell till the whole House comes up—"

"Do!" said Skinner genially. "Coker's looking for his hamper now, and I dare say he will be glad to find it! Get Coker here by all means."

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

He decided not to yell! He did not want to see Coker of the Fifth—in that hamper! If Coker of the Fifth found that hamper, packed with Bunter in place of tuck, Bunter's last state was likely to be worse than his first!

"Think it over, old fat man!" said Skinner through the lid of the hamper. "We'll come back in half an hour!"

"Beast!" groaned Bunter.

"And if you own up, we'll let you out! If not, you stay there till prep!"

"Ow! Beast! I tell you—"

"Own up what you've done with the tuck, you greedy pig!" growled Stott.

"I tell you, I never—"

"Come on," said Skinner, "he's  
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jolly well sticking inside that hamper till he owns up; I know that! Good-bye, Bunter!"

"I say, you fellows—" came a yell from the hamper.

The sound of the closing door interrupted Bunter! Skinner & Co. were gone. Billy Bunter was left—a prisoner in the hamper—with feelings that could have been expressed in no known language.

### A SHORT WAY WITH FAGS!

**C**OKER of the Fifth breathed wrath.

His pals, Potter and Greene, were almost as wrathful as Coker.

Potter and Greene did not always see eye to eye with the great Horace. But on this occasion they were at one with him. They missed that hamper as much as Coker did. Football on a keen March day gave a fellow an appetite.

Potter and Greene had been playing football. Coker had been looking on, thinking how much better he could have done it. All three had come in with good appetites from the keen fresh air.

Generally when Coker got excited, Potter and Greene bore with him as patiently as possible on the old principle of suffering fools gladly. Now they got as excited as Coker.

"The neck!" said Coker. "The cheek—the nerve—the neck! Taking the whole hamper, you know—shifting the whole cargo—lock, stock and barrel! But I fancy I can guess who did it."

"Let's get after him!" said Potter.

Coker had been talking for a quarter of an hour since the discovery that the hamper was missing, and his friends thought that it was time to get down to action.

"Who was it, then?" asked Greene.

"Some Remove kids, I fancy!" said

Coker. "I smacked their heads for slacking about just before I came down to the footer. Well, they may have done this to get their own back on me—they're cheeky enough. That young scoundrel Bunter may have had a hand in it—you know him! And I remember I cuffed him on the stairs—"

"What did you cuff him for?" asked Potter, staring at the great Horace.

"It does fags good!"

"Oh!"

"Well, come on!" said Coker. "They can't have got the hamper open—there's a padlock on it, you know! They can't have got at the stuff, I think. But the sooner we get it back, the better."

Potter and Greene heartily concurred in that! They followed Horace Coker from the study and headed for the Remove quarters.

At the corner of that passage the Famous Five were talking in a group after tea, and they gave Coker & Co. inquiring looks. They wondered whether old Horace was on the track of that hamper.

"Want anything, Coker?" asked Harry Wharton politely.

"I want my hamper!" yapped Coker. "My hamper's been pinched from my study. Seen anything of it? It was big enough to be seen—big enough for one of you fag shrimps to get into."

"The seefulness has not been terrific, my esteemed Coker!" smiled Hurrec Jamset Ram Singh.

The Co. certainly had not seen that hamper, though they had heard of it. Coker, glancing up the passage, uttered a sudden exclamation.

"There they are! Come on!"

From the box-room stair at the other end of the passage three Remove fellows appeared—Skinner, Snoop, and Stott.

They were the three whose heads Coker had smacked that afternoon, and upon whom his suspicions centred.

Coker started up the passage at a rush. Potter and Greene followed him. The Famous Five gazed after them.

"Look here, Coker's not going to throw his weight about in our passage!" grunted Johnny Bull. "What about booting him out?"

Harry Wharton shook his head.

"Coker's got a right to his hamper," he said. "We can't stand for grub-raiding in Fifth Form studies. Let Coker rip!"

"Well, no!" admitted Johnny. "But—"

"According to Bunter, there's nothing left in that hamper!" remarked Frank Nugent.

"Then we'd better let him have Bunter!" said Bob Cherry. "What isn't in the hamper must be in Bunter."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Skinner & Co looked rather startled at the sight of Horace Coker coming up the passage like a thunderbolt, with Potter and Greene at his heels. This looked as if old Horace was on the track of that hamper!

Still, there was no evidence that Skinner & Co. were connected with the disappearance of the hamper! No eye had fallen on them during the annexation of Coker's property.

"Where's my hamper?" roared Coker, eyeing the three belligerently.

"Hamper!" repeated Skinner, raising his eyebrows. "What hamper, Coker?"

"Didn't you bag a hamper from my study because I smacked your head for slacking?" demanded Coker.

"Never even knew you had a hamper!" answered Skinner airily. "Did you fellows know anything about it?"

"Never heard of it," said Snoop, with a shake of the head.

"What sort of a hamper was it, Coker?" asked Stott, with an air of polite interest.

Coker looked at them! There was, in Coker's opinion, presumptive evidence against these three! Actual evidence, there was none! But Coker, as he often told his friends, had a short way with fags!

He made a sudden grab at Skinner and got him by the collar.

"Now, where's my hamper?" he roared.

"Here, leggo, you cheeky rotter!" howled Skinner, in alarm. "Leggo! Why, you swab! Yaroooooh!"

Bang!

Harold Skinner's head tapped on the passage wall. It tapped hard! Skinner's frantic yell awoke all the echoes.

"Now, where's my hamper?" demanded Coker.

"Ow! Leggo! Rescue!" yelled Skinner.

From the landing end of the passage, Harry Wharton & Co. looked on. From half a dozen study doorways, other fellows watched. But there was no response to Skinner's call for rescue. Everybody knew that Skinner

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had pinched Coker's hamper, and he could not expect the Remove to rally in such a cause.

Bang!

"Ow! Yoo-hoop! Stoppit!" raved Skinner. "Oh, my napper! Oh, my nut! Yow!"

"Here, hold on, Coker, old man!" gasped Potter. "There's no proof that that kid knows anything about it, and—"

"Don't be an ass, Potter!"

"But look here!" exclaimed Greene.

"Don't be a goat, Greeney!"

Coker, it seemed, was satisfied with his own methods of acquiring information. He banged Skinner's suffering nut again.

"Now, where's my hamper?" he roared.

"Ow! Wow! Up in the box-room!" shrieked Skinner. "Ow! Leggo, you swab! Oh, my nut! It's in the box-room! Wow!"

"Oh!" gasped Potter and Greene together.

Coker's methods, high-handed as they were, seemed to have got him there, so to speak.

"What did I tell you?" grinned Coker. "Didn't I tell you that I jolly well knew they had it? Come on!"

Coker released Skinner's collar, giving him a spin that sent him tottering along the passage. Skinner staggered against the wall, rubbing his suffering nut, and spluttering. Snoop and Stott dodged out of reach.

"Come on!" said Coker briskly. "We know where it is now—come and get it out!"

Coker tramped up the box-room stair. Potter and Greene followed him up. Coker hurled open the box-room door.

"Look!" he roared. "There it is! Look!"

Coker pointed to the gigantic hamper.

There it was! It was, as Coker had said, big enough to be seen! In fact, it leaped to the eye!

Coker & Co. tramped into the box-room.

In the Remove passage, Harold Skinner rubbed his head and spluttered. But Harold had one consolation—there was nothing in the hamper but Bunter—and Coker was welcome to Bunter!

### JACK-IN-THE-BOX!

**B**ILLY BUNTER hardly breathed. At the sound of footsteps, the fat Owl of the Remove had hoped that it was Skinner coming back to let him out. Horace Coker's powerful voice, as he spotted the hamper, apprised him that it was not.

The fat junior suppressed a squeak of terror.

He would have been glad to hear anybody coming up to the box-room—except Coker. But not Coker! It was fearfully uncomfortable inside the hamper. But Bunter had a feeling that it would be still more uncomfortable outside—with Coker there!

So William George Bunter understudied that wise animal, Brer Fox, and "lay low and said nuffin."

"Here it is, all right!" Coker's powerful voice boomed through the hamper. "I jolly well knew they had it! What?"

"Looks like it!" agreed Potter.

"I fancy that fat young scoundrel, Bunter, had a hand in it, too," said Coker. "You know what he is, after a fellow's tuck! I've booted him no end of times for scrounging tuck in my study. If you see him while we're getting this hamper back, boot him!"

"Beast!" breathed Bunter silently.

"Get hold!" said Coker. "The three of us can handle it easily enough."

Bunter barely repressed a squeak as the hamper moved. He realised that Coker & Co. were going to cart it back to their study!

As the padlock was in position, and the lid fastened, Coker supposed that it had not been opened yet. It was a natural supposition. Certainly, Coker never dreamed that it had not only been opened, but that its former contents had been exchanged for a fat Removite.

Bunter was not likely to let him know!

All Bunter could hope for was a chance of dodging away when the lid was unfastened! Until it was unfastened it, was Billy Bunter's cue to continue to imitate Brer Fox and keep his presence a secret!

"You fellows take that end—I'll take this!" said Coker. "Now, then, all together!"

"By gum, it's heavy!" gasped Greene.

"A hamper this size is bound to be heavy, Greeney! Those tins of biscuits in it are pretty heavy stuff!"

"It seems a good bit heavier than it was before!" said Potter.

"Well, don't be a silly ass, Potter! How could it be heavier than it was before?" exclaimed Coker impatiently. "Those fags haven't even got it open—but if they had, think they'd put anything into it?"

"Well, I suppose not! But—"

"Oh, get going!" yapped Coker. "Put a bit of beef into it! You fellows fancy you can play football—well, let's see if you can shift a hamper."

Coker & Co. heaved at that hamper. They heaved it up and got it to the door. There they allowed it to rest for a moment or two.

"By gum!" said Coker, in surprise. "It does seem heavier!"

"Didn't I say so?" grunted Potter.

"Well, it can't be heavier—that stands to reason!" said Coker. "It does seem so—but it can't be, and you know it as well as I do! If you fellows put a spot of beef into it, it won't seem so jolly heavy! Get going!"

They heaved the hamper out on the landing.

Amazing as it was—inexplicable, in fact—that hamper did seem heavier than before—much heavier!

It had been heavy when it had been landed in Coker's study—Aunt Judy had packed that hamper as if she had fancied that

her dear Horace needed provisioning for the duration of the war. But, heavy as it had been originally, it seemed amazingly heavier now.

But, really, though it seemed so, it was impossible—for how could it have got heavier? Even if the raiders had got it open, their dealings with the contents would have been in the way of subtraction—not addition! And it appeared that they had not even got it open!

That heavy hamper bumped down the box-room stair.

It made a good deal of noise as it bumped from step to step, and Coker & Co.'s trampling feet made a good deal of noise also. That was why Coker & Co. did not hear suppressed gasps and squeaks from the unhappy inside passenger. The prisoner of the hamper was not enjoying his journey!

At the foot of the stair, the three Fifth-Formers stopped for another rest.

Coker mopped his manly brow.

Skinner, still rubbing his head, stared at the hamper. He had expected Coker to make a discovery in the box-room.

Apparently Coker hadn't. As he realised that Billy Bunter must be still inside that hamper, Skinner forgot the pain in his nut, and yelled.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh crikey!" gasped Snoop. "Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker gave them a glare. But he was getting rather breathless with that hamper, and he had no energy to spare for cheeky juniors.

"Come on!" he grunted.

And the three Fifth Form men heaved up that amazingly heavy hamper and bore it, gasping, along the passage.

Almost all the Remove watched it in transit. From nearly every study rude remarks were made as Coker & Co. laboured by.

Skinner & Co. knew that there was a fat Removite parked inside that hamper. The other fellows did not know. They supposed that the contents of that hamper were the usual contents of a hamper, and the sight of three senior men staggering under a cargo of food in time of war rations naturally moved them to indignant and sarcastic comments.

"Food-hogs!" roared Bolsover major.

"Greedy pigs!" yelled Hazel.

"Oh gad!" exclaimed Lord Mauleverer. "Coker, old man, ain't that rather over the limit? Ain't you afraid of gettin' run in?"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob Cherry. "Here comes Coker with his pantechnicon of grub!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The grubfulness must be truly,

(Continued on next page.)

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"terrific!" exclaimed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Food-hogs!" hooted Johnny Bull. "Dash it all, this is pretty thick!" exclaimed Harry Wharton, staring at the hamper as it approached. "How the dickens did such a cargo as that pass the House dame? Better not let Prout see that, Coker!"

"Hoarders!" shouted five or six voices.

"Mind you don't get spotted, Coker!" exclaimed Peter Todd. "They'd have you up before the Head for food-hogging like that!"

Coker paused, with a ferocious glare at the Remove crowd. Coker was a patriotic chap. Nothing would have induced him to hog food in war-time. Really, he was quite innocent in the matter. But, undoubtedly, appearances were against him.

"You cheeky kids!" gasped Coker. The weight of that hamper was telling on him. "There's nothing in this hamper, but a few things my aunt sent me. Think I'd break the ration laws, you little cheeky swabs?"

"A few things!" said Frank Nugent. "Only a few! What size would the hamper be if she'd sent you a lot?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's the hamper itself that's heavy chiefly, I think," said Coker. "Nothing in this hamper that you can't buy at any shop. Nothing at all that's rationed. Come on, you men, let's get out of this!"

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They heaved onward.

Potter and Greene were crimson with exertion and with annoyance. Really, that heavy hamper looked like food-hogging on a grand scale. It was rather unpleasant. They hurried that hamper out of the Remove passage as fast as they could.

Yells and cat-calls followed. A whole mob of Removites followed them down the passage, hooting and hissing.

"Yah! Food-hogs!"

"Grub-scrourgers!"

"Look out for the pre's!"

"Mind Prout doesn't spot you!"

"Who hog grub?"

"Coker does! Yah!"

Coker & Co. were glad to get out on the landing. They heaved that heavy hamper across the landing, and left the Remove behind at last. They heaved it up the Fifth Form passage.

They landed it at long last in Coker's study. Then they stood panting.

Coker wiped perspiration from his brow.

"Blessed if I can understand it!" he said. "It does seem heavier. I can't make it out. It can't be, you know. Well, now we've got it back, we'd better get something out for tea. I'm pretty sharp set!"

"Same here!" agreed Potter.

"Hallo, what's the matter with this padlock? It's been wired! By gum, it's been busted and fastened with a bit of wire!" exclaimed Coker, in surprise. "Have they had it open, after all?"

Coker blinked at that surprising padlock.

"Well, they can't have taken anything out, judging by the weight!" said Greene. "Get it open, old man!"

A fat junior huddled up inside that hamper quaked. He could hear Coker fumbling with the wire with which Skinner had fastened the padlock.

In a minute or less that big round lid would be lifted—and Billy Bunter revealed.

What would follow, Bunter could guess.

There would be no grub in that hamper for Coker & Co.—but there would be Bunter! Bunter was booked for the most exciting time in his fat career, if Coker's grasp fell on him.

It was an awful prospect. Bunter had to get out of that hamper the moment the lid was up. He had to escape the grasp of Coker's powerful paws. Presence of mind was not Bunter's long suit, but his fat brain was working at full pressure now, under the spur of dire terror. Bunter knew what he was going to do as soon as that lid was unfastened. He quaked, but he was ready.

Coker jerked the padlock loose and threw it aside. He grasped the edge of the lid to lift it.

Then an amazing thing happened. That big flat lid shot up of its own accord, apparently. It shot open suddenly, propelled from within. An

earthquake could hardly have taken Coker more by surprise.

Coker had opened many hampers of all shapes and sizes in his time. Never had he dealt with one of which the lid, when unfastened, shot up of its own accord.

Bang!

Coker, leaning over the big hamper, got the edge of the lid just under his nose as it shot up. It nearly lifted Coker's nose off.

Coker gave one wild howl of amazement and anguish and tottered backwards and sat down, bumping, on his study floor. Potter and Greene, astounded, gazed transfixed.

The lid fell back, and an unexpected figure bounded up like a jack-in-the-box.

Potter and Greene gazed, spell-bound, petrified.

Coker, sitting on the carpet, fairly gibbered.

That moment of stunned amazement gave Bunter his chance.

One frantic bound and he was out of the hamper. Another, and he was at the study door. Another, and he was in the passage, running for his life.

Potter and Greene still stood spell-bound. They wondered whether their eyes had deceived them. They gazed at the doorway; then they gazed into a huge, but empty hamper.

"Ooogh!" gasped Coker. He staggered up, his hand to his nose. "Oogh! What was that? Who was that? Was that Bib-bob-bub-Bunter?"

He gave the empty hamper one glare, then he bounded to the door. Pattering feet died away round the corner at the landing. Billy Bunter was gone. The Owl of the Remove had vanished like a fat ghost.

Coker & Co. were left with an empty hamper—gazing into it—and Coker dabbing at a thin red stream that oozed from a damaged nose.

## MYSTERY OF COKER'S BLANKETS!

WINGATE of the Sixth, standing at the doorway of the Remove dormitory at half-past nine that evening, glanced round him down the passage and frowned.

Up that passage from the dormitory landing came a burly figure, and a red and wrathful face dawned on the captain of Greyfriars.

Wingate was seeing lights out for the Remove. He did not expect to see Coker of the Fifth, and he did not want to see Coker of the Fifth. Fifth Form men had no business in the junior quarters. So he frowned at him.

"What the thump do you want here, Coker?" he demanded.

There was a startled squeak within the Remove dormitory. The name of Coker was a sound of alarm to a pair of fat ears in the Remove.

"I say, you fellows, it's Coker coming! I say, keep him off!" squeaked Billy Bunter.

"Oh, my hat!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Is Coker coming here?"

We'll give him all he wants if he butts in!"

"And a little over!" said Johnny Bull.

That evening, Billy Bunter's chief occupation had been keeping out of the way of Horace Coker. Twice had Coker striven to establish contact. Once he had invaded the Remove passage in search of Bunter, and a dozen Remove men had helped him out again. Once he had charged into the Rag, and again a dozen Remove men had assisted him to depart.

Since then, Coker, so to speak, had used no other. In the dormitory, Bunter had considered himself safe. Now Coker was coming!

Remove men were quite as ready to hurl Coker out of their dormitory as out of their passage or the Rag. The Famous Five and six or seven other fellows lined up ready for Coker.

But the Greyfriars captain's stalwart form interposed as Horace arrived at the doorway. He waved Coker back.

"Out of this, Coker!" he rapped.

"Look here——" roared Coker.

"Cut, you ass! Do you think you can come here ragging in a dormitory? Get out of it!" snapped Wingate.

"Oh, let him come in, Wingate!" called out Bob Cherry. "We'll help him out!"

"The helpfulness will be terrific!"

"Come on, Coker!"

"Trickle in, old bean!"

Coker glared into the dormitory. Evidently, he would have charged in, but Wingate blocked the way, waving him off. But Coker of the Fifth was not to be waved off like an intrusive cat.

"Go to your dorm, you ass!" said Wingate. "You'll have Prout on your track! Now buzz off!"

"Think I can go to bed without any blankets?" roared Coker.

"Eh? What?"

"I'll spifficate them!" roared Coker. "Bagging a man's hamper—and then bagging the blankets off his bed!"

Wingate stared at him. So did the Removites!

This was quite unexpected. Apparently, it was not the affair of the hamper that was worrying old Horace now! Somebody, it seemed, had been larking with his bed in the Fifth Form dormitory!

"Oh! crikey!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "Bunter can't have bagged his blankets! Even Bunter can't eat blankets!"

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"All my blankets gone!" roared Coker. "Think I'm going to bed without blankets? Think I don't know it was these young sweeps? I——"

"The blankets are gone off your bed!" exclaimed Wingate blankly. "You'd better go to the House dame about it, then!"

"I've come here!" bawled Coker. "Think I don't know it was these Remove kids? All my blankets gone, and Potter's as well—and Greene's pillow, too! I've come to take them

back, see, and to smack the young sweep's head that snuffed them, and you're not going to stop me!"

Wingate looked in at the grinning Removites.

"Have any of you young rascals been larking in Coker's dormitory?" he demanded.

There was a general shaking of heads. Remove men were rather given to larking with old Horace; but certainly they had never thought of raiding his blankets. Coker, apparently, had made that discovery when the Fifth went up to their dormitory: and perhaps it was natural that he should suspect that the practical joker was to be found in the Remove. Anyhow, he did suspect it—or, rather, he was certain of it.

"Who's got those blankets?" he roared.

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

"I say, was it you, Skinner?"

"No, you fat ass!" grunted Skinner. "I've been nowhere near the Fifth Form dorm!"

"Try some other dorm, Coker!" suggested Harry Wharton. "Nobody here's got your blankets, old bean!"

"I'm not going without them!" roared Coker. "I jolly well know some of you had them! Half a dozen blankets and a pillow! Where are they?"

"Go down to the House dame, and she'll find you some more for to-night, Coker," said Wingate soothingly.

Coker did not take that advice. Coker was not in need of advice—he did not want advice: he wanted blankets, and vengeance!

With a sudden barge he pushed Wingate out of the way and charged into the Remove dormitory.

The Greyfriars captain staggered.

"You checky ass!" he gasped.

"I'll——"

"Collar him!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Look here," roared Coker. "I want those blankets! If you don't hand them over this minute, I'll—— Yarooooop!"

Coker's remarks were continued in a breathless gurgle, as a dozen Remove men collared him. Coker's burly form smote the floor of the Remove dormitory. Then Coker was rolled over doorward.

He rolled over and over, spluttering wildly. He rolled out of the doorway, and was landed in the passage in a gurgling heap.

"Roll him home!" shouted Bob Cherry.

"Go it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Stop that!" gasped Wingate.

"Get back into the dormitory at once!" Wingate had his official ash under his arm. He slipped it down into his hand. Three or four whacks, distributed impartially among the excited Removites, drove them back into the dormitory.

Coker was left gurgling. He sat up, still gurgling.

"Now get out of it, Coker!" snapped Wingate. "Your blankets aren't here——"

"Ooogh!"

"Go down to the House dame——"

"Ooogh!"

"Do you hear?"

"Urrrrgh!"

"Are you going?" snapped the Greyfriars captain. "By gum, if you're not gone in two ticks, I'll lay the ash round you! Now, then!"

Coker staggered to his feet.

"I tell you——" he spluttered.

"Are you going?"

"I tell you——"

Whop!

"Oh!" gasped Coker. He decided to go! And he went!

A chuckle from the Remove dormitory followed Horace Coker as he departed in speechless wrath.

No doubt he obtained a new supply of blankets from the House dame; at all events, he did not come back to the Remove dormitory inquiring for blankets. Coker seemed, at last, to have had enough of the Remove.

### THE FACE AT THE WINDOW!

"WHO'S the joker?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Echo answers who!" said Harry Wharton.

"Esteemed echo remarks that the whofulness is terrific!" observed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

The Famous Five were puzzled. So were a good many other fellows.

They were discussing the puzzling happenings of the previous day, as they went round to the school allotments in the sunny spring morning. It being Sunday morning, the juniors were free after an hour at divers, and instead of the accustomed Sunday walk of peace-time, they were going to put in some useful hoeing among the vegetables. So there they were, each with a hoe under his arm—and unaware of an eye that was upon them from a high window at the back of the building as they came.

"Somebody's up to something!" said Harry Wharton. "Blessed if I can make it out! Like Smithy—if Smithy wasn't gone."

"Just like!" agreed Frank Nugent. "Bunter still makes out that he never larked with Lamb's drawings in his study!"

"Bunter would make out anything!" remarked Bob. "Still, it seems that he was after Coker's hamper, not Lamb's jolly old works of art, when he got out of the Form-room in the morning. And it wasn't Bunter got Lamb with that old boot from the box-room window."

"According to Skinner, Snoop, and Stott, it wasn't any of them!" said Harry Wharton. "But Lamb didn't fancy that boot on his nut!"

"Somebody else, from another window!" said Bob. "The same somebody who cleared out that hamper in the box-room. Somebody had all the tuck out of that hamper—tous of tuck, I hear."

"And somebody pinched Coker's blankets from his dorm!" said Frank Nugent. "But who the dickens——"

"It's weird!" said Johnny Bull. "Some silly ass has set up as a practical joker and is keeping it dark. It's the same man all the time, of course! First he rags in Lamb's study—then he gets the Baa-Lamb

with a boot on his nut—then he pinches the grub out of that hamper—then he walks off with blankets and a pillow from the Fifth Form dorm! It's the same man all right.

"But who?"  
 "Goodness knows!"  
 It really was a puzzle. Bunter had been whopped for that rag in the Pet Lamb's study—Skinner & Co. had had it all round for the episode of the boot from the window—but they knew no more than anyone else who the real culprit was!

And as Billy Bunter had not been seen looking sticky or jammy since the clearing-out of the hamper, Skinner & Co. were convinced at last that it was not the fat Owl who had snaffled that cargo of tuck—though Billy Bunter still had a lingering suspicion that it was the Famous Five! And who had raided blankets from the Fifth Form dormitory was a mystery.

"If old Smithy wasn't gone—" said Bob.

"But the gonfulness of the esteemed old Smithy is terrific!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Somebody following in his giddy footsteps!" said Johnny Bull. "Must be a Remove man or he wouldn't have spotted that hamper in our box-room."

"But it's jolly queer!" said Bob Cherry, coming to a halt and gazing up at the high window of the Remove box-room. "Lamb thought the boot came from that window, but Skinner and his mob swear they never buzzed it and that nobody did while they were there! And there's no other window on that wall except that little garret window—"

"Somebody might have been there," said Nugent.

"But it was locked, and the key gone, Skinner says!" answered Bob. "Nobody could have got in! It's still locked—I've looked at it. But if the boot never came from the box-room window, it simply must have come from that garret window, and—Hullo, hallo, hallo!" Bob broke off with a startled yell.

"What—" exclaimed his chums, all together.

"Look!" gasped Bob.

His glance had passed from the box-room window to the little garret window a few yards from it! And his eyes fixed there, glued in utter amazement on that garret window!

"What the thump—"

"Look!"  
 His comrades followed his gaze.  
 "Oh!" gasped Harry Wharton.  
 "Oh! crumbs!" stuttered Johnny Bull.

"Smithy!"  
 A face was pressed to that window, inside, looking down! Five pairs of amazed eyes fastened on it!

Harry Wharton & Co. knew that face! It was a face they had not expected to see at Greyfriars School again—since the Bounder had been sacked.

In utter amazement, they stared up at the Bounder of Greyfriars.

"Smithy!" breathed Bob.  
 They saw the face at the window move suddenly.

Herbert Vernon-Smith had not expected to be spotted—but he could see that the chums of the Remove had spotted him now!

For a moment more the face remained in sight—the finger laid on the lips, in sign of silence.

Then it disappeared.  
 Harry Wharton & Co. gazed up at the window—nothing was to be seen there now! Then they gazed at one another.

They understood—now.  
 "Smithy—that mad ass!" gasped the captain of the Remove. "Smithy he—he—he's there! It was Smithy who—"

"That's why he snaffled that hamper of grub!" gurgled Bob Cherry. "He can't come down to Hall for meals as—"

"And Coker's blankets—camping out in that garret!" murmured Johnny Bull. "Smithy all the time!"

"Keep it dark!" said Harry Wharton. "Not a word—we can't give him away! But—well, this beats it!"

"The beatfulness is terrific!"

Three or four fellows came round the corner of the building, and the Famous Five turned hastily away. They did not want to draw attention to that garret window. Smithy's secret had to be kept—though what was to come of the amazing return of the scapegrace of Greyfriars to the school, Harry Wharton & Co. could only wonder.

THE END.

("BOUNDER AND STICKER!" is the title of next week's exciting yarn of the chums of Greyfriars. And it's a real corker, chums! Don't miss it, whatever you do!)

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fellow on the spot butting into his difficult task. It was necessary, above all, for Slim Jim not to be put on his guard if Ferrers Locke was to succeed in tracking him.

If Mr. Lamb, as Locke believed, was the mystery crackman, it was very necessary indeed for Mr. Lamb not to take the alarm.

"Well, is it a go?" asked Vernon-Smith. "I've got sense enough to keep it dark that I'm here—not a soul will know. I'm sticking on till I've shown that man up in his true colours. Nothing against your jolly old conscience in helping a chap to show up a rogue. I'll make it worth your while, as I've said. Is it a go, Robinson?"

John Robinson shook his head. "I am afraid that I could not consent to anything of the kind, sir," he answered.

"Oh, don't be a fool!" snapped the Bounder. "Where's the harm? I'll stand you anything you like, within reason, to help me out in this! Will you?"

"I am afraid, sir, that—"

"Yes or no!" snarled the Bounder savagely.

"No, sir!" said John Robinson quietly.

The Bounder stood looking at him with a dark brow. He had thought out this plan, and he had counted on John Robinson's co-operation. He could, as he had said, have made it worth the man's while.

But there was nothing doing. John Robinson's manner was very respectful, but it was very firm.

"Hang you, then!" snapped the Bounder savagely at last. "I'll manage without you, Robinson. And if you give me away—"

"He paused. "I've been speaking to you in confidence, Robinson. I suppose you're decent enough not to betray a chap behind his back."

John Robinson coloured a little.

"I certainly feel bound not to repeat what you have said to me, Master Vernon-Smith," he answered. "But—"

"You can cut out the buts!" snarled Smithy.

And he turned his back contemptuously on the chauffeur and walked away.

But he did not go as he had come by the gate on the lane. He went in the direction of the quad—and John Robinson stood looking after him as he went with a knitted brow.

### BAD LUCK FOR BUNTER!

MR. LAMB gave quite a jump. Having dismissed the Bounder, the art master had gone to his study.

His face wore its amiable expression as he came up the passage, and he paused once or twice to exchange remarks with Mr. Hacker and with Monsieur Charpentier. Then he went into his study—and jumped!

Had Herbert Vernon-Smith been still at Greyfriars School, Mr. Lamb might not have been so surprised at what he saw. But he did not, of

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course, think of the expelled junior, who had been sent away from Greyfriars the previous day, in connection with what he beheld in his study.

Mr. Lamb stared over his gold-rimmed glasses, and the amiable look faded off his face as if wiped off by a duster.

Someone had been in that study during class. It had been in its usual order when Lamb left it to go to the Remove room. Now it was far from being in its usual order. A ragger had been at work.

On Mr. Lamb's table lay several sheets of Bristol board, which he used for his pen-and-ink work. Most of them had unfinished drawings on them. Lamb, who was

known in the Remove to do illustrations for picture papers, generally had half a dozen drawings in various stages of progress. Lamb was a clever artist, and it was a rumoured in the Remove that he made more

by work for the Press, with pen and brush, than he made as art master at Greyfriars. Often and often

fellows who had come to the study had seen cheques lying among the drawings—which, according to the Bounder at least, was a part of Lamb's affectation of an artistic, Bohemian sort of character.

Lamb had left half a dozen unfinished drawings there—now some unknown hand had finished them for him.

The hand that had finished them had not been an artistic one! That unknown hand had dipped a brush into Indian ink and daubed the most absurd daubs. A picture of Herr Hitler had been finished off with a top hat in Indian ink. A sketch of a milkmaid had been adorned with a pair of huge moustaches. A drawing of a group of Army recruits had had all the faces

blacked out, transforming them into negroes. Every one of the drawings had been daubed in more or less the same way.

Mr. Lamb stared at them—he glared at them! Who had done this?

It did not take him long to guess. It had been done during class—and only one Remove fellow had been absent from class during lessons.

But for that absence of Bunter's, Mr. Lamb would have been driven to believe that he was the object of the enmity of some fellow in another Form—for he certainly did not think of Herbert Vernon-Smith, now presumably at home in his father's mansion at Courtman Square, London.

But, naturally, he thought of Bunter at once. Bunter had been out of class—on an untruthful excuse. Bunter had done this!

With set lips, Mr. Lamb stepped to the study window and threw it open.

Mr. Lamb grimly. "You have done

The Remove fellows were out in break, and Mr. Lamb beckoned to the nearest, who happened to be Hazel-dene.

"Hazel-dene! Find Bunter at once and tell him to come to my study!" rapped Mr. Lamb.

"Yes, sir," answered Hazel—and he went off in search of the Owl of the Remove.

Mr. Lamb stepped back to his table and picked up a cane. He gripped that cane hard as he waited for Bunter to appear.

In a few minutes the fat Owl came rolling in. He blinked rather un-easily at Mr. Lamb through his big



Vernon-Smith barged Wingate full in the chest and sent him sprawling on his back. Then the Bounder made a rapid bound from the car—jumping clear across the astonished captain of Greyfriars as he sprawled!

spectacles. Bunter had lines overdue—he generally had! He supposed that he was sent for on account of those lines.

"I—I—I haven't had time yet, sir," stammered Bunter, before Mr. Lamb could speak. "I was going to do them last night, sir, only the fellows were making such a row in the passage—"

"Bend over that chair, Bunter!" Mr. Lamb wished the cane.

"Oh crikey! I—I was really going to do the lines, sir!" gasped Bunter. "I—I—I mean, I—I did them, sir! I did the whole hundred, sir, only—only Toddy used them by mistake to light the study fire, and—"

"Now that Vernon-Smith has been expelled, Bunter, I shall certainly allow no boy in the Remove to imitate and repeat his conduct!" said Mr. Lamb grimly. "You have done

very serious damage in this study—"

Bunter jumped! "This study, sir! I haven't been in this study!" he stuttered. Bunter realised that it was not the matter of the lines.

"Indeed!" said Mr. Lamb, in the same grim tone. "You did not make that untruthful excuse about your map, Bunter, in order to visit this study during class and damage the drawings on my table?"

"Oh crumbs! No, sir!" gasped the bewildered Owl. "I—I never went near this study, sir—I went up stairs to Coker's—I mean, I—I never went to any study at all."

be expected to believe Bunter. A fellow who had just told him that he had not had time to do his lines, and that he had done them, and that Toddy had used them to light the study fire, could hardly look for implicit faith in his statements. And the fact that Bunter had been out of class, and no one else had, settled the matter.

Mr. Lamb wished the cane again. "I am waiting for you to bend over that chair, Bunter!" he rapped. "But I never did!" wailed Bunter.

"I never—I didn't—I wasn't—I wouldn't—I—I—Yaroooh!" Whop!

Bunter yelled as the cane rapped on podgy knuckles. That was a hint that Mr. Lamb was tired of waiting for him to bend over the unfortunate fat Owl bent over the chair.

Whop, whop, whop! "Oh!" roared Bunter. "I never—yaroooh! I didn't—yarooop! I wouldn't—wow!" Whop, whop, whop!

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!" "You will go into Extra School this afternoon, Bunter!" said Mr. Lamb, as the fat Owl wriggled away from the chair after the final whop.

"Ow! Wow! I was in Extra School on Wednesday, sir!" moaned Bunter. "Ow! I tell you I never—"

"Go!" "But I never—"

Whop! Whop! "Yoo-hoop!" Bunter departed—in haste.

He went wriggling down the passage. He yowed and howled as he went. Bunter had had Extra on Wednesday, now he was getting Extra again on Saturday—and he had been whopped—and he had done nothing—except go after Horace Coker's hamper.

The fat Owl rolled out into the quad in a state of inexpressible woe and indignation—and during break that morning, he did not bestow a single thought on Coker's hamper—he spent break in wriggling and twisting and telling other Remove fellows what an un-speakable beast the Pet Lamb was.

### HELP REQUIRED!

"POOR old Smithy!" said Harry Wharton. "Ass to get himself sacked!" grunted Johnny Bull.

After dinner that day, the Famous Five were thinking of football. There was a match due with the Shell that afternoon, and Hobson & Co. of the Shell were rather a tough crowd for a junior Form at Soccer. There was no doubt that Herbert Vernon-Smith was going to be missed from his accustomed place in the front line. The Bounder was a good man at Soccer—one of the best in the Remove.

"It's rotten!" said Frank Nugent, and he spoke sincerely enough, though it was settled that he was to play in Smithy's place, and he was keen enough to get a place in the Remove eleven. "Poor old Smithy!" "The rottenfulness is terrific!" agreed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"We shall miss Smithy!" sighed Bob Cherry. "Not only at Soccer, either! He was a good chap—in his own way! He never really cared for that horse-racing muck—it was only a sort of wrong-headed swank! I jolly well wish he was back at Greyfriars."

"Same here!" agreed Johnny Bull. "Quelch won't like it, when he comes back, finding a Remove man sacked," said Bob. "Still, I suppose it might have happened just the same if Quelch had been here instead of that little beast Lamb. Smithy risked it often enough in Quelch's time. Blow Lamb, anyhow!"

"Well, we've got to make up our minds to it," said Harry, "and we shall have to fill Smithy's place at Soccer—"

"I say, you fellows—" Billy Bunter rolled up to the Famous Five. "I say, I'm in Extra this afternoon."

"We've heard that one!" answered Bob. "Oh, really, Cherry! It's frightfully unjust, you know!" said the fat Owl. "That beast Lamb made out that I was ragging in his study—"

"And weren't you?" "No!" roared Bunter. "I told him so, but the man was cad enough to doubt my word. These schoolmasters are a suspicious lot. Quelch used to doubt my word, just like Lamb."

"I wonder why?" said Bob Cherry thoughtfully. "Can any of you fellows guess why a beak should doubt Bunter's word?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! I've had six, and I've got to stick in Extra. And I never did anything—anything at all. I haven't the faintest idea who ragged Lamb's study this morning," asserted Bunter. "Must have been a man in another Form."

"Likely, isn't it?" remarked Bob. "I hope you don't doubt my word, like that beast Lamb, Bob Cherry!" "Hopeful nature, Bunter's!" remarked Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!" "Beast! I never did it!" howled Bunter. "I'd like to rag the cad all right, but he ain't safe! Makes out that he's a purring kitten, and then changes all of a sudden into a scratching cat. I wish Quelch had never been kidnapped!"

"Not really!" ejaculated Bob. "Yes, really!" declared Bunter. "It seemed rather a stroke of luck at first; but Lamb turns out to be a worse beast than Quelch!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "Oh, cackle!" snorted the indignant fat Owl. "I can tell you it's pretty thick if fellows are going to be whopped for nothing. I've a jolly good mind to go to the Head about it! I could go to the Head

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