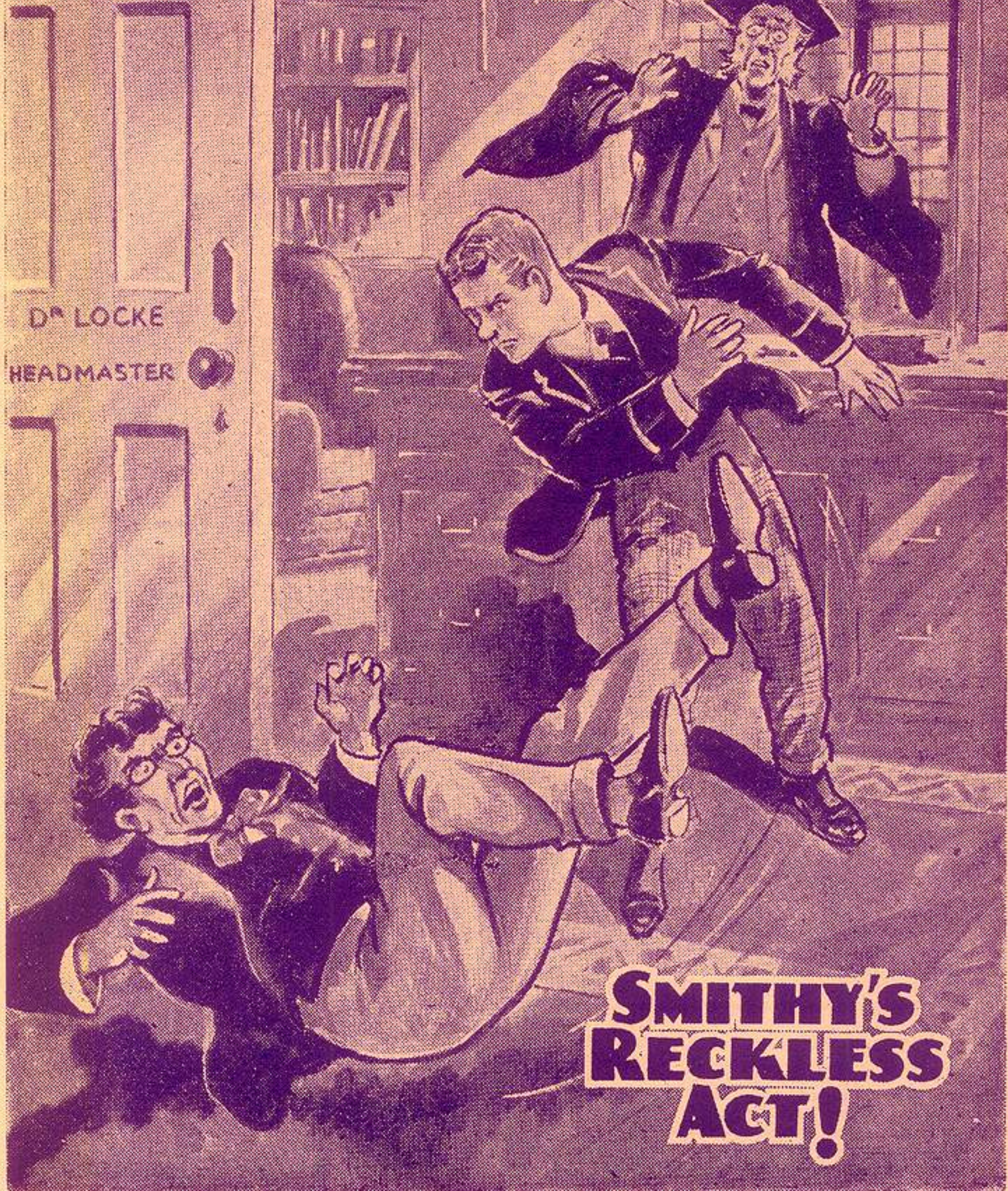


**THE
MAGNET**

REBEL OF THE REMOVE CAUSES SENSATION AT GREYFRIARS!

The Magnet ^{2^p}



**SMITHY'S
RECKLESS
ACT!**



The GREY FRIARS HERALD

STOP
PRESS
NEWS

EDITED BY HARRY WHARTON

Grand Sea Story

PATCH THE PIRATE!

By BOB CHERRY

PATCH THE PIRATE was the fiend of the Spanish Main. He was called Patch because he had a patch over one eye and an evil light in the other. He strode up and down the quarter-deck of his brig, the Laughing Lobster, rolling his eyes and gnashing his teeth.

"Sink me!" he muttered savagely. "If something don't turn up pretty soon, we shall either have to make holes in the water or else work for our living, and I dunno which is wust. Only one ship have we found this moon, and she turned out to be a merchantman, full of cocoanuts and sacks of sugar and cases of soap, which will fetch about fifteen bob when we sell 'em. G-r-r-r!"

He leaned over the poop-rail and glared at his black-hearted crew.

"I say, you fellows!" he bawled. "Splice the mainbrace three points to lo'ard and tell Horrible Herbert to bring up the prisoner!"

"Ay, ay, cap'n!"

Patch paced the quarter-deck, and then the half-deck, and after that the whole-deck.

"Bust it!" he hissed. "I believe that bally merchant ship had a hidden treasure on board, and her captain knows it. I'd give a term's pocket-money to force the truth out of him, but the rotter treats me with silent disdain. But I'll show him what's what. I'll make him talk, the beast!"

Horrible Herbert, the mate of the pirate lugger, approached, leading the prisoner, who was ironed from head to foot.

Patch glared bitterly at him.

"Well?" he snarled. "Have you thought better of your decision, captain? I mean to have that treasure, so you needn't think I don't. I've captured your ship. Your crew have gone. Gore has been spilt by the gallon. If you want to save your bacon, you'd better tell me where you've hidden the treasure—see?"

"Go and eat coke!" growled the captain fearlessly.

Patch turned as white as a peony with rage.

"You refuse to speak?"

"Rats!"

"Very well!" hissed the pirate. "You shall be dropped into the ballast-hold until you have written me a million lines of Virgil. And you won't get nuffink to eat but bread, except water!"

"Ere, 'old on, master!" exclaimed Horrible Herbert who had a repul-

sive face, but a kind heart. "You can't do that there 'ere. Be yooman, dash it! Don't torture a covey like that!"

"You shut up!" snarled the brutal Patch, picking up a marline-spike. "I'd jest as soon bust you one as not. You're too kind-hearted for a pirate, my lad, and you'll come to a bad end. Now take that prisoner below!"

"Shan't!" said Herbert staunchly. "Then take that!" yelled Patch, landing out with the spike.

A fearsome clout across the features lifted Herb clear of the deck and dropped him into a barrel of tar.

Patch roared with laughter, and so did the black-hearted crew, for they all sneered at the mate's kind heart. They were ruffians of the deepest dye, like their master, and they enjoyed seeing the mate stop a packet.

"Yarocoh!" yelled Herb, from the tar barrel. "Oh crikey! You—you rotter! Look at me! I shall 'ave to wash now, and we don't never wash on this ship. I don't believe there's a bit o' soap anywhere on board."

"We took some cases of soap off the merchant ship," grinned Patch. "You can use it all. You'll need it! Ha, ha, ha! Away with this cad, you fellows!"

The prisoner was flung down below, while Horrible Herbert crawled away to the nearest bath-room, which was used as a sail-locker.

Patch gritted his teeth as he looked at the dismantled merchant ship, now being towed behind the pirate.

"Hang it! Blow it! Bust it!" grated the pirate. "I know there's treasure somewhere on that ship. Where the merry thump could they have hidden it? I've combed that old lugger from stem to stern. I'd better go and comb her from stern to stem. Avast there, you lubbers! Bring me a comb and follow me!"

But the search was fruitless.

Patch stamped back to his ship and went below. Horrible Herb was still busy with the tar. He had used a dozen cakes of soap already.

Pausing only to kick him in the ribs with a sea-boot, Patch went to the prisoner.

"I'll give you ten bob if you'll spill the beans!" he snarled.

"Go and chop chips!"

"Well, look here, old fellow—halves!" whispered Patch eagerly. "I've been disappointed about a postal order, otherwise I wouldn't bother you."

"Nothing doing!" said the captain curtly.

"Then take two million lines, and if they're not handed in by tea-time, they'll be doubled."

The next day and the next this

scene was repeated. The prisoner refused to divulge the secret, and Patch grew frantic with fury. He vented his rage on the luckless Herb who, it appeared, spent most of his time scrubbing tar. He practically lived in the bath-room. It was observed, too, that his pockets seemed to bulge more every day.

In fact, he went on scrubbing until he had used up the entire cargo of soap, and his pockets bulged like balloons. After which, he grew rather thoughtful, and one morning he was missing. A ship's boat was also missing. So was a tuck-hammer.

"Deserted, by gum!" snarled Patch. "Well, good riddance to bad rubbish! He was a weak-hearted rat, and what's worse, he'd got into a awful 'abit of washing 'isself. We don't want no blokes who wash themselves. It ain't 'caithy."

He bawled to his crew to bring up the prisoner.

"Now, you rotter!" he said, when the captain appeared. "We'll finish you for good, unless you spill the news. Where are the diamonds you had on that ship?"

"Find out!"

"I'm going to!" said Patch, selecting his stoutest cane. "Bend over that stanchion! You shall have six dozen to start with, and every one a swipe!"

Whop!

"Yooooop!" shrieked the captain. "Oh crumbs! Stoppit! I give up, blow you! We hid the diamonds in those cakes of soap."

"Wha-a-at?"

"Now leggo, will you! If you cut open the soap, you'll find a diamond in every cake. And I hope they choke you!"

Patch drew a deep breath.

"From this day forward," he hissed, "I'll never, never, never trust a bloke who washes 'isself. Great pip! I'd give a quid note to meet Horrible Herb for five minutes!"

But he never did!

COMIC COMMENTS!

A reader writes: "When we think of the many wonderful inventions which have come since the year 1900, we can't help wondering what will have come by 2,000 A.D."

Bunter's postal order, we hope!

"Hands, knees, and boomp-daisy!" is the title of the latest dance-song.

It's also a good description of Coker's football.

Hurree Singh has a great liking for washing his face at frequent intervals.

Perhaps he wants to find out if there's any ink on it.

VERNON-SMITH, THE BOUNDER OF GREYFRIARS, HAS RECEIVED MARCHING ORDERS! BUT HE'S GIVING THE MASTERS SOMETHING TO REMEMBER HIM BY BEFORE HE GOES!

BOUNDER and STICKER!



By FRANK RICHARDS

“Vernon-Smith!” gasped the Head. “How dare you come here! You have been expelled!”
“I’m goin’ now, old bean,” drawled the Bounder, “unless you want me to give Lamb a few more attentions!”

THE CHANCE OF A LIFETIME!

“Oh!” gasped Billy Bunter. Bunter’s eyes almost popped right through his big round spectacles. After third school, that Monday morning, the fattest member of the Greyfriars Remove was adorning the school gateway with his podgy person. That was how he came to observe the grocer’s man deliver a box to old Gosling, the ancient Greyfriars porter, at his lodge. It was a wooden box. It was not very large, but it seemed heavy. The man from Uncle Clegg’s carried it on his shoulder to Gosling’s lodge, and dumped it down with relief when he got it there. Billy Bunter was generally interested in what did not concern him. Still, he would not have been specially interested in a wooden box delivered at the school porter’s lodge had not his eyes and his spectacles spotted the inscription on that box. The words stencilled on that box were, to Bunter, thrilling. The sublimest poetry could not have moved him so deeply. For the words were:

“SLIVERS’ JAMS.”

Those words went to Billy Bunter’s heart!
His eyes and his spectacles were

glued on that box as the man from Uncle Clegg’s landed it in Gosling’s doorway.
“That it?” asked Gosling.
“That’s it, Mr. Gosling! Twelve pound pots! Mr. Clegg ain’t got the big pots in stock, owing to the war.”
“All right!” said Gosling. “Twelve pounds is twelve pounds, whether it’s in one pot or a dozen.”
Billy Bunter’s plump heart throbbed.
Twelve pound pots of jam! Enough to keep Billy Bunter happy and busy for twelve minutes at least!
The man from Friardale went back to his cart. Billy Bunter did not waste a blink on him. He gazed at that wooden box. Gosling shut his door—shutting off the beatific vision!
“Greedy beast!” breathed Bunter. “Twelve pounds of jam in one whack! That’s hoarding! It’s food-hogging! Serve him jolly well right to lose it!”
Really, it looked rather like hoarding!
Old Gosling had reached an age

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

when jam did not appeal to him as it did to Billy Bunter. Whether old Gosling was sixty, or seventy, or eighty, nobody knew—many fellows thought that he had made his century. Whatever his age was, he could not be supposed to be fearfully keen on jam. This looked, therefore, as if he had laid in a supply for the whole duration! If that was not hoarding, what was?
Billy Bunter was down on hoarding! Least of all would Bunter have hoarded jam! Jam, in Bunter’s possession, never lasted longer than it took to convey it to a large mouth on a tablespoon.
Bunter made up his mind on the spot that old Gosling was not going to hoard all that jam if he, William George Bunter, could prevent it!
It was a patriotic duty to stop hoarding. Likewise, the jam was very attractive!
Billy Bunter stood for a minute in thought. His fat brain did not always work quickly. Now, under the influence of jam, it worked at full pressure.

He rolled up to Gosling’s door and knocked.
Gosling opened the door.
The wooden box still lay where the grocer’s man had landed it. The

magic words "Slivers' Jams" leapt to Bunter's eyes.

"Well?" grunted Gosling, staring at Bunter.

"I say, Gosling, Mrs. Mimble wants you to step across to the tuckshop!" squeaked Bunter.

"Oh!" said Gosling. "Thank you, Master Bunter."

Gosling took his ancient hat from a peg, placed it on his ancient head, and came out of his lodge. He closed and latched the door after him, and walked away in the direction of the school shop in the corner of the quad.

Billy Bunter grinned at the old porter's back as he went. Gosling was gone—utterly unsuspecting of the fat Owl's nefarious designs on that consignment of a dozen pound pots in a wooden box.

Bunter waited impatiently till Gosling had disappeared.

Then he turned the door-handle and opened the door of Gosling's lodge. Once more his eyes and his spectacles gloated on that box from Uncle Clegg's.

But Billy Bunter did not waste time in gloating.

It was a time for action—prompt action! It would not take Gosling many minutes to reach the school shop. There he would learn that Mrs. Mimble had not sent him any message. He would learn that his ancient leg had been pulled and would return—and it behoved Billy Bunter to be safe off the scene, with the jam, before Gosling reappeared in the offing!

So Bunter lost no time.

He clutched up that box!

It was rather heavy. Twelve pots, each containing a pound, were a good weight, and there was the wooden box in addition. Billy Bunter was no athlete. But he braced himself manfully to the weight.

He heaved that box outside and shut the door. Then he heaved the box on to a fat shoulder.

He gave one wary blink round through his big spectacles. He did not want to be spotted walking off with that box.

Gosling, when he missed it, was not likely, Bunter thought, to make much fuss. He would not like to proclaim his hoarding to the whole school. Fellows would chip him about food-hogging—the Head would be displeased—it was, in fact, the sort of thing a man would keep dark. Gosling would be fearfully annoyed, but probably he would realise that the less said, the better.

Still, Bunter did not want to be spotted. Masters would be down on hoarding—but were not likely to approve of Bunter's method of dealing with it!

But no one was near at hand. Redwing of the Remove was walking at a little distance, but he was in deep thought and taking no heed of Bunter—probably thinking of his chum Smithy, who had been sacked. Mr. Lamb, the art master, could be seen talking to Mr. Prout—but neither master was looking towards the gates. Coker of the Fifth was in the offing, but Coker of the Fifth disdained to take notice of Bunter—Remove fags

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,674

and their proceedings were far below Coker's notice.

The coast, in fact, was clear—it was all right for Bunter. After one cautious blink round, Bunter started.

He rolled off towards the House with that box on his fat shoulder. He made good speed. He gasped for breath. He panted. But he did not pause. And he disappeared into the House before Gosling, with a frowning brow, emerged from the school shop.

NOT JAM!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"
"What on earth's that?"
"Moving job?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Wharton & Co. of the Remove were coming downstairs as Billy Bunter came up. They met on the middle landing.

And the Famous Five regarded Bunter with astonishment.

Bunter was seldom seen to exert himself. He objected on principle to exertion in any shape or form. He disliked Mr. Lamb because the art master, who took the Remove in Mr. Quelch's absence, made a fellow work, just like old Quelch! He loathed stairs, and he hated carrying anything.

So the sight of Billy Bunter, panting and gasping his way upstairs under the weight of a heavy box, was surprising.

"Ooooh!" gasped Bunter breathlessly. "I say, you fellows, lend a fellow a hand, will you? I say, this is rather heavy!"

"Jam!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, spotting the stencil on the wooden lid. "Is that a cargo of jam, you guzzling gander?"

"The jamfulness is terrific!" grinned Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Hoarding, you fat frog?" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Catch Bunter hoarding!" chuckled Frank Nugent. "Bunter does all his hoarding inside his waistcoat!"

"I say, you fellows, you might lend a fellow a hand!" gasped Bunter. "I want to get this box to my study—the dinner bell may go any minute! Lend a hand, will you?"

"Where on earth did you get all that jam?" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"Oooogh!" Bunter dumped the box down on the landing and mopped a fat brow. "It—it's just come! From Bunter Court, you know! We don't get enough jam here, so I—I asked my pater to—to send me some, see?"

"Gosling would have carried it in for you, you fat ass!"

"Oh! Yes! No! I—I didn't want to bother Gosling!" gasped Bunter. "He's—he's rather old, you know, and—and it's heavy. A fellow has to be considerate—"

"Well, my only hat!" ejaculated the captain of the Remove.

If it was surprising to see Bunter staggering along under a heavy weight, it was still more surprising to hear his reason for so doing. This was the first time on record that

Bunter had shown such consideration for others.

"I'm going to whack it out, of course!" went on Bunter. "Nothing mean about me, I hope! I've got lots! Twelve pounds in pound pots, the man said—"

"What man?"

"I—I—I mean the pater said so, in—in his letter. This jam hasn't come from Uncle Clegg's in the village!" explained Bunter hastily. "It's from Bunter Court—just delivered from the railway—"

"Without a label on it?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Yes—I mean, no! I say, you fellows, we shall have to cut down to Hall in a minute. Lend a fellow a hand! I'll stand you a pot each, if you like! One for Toddy, too! That will leave me six pounds. I never was greedy."

Billy Bunter could be generous when he had lots! And six pounds of jam was enough for Bunter—considering that dinner was almost due!

"Bear a hand!" said Bob Cherry.

Bob and Harry Wharton picked up the box between them, and carried it up the upper staircase and across the study landing.

"I say, you fellows, come on, all of you!" urged Billy Bunter. "I'm going to whack it out, you know!"

He rolled after Wharton and Bob Cherry, and the other three members of the Co. followed on.

The box was carried up the Remove passage and dumped down at last in Study No. 7.

"I say, we've got to get the lid off! I don't see why that idiot old Clegg wanted to nail the lid!" grunted Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! I say, you fellows, get a hammer or a chisel, or something!"

Bob Cherry went along to Study No. 13, to get a hammer and chisel from his tool-chest.

Billy Bunter waited impatiently for his return—the Co. with less impatience. They were not so keen on jam as Billy Bunter. Still, in a time of war rations, pots of jam had an appeal.

"Jolly good jam, old chaps!" said Bunter. "Our cook makes splendid jam, you know!"

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

Billy Bunter belonged to the class that, proverbially, ought to have good memories! But Bunter had a very bad one.

"Did Uncle Clegg nail on that lid at Bunter Court?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "I—I—I mean—no, he didn't—I mean it was the butler, or the groom of the chambers, who nailed it on, I expect—"

"And sent it on the railway without a label!" remarked Frank Nugent. "Lucky it got here, what?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Wharton & Co. certainly had no idea how Billy Bunter had obtained possession of that box. But they knew it was from Uncle Clegg's in the village, not from that palatial establishment, Bunter Court!

If Billy Bunter happened to be in funds, it would be like him to expend the same in jam—and like him, also, to declare that the consignment came from Bunter Court.

Bob Cherry came back with hammer and chisel.

Bunter grabbed them from him—he was too impatient to wait for Bob to get to work on the box.

Bang, bang, bang, bang!

The fat Owl of the Remove inserted the chisel under the wooden lid, and banged on it with the hammer. He banged hard and fast. The dinner bell was almost due, and Bunter wanted to sample that jam before dinner.

Bang, bang, bang!

"Yaroooooooh!"

Billy Bunter gave a sudden roar, dropped hammer and chisel, and leaped clear of the floor.

"Wow!" he roared. "Ow! Wow! Yow!"

"What on earth——"

"What the thump——"

"Ow! My thumb! I've banged my thumb! Wow! Yow! Ow! Wow!" roared Bunter. "Oh crikey! Wow! Wooooogh!"

Bunter jammed a fat thumb into a large mouth, and sucked it frantically.

"Urrgh! Wow! I say, you—wow!—fellows, there's nothing to—gurrgh!—cackle at! Think it's—wow!—funny! Yow-ow-ow!"

"Ha, ha! Not at all, old fat man!" gasped Bob Cherry. "More haste, less speed, you know! Leave it to me."

Bob took the hammer and chisel and started on the box.

Billy Bunter sucked his fat thumb as energetically as if it already had some of the jam on it!

Bang, bang, bang! went the hammer.

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!" went Bunter.

Five or six fellows gathered round the study doorway, attracted by the din, and stared in.

"What's the game?" asked Hazeldene.

"Breakin' up the happy home?" inquired Lord Mauleverer.

"Sounds like an air raid!" remarked Skinner. "Oh, my hat! Is that jam? Where did you pinch all that jam, Cherry?"

Bob, in the act of delivering another bang, looked round.

"You cheeky ass——" he began. "Oh! Yarooop!"

Hammer and chisel went to the floor a second time, and Bob bounded up with a roar.

For the second time the hammer had established contact with a thumb.

"Ha, ha, ha!" came a yell from the doorway.

"Ow!" roared Bob. "You blithering ass, Skinner, making a fellow look round when he's hammering——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you're wasting time, Cherry. Are you going to get that box open?" hooted Billy Bunter.

"No!" roared Bob. "Blow the box! Bother the box! I'm going to punch Skinner's chooky head, that's what I'm going to do!"

Harold Skinner disappeared down the passage.

Johnny Bull, grinning, took up the hammer and chisel and took a turn at getting the box open. The wooden lid cracked up at last.

"That's all right!" exclaimed Bunter eagerly. "I can manage it now!"

And Bunter grabbed at a loose wooden slat, to jerk it off.

The next moment a fearful yell resounded the length of the Remove passage.

"Yoooo-hooooo-hooo!"

"What the thump's the matter now?" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"Yaroo! There's a nail in it——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow! Beasts! Yow! Wow! Ow!"

"The more the hastefulness, the less the speedfulness, my esteemed Bunter!" chuckled Hurreo Jamset Ram Singh.

"Ow! Wow! Beast! Will you get that beastly box open before the bell goes?" howled Bunter.

Harry Wharton, laughing, jerked off the wooden slats that had been carefully nailed on top of that box by Uncle Clegg.

Twelve pots in close array were revealed. The captain of the Remove gave them a surprised stare, and then burst into a yell.

They were not jam pots! They were paint pots! Twelve pound pots met his startled eyes, and on each of them was the inscription:

"GREEN PAINT!"

NOT EDIBLE!

"**H**A, ha ha!" yelled the captain of the Remove.

"Great pip!" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Johnny Bull.

The Famous Five stared into that box. There were the twelve pound pots—twelve pounds of green paint! There was no sticky feast ahead of Billy Bunter! The fat Removeite could eat almost anything, but even Bunter would have jibbed at green paint!

"I say, you fellows, what are you cackling at?" exclaimed the fat Owl impatiently. "I say, hand those pots of jam out, will you?"

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

They could all see that the pots were paint pots! Bunter had not yet made that discovery. The fat Owl's vision was limited. He could see twelve pots piled in the box, but the nature of those pots had not yet dawned on him.

"Are you going to scoff that lot, Bunter?" gasped Hazeldene, in the doorway.

"Eh? I'm whacking it out!" answered Bunter. "You can have some, if you like, Hazel!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Hazel. "No, thanks!"

"I say, you fellows——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, shut up!" roared Bunter. "Get out of the way and let me unpack the box, if you're too jolly lazy!"

Bunter dived a fat hand into the box and jerked out the nearest pot. Then he jumped! Even Bunter discerned what it was when he clutched it out in a fat paw.

His eyes almost popped through his spectacles.

"Oh crikey!" he gasped. "This—this isn't jam!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That old ass Uncle Clegg must have shoved in a pot of paint by mistake! The silly old ass!"

Billy Bunter hurled the paint pot to the floor and clutched up another. Then he gave another jump.

"Oh crumbs! This is paint, too!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter bent over the box. He scanned the contents. Then he gave a roar of wrath and dismay.

"I say, you fellows, there ain't any jam at all—it's all paint pots!"

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

Billy Bunter glared at that box.

The awful truth dawned on him. He had been surprised at Gosling hoarding jam. The explanation was simple—Gosling hadn't! Gosling had ordered twelve pounds of green paint from the village stores. Uncle Clegg had run out of the big pots, as his man had told Gosling, and sent a dozen pound pots. For convenience of transit, he had packed them in an empty box that had once contained pots of Slivers' jams!

It was quite a natural thing for the village shopkeeper to do. Uncle Clegg, like most shopkeepers, kept empty boxes by him for just such uses.

But that had not occurred to Billy Bunter. Slivers' Jams was stencilled on the box. That had been enough for Bunter.

"Oh crikey!" gasped the dismayed fat Owl.

He had raided that box from Gosling's lodge—to find himself in possession of twelve pounds of paint.

His fat jaw dropped. Paint was of no use to Bunter! Gosling had sheds or fences or something or other to paint. Bunter hadn't.

"Oh lor'!" groaned Bunter.

"It's all right, old fat man!" said Bob Cherry consolingly. "Old Clegg's sent you the wrong lot, that's all. You can get him on the phone and tell him he's made a mistake——"

"You silly idiot!"

"Eh?"

"I—I—I say, you fellows, which of you is going to get that box back to Gosling's lodge?" gasped Bunter.

"No need for that," said Harry Wharton. "Uncle Clegg's man can take it when he brings the jam——"

"You silly dummy!"

"What?"

"He—he—he ain't sending me any jam, you idiot!" gasped Bunter. "I—I thought there was jam in it, or—or I shouldn't have snaffled it from Gosling's lodge——"

"What?" roared the Famous Five.

"Ha, ha, ha!" came a shriek from the passage.

"Does that belong to Gosling?" gasped Harry Wharton. "Why, you fat, fooling, frabjous fraud, have you pinched that box from Gosling?"

"I—I thought it was jam! Who wouldn't? It's got jam stencilled on it—it's had jam in it! How was a fellow to know that that old goat had packed paint pots in a jam box?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows, it's got to be got back!" gasped Bunter. "Stick the lid on again."

"The lid's in a dozen pieces! It will want some sticking on again!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

"Better take it back as it is," said Nugent. "The sooner the better, you fat chump!"

"I'm not going! Gosling would complain to Lamb—I should get six! One of you fellows take it—"

"Think we want six from Lamb?" grinned Nugent.

"Well, I wouldn't be selfish, old chap—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"You see, I—I thought Gosling wouldn't dare to make a fuss about it, as it was hoarding," groaned Bunter. "But it's paint, so it ain't hoarding, and he's sure to make a fuss about it—"

"The surefulness is terrific."

"I ain't going to take it back! Gosling would make out that I'd had it if he saw me with it—"

"Oh crikey!"

"You know what he is! If he saw me taking this box back to his lodge, he wouldn't believe that I'd never touched it—"

"Perhaps not!" gasped Harry Wharton.

"The perhapsfulness is preposterous!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows, you're wasting time! The dinner bell will be going in a tick. Who's taking that rotten box back to Gosling's lodge?" howled Bunter. "You can tell him you opened it to save him the trouble, Cherry, if you take it! Look here, you can tell him anything you like so long as you don't mention me, you know. That's important."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a sound of a clanging bell from below. It was the dinner bell, and at that sound the Removites in the passage scudded away for the stairs.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! That's tiffin!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Come on, you men!"

"I say, you fellows!" yelled Billy Bunter, as the Famous Five scampered out of the study. "I say—stop! You've got to get that back box—I mean that box back! I say, don't you clear off while a fellow's talking to you! I say—beasts!"

The chums of the Remove vanished down the stairs. Billy Bunter was left alone with the box of paint.

But he did not linger. Green paint had no attraction for Bunter—dinner had! Bunter was not going to carry that box back—it was only too probable that Gosling, if he saw him with it, would refuse to believe that he hadn't touched it. Besides, dinner called!

Billy Bunter rolled down to dinner. The problem of what was to be done with that cargo of green paint had

to be left till after dinner. First things came first!

CALLED TO ACCOUNT!

MR. LAMB, the art master of Greyfriars, had an amiable smile on his face as he let the Remove into their Form-room that afternoon.

Since Herbert Vernon-Smith had been expelled, and Greyfriars knew him no more, Lamb had become, once more, the "Pet Lamb" that the Remove knew.

There was no doubt that the Bounder of Greyfriars had been a thorn in his side, and that it was a relief to him to see the last of the seapegrace of the school.

That, really, was not to be wondered at. Mr. Quelch, when he had been at Greyfriars, had looked on Smithy as the worst boy in the Form, and had had plenty of trouble with him. In Quelch's time, the Bounder had come very near the long jump.

It was not surprising that Lamb, in his turn, was fed up with him—especially as Smithy had a special feud with Lamb, and all that term had set himself to worry him.

Lamb was art master—he had taken on the Remove, in Quelch's absence, to oblige the Head. Fisher T. Fish guessed and calculated that he made an extra salary thereby; certainly, he had won the good opinion and kind regard of the headmaster. In Dr. Locke's opinion, he had only one fault—he was rather too easy and amiable and unsuspecting for a Form like the Remove, who required a strong hand.

The Head was happily unaware of the fierce and savage temper that occasionally broke out from under Mr. Lamb's amiable mildness. But the Remove were well aware of it, and ragging in the Form-room, which had been incessant at the beginning of the term, had almost died out—the lamb was so liable to turn suddenly into a tiger!

But since Herbert Vernon-Smith had gone, Lamb had been his old soft, good-tempered self, and the more thoughtless fellows were tempted to let themselves go a little.

Bolsover major, who had not banged his desk-lid for some time—once his daily habit—restarted after the interval, so to speak.

"Bang!" ran through the Form-room, as the juniors were taking their places.

Mr. Lamb, at his desk, looked up. "What was that?" he ejaculated. "Dear me! Was that a gun at sea?"

There was a chuckle in the Remove. Guns from the sea were often heard at Greyfriars in the war days. This was the old Pet Lamb—the nervous, fluffy little man of old.

"Oh, no, sir," said Bolsover. "That was a fog signal, sir!"

It was a clear, bright spring day, with not a spot of fog on the horizon, on land or sea. But Bolsover's answer seemed good enough for the innocent Lamb. He resumed sorting papers out of his desk.

Harry Wharton gave him a very curious look.

The Bounder had always said that

Lamb was as hard as nails, as keen as a hawk, and as cruel as a cat. Many circumstances had made the captain of the Remove believe that Smithy had read the man correctly.

But if he was, as Smithy had declared, playing a part, he played it like second nature. Wharton wondered whether, after all, the man was what he looked, and whether it was, after all, the Bounder's incessant hostility that had got his goat and roused the worst part of his nature. Quelch had often been at the very end of his patience with the Bounder.

Yet there were certain facts that Wharton could not dismiss from mind. Smithy had never heeded the art master when he first came—Lamb had started that feud by a savage outburst of temper that had taken the Bounder by surprise and evoked his bitter enmity.

And it was certain that Lamb, as Smithy declared, had secrets—Smithy had proved that he often left the school secretly, late at night; and the fact that he visited Nobby Parker at Sea View on the cliff road had been made the talk of the Remove. That talk was likely to die away, now that Smithy was gone—it was Smithy who had kept the topic alive, simply because it irritated and exasperated the Lamb.

Bang!

It was Hazeldene's desk-lid that went next, Hazel following Bolsover's example, as it seemed safe.

Mr. Lamb looked up again. "What was that?" he exclaimed. "Another fog-signal, sir!" said Hazel.

"Dear me!" said Mr. Lamb. "The weather must be bad at sea!"

"He, he, he!" from Billy Bunter.

Bunter was the next! Bunter had had a few examples of the Lamb's uncertain temper. But Bunter's memory was short.

Bunter lifted his desk-lid. He was happily unaware that Lamb, who had heard his fat giggle, was looking straight at him, over the gold-rimmed glasses that slanted on his nose.

Bang!

Bunter put plenty of beef into it. He put both fat paws to the desk-lid and banged it with all his force. The bang rang through the Form-room like a cannon-shot.

"Bunter!" exclaimed Mr. Lamb.

"Oh! That was another fog-signal, sir!" gasped Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!" came from all the Remove. Every fellow—but Bunter—had seen the Lamb watching the fat Owl, as he banged.

"My goodness!" exclaimed the Lamb. "Bunter! You are a most untruthful boy! You will take fifty lines, Bunter!"

"Oh, really, sir!" protested Bunter.

This seemed fearfully unjust to Bunter. Bolsover major and Hazel had got by with it! Now he was picked on.

"I say, sir, I never banged my desk-lid!" exclaimed the fat Owl. "You can ask Toddy, sir! He's sitting next to me, and he saw me!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That will do, Bunter!"

"I never touched it, sir! I had my hands in my pockets all the time, sir!" pleaded Bunter. "Besides, it was entirely an accident—it slipped through my fingers!"

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

"I say, you fellows, I wish you wouldn't cackle—you'll make Mr. Lamb believe that I banged my desk-lid!" exclaimed Bunter indignantly. "I never did, sir—I never touched it; I had my hands behind me—"

"You will take another fifty lines for untruthfulness, Bunter!"

"Oh crikey!"

"Now say no more!" said Mr. Lamb—still mild.

visit was not unconnected with green paint.

"What is it, Gosling?" asked Mr. Lamb.

"Wot I says is this 'ere, sir!" answered Gosling. "I want that there paint."

"That what?"

"Twelve pound pots of paint!" said Gosling. "Pinched from my lodge, sir! Green paint what is wanted for a fence to be painted this 'ere afternoon as ever was, sir, and took from my lodge."

There were grins on a number of faces in the Remove. Bunter evidently had not restored that cargo

"He comes and tells me Mrs. Mimble wanted me in the school shop, sir!" he said. "I goes to see Mrs. Mimble, and she says, says she, she never sent me no message, she says! When I come back, that box of paint is gorn!"

"Bunter! Why did you take such a message to Gosling?"

"It—it was all a mistake, sir!" gasped Bunter. "I—I thought Mrs. Mimble wanted Gosling, sir, and— and being an obliging chap, I—I went and told him, sir! I—I'm always doing these obliging things!"

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Bob Cherry.



"Yaroooooooh!" roared Bunter, dropping hammer and chisel, and leaping clear of the floor. "Ow! I've banged my thumb! Wow! Yow!" He jammed a fat thumb into a large mouth and sucked it frantically.

Billy Bunter said no more—a hundred lines were enough for him. But he gave Mr. Lamb ferocious blinks through his big spectacles. This, as he whispered to Toddy, was as good as making a fellow out a liar before all the Form—just like that swab Lamb!

The lesson commenced in the Remove Form-room—uninterrupted by any more desk-banging. But it was destined to be interrupted in another way. A quarter of an hour later there was a tap at the Form-room door, and it opened to reveal William Gosling.

Mr. Lamb glanced round at him. Visits from the school porter during class were unusual; and Mr. Lamb, like most of the Remove, wondered what the ancient gentleman wanted.

Billy Bunter felt a sudden inward quake! Bunter guessed that Gosling's

of paint; and it seemed that Gosling was on the track of the fat raider.

"Dear me!" said Mr. Lamb. "Do you mean that a Remove boy has taken paint from your lodge, Gosling?"

"I know it's gorn, sir!" answered Gosling surlily. "If it wasn't Master Bunter what took it, I'd like to know who did."

"Oh lor'!" breathed Bunter.

"Bunter! Have you taken paint from Gosling's lodge?"

"Oh, no, sir! I never knew he had any paint!" answered Bunter promptly. "I—I've no use for paint, sir! I—I never use paint."

"Paint is a very extraordinary thing for a Remove boy to take from your lodge, Gosling!" said Mr. Lamb. "Are you sure of this?"

Gosling pointed a horny forefinger at Bunter.

"Did you take a box of paint from Gosling's lodge?"

"Oh, no sir! Never saw it!"

Billy Bunter hardly seemed conscious of the fact that this was untruthful. When Bunter was in a scrape, he would say the first thing that came into his fat head to get out of it. A fellow in a scrape had to think of getting out of the scrape—and a fellow couldn't think of everything at once. So Bunter did not think of the truth!

Mr. Lamb looked at him.

Had he been aware that those pots of paint had been packed in a box marked jam, he might have guessed that it was a case of mistaken identity! Being unaware of that, he was puzzled.

Paint, it was certain, was not the sort of thing a fellow would be likely

to pinch. No fellow in the Remove could be supposed to have any use for twelve pounds of paint!

"If you have been playing foolish tricks on Gosling, Bunter—" said Mr. Lamb, after a pause.

"Oh, no, sir! I—I like him too much!" asserted Bunter. "I certainly never touched the paint! I wasn't there when the man brought it from Uncle Clegg, and never knew anything about it. I never touched the box, sir, and it ain't in my study now."

"Wha-at!" gasped Mr. Lamb.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My eye!" said Gosling, staring at the fat junior.

"I think," said Mr. Lamb, "that you had better come with me to your study, Bunter. You will come also, Gosling, to take away the paint! Wharton, I shall leave you in charge of the Form for a few minutes."

"Yes, sir!"

"But I—I say, sir, I—I never touched it!" gasped Bunter. "I never knew anything about it! It—it's no good going to my study, sir; it—it ain't there—I never left it there when I went down to dinner, sir—"

"Follow me at once, Bunter!"

"Oh lor'!"

Billy Bunter rolled dismally out of the Form-room, after Mr. Lamb. Gosling, with a snort, followed him. As the door closed after them, there was a roar in the Form-room.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCE!

BILLY BUNTER'S fat face was glum and gloomy as he heaved his weight up the staircase in the wake of Mr. Lamb.

Lamb went ahead with his light and springy step; Bunter heaved and grunted after him; Gosling, snorting, brought up the rear.

From the bottom of his fat heart, the Owl of the Remove wished he had never snaffled that delusive box marked Slivers' Jams—or alternatively, as the lawyers say, that he had taken it back where it belonged.

That he had not ventured to do—and he had asked fellow after fellow to do it, without finding any takers. He was, in fact, still asking fellows to do it, when the bell rang for class, and the subject had to be dropped.

Now he was going to be convicted, beyond hope, as the raider—that wretched box would meet Lamb's eyes the minute he stepped into Study No. 7.

The procession arrived in the Remove passage.

Mr. Lamb pushed open the door of Bunter's study, and entered.

Billy Bunter turned his big spectacles on Gosling with a petrifying blink.

"Beast!" he breathed.

"Huh!" grunted Gosling. "Wot I says is this 'ere, Master Bunter—you sneaked that there paint from my lodge when a man's back was turned, and—"

"Bunter!" called Mr. Lamb from the study.

"Yes, sir!" mumbled Bunter.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,674.

"Please come in, and point out the box!" said Mr. Lamb.

"Eh?" ejaculated Bunter in astonishment.

He blinked into the study. That wooden box containing twelve pound pots of paint was large enough to be seen. He had expected it to catch Mr. Lamb's eyes first thing.

The fat Owl blinked and blinked again, his eyes almost bulging through his spectacles.

"Oh!" he gasped.

The box of paint was not to be seen!

It had been left standing in full view. It was not in full view now. It was not in view at all!

Billy Bunter could hardly believe his eyes or his spectacles. He had expected that box to leap to the eye as soon as the study was entered. What had become of it he could not begin to guess.

Every fellow whom he had asked to carry it back to Gosling's lodge had refused. It had not been taken back. Then where was it?

It was a deep mystery to Bunter. That wooden box seemed to have vanished like the ghost of a wooden box.

"Have you concealed it in this study, Bunter?" demanded Mr. Lamb impatiently.

"Oh! No, sir!" gasped Bunter.

"Then where is it?"

"I—I don't know, sir!"

Quite by accident, as it were, Bunter was telling the truth. He did not know where that box of paint was. He had not the faintest idea!

He stood blinking about the study in amazement. Gosling, snorting more emphatically than ever, stared in at the door. Neither of them discerned even a spot of paint.

Mr. Lamb moved about the study—he looked under the table, behind the armchair, and into the cupboard! But there was no wooden box of green paint to be found.

"The paint is not here, Gosling!" said the art master at last.

"Huh!" grunted Gosling.

"I—I—I said it wasn't, sir!" stammered Bunter. Bunter was going to make the most of this amazing and utterly unexpected stroke of luck. "I—I said it wasn't in my study, sir."

Mr. Lamb gave him a searching look.

"What have you done with it, Bunter?" he asked.

"Nothing, sir! I—I never touched it! I—I think it's rather rotten of Gosling, sir, to make out that I pinched his paint, when I only gave him that message to oblige him!" exclaimed Bunter indignantly. "As if I'd touch his paint! What could I want paint for?"

"It is certainly not here, Gosling," said Mr. Lamb. "And, really, I can hardly imagine any reason why this boy, or any other Remove boy, should want paint—"

"Where's he put it, sir?" asked Gosling. "You answer that, Master Bunter! Wot I says is this 'ere—you've parked it somewhere."

"I haven't!" roared Bunter.

Snort, from Gosling! It was fearful cheek, of course, for a school

porter to doubt the word of a Public school man! But Gosling did!

"You did not see Bunter take the paint, Gosling?" asked Mr. Lamb mildly.

"'Ow could I see 'im, when he sent me off to the school shop, making out that Mrs. Mimble wanted me?" grunted Gosling. "He sneaked that paint while a man's back was turned."

Gosling glared at Bunter: Bunter glared back at Gosling. The fat Owl was feeling safe now—owing to the mysterious disappearance of the paint. There was no evidence against Bunter—the evidence had vanished!

"Look here, don't you be cheeky, Gosling!" admonished Bunter. "This sort of thing won't do!"

Snort!

"Making out that a chap has snaffled your paint!" exclaimed Bunter indignantly. "What's the use of a lot of paint to me? As if I'd touch your paint!"

Snort!

"Really, Gosling—" said Mr. Lamb.

"Twelve pounds of green paint, what is wanted to paint a fence!" said Gosling. "'Ow's that fence going to be painted without the paint, sir?"

"I think," said Mr. Lamb, "that you had better look elsewhere, Gosling! Bunter, you may return to the Form-room."

"Yes, sir!" chirruped Bunter.

He rolled away to the stairs. Mr. Lamb followed him. Gosling was left grunting.

Gosling gave a searching glare round Bunter's study. But the most expressive glare could not discern a box of paint that was not there!

Gosling tramped away at last, snorting.

Billy Bunter rolled back cheerfully into the Remove room. Mr. Lamb followed him in.

The Famous Five and other fellows greeted Bunter with commiserating glances. They expected the cane to be featured in the next scene—having no doubt that the purloined paint had been discovered in Study No. 7.

To their surprise, Bunter rolled cheerfully to his place; and Mr. Lamb resumed the interrupted lesson without picking up his cane.

"I say, Toddy!" Bunter whispered to Peter Todd. "Did you shift that paint out of the study, old chap?"

"Eh? No!" answered Peter. "Isn't it there?"

"Who did, then?" Bunter gave a fat chuckle. "I say, it's gone—somebody must have shifted it after I went down to dinner—he, he, he! That beast Gosling can't make out that I had it, now! He jolly well would, if he could—crusty old brute, you know—he'd make out I was telling fibs, if he could! I think the Head ought to sack him—insulting old swab, you know, doubting a fellow's word! I wonder who shifted the paint, though! He, he, he!"

It was quite a mystery to Bunter! It was a mystery to the other Remove fellows when they heard, after class, how that cargo of paint had mysteriously disappeared. Somebody, it seemed, had shifted it—in time to

save the fat Owl from being copped. But who, nobody seemed to know! Twelve pounds of green paint had vanished—destined, as it happened, to turn up again in a most unexpected quarter!

FERRERS LOCKE HAS A VISITOR!

KNOCK!

John Robinson, the head-master's chauffeur, in his room over the garage at Greyfriars, started a little as he heard the knock below.

It was evening, and black-out reigned, and John was not expecting callers in the black-out.

When John or the car was wanted, the Head was accustomed to ring him up; and no one else at Greyfriars was entitled to want either.

The quiet-mannered, olive-skinned, dark-haired lean man who played the part of chauffeur at Greyfriars School was very reserved, and did not encourage visitors in his quarters. While always civil and obliging, he never asked anyone in, and did not seem to like anyone even dropping into the garage yard for a chat.

The side door at the garage, which gave access to the staircase to John's rooms, was always kept locked. Nobody who called could get at John Robinson without knocking for admittance.

The Head's new chauffeur had good reasons for his reserve. At the present moment, with his window carefully blacked out, the chauffeur was engaged in sorting over the contents of a suitcase which he had unlocked.

That suitcase would have astonished the Greyfriars fellows if they could have seen its contents. They would have wondered what a chauffeur could possibly want with an assortment of wigs, beards, moustaches, eyebrows, and other disguises.

Knock! came again at the door, and John Robinson frowned.

He could not guess who was knocking at the lower door.

He closed the suitcase and locked it. Then he glanced into a glass—that reflected an olive face with a slightly foreign cast.

John Robinson often looked in the glass—to make sure that his appearance as John Robinson was unaltered. No one at Greyfriars guessed, or dreamed, that John Robinson was Ferrers Locke, the famous Baker Street detective—no one knew, but the Head. And John Robinson was extremely careful that no one should ever know, or suspect—till he had laid Slim Jim by the heels and tracked out the kidnapped master of the Remove!

Having glanced in the glass, John descended the stair to the side door and unlocked the same. He opened the door about a foot and peered out in the blackness of the black-out.

There was a push on the door from without. But it opened no farther—Ferrers Locke's foot was against it inside.

"That you, Robinson!" came a low voice that the disguised detective knew.

Ferrers Locke compressed his lips. "Yes, Master Vernon-Smith. So it is you?"

Herbert Vernon-Smith, a dim shadow in the gloom, peered at him with a grinning face.

"Won't you let me in, Robinson?" he asked.

"No, sir!" answered John Robinson evenly.

The Bounder laughed.

"Not glad to see me?" he asked.

"No, sir!"

"Did you guess I was still in the school?"

"I wondered, sir," answered John Robinson quietly, "I have not seen you since the day last week, after you were expelled; but I wondered. This is very reckless conduct, Master Vernon-Smith! If your father knew—"

"The pater won't get news in a hurry, on the other side of the Atlantic," answered Herbert Vernon-Smith coolly. "Look here, Robinson, when I saw you the other day I offered to make it worth your while to put me up at the garage here for a time—"

"And I refused, sir," said the chauffeur. "I am afraid that it is hardly in accordance with my duty to keep your presence here a secret."

"You can't give a chap away," said Vernon-Smith. "I told you what I'd come back for—to keep an eye on that rotter Lamb and get him sacked, same as he got me. No harm done, Robinson, if the man's a rogue, as I believe. If he isn't, I can't do him any harm."

"If Dr. Locke knew you were in the school—"

"He won't know unless you tell him—and you can't! I spoke to you in confidence—you can't betray a chap after that."

"Do you mean to say that you have remained concealed in the school since I saw you last?" asked Ferrers Locke, peering curiously at the Bounder of Greyfriars in the gloom.

"Won't you let me in for a chat?" grinned Smithy.

"No, sir."

The Bounder laughed again and leaned on the doorpost. John Robinson kept his foot against the door.

What the expelled junior wanted he did not know; but he was not letting him in.

The Bounder did not guess it, but his continued presence in the school was a menace to Ferrers Locke's plans. So far as Vernon-Smith knew, John Robinson was a chauffeur, and nothing more.

"I don't mind telling you, Robinson," drawled Smithy, "Greyfriars is a rambling old place, with a good many disused rooms in odd corners—and when you declined to put me up here I looked for quarters. I've parked myself in a garret next to the Remove box-room."

"And you have not been found?"

"Why should I be?" grinned the Bounder. "That garret's empty and never used—now the key's missing, that's all! Nobody fancies that an expelled chap has barged in and borrowed the garret and the key." He gave a chuckle. "Some Remove fellows know—they saw my face at

the window on Sunday morning—five fellows, to be exact! But Wharton and his mob won't give a fellow away."

"They may get into trouble, Master Vernon-Smith, if they are supplying you with food and other necessities—"

"They're not! Think I'd drag any other fellow into my scrape?" sneered the Bounder. "My best pal, Redwing, doesn't even know I'm here—he'd do anything for me, but I'm not landing him in it. If it comes out that I'm here, there will be a row—but nobody else will be in it."

"Then how do you obtain food?" asked Ferrers Locke. He was irritated by this strange stunt of the expelled scapegrace of Greyfriars, but he was interested, too!

"I've got enough for a week or two!" chuckled Smithy. "I cleared out a hamper of tuck that some fellow carted up to the box-room. I bagged blankets and pillow from the Fifth-Form dorm for camping. I fancy the fellows think that some practical joker has been larking about. They won't guess who."

"The sooner you go home, Master Vernon-Smith, the better."

"That's my bizney, not yours, Robinson," retorted the Bounder.

"I'm sacked, but I'm not done with Greyfriars till I've downed that rat, Lamb! I'm going to know why he sneaks out of the school secretly at night! I'm going to spot what his game is in connection with that gangster, Nobby Parker, before I kick the dust of Greyfriars from my shoes, my man. Lamb's a rogue and a rascal of some sort—I've told you a lot about him. Don't you believe so yourself?"

Ferrers Locke made no answer to that.

He was not likely to confide to a schoolboy that he not only believed that Mr. Lamb was a rogue and a rascal, but that he believed that he was no other than Slim Jim, the mystery cracksman, whose depredations in the vicinity occurred at least once a week, and had so occurred ever since Lamb had taken up the post of art master at Greyfriars School.

Even to the Head, Locke had breathed no word of his suspicions of that new member of Dr. Locke's staff.

"What do you think, Robinson, after all I've told you about the man?" persisted the Bounder of Greyfriars.

"I prefer to state no opinion, sir," answered John Robinson. "I do not feel, Master Vernon-Smith, that I can betray your presence here, as you spoke to me, as you put it, in confidence. But you certainly ought to go."

"When Lamb does," said the Bounder, between his teeth. "That blighter got me sacked, and I'm giving him the same back."

"I hardly think, sir, that Dr. Locke had any alternative but to expel you when you have admitted that you forced open Mr. Lamb's desk to obtain a letter from a racing man that belonged to you," said John Robinson dryly.

"Oh, quit!" sneered Smithy.

"I've no kick coming where the Head is concerned. But Lamb nailed me because he knew I'd spotted some things and was afraid I should spot more! Don't I know it? I'm sacked—he's going to be if I can work it."

"Indeed! I hardly see—"

"Suppose that man's a rogue and a rascal, as I believe—suppose I show him up and put the Head wise? No good spinning a yarn I can't prove—but I'm going to get proof somehow. I'm sticking here till I do, and in the meantime"—the Bounder's eyes gleamed—"in the meantime, my good Robinson, I'm going to give the Lamb as high an old time as I can. That's why I've come here now. You've refused to put me up here—"

"I certainly refuse!"

"What about to-morrow—just for a single day?" asked the Bounder. "I specially want to be off the scene to-morrow."

Ferrers Locke gave him a rather grim look.

"Does that mean that something is scheduled to happen to-night, and that you fear that a search may take place to-morrow?" he asked.

"Guessed it in one," said Vernon-Smith coolly.

"I advise you to give up the idea entirely—"

"Keep your advice till I ask for it, my man. Yes or no?"

"No!" said John Robinson emphatically.

The Bounder shrugged his shoulders.

"O.K! I'll think of something else," he said. "I could lie low here for a time, but if you won't, you won't. Perhaps I'll take a night stroll when I'm through, and put up somewhere. I can get out after dark when I choose, and nobody the wiser. I get out during the day, for that matter—when the fellows are in class, or at meals." He chuckled. "I had a stroll through the studies to-day while the school was at dinner, and found something that will come in useful to-night! Sure you won't put me up to-morrow, Robinson?"

"Quite!" said John Robinson.

"I'll stand you a quid."

"You would be better off, Master Vernon-Smith, without so many quids," said John Robinson dryly. "I think too large an allowance of quids has helped towards your undoing."

"I shouldn't wonder; but I never came here for a sermon, Robinson. I got out in the black-out for a spot of fresh air, and to see whether you'd put me up to-morrow. What about two quids?"

"I think, Master Vernon-Smith, that this interview had better terminate."

"No use for money?" sneered the Bounder. "Well, go and eat coke! I'd punch your cheeky face before I go if you weren't keeping my secret for me, you ninny! Rats to you, Robinson!"

With that valediction, the Bounder of Greyfriars disappeared into the black-out.

Ferrers Locke closed the door and snapped the lock shut. He stood frowning for some minutes in

thought before he went up to his rooms again.

The Baker Street detective knew, better than Smithy did, that the vengeful Bounder was on the track of a rogue and a rascal. But it was awkward and irritating to him.

The Bounder of Greyfriars was keen, wary, sagacious, and determined, but he did not know what he had undertaken. He was no match for a cunning crook like Slim Jim. His intervention might have awkward results, perhaps even alarming the wary crook and putting him on his guard.

Ferrers Locke would have been glad and relieved had the expelled Removite been safely at home. But the junior had trusted him, never dreaming that he was a detective, or specially interested in Mr. Lamb—and he could not betray his presence in the school.

But as he ascended the stair to his rooms again the Baker Street detective, though he intended to say nothing, certainly hoped that the secret occupant of the locked garret would not be much longer in getting discovered. Mr. Lamb was relieved by the Bounder's departure, never dreaming that he had returned—and Ferrers Locke would undoubtedly have been equally relieved to hear that Herbert Vernon-Smith was gone for good.

A STUDY IN GREEN!

"I SAY, you fellows, there's a row on!"

"Looks like it!"

"Lamb looks as mad as a hatter!"

"Who's been ragging Lamb?"

"What the dickens is up?"

All the Greyfriars fellows knew, before the breakfast bell rang in the morning, that something was up.

Mr. Lamb, according to fellows who had seen him, looked as mad as a hatter. Sixth Form prefects were seen with grave faces. Masters clustered in groups with an air of preternatural solemnity.

"Outrageous!" Mr. Prout was heard to boom. "Unprecedented!"

"Scandalous!" Mr. Capper was heard to reply.

A remark made by Wingate of the Sixth was caught up and repeated far and wide.

"This is the limit! Somebody will be sacked for this!"

Which intensified the excitement.

Something, it was clear, must have happened in the night—something of a fearfully serious nature.

Sackings were rare at Greyfriars School. There had been one expulsion that term—Vernon-Smith of the Remove had been sacked. That had happened only a few days ago. For another expulsion to follow in a few days was unprecedented, as Mr. Prout might have said.

Most of the Greyfriars fellows were in a buzz of excitement when the bell rang and they went into Hall to breakfast.

All eyes in the Remove—and many in other Forms—fixed on Mr. Lamb. It was generally known or guessed

that what had happened had some connection with the art master.

Lamb seemed to have lost the amiable look he had recovered after the Bounder's departure. His face was hard and harsh, his lips set, his eyes glinting over his glasses. He gave the Remove a dark look, and his keen eyes searched face after face.

However, he said nothing, not even "Good-morning!"

Breakfast passed off in a state of tension.

When Mr. Lamb rose, he spoke at last. He scanned the faces at his table as he spoke.

"The boy who came down to my study last night will follow me!"

"Oh!" gasped the Remove.

Several fellows noticed—and stared at—a smear of green paint on Mr. Lamb's sleeve. Lamb wore his velvet coat—according to the Remove fellows, he lived in that old coat! On the sleeve was a green smear. Lamb, it seemed, had been in contact with wet paint! So the juniors guessed that, whatever it was that had happened, it had something to do with wet paint in Lamb's study.

Mr. Lamb waited a few moments. But nobody seemed disposed to own up to being the fellow who had come down in the night to his study.

"Very well!" said Mr. Lamb, between his compressed lips, "you will all go to the Form-room at once."

Squeak, from Billy Bunter.

"It ain't time for class yet, sir!"

Lamb seemed, to Bunter, to be making a very serious mistake—telling fellows to go to the Form-room before the bell rang for class.

"Take a hundred lines, Bunter!"

"Oh lor'!"

"Go at once!" said Mr. Lamb.

The Greyfriars fellows left Hall, and the Remove headed for their Form-room.

Billy Bunter squeaked with indignation as he went.

"I say, you fellows, if that swab is going to start classes before the bell goes, I ain't going to stand it, see? You'd better go to the Head, Wharton, as head boy of the Form."

"Fathead!" was Harry Wharton's reply.

All the Remove, except Bunter, understood that they were to be questioned. Whatever it was that had happened in Lamb's study, was attributed to a member of the Remove, as a matter of course. Lamb was going to spot that member—if he could!

Lamb did not go with his Form. He was seen to head for Dr. Locke's study. That apparently meant that the Head was to take part in what was to follow—which showed that it was awfully, fearfully serious.

The Remove gathered at their Form-room door, waiting for Lamb to come and let them in. There was a buzz of excited discussion as they waited.

"What have you been up to, Bunter?" asked Skinner.

Bunter blinked at him.

"Eh? What? Nothing!" he howled. "Don't you get making out that I had anything to do with it, Skinner, you beast!"

"You hadn't?" grinned Skinner.
 "No!" roared Bunter, in alarm.
 "I don't even know what's happened, you swab! How should I know, any more than any other fellow?"
 "What the dickens do you mean, Skinner?" asked Tom Redwing.
 "Why should Bunter be supposed to know anything about it?"

Harold Skinner chuckled.
 "I fancy there's wet paint in Lamb's study!" he said. "Didn't you spot that smear on his sleeve? Bunter bagged a cargo of paint from Gosling's lodge yesterday."

"Oh!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.
 "Bunter, you ass——"
 "I—I—I didn't!" gasped Bunter.
 "I never touched the paint! I never had anything to do with it! Besides, I thought it was jam, as you fellows jolly well know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Just like Bunter!" remarked Snoop. "Following in Smithy's footsteps, now Smithy's gone!"

"I didn't—I wasn't—I never!" yelled the alarmed Owl. "Lamb said somebody came down to his study last night! Well, think I turned out of bed? Is it likely?"

"The likeliness is not terrific!" chuckled Hurrec Jamset Ram Singh.

"Look here, I'm jolly well going to see what's happened!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Easy enough to get a squint in Lamb's study!"

Bob left the crowd of Removites, and cut away for Masters' Passage.

In that passage he sighted Mr. Prout, Mr. Capper, Mr. Twigg, and Mr. Hacker, in a group outside the open door of Lamb's study.

They were staring into that study, with horrified faces. Evidently, the interior aspect of that study was startling.

Lamb was not to be seen. He was with the Head. Bob hurried up the passage to the spot where the four masters stood.

They glanced at him.
 "This, perhaps, is the boy!" boomed Prout. "Cherry! Was it you who committed this unparalleled, this unprecedented outrage?"

"Oh! No, sir!" gasped Bob. "I just came to see——"

"The Remove," said Mr. Hacker, "were an unruly Form when Mr. Quelch was here. They have deteriorated since then. Such an act as this——"

"Scandalous!" said Mr. Capper.
 "Unheard of!" said Mr. Twigg.

Bob looked into the study. Then he jumped. It was no wonder that the masters were shocked and horrified. Bob could hardly believe his eyes at what he saw.

The smell of paint came thickly from the open doorway. The window had been set wide open, and the breeze from the sea came in, but it did not clear off that heavy scent. The study reeked with paint—green paint!

It had been painted—but not as a house-painter would have painted it! Daubs, or rather, slabs, of paint had been laid on by a heavy hand. A vast quantity of paint had been used—and it looked as if it had been laid on with a whitewash brush.

That study was a study in green. Walls had been streaked and daubed. Tables and chairs had been painted. The looking-glass, the desk, even the telephone, had been painted green! Green blotches adorned the rug. There was a pool of green in the seat of the armchair. Sheets of Bristol board, which Lamb used for his drawings, had been criss-crossed with strokes of green. Pictures on the walls had been almost obliterated by green paint, wet and reeking. Empty paint-pots were strewn about the floor.

Bob Cherry gasped.
 It was the wildest, maddest rag that had ever happened at Greyfriars School. That study was quite uninhabitable. Lamb, it was certain, would have to find fresh quarters till that study had been set to rights—and it was likely to take time.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bob.
 Who ever had done that, it was certain, would be sacked as soon as he was spotted. It was only a question of spotting him.

Bob hurried away to carry the news to the Remove. He rejoined the crowd at the Form-room doorway with wildly excited face.

"What——" began a dozen voices.
 "Lamb's study!" gasped Bob.
 "Pip-pip-pip——" he stuttered in his excitement.

"What?"
 "Pip-pip-painted!" gasped Bob.
 "Painted green! Smothered! Mucked up! Horrid! Wet paint all over the shop! Green paint!"

"Oh, my hat!"
 "Green paint!" grinned Skinner.
 "And Bunter doesn't know anything about it!"

"You utter idiot, Bunter!" exclaimed Johnny Bull. "Is that what you did with Gosling's paint?"

"No!" shrieked Bunter. "I never——"
 "What's become of the paint, then?" asked Nugent.

"It was in Bunter's study!" chuckled Skinner. "It's in Lamb's study now. Poor old Bunter! You'll catch the same train as Smithy."

"I never——" yelled Bunter.
 "I guess you had the paint," remarked Fisher T. Fish. "I'll say that the beaks won't look farther than the guy who had the paint."

"Of course, it was Bunter," said Bolsover major. "Blessed if I know where he got the nerve, though."

"It wasn't——" howled Bunter.
 "Who had the paint?" grinned Skinner.

"I didn't—I never—I wasn't never—I mean I never wasn't—I mean——"
 "Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here comes the Head!"

Dr. Locke, stern and majestic, came down the corridor with Mr. Lamb.

There was silence in the Remove.
 Billy Bunter blinked at his head-master in palpitating dread.

Every fellow present believed, as a matter of course, that Bunter had done this—Bunter had had the paint. Obviously, it was the same paint—and Bunter had had it.

Nobody doubted that Lamb was on his track. Lamb could hardly have forgotten Gosling's visit to the Form-room the previous day.

Mr. Lamb unlocked the Form-room door.

The juniors went silently in, few doubting that during the next few minutes the fat Owl of the Remove was going to be detected, sacked, and sent the same way that Herbert Vernon-Smith had already gone.

NOT BUNTER!

"**B**UNTER!"
 "Oh lor!"
 "You will stand out before the Form, Bunter," said Dr. Locke.
 "Oh crikey!"

Billy Bunter almost crawled out of his place.
 Evidently suspicion had centred on him at the start.

Mr. Lamb had acquainted the head-master with the circumstances, and left the matter in his majestic hands. It was too serious a matter for a Form-master to deal with.

It was a matter for expulsion—immediate expulsion of the reckless offender. Everyone in the Form-room could guess that—and the Head's stern look showed that they guessed correctly.

Billy Bunter stood before his head-master, with his fat knees knocking together.

The trail of tuck had often led Bunter into scrapes—but never had it led him into so awful a scrape as this. All this was due to that old ass, Uncle Clegg, packing paint pots in a box that had contained Slivers' Jams! It did not occur to Bunter that it was due to his own Bolshevistic propensities. Bunter, as usual, was blameless.

Dr. Locke gave him a fixed look. Bunter quaked under it. Then the Head glanced over the breathless Form.

"My boys," he said quietly, "an unheard-of outrage has occurred—a
 THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,674.

A WORD OF ADVICE!

Make sure of getting your copy of the **MAGNET** regularly each week by filling up the Order Form on this page and handing it to your newsagent to-day! Failure to do this may result in your missing the **MAGNET**! You don't want this to happen, do you?

ORDER FORM.

To (Newsagent)

.....

Until further notice, please reserve for me every week a copy of the **MAGNET**.

Reader's Name and Address

.....

master's study has been painted—or, rather, drenched—with green paint. The boy who has done this must have left his dormitory during the night and descended to Mr. Lamb's study to carry out this extraordinary prank. That boy will be expelled from Greyfriars—he will leave the school this morning!"

Dead silence.

"I shall question you first, Bunter," said Dr. Locke. "There appears to be some reason to believe that paint—green paint—in large quantities was in your possession yesterday."

"Oh, no, sir!" gasped Bunter. "I never went near Gosling's lodge yesterday, sir. I—I was quite surprised when he came to the Form-room and said that the paint was gone."

Mr. Lamb gave him a look.

"I dismissed the matter yesterday, sir," he said, "as there appeared to be no definite proof, and it seemed improbable to me that any boy would remove a quantity of paint from the porter's lodge. I could not imagine any use to which it could be put by a Remove boy. Now, however—"

"Now," said the Head, "it is only too clear to what use it was intended to be put. Bunter, you say that you did not go near Gosling's lodge yesterday—"

"Nowhere near it, sir!"

"Did you not tell me, Mr. Lamb, that Bunter gave the porter a message which caused him to leave his lodge for a time?"

"I did, sir," said Mr. Lamb grimly.

"Oh! I—I—I only wanted to oblige Gosling, sir!" groaned Bunter. "I—I'm such an obliging chap, sir—I'm always doing these good-natured things."

"I warn you to speak the truth, Bunter," said the Head sternly.

"Oh, yes, sir! I—I always do, sir! I—I can't ever remember having done anything else, sir!"

"What a memory!" murmured Skinner; and the silence in the Remove was broken for a moment by a suppressed chuckle.

"Bunter! You have said that you went nowhere near the porter's lodge—"

"Nowhere at all, sir. I was up in my study at the time."

"You admit that you gave him a message!" exclaimed the Head.

"That was only to oblige him, sir!"

"Bless my soul!" said Dr. Locke, gazing at that remarkable member of the Remove, "are you impenetrably stupid, Bunter?"

"Yes, sir, I—I mean, no, sir! C-c-can I go back to my place now, sir?" asked Bunter anxiously.

"You have admitted," said the Head sternly, "that you went to Gosling's lodge. You gave him a spurious message. While he was absent—a matter of only a few minutes—the paint was taken away. There can be no doubt, Bunter, that it was taken by you."

"It wasn't, sir—I mean, I never—that is, I didn't!" gasped Bunter. "I—I couldn't have carried the box, sir—it was too heavy. You can ask Wharton, sir—he knows I couldn't get it past the middle landing."

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,674.

"Wha-a-t?"

"And the other fellows, sir—Bull and Cherry, and Nugent, and Inky—they all know!" gasped Bunter. "It was too jolly heavy for me—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!" exclaimed the Head. "Then you admit, Bunter, that you took away the box of paint and conveyed it as far as a landing in the House—"

"Oh! No, I never touched it!" howled Bunter.

"Upon my word!"

"The matter appears to be clear, sir!" said Mr. Lamb.

"Quite!" said the Head.

"Obviously, Bunter abstracted the paint from Gosling's lodge, and no doubt placed it in concealment, as it was not found in his study. From his own words, it appears that other boys saw him in the act of taking it into the House. It is clear that that is the paint that was used to disfigure your study last night, and—"

"It wasn't me, sir!" shrieked Bunter. "I never took that box, and I never left it in my study, and somebody else took it away while I was downstairs, too. Mr. Lamb knows, sir—he looked for it and it wasn't there. And I asked a lot of fellows to take it back, only they wouldn't—and I'd have taken it back myself, only if I had, Gosling would have made out that I had prigged it—and I didn't. I never touched it at all!"

"Say no more, you stupid and untruthful boy!" said Dr. Locke. "The matter is quite clear now, and for such an offence—"

"I never—" moaned Bunter.

Harry Wharton exchanged a glance with his friends. It was settled, in the Head's mind, that Bunter had annexed that paint—as, indeed, he had. As it was the same paint that had been daubed over Lamb's study, he could not doubt that Bunter had taken it for that purpose. The thing seemed absolutely conclusive. But there was a point in Bunter's favour of which the obtuse and terrified Owl had not thought.

"May I speak, sir?" asked Harry.

Dr. Locke glanced at him.

"Certainly, Wharton, if you know anything about this matter!"

"I think I ought to tell you, sir, that Bunter did not know that there was paint in the box when he took it," said Harry. "What he may have done since, I don't know—but he never took that paint intending to play tricks with it in Mr. Lamb's study."

"I do not see how you can know this, Wharton."

"A lot of fellows know, sir! Bunter thought it was jam—"

"Wha-a-t?"

"Jam, sir!"

"What do you mean, Wharton? Are you deliberately wasting my

time?" exclaimed the Head. "How could even a stupid boy like Bunter mistake paint for jam?"

"It was in a dozen small pots, sir, packed in a wooden box!" explained the captain of the Remove. "The box had contained jam pots at one time—it was an old empty box that Mr. Clegg used to pack the paint pots in. Bunter saw 'Slivers' Jams' marked on the box and fancied it contained jam pots."

"I didn't!" yelled Bunter. "I never touched it! As if I'd take Gosling's jam! Besides, it was hoarding—"

"Be silent, you utterly stupid boy!" exclaimed the Head. "Cannot you see that Wharton is speaking in your favour?"



Vernon-Smith, peering round the stone pillar, was withdrawn, and there was something in

"He's making out that I had it, and I never—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Be silent! Wharton, if you can give me some evidence of what you say, it will show that this foolish boy did not take the paint with the deliberate intention of disfiguring his Form-master's study."

"A lot of fellows know, sir! Bunter thought it was jam, and offered some of us a whack—"

"A what?"

"I—I mean a share, sir! He was knocked over in a heap when the box was opened and it turned out to be paint."

"I wasn't!" yelled Bunter. "I never saw it at all!"

"Silence!" thundered the Head. "Will you be silent, Bunter?"

"Yes, sir; but I ain't going to have Wharton making out that I had that box in my study—"

"Be silent! Were other boys present at the time you speak of, Wharton?"

"Yes, sir! A whole crowd!"

"We opened the box for him, sir!" said Bob Cherry. "We all thought it was jam, as Bunter said so—"

"I didn't!"

"We never knew he had snaffled it from Gosling, sir," said Johnny Bull. "But we all thought it was jam, and Bunter did—"

"I never—"

"Bless my soul!" said the Head. "This places a very different complexion on the matter, Mr. Lamb!"

"Quite so, sir!" agreed Mr. Lamb. "If it is a fact that Bunter did not know that the box contained paint."

it, only I thought Gosling was hoarding jam! It wasn't the jam—I don't care for jam—I've never liked it! I was only going to stop him hoarding—and then it turned out to be paint, and—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What became of the box, Bunter?" demanded the Head.

"I don't know, sir! It wasn't in my study when Mr. Lamb went there to look for it! I thought Toddy had shifted it, but he said he didn't! Not that it ever was in my study!" added Bunter anxiously. "I've never seen it, and I—I never heard of it till you mentioned it, sir."

Dr. Locke gazed at him. He gave him quite a long gaze. Then he turned to the art master.

"Mr. Lamb, this foolish boy has placed himself under suspicion by his greed and stupidity," he said. "But I think it will be necessary to look farther for the culprit."

"I think so, too, sir!" said Mr. Lamb, his eyes glinting over the class.

It was, in fact, clear now that Billy Bunter was not the culprit. He had bagged that paint by mistake, and he had tried to get other fellows to take it back where it belonged. That was fairly clear evidence that Bunter had had no use for the paint.

It dawned on all the Remove, and was clear to the headmaster, that the unknown painter had bagged that box of paint from Bunter's study for his own purposes.

"Some other boy in this Form," said the Head, "must have taken that paint and used it in the night in your study, Mr. Lamb. It remains to discover that boy!"

There was a long pause. Suspicion against Bunter had faded away—but against any other fellow there was not a spot of suspicion. It might have been any man in the Remove. There was no clue.

"There must be the strictest investigation, Mr. Lamb!" said the Head, at length.

"Such a matter cannot be allowed to rest! You will deal with Bunter for having taken the box from Gosling's lodge. In the meantime—"

"I shall make the very strictest inquiry, sir!" said Mr. Lamb. "I have no doubt that I shall discover the offender."

"I shall leave the matter in your hands, Mr. Lamb—and you will report to me when a discovery is made!" said Dr. Locke.

Then, to the relief of the Remove, the Head left the Form-room.

Billy Bunter eyed Mr. Lamb uneasily as he picked up a cane from his desk.

"Mum—mum—may I go to my place, sir?" mumbled Bunter.

"You may not, Bunter!" answered Mr. Lamb grimly. "I shall cane you very severely for having taken the box of paint from the porter's lodge."

"But I—I—I didn't, sir—"

"Bend over and touch your toes, Bunter!"

Billy Bunter had six—all good ones! Considering that he had had a narrow escape of the sack, Bunter really was in luck—but he did not seem to regard himself as a lucky man! Those six swipes were delivered to the accompaniment of six fiendish yells which woke the echoes far and wide—and for quite a long time afterwards Billy Bunter, like Rachel of old, mourned and could not be comforted!

GONE FOR GOOD!

"SMITHY?"

"Yes!" said Harry Wharton.

"But—"

The captain of the Remove had a very thoughtful expression on his face when the Form came out after third school. He had been doing some thinking that morning—with the result that he had guessed the solution of the mystery that puzzled all the Remove, as well as their Form-master.

"Look at it!" he went on quietly. "We know that Smithy came back here after he was sacked—we saw him at that garret window on Sunday morning. He can only have come back for one reason—to get on with his feud with Lamb!"

Bob Cherry whistled.

"You think he's still here?" he asked.

"I'm pretty certain he is! And if he is, he doesn't stick in that garret all the time!" said Harry. "He can get out easily enough without being spotted, if he chooses his time. When the school's at meals in Hall, or in class—nobody about to spot him, then."

"Bunter had the paint!" said Johnny Bull.

"It was snaffled from his study while we were at dinner yesterday—that's pretty plain! And Smithy did it!" said Wharton. "I'll bet he jumped at the idea of painting Lamb's study as soon as he saw that cargo of paint."

"He would!" agreed Bob. "I suppose he was wandering about, while the coast was clear, and spotted it. But—"

"We can't give him away!" said Nugent.

"No! But this won't do!" said the captain of the Remove. "I think we'd better root him out and tell him. This isn't his first trick on Lamb—there was a rag in the Pet Lamb's study one day, and Bunter was whopped for it, and he said he had nothing to do with it—"

"Bunter would say anything!" remarked Johnny.

"Yes; but there was a boot chucked at Lamb's napper from a window, and Skinner and his mob were whopped for it—and they all say they had no hand in it. Now this has happened! Smithy will be getting all the Remove whopped in turn, if this goes on."

"Or sacked, by gum!" said Bob. "If you hadn't spoken up for Bunter, he—"



...hed the man groping in the ivy. The man's hand it. The Bounder saw it—a leather wallet!

"That fact appears to be established," said the Head. "Bunter must be exonerated from having obtained the paint deliberately. Thank you, Wharton—I am glad you have spoken. Bunter!"

"It wasn't me, sir."

"After you had found out that the box contained not jam, but paint, what did you do with it?"

"Nothing, sir! I—I never saw it!"

"Grant me patience!" gasped the Head. "Wharton, do you know what Bunter did with the box?"

"It was left in his study, sir, when the dinner-bell rang. After that, he was asking fellows up and down the Remove to take it back."

"You are sure of this, Wharton?"

"He asked more than half the Form, sir!" said Harry. "He didn't want it, as it was paint!"

"Of course I didn't!" wailed Bunter. "I shouldn't have touched

Harry Wharton nodded. "We've nothing to do with Smithy's stunts, and we've kept clear of that garret, and said nothing!" he answered. "But this won't do—and we'd better tell Smithy so plainly! This morning we all thought that Bunter had played that mad trick with the paint, and Lamb certainly thought so—only I remembered that the fat chump had snaffed it, thinking it was jam in the box. But for that—"

"If it was Smithy, he's jolly well got to chuck it!" said Bob decidedly. "And the sooner we tell him so, the better!"

"Let's!" agreed Nugent.

The Famous Five went up to the Remove passage.

They strolled along that passage in a casual sort of way to Johnny Bull's study at the end. It was necessary to be cautious, in order not to draw attention to the vicinity of the box-room.

If the Bounder, as Wharton believed, was still hidden within the walls of Greyfriars School, they certainly did not want to give him away. They waited till no one was in sight and then slipped quietly up the box-room stair.

The door of the little garret, adjoining the box-room, was shut. No key was to be seen. As that garret was never used, or entered, no one was particularly interested in the key; but any fellow who had noticed that it was missing would naturally have supposed that it was in charge of the house-dame. But the Famous Five had their own ideas about that. The expelled junior certainly had been in that garret a couple of days ago, whether he was still there or not, and they knew that he must have locked the door on the inside.

Harry Wharton tapped lightly at the door.

There was no sound from within.

"Better let him know it's us!" murmured Bob. "He might fancy it was the Lamb or a pre. on the prowl!"

Harry Wharton stooped to the key-hole.

"Smithy!" he whispered.

There was no answer.

Any occupant of the garret must have heard that whisper and recognised the voice. But if the Bounder was there, he did not choose to reply.

"Smithy!" repeated the captain of the Remove, more loudly. "You can open the door, fathead—we're not going to give you away! We want to speak to you!"

Silence!

"The silly ass! Why doesn't he answer?" muttered Nugent. "He must know it's safe with us!"

"After all, we're not sure he's there!" remarked Johnny Bull. "You haven't tried the door!"

"It was locked," said Harry. He turned the door-handle, and broke off suddenly as the door opened to his hand. "Oh!" he ejaculated.

On previous occasions that door had been locked. But it was not locked now. It opened. And the chums of the Remove pushed in, staring round them.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,674.

The garret was empty.

"Oh!" repeated Harry Wharton.

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"Not here, old man!" he said.

"The herefulness does not seem to be terrific!" murmured the Nabob of Bhanipur.

Harry Wharton knitted his brows as he stared round the empty, unfurnished little room. He had felt certain that he had solved the mystery of the painted study; he had been quite assured that the expelled Bounder was still lurking in the school, carrying on his feud with the Lamb.

But there was no sign of an occupant in the little garret. If Vernon-Smith had been there since the morning they had seen his face at the window, he was gone now.

"False scent, old man!" said Johnny Bull. "He was here a couple of days ago—we saw his chivvy at the window! He ain't here now!"

"No," said Harry slowly. "He was here—he must have meant to stay! We jolly well know that he snooped the tuck out of the hamper in the box-room, and he bagged the blankets from the Fifth Form dorm! He must have meant to camp here. But—"

"A chap would soon get fed up!" said Bob.

"Well, yes; but Smithy is a sticker. Look here, if he's gone for good, what has he done with the blankets and things?"

"Not here, anyhow!" said Bob.

"He must have parked them somewhere. In the box-room, perhaps—they could have been put out of sight there!"

The juniors left the garret, closing the door after them. They stepped into the adjoining box-room. There were a good many empty boxes and trunks in that apartment, and Wharton looked into one after another.

"Oh, my hat! Look!" he exclaimed, as he lifted the lid of a big trunk that belonged to Lord Maulverer.

"Smithy's larder!" chuckled Bob.

Mauly's trunk had been empty when it was placed in the box-room. It was not empty now. It contained a roll of blankets and some other articles, evidently those used by the Bounder in camping in the garret, as well as a stack of tins, packets, cartons, and other containers of food-stuffs.

"That's where he's hidden his outfit!" said Harry. "He may have fancied that there would be a search, after what happened in Lamb's study, and cleared off for a time!"

"Or for good!" said Bob.

Harry Wharton closed the lid of the trunk.

"I don't believe he's gone for good," he said. "He wouldn't have bothered to put those things out of sight unless he thought he would want them again—he could have left them in the garret. I believe he's cleared off, in case Lamb got suspicious and there was a search. He knew there would be a fearful row about painting that study!"

The Famous Five left the box-room. Whether Smithy was gone for a time,

or gone for good, they could not tell; but Harry Wharton, at least, was convinced that they had not seen the last of the expelled Bounder.

But wherever Smithy was, and whatever might be his intentions, he was not on the spot now—that, at least, was certain. The Famous Five went down—and found most of the Remove discussing with great interest and considerable excitement that amazing rag in Lamb's study, and debating who was going to be sacked for it.

The chums of the Remove had little doubt that the fellow who had painted Lamb's study had been sacked already. But on that subject they said nothing—they were carefully keeping Smithy's secret!

SMITHY ON THE TRACK!

HERBERT VERNON-SMITH caught his breath suddenly.

The old ivy rustled as the Bounder dropped inside the ancient Cloister wall.

The hour was late—approaching midnight. The Bounder had left it late before he returned to the school. He did not want to run the slightest risk of his presence at Greyfriars being discovered.

John Robinson knew; but he was assured that the chauffeur would not betray him. Harry Wharton & Co. had glimpsed him at the garret window a few days ago; but he knew that he could depend on their silence if they guessed that he was still about the school. But the fewer who knew, the safer he was. And had the eyes of a master or a prefect fallen on him, his game would have been up at once.

In the late hours, after all Greyfriars had gone to bed, no eye was likely to fall on him. Unless, as the Bounder cynically reflected, it was Lamb's—if he chanced to run into the art master on one of his mysterious nocturnal excursions!

He was very wary as he clambered over the Cloister wall and dropped within, and stood listening, after the rustle of the ivy had died into silence.

It was a calm, clear night of spring, with a glimmer of moonlight that fell in silvery pools among the old stone pillars of the Cloister. Black shadows alternated with patches of silvery light. And it seemed to the Bounder, as he stood watching and listening, that a shadow stirred. He caught his breath, his heart beating.

No one could be in the old dim Cloister at that hour—unless it was Lamb, creeping cautiously out of the school, as Smithy knew that he had often crept.

In his days as a scapegrace in the Remove, Smithy had more than once broken out by way of the Cloister at the very spot where he had now climbed in, where the old ivy clustered thick round an ancient stone buttress of the wall. But not at that late hour. The most reckless black sheep in the school could hardly be getting out at nearly midnight. It was Lamb, or nobody—

for, so far as Smithy knew, there was no one else at Greyfriars likely to be out of bed when midnight was about to chime. Smithy knew nothing of the activities of the Head's new chauffeur in the small hours.

He stood listening and watching. There was no sound—and if a shadow had stirred, as he fancied, it did not stir again. Yet he had a feeling that the old Cloister was not untenanted—that he was not alone there.

If it was Lamb, he had seen him—he stood in moonlight within the old wall. What would the man do? If he collared him, he would have to admit that he was out of the House at that late hour—a circumstance that certainly he would prefer to keep secret. But was it Lamb? Was it anyone?

For several long minutes Vernon-Smith stood watching and listening. The silence and stillness reassured him at last—no one was there! And at length he trod softly away.

Keeping in the shadow as much as he could, the Bounder crept to the back of the school buildings. To get back into the House, he had to climb to the garret window, which he had left unfastened.

He stood, at last, at the foot of the wall, looking up. The moonlight glimmered on two windows high above his head—those of the box-room and the garret adjoining it. A rainpipe gave a rather precarious access to the leads of an out-building under the windows.

He was wondering as he looked up whether there had been a search for the painter of Lamb's study, and whether the garret had been visited.

It was not likely, but it was possible, that Lamb might suspect whose hand had been at work—and if he did, there certainly would have been a search. If it had taken place, the Bounder had left nothing to betray his sojourn. Nobody was likely to look into Mauleverer's trunk in the box-room.

If there had been any search, nothing had been discovered—Smithy had left no sign, and he had spent the day at the Three Fishers, up the river, at a safe distance from the school.

He stood looking up at the garret window—gleaming like a sheet of silver in the brightness of the moon.

Where he stood, at the foot of the wall, he was in black shadow; but as soon as he climbed on the out-building below the window, he would stand out clear in the bright moonlight. He was little likely to be seen at that hour, unless Lamb was out, and near the spot. But Herbert Vernon-Smith was too cautious to take risks—discovery meant the end of the strange game he was playing at the school from which he had been expelled. He waited for a cloud to drift over the moon before he started his climb.

He had long to wait. The sky was clear and fine. Clouds were drifting from the sea, but they moved very slowly. But Smithy was patient. He leaned on the wall, his hands in his overcoat pockets, and waited

while one long minute followed another.

Nearly half an hour had passed, and the moonlight was still bright on the high window, when the Bounder was suddenly glad that he had been so cautious. From the silence of the night, a faint sound came to his ears.

It was a soft, stealthy, almost inaudible sound; but the Bounder knew that it was a footfall.

His heart beat!

This time it was not fancy—it was certainty! From somewhere at the back of the building that footfall came—soft and stealthy. Someone had left the House by door or window, at midnight, and was creeping away—stepping lightly, almost noiselessly.

A dark shadow fell across a pool of moonlight.

Vernon-Smith craned himself back against the wall, deeper in dark shadow, his heart throbbing, and watched and listened.

A figure passed within a few yards of him.

His eyes gleamed at it. His first feeling was one of disappointment. It was not Lamb, as he had expected—Lamb was a little man, and this was a bulky figure in a heavy overcoat and slouched hat.

Had it been Lamb, the Bounder knew what he was going to do. It was a chance he was not likely to miss, of shadowing the art master on one of his mysterious night-prowlings, and discovering what it meant. That was what he was at Greyfriars to discover if he could.

But that bulky figure was not Lamb's.

He watched it keenly. The face was hidden by the turned-up collar of the big overcoat and the slouch of the hat-brim. It was not Lamb—who was it? But was it not?

It came into the Bounder's mind that the big hat, the thick greatcoat, and the heavy boots, would give the little art master a much more bulky appearance—indeed, it was likely enough that the man would calculate on that, in case a chance eye should fall upon him in his prowlings.

The figure remained in sight only for a few moments, then it passed into shadow again.

Whether it was Lamb or not, the Bounder could not tell. But he did not hesitate. He crept on tiptoe in the direction the stealthy figure had taken.

Twice, thrice, he glimpsed it again in the moonlight, though it seemed to hug the shadow wherever possible. Hardly a sound came back to the Bounder's intent ears. He followed, creeping even more stealthily than the dark figure ahead.

Once more he glimpsed the figure in the moonlight; then it disappeared into the darkness of the old Cloister. That, then, was the man's way out—whoever he was! It was Lamb—it must be Lamb! Who else could be stealthily leaving the school at midnight? Where was he going? What, in the name of all that was mysterious, was his game?

The Bounder could not guess. But

he was going to know. And he crept silently into the dark Cloister on the trail of the mysterious figure that had disappeared.

'TWIXT CUP AND LIP!

FERRERS LOCKE did not stir, as a faint footfall on the old stone flags of the Cloister came to his keen ears.

Within a few yards of the spot where half an hour ago Vernon-Smith had climbed in, the Baker Street detective stood close in the shadow of an old stone pillar.

Locke had been on the spot over an hour when the Bounder had come! And he had set his lips with anger and hugged closer cover, when he saw the scapegrace of Greyfriars drop from the ivied wall.

That reckless schoolboy's folly bade fair to ruin all his plans.

Night after night, for long, weary hours, the Baker Street detective had waited and watched, in that spot.

Many days and nights had passed since the night when he had seen a dim form creep into the Cloister and hide the leather wallet containing the cracksman's outfit under the ivy by the buttress.

During that space of time Slim Jim had not been at work—there had been no report of any fresh raid by the mystery cracksman. But sooner or later it must come—and when Slim Jim marked down his next crib to crack, he would need that outfit—and when that time came, Ferrers Locke was going to be on hand.

Night after night he had waited and watched—and now, at last, the time had come! The faint footfalls coming up the Cloister warned him.

Locke did not stir—he watched! Half an hour had passed since he had seen that reckless schoolboy climb in. Vernon-Smith, he had no doubt, was safe off the scene long ago. The man who was coming was the man he wanted. And the detective's eyes glinted as a bulky figure in greatcoat and slouched hat emerged into the moonlight and stooped to grope under the ivy by the buttress.

Like the Bounder, he had no doubt that it was Lamb, bulky as he looked. Lamb or not, he knew that it was Slim Jim.

But he did not stir.

His cue was to shadow the man—to track him to the crib he had planned to crack, and catch him in the act. It was futile to seize him now—worse than futile.

Lamb—if it was Lamb—might find it difficult to explain his movements, but there was no proof. It was proof that Ferrers Locke wanted—proof sufficient to clap the handcuffs on the man's wrists, to place him in the hands of the police. That proof awaited him—when he tracked Slim Jim to the scene of robbery.

There was a rustle of the old ivy as it stirred; the man groping under it, behind it, was in the deep recess by the buttress.

Suddenly, the arm thrust into the ivy was withdrawn; the hand came
THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,674.

out empty, as the bulky figure rose sharply to its feet, with a catch of breath that reached the detective's ears.

The man stood staring into the darkness of the Cloister, the way he had come!

Ferrers Locke's lips set. For a moment he imagined that Slim Jim had suspected a watcher near at hand.

But it was not that! It was something at a little distance that had alarmed the crook.

The next moment, Ferrers Locke knew what it was, as a faint sound came. The crook had heard it first—his ears were as keen as those of a wild animal. Someone was coming softly up the Cloister—and the man knew that he had been followed.

For a long moment the man stood staring, listening. Then, suddenly, he moved.

That he was suspected, that he was watched, Slim Jim could hardly have supposed; but he knew that someone was there.

By whatever chance it happened, someone was coming.

With lightning-like suddenness, the man in the slouched hat darted out of the moonlight into the darkness under the old arches of the Cloister.

Crash!

There was a startled cry.

The crook, undoubtedly, had intended to dodge away unseen, unheard, in the dark; but in the dark he had crashed into an unseen figure.

Ferrers Locke gritted his teeth. He heard a cry, and a heavy fall, then, for a moment, a sound of running feet. His chance was gone—the crook had taken the alarm, and was hunting cover—hunting his hole like a scared rabbit! Slim Jim would crack no crib that night!

From the darkness under the old arches, Locke heard a sound of panting breath, and a scuffling sound as someone dragged himself to his feet.

Slim Jim was gone—but the unknown into whom he had crashed had gone sprawling over under the shock. Who was it? The Baker Street detective thought that he could guess.

"Oh gad!" he heard a breathless exclamation.

Then stumbling footsteps came out into the moonlight.

Locke, from his cover, saw the Bounder of Greyfriars.

Vernon-Smith stood panting, staring about him dizzily. He had been taken utterly by surprise by that sudden crash in the dark, and had gone over like a ninepin.

That the man ahead of him had stopped, that he had any reason for stopping, Smithy, of course, did not know. He had not counted on that sudden rush back of the man he had been shadowing. For some moments he hardly realised what had happened.

"Oh gad!" he repeated breathlessly.

Locke made no sound, but his look was very expressive as he watched the Bounder of Greyfriars.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,674.

The Bounder's intervention could not have come at a more unfortunate moment for the detective. But for that, Slim Jim would have been on his way, the Baker Street detective shadowing him to his destination. Now all was over—for that night, at least.

"The rotter!" He heard the Bounder mutter the words aloud. "He must have heard something—I was closer on him than I thought—the wary rat! He was going out—I'm certain of that! He's chucked it—the rotter! By gum, I'll get him another time!"

Ferrers Locke's eyes glinted in the darkness, but he did not stir.

For a minute or two longer the Bounder stood staring about him, then he went. Not till he was clear of the spot did Ferrers Locke stir—and it was an intensely angry chauffeur that went back to his rooms over the garage.

Smithy, sorting his blankets out of Lord Mauleverer's trunk, and camping once more in the locked garret, little dreamed of the harm he had done.

BUNTER KNOWS!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

Billy Bunter squeaked unheeded.

There was a crowd of Remove fellows in the Rag after third school the next day; they were discussing what was now the chief topic in the Remove and in Greyfriars generally—the painting of Lamb's study.

Nobody, so far, had been expelled for it.

Nobody had been found out.

That was not for want of effort on the part of masters and prefects. The hunt was up, so to speak.

The Head had made it clear that that offender had to be discovered. Such an outrage could not be overlooked, or forgotten, or allowed to rest. It was altogether too outrageous for that!

Lamb's study was uninhabitable. He had shifted his quarters to Mr. Quelch's old study while his own was in the hands of the decorators. Almost every fellow at Greyfriars had visited that green-painted study, to stare at the daubs and splashes of paint, and every fellow who saw it agreed that the unknown ragger was some lad.

Had the Bounder been still at Greyfriars, he would certainly have been suspected in the Remove. Smithy was the only man capable of such things.

But as the Bounder was gone, it seemed to be the handiwork of some wild and reckless fellow, bent on following in the Bounder's footsteps.

And he had not been spotted!

The Head had gone to the length of calling the prefects specially to his study and impressing upon them that the offender had to be found. All the prefects were on the prowl. All the masters, as well as Mr. Lamb, were keenly on the qui vive. As Prout declared in Common-room, such an unprecedented and unparalleled act was an insult to the whole staff. The

perpetrator had to be discovered and expelled from the school, of which he was a disgrace, Prout declared; and all the beaks agreed with Prout.

Every man in the Remove had been questioned and cross-questioned not once, but many times. The culprit was in that Form—there was little or no doubt about that. Lamb questioned them—other beaks questioned them—prefects questioned them, one after another. And absolutely nothing came to light.

Every man in the Form declared that he most certainly had not left his dormitory on Monday night. Every man declared that he had not the slightest connection with the mysterious removal of that box of paint from Study No. 7 in the Remove. According to their own account, the Remove were all as innocent as doves.

Five members of that Form, certainly, suspected that they could have named the culprit.

But they were not, after all, sure; and, in any case, they certainly would not have named him. Harry Wharnton & Co. said nothing of the Bounder—and even Smithy's chum, Redwing, had no suspicion that the expelled junior had reappeared at the school.

Who was it? was the question asked up and down Greyfriars—and nobody could find an answer.

Everybody had expected that a discovery would be made on Tuesday. But no discovery was made on Tuesday; and now it was after third school on Wednesday, and yet no discovery had been made.

Prefects were still on the prowl. Masters were still keen. The Head was still determined. But it looked as if all that prowling and keenness and determination would come to exactly nothing. Nobody had been spotted yet, and it began to look as if nobody ever would be spotted.

Some fellows, certainly, had lingering suspicions of Billy Bunter. After all, Bunter had snooped that paint!

The Head had been satisfied that Billy Bunter was simply a howling ass, and not a desperate ragger. Lamb seemed to be satisfied also. Still, as Skinner asked, if it was not Bunter, who was it?

It was somebody. That, at least, was certain. Lamb's study had not painted itself green. Who was the somebody? If it was not the fellow who had snooped that paint from Gosling's lodge, which fellow was it?

On the other hand, though it was an undoubted fact that Billy Bunter had had the paint, it was another undoubted fact that he hadn't the nerve.

It was difficult to picture the fat Owl getting out of the dormitory in the middle of the night and creeping downstairs with pots of paint, to splash and daub a master's study and leave it strewn with empty paint-pots—with the certainty of being sacked if he was spotted!

Bunter, in fact, was the very last fellow to have done such a thing—except, of course, that he had had the paint!

While masters and prefects took an awfully serious view of the matter, many of the juniors regarded it as a

tremendous lark, and wished the unknown ragger luck! And it seemed that he was going to be lucky; for by this time hardly any fellow expected that a discovery would be made.

"He was some lad, whoever he was!" Bolsover major declared. "Smithy's style all over; only even Smithy would have drawn the line at it, I fancy. Some nerve!"

"But who the dickens——" said Squiff.

"Bet you they won't spot him now!" said Hazeldene. "They've been all over the school with a small comb and found nothing out. If it really was a Remove man, I don't see why he can't let fellows know. Nobody in the Form would give him away."

"I say, you fellows——" squeaked Bunter again.

Bunter had been listening to the discussion with a shade of unusual thoughtfulness on his fat brow and a sly twinkle in the little round eyes behind his big round spectacles. Great thoughts, it seemed, were stirring in Bunter's podgy brain, if anyone had noticed—but nobody did.

"Might be a chap in another Form," said Peter Todd. "They rag Lamb rather in the art class. He may have got some fellow's back up."

"But who?" said Tom Brown. "I'd have said that not a man at Greyfriars had the nerve to play such a mad trick, except Smithy."

"I say, you fellows——"

"Oh, shut up, Bunter!" said Bolsover major, taking heed at last of the fat Owl's squeak.

"Oh, all right—if you don't want to know who did it!" sniffed Billy Bunter.

At those words every eye in the Rag turned on the Owl of the Remove.

Even Lord Mauleverer sat up and took notice. Even Fisher T. Fish left off for a moment thinking about money to stare at Bunter. The Famous Five, who had been taking no part in the discussion, all spun round towards Bunter with startled looks. Billy Bunter's fat squeak really had the effect of a thunderclap.

"Do you know who it was?" a dozen voices exclaimed.

"Don't I?" grinned Bunter.

"Who was it?"

"Was it a Remove man?"

"Cough it up!"

"Shake it out!"

"Tell us who it was, you fat foozler!"

Billy Bunter grinned—from one fat ear to the other! He was the centre of interest now—he had the house. He was the cynosure of all eyes—he had the spotlight! Bunter liked the spotlight! This was a great moment for Bunter!

"Guess!" he grinned.

"The fat ass!" snorted Bolsover major. "He doesn't know——"

"Don't I just!"

"Doesn't Bunter know everything?" remarked Hazel. "Whose keyhole have you been at, Bunter?"

"Beast! I jolly well know——"

"Cough it up, then, you fat frog!" growled Bolsover.

"Better keep it dark!" exclaimed Harry Wharton hastily. "If you've

really found out, Bunter, keep it to yourself!"

Wharton was thinking of the Bounder. If Bunter knew who had painted Lamb's study, it must mean that he had discovered the Bounder's return to Greyfriars—or so it seemed to the captain of the Remove, at least. And that was not a matter to be shouted from the house-tops.

But there was a roar of protest at once! Every fellow wanted to know! Curiosity was very keen about the identity of the unknown ragger who had perpetrated the wildest rag in the history of Greyfriars.

"Shut up, Wharton!"

"Let him rip!"

"Get it out, Bunter!?"

"Who was the chap?"

"Tell us, you fat ass!"

"The stillfulness of the tongue shows the wisdom of the esteemed head, my absurd fat Bunter!" said Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"Shut up, Inky!"

"Go it, Bunter!"

"Who was it?"

"Me!" said Bunter.

There was a general gasp.

"Who?" stuttered Harry Wharton.

"Me!"

BOLD, BAD BUNTER!

"YOU!"

Almost every fellow in the Rag exclaimed at once.

They stared at Billy Bunter. They blinked at him. They goggled at him.

That unexpected and ungrammatical answer from the fat Owl took everybody by surprise.

Bunter, so far, had emphatically denied any knowledge of the painting of Lamb's study. He had had the paint, but he asseverated that he did not know who had snaffled that paint from his study in the Remove; his fat mind, according to his own account, was a perfect blank on the subject.

He had been believed, chiefly because hardly a fellow supposed that he had the nerve to perpetrate such a rag. Skinner and one or two other fellows had a lingering suspicion, that was all. The Head certainly had believed him; and the Head was popularly supposed to be able to tell at a glance whether a fellow was speaking the truth or not. Lamb, who was undoubtedly very keen to spot that ragger, was satisfied that it was not Bunter—or appeared to be satisfied. And now——

Now Bunter owned up to it!

"You!" stuttered the Removites.

"What do you think?" asked Bunter, with a fat smirk. "Think I'm afraid of Lamb? Think I'm afraid of the Head? No fear!"

"It was——was you!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "You fat foozler, it wasn't!"

"It was me!" roared Bunter.

"I suppose you mean 'it was I'?" remarked Peter Todd.

"Eh? No! I don't mean it was you, Toddy—I mean it was me!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle

at! Don't you get making out that it was you, Toddy—it was me!"

"That grammar wouldn't do for Quelch!" chuckled Peter. "But if you mean that you did it——"

"Of course I did! It was me, all the time!" declared Bunter. "Lamb's been a beast to me, hasn't he? Making a fellow out a liar before all the Form, and all that! So I jolly well paid him out! I got that paint from Gosling, and I jolly well painted his study!"

"Didn't I say it was Bunter?" remarked Skinner.

"I rather fancied it was, too!" said Snoop.

"Sorry you'll be leaving soon, Bunter!" grinned Hazeldene.

"Eh?" Bunter blinked at Hazel. "I ain't leaving! Wharrer you mean?"

"You'll be leaving as soon as this gets out."

"I say, you fellows, don't you give a chap away, you know!" said Bunter. "I don't mind owning up to you fellows, now they haven't found anything out—but I don't want the Head to know. Not that I'm afraid of the Head—still, I'd rather he didn't know."

Harry Wharton & Co. gazed at the fat Owl.

Wharton had felt certain that it was the hidden Bounder who had painted Lamb's study. His friends had thought it very probable. Bunter's claim to the distinction took them all by surprise.

True, they had all thought that it was Bunter's work, like the rest of the Form, when it first happened—from the circumstance that he had had the paint. But Harry Wharton had not been long in guessing the truth. Now, however, he was not certain that it was the truth he had guessed.

The Bounder had been gone, when he was looked for. He might have been gone before that painting had taken place. In that case, it was some fellow in the school who had done it.

"You fat ass!" exclaimed the captain of the Remove. "Was it really you, or are you gammoning—as usual?"

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"Did you get the paint on purpose?" demanded Bolsover major.

"Of course I did! As soon as I spotted that box of paint in Gosling's lodge, I said to myself: 'I'll jolly well paint Lamb's study with that!' Those very words!" said Bunter breezily.

"You fat Ananias!" roared Bob Cherry. "You thought it was jam!"

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"You told us it was jam!" howled Johnny Bull. "You thought it was jam, right up to the minute we got the box open!"

"So he did!" exclaimed Nugent. "We all know he jolly well did! He was trying to get fellows to take it back, when he found out that it was paint."

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "I—I mean——"

"Well, what do you mean?" asked Wibley. "Did you do it or not, you fat chump?"

"Yes, I jolly well did! This is how it was," exclaimed Bunter. "I snooped that box, thinking it was jam—but when I found out that it was paint, I said to myself—'I'll jolly well paint Lamb's study with that!' Those very words."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Was it you who shifted it out of the study, then?" asked Peter Todd, eyeing his fat study-mate suspiciously.

"Eh? Oh! Yes! Of course it was! I—I hid it in the box-room, all ready for painting Lamb's study! And in the dead of night," added Bunter impressively, "I came down and—and did it!"

"Where did you get the nerve?" asked Lord Mauleverer.

"Oh, really, Mauly, I've got tons of nerve!" said the fat Owl. "Smithy ain't the only man that can rag Lamb, I can tell you! He's been a beast to me all this term—now I've got back at him, see?"

"No, I don't quite see!" remarked his lordship.

"Well, Bunter knows whether he did it or not!" said Skinner. "I fancied he did, all the time. He had the paint."

"If you did it, you fat ass, the less you say about it the better!" said Harry Wharton.

"Who's afraid?" demanded Bunter. "Fat lot I care for Lamb, or for any of the beaks, if you come to that! I've got more nerve than you, old chap!"

"You'll want all your nerve, when you get spotted!" grinned Bob Cherry. "You'll want a little more than you've got, I fancy."

"Yah!" was Bunter's retort to that.

Harry Wharton & Co. left the Rag in a rather puzzled mood. They had felt sure—or almost sure—that it was the hidden Bounder who had ragged Lamb's study. Now they were uncertain.

"Did that fat ass do it, or didn't he?" asked Bob, as they went out into the quad.

"I suppose he knows whether he did or not!" said Johnny Bull. "Is even Bunter idiot enough to say he did if he didn't?"

"The esteemed idiotic Bunter is idiot enough for anything!" remarked the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Yes—but—"

"Goodness knows!" said Harry Wharton. "I certainly thought it was Smithy! Still, he was gone—and may have gone before it happened, for all we know. But—" He shook his head. "That fat ass thinks that it's all safe now, as they've been unable to find anything out. He thinks some fellow did it, and is going to keep it dark, and he can claim the jolly old glory! He would like fellows to think him a tough customer, like Smithy! It's all gammon!"

"I shouldn't wonder!" agreed Bob.

Whether it was gammon or not, Billy Bunter was sticking to his story. The glory, such as it was, of being the boldest and baddest

ragger ever known at Greyfriars School was Bunter's.

Bunter was some lad. Bunter was a wild and reckless fellow, who did not care a boiled bean for the beaks, the Head included! Bunter was, as it were, carrying on the tradition left by the expelled Bounder. In the Rag, Bunter was surrounded by an excited crowd listening to details of his daring and desperate exploit—details which the fat Owl invented as he went along.

Bunter, for once, was the goods.

Bunter was the fellow who had done what no other fellows, howsoever reckless, would have ventured to do—even the Bounder, before he was sacked!

Bunter was a bold, bad ragger—a devil of a fellow—in danger of the sack, and not caring a hang for the danger. That was the character in which the fat and fatuous Owl fancied himself. Now he was getting away with it!

When the dinner-bell rang, there was quite a swagger about Bunter as he rolled away to Hall. A bold, bad ragger was entitled to a spot of swank!

Temple of the Fourth tapped him on a fat shoulder en route.

"I say, was it really you?" whispered Temple.

Bunter smirked. The news was getting out—fellows in other Forms were learning what a devil of a fellow Bunter was!

"What do you think?" smiled Bunter.

"Well, dash it, you've got a nerve, dash it!" said Temple.

"That's a thing I've never been short of!" drawled Bunter.

He rolled on, feeling rather like the ancient gentleman in Horace, who was like to strike the stars with his sublime head. Cecil Reginald Temple, the captain of the Fourth, had told him that he had got a nerve, dash it! This was glory!

Neither was this all. As the Remove went into Hall, Hobson of the Shell dropped a whispered inquiry into a fat ear.

"Did you—?" began Hobby.

"Didn't I?" grinned Bunter complacently.

"You smudged all that paint over your beak's study!" breathed Hobson.

"Sort of!" admitted Bunter.

"By gum, you take the whole cake!" said Hobson. "I'd do the same for Acid Drop, only I don't want to be sacked!"

"Who cares?" said Bunter breezily.

"Well, you're the limit!" said Hobby.

Never had Billy Bunter felt so bold and so bad. In a lucid interval, as it were, he wondered who on earth really had plastered that paint all over Lamb's study.

Whoever it was, he was keeping it very dark—it was safe for Bunter to lay claim to the exploit. Nobody had been found out—nobody was going to be found out—this was getting glory on cheap terms—being a devil of a fellow with no risk attached! That suited Billy Bunter admirably!

Even the expelled Bounder had never done anything quite so wild and reckless as this in his time at Greyfriars. Bunter had—at least, nearly everybody believed that he had—and Hobson, the captain of the Shell, had called him the limit.

Billy Bunter, as he rolled to the Remove table, swelled with such importance that he was almost in danger of suffering the fate of the frog in the fable and bursting!

Mr. Lamb, as it happened, was not at the Remove table as usual. A Sixth Form prefect had taken his place there. Which was, perhaps, just as well for Bunter, for there was a good deal of whispering at the table, and fellows at other tables glanced at Bunter, fags of the Third and Second regarding him with open-eyed awe and wonder. Which was pie to Bunter—but no doubt it was just as well for him that the Lamb was not there to observe it.

It had not yet occurred to Bunter's fat brain that all this glory might have the effect of drawing attention to him, with uncomfortable results. That was to occur to him later.

THE MYSTERIOUS WALLET!

"OH!" breathed Vernon-Smith. The Bounder of Greyfriars stood for a moment startled—listening with knitted brows and intent ears.

He was standing in the old Cloister—having, in fact, just clambered in by the ivy. The school were at dinner, and Smithy picked his time carefully for his goings and comings.

As Bob Cherry had remarked, a fellow was liable to get fed up with such quarters as the expelled junior had found in the school. Smithy was a sticker, and he was determined. He was going to stick on at Greyfriars somehow till he had found out Lamb's secret game, whatever it was, and shown him up, getting him, he hoped, sacked, as Smithy had been sucked. But he had to get out of that garret sometimes, and it was safe enough with care and caution.

He had slipped out while the school were in Form unseen, unsuspected. He was returning while they were at dinner. From of old, he knew that spot in the ancient Cloister where it was easy to climb the wall with the aid of the ivy and drop within.

After dropping in, he waited for a few moments to watch and listen—though it was unlikely enough that anyone would wander into the old Cloister at such a time.

A footfall on the old stone flags came to his ears.

Unlikely as it was—impossible as he would have supposed it—someone was walking in the Cloister.

Who the dickens it could be, the Bounder could not guess or imagine. Every man at Greyfriars must be in Hall at dinner-time—it was not some fellow like Loder of the Sixth, or Price of the Fifth, sneaking into a quiet corner for a smoke. Form-masters sometimes walked in the Cloister—but at dinner-time they



"I don't care a boiled bean for that cheeky little beast Lamb!" said Bunter. The door opened suddenly, and Mr. Lamb stepped in. A fat hand grasping a doughnut remained motionless, half-way to the largest mouth in the Remove. Bunter seemed petrified!

sat at the head of their tables in Hall. That footfall was utterly unexpected, and it warned the Bounder that he was not so safe as he supposed.

But he was prompt to act.

He backed away into the cover of a stone pillar—the same, if he had only known it, that had hidden Ferrers Locke the night before.

He listened intently. He was glad that he had acted so swiftly, for the footfall was approaching.

It stopped at last at the end of the Cloister, close by the spot where the Bounder had clambered in a few minutes ago. He realised how narrow his escape from detection had been.

He was safe out of sight now—unless the man, whoever he was, came round that old pillar. If he suspected that anyone was there, he would. But did he? Who was he, anyhow, and why was he there?

The Bounder was puzzled. It looked to him as if someone else had chosen this time to come to that spot when it was certain to be deserted! But why? A fellow could not be breaking bounds at dinner-time! Who else?

He started as a rustling sound came to his ears. It was the rustle of the thick old ivy that clustered on the wall—only three yards from the spot where he stood behind the pillar.

It sounded like a fellow climbing out. Anyhow, if he was handling the ivy, he had his face to the wall—

and, therefore, his back to the Bounder.

Vernon-Smith peered round the stone pillar.

He barely suppressed a gasp at what he saw.

He had a back view of a man stooping by the wall, groping with the full length of his arm under the ivy where it was thickest at the corner where the big buttress jutted.

He could only see the man's back, but he knew Mr. Lamb at a glance. He watched him in wonder.

It was to that spot that he had tracked the man in the greatcoat the previous night; the man he was sure was Lamb. The man had taken the alarm and rushed back, knocking him over in the dark—certainly without knowing whom he had knocked over. But why was he here again—picking this moment when everybody was in the House and no eye could fall on him? He was not going out—he was groping under the ivy! He must have cut dinner in Hall for this very purpose! What did it mean?

The Bounder hardly breathed as he watched.

The arm that was extended under the mass of ivy was withdrawn, and there was something in the hand.

The Bounder saw it—a leather wallet.

His eyes almost popped.

He knew that leather wallet by sight. He had seen it when he had broken open Mr. Lamb's desk in his study—the act for which he had been

expelled. He had known that Lamb had been intensely angered by that wallet having been seen. It had some connection with the man's mysterious secrets.

The man whose back was turned to him rose to his feet. Evidently, that wallet was all that he wanted—that was what he had come for!

Vernon-Smith backed swiftly out of sight, in case he should turn. A faint sound told him that Lamb was thrusting that wallet out of sight under his coat.

The hidden Bounder stood in amazement. For some reason inexplicable to him, Lamb had hidden that leather wallet in that obscure corner. Now he was taking it away from its hiding-place.

It dawned on Smithy why. It was because of the alarm of the previous night.

Had he, the previous night, intended to take that wallet with him when he went? Was that why he had stopped at the wall? But what, in the name of wonder, could it contain? Smithy could not begin to guess.

Whatever it contained, Lamb had evidently decided to remove it from its present hiding-place. That alarm in the night had been enough for him—someone unknown had been on the spot, and the man was caution itself. He would never come that way again, in case of a similar happening. But what was in that mysterious wallet? Vernon-Smith could only wonder.

Receding footfalls came to his ears. Lamb was going. He peered out again, and had a glimpse of the man's back as he disappeared.

"By gum!" breathed the Bounder.

He was deeply puzzled, but his suspicions of the man, though vague, were deeper, sharper than ever. It seemed to Vernon-Smith that he glimpsed guilt behind all this. But of what was the man guilty?

He did not know—he could only make vague guesses. He would have given much to know what were the contents of that mysterious wallet.

He waited a quarter of an hour before he stirred from cover. Lamb was long gone, when the Bounder crept away from the Cloister and made his way cautiously to the back of the House, to regain his hiding-place in the garret.

What was the man's strange secret?

It was a secret of guilt of some kind—the Bounder was sure of it—he was convinced of it. The man who had got him expelled had a guilty secret—he knew it! What it was he did not know and could not guess—but on one point he was grimly determined—he was going to know before Greyfriars School saw the last of him!

AFTER THE FEAST, THE RECKONING!

"NOT Bunter?"

"Yes—Bunter!"

"Cheeky little sweep!" said Coker of the Fifth.

The news was getting to the seniors by tea-time. Potter of the Fifth had heard it from Greene, who had heard it from a man he knew in the Shell, who had been told by a Fourth Form chap, who had had it from a friend in the Remove. Thus did news travel.

"Cheeky, if you like," said Potter. "But what a nerve! From what I hear, the young sweep pinched that paint from Gosling's lodge—pinched it on purpose to paint his beak's study—and told the other fags that it was a box of jam, to keep it dark! Pretty deep!"

"And the prefects haven't spotted him," said Coker, with contempt. "They can't spot anything—they're a lot of duds! A Remove fag paints his beak's study—"

"Shush!" breathed Potter, as Mr. Lamb came out of the House, passing at a short distance.

Lamb, of course, was to hear nothing. Nobody was going—intentionally, at least—to say anything in the hearing of a beak. Though, with so much talk going on, it was very probable that something would be said unintentionally.

"Eh?" Coker did not notice the art master for a moment. "What do you mean, Potter? The pre's ought to have spotted Bunter long ago—he did it on Monday night, and now it's Wednesday afternoon! Think I wouldn't have spotted him if I'd been a pre? I—"

"Dry up!" breathed Potter. "Do you want to get the silly kid sacked?"

"What—" began Coker. "Oh!"

he added as Mr. Lamb dawned on him. And Horace Coker dried up.

Mr. Lamb, in passing, glanced at the two Fifth-Formers. There was a rather grim expression on the Lamb's face as he walked on.

The hunt for the study painter had died down. Prefects had prowled and prowled, but had found out nothing. They were keen enough, especially as the Head was so anxious for that reckless offender to be discovered and properly punished. But what was even the keenest prefect to do without the faintest clue? Mr. Lamb, who was a good deal keener than most prefects had been equally baffled—till now.

But that afternoon Lamb had heard the name of Bunter repeated a good many times. Fellows would be speaking of Bunter, and would stop suddenly if they saw Lamb. But half a dozen times, at least, the Lamb had caught the name of Bunter, and no doubt he had wondered why that fat member of his Form had become such an interesting topic.

Now Coker's loud voice had told him more.

He knew now why Bunter was talked of far and wide—he had, or was believed to have, painted Lamb's study green. Perhaps a suspicion had lingered in the Lamb's mind all the time; after all, Bunter certainly had had the paint. Now, it seemed. Bunter, the study painter, was a general topic. Was it Bunter, after all, who had followed in the footsteps of the expelled Bounder?

Lamb's face was grimly thoughtful as he walked on. As he passed the fountain in the quad a voice floated to him from the other side—the voice of James Hobson of the Shell.

"Some lad, that man Bunter of the Remove!"

"But did he—" It was Hoskins' voice.

"Oh, it's O.K.! I asked Bunter himself just before tiffin. I—" James Hobson's voice died out as he spotted Lamb.

A group of Shell fellows remained silent till the art master was gone.

Mr. Lamb walked into the House. His lips were tightly compressed.

The inevitable had happened—not, of course, foreseen by Billy Bunter, when he had jumped at that glorious chance of getting the reputation of a devil of a fellow, who did not care a hang for the danger of expulsion.

So much talk on the subject had been bound, sooner or later, to reach official ears. Now it had reached them!

Mr. Lamb threw open the door of the Rag to see whether Bunter was there. He wanted Bunter. The lazy voice of Lord Mauleverer was audible as he did so.

"Gammon! Nothin' in it!"

"You're a silly ass, Mauly," said Skinner. "I jolly well knew it was Bunter all along—and now he owns up to it!"

Sudden silence as Mr. Lamb was seen at the door.

The art master glanced round over the gold-rimmed glasses slanting on his nose.

"Is not Bunter here?" bleated the Lamb. "Where is Bunter?"

Wanted by the Police . . .

Wanted for over a year by the police, Jim Valentine, the boy forger, enters Greyfriars to make good. Determined not to lose the "boy with a past," Jim's rascally associates cunningly set to work to blacken the boy's name at Greyfriars and thereby drive him from the school. You'll thoroughly enjoy this super-school story of Harry Wharton & Co., of Greyfriars.



THE BOY WITH A PAST!

A Book-Length School Yarn
by famous FRANK RICHARDS

Two other school yarns you'll enjoy—
No. 401: *Cock o' the Walk!*
by Martin Clifford
No. 402: *The Rebels' Victory!*
by Edwy Searles Brooks

No
400

SCHOOLBOYS' OWN LIBRARY

IF YOUR NEWSAGENT HAS NOT A COPY IN STOCK ASK HIM TO ORDER ONE FOR YOU!

4½
EACH

"Up in the studies, I think, sir," answered Skinner.

"Thank you, Skinner!"

Mr. Lamb left the Rag, leaving a dozen fellows staring at one another. They fancied they could guess why the Lamb wanted Bunter.

"That fat ass has got spotted!" murmured Skinner. "Lamb's on his track—you can see that!"

"Poor old Bunter!" said Hazel. "He should have gone on keeping it dark—he did at first."

"Oh, he couldn't help swanking about it!" grinned Skinner. "By gum, though—fancy two men sacked from the Form in one term! Bunter won't be here to-morrow!"

Mr. Lamb—with very little doubt in his mind now, if any—ascended the staircase to the Remove studies.

Three or four fellows on the Remove landing were talking, and suddenly ceased to do so as the art master came in sight. The Lamb could guess now what had been the subject under discussion.

He passed them and went up the Remove passage, heading for Bunter's study—No. 7. But he did not walk so far as Study No. 7—a fat squeak floating out of Study No. 1 stopped him. In that study the Famous Five were at tea—and it seemed that they had a distinguished guest!

"I say, you fellows, it wanted some nerve, I can tell you!"

The door was a foot open. That fat and fatuous squeak came to Mr. Lamb's ears with the greatest distinctness.

"Yes—if you did it!" came Harry Wharton's voice.

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Well, did you?" grunted Johnny Bull.

"You jolly well know I did!" came an angry squeak. "Didn't I bag that paint from Gosling's lodge? Who do you think did it if I didn't? Think I'm afraid of Lamb? Blow Lamb!"

Mr. Lamb stood in the passage, his face growing grimmer and grimmer.

"Fat lot I care for Lamb!" went on Bunter. "I'd do it again as soon as look at him! Who's afraid of Lamb, I'd like to know?"

"You are, you fat fraud, if he could hear you!" said Bob Cherry.

"Yah! You fellows may be afraid of Lamb," said Bunter contemptuously—"not me! I've a jolly good mind to paint his new study, same as I painted the old one—and so I jolly well will if I have any more of his old buck! I don't care a boiled bean for that cheeky little beast Lamb!"

The door of Study No. 1 was pushed open.

Mr. Lamb stepped in.

"Oh!" gasped the Famous Five together.

They jumped to their feet.

Billy Bunter did not! He remained as if glued to his chair. A fat hand grasping a doughnut remained motionless, half-way to the largest mouth in the Remove! Bunter seemed petrified. There was a big gap in that doughnut, where Bunter had already taken an extensive bite. He did not take another. The doughnut remained suspended, like Mahomet's coffin, between the heavens

and the earth. Bunter was paralysed.

He knew that Lamb must have heard him. His fat brain fairly swam.

He had stated that he did not care a boiled bean for Lamb! Judging by his look now, he cared many boiled beans—whole bushels of them.

"Bunter!" said Mr. Lamb quietly.

"Oh lor'!" gasped Bunter.

"Follow me at once!"

"I—I—I never—" moaned Bunter.

Mr. Lamb glanced round at the dismayed faces of the Famous Five. His look was hard and grim.

"I conclude," he said icily, "that it is common knowledge in the lower school that Bunter was guilty of the outrage in my study on Monday night."

Harry Wharton & Co. made no reply.

There was no denying the fact. It was common knowledge, not only in the lower school, but in a good deal of the upper school. Nearly all Greyfriars was talking of Bunter's exploit. Lamb, evidently, was aware of it—the hapless fat Owl's swank had come home to roost, as it were.

"Bunter, follow me at once!" said Mr. Lamb. "I shall take you to your headmaster. I—"

"Oh crikey! I—I never did it, sir!" gasped Bunter. "I—I don't know who did, sir; but I never—"

"What! I have just heard you say that you did!"

"Oh lor'! I—I—I meant that I—I—I never!" gasped Bunter. "I—I mean, that was only a—a figure of speech, sir. What I—I really meant was that I—I never had anything to do with it, sir."

If Billy Bunter had had a reputation for telling nothing but the frozen truth, Mr. Lamb would hardly have believed that statement. But Billy Bunter's reputation was far otherwise. Certainly the Lamb did not think for a moment of believing him.

"Follow me!" he rapped. "You will be expelled, Bunter!"

Yell from Bunter:

"I—I—I say, I—I—I never—"

"You will be expelled, as Vernon-Smith was expelled. Now follow me to your headmaster's study!"

It was not a bold, bad Bunter that limped out of the study after the art master. It was a deflated, dismal, doleful, terrified Bunter, limping along with his fat knees knocking together, and an expression on his fat face that might have moved a heart of stone.

Boldness and badness had completely evaporated. Like Lucifer Son of the Morning, Billy Bunter had fallen from his high estate, and great was the fall thereof. He fairly crawled after Mr. Lamb to the Head's study. Harry Wharton & Co., forgetful of tea, were left looking at one another in silent consternation.

BUNTER BUNKED!

"BUNKED!"

"Ow!"

"Sacked!"

"Yow-ow!"

"Give it a

name!"

"Wow!"

A crowd of Remove fellows waited on the landing for Billy Bunter's return. They all spoke at once when the fat Owl crawled into view again.

Bunter's replies were not very intelligible. But his looks spoke volumes.

Never had the fat face of William George Bunter worn an expression so utterly dismal, doleful, and deplorable. It was plain that the chopper had come down.

"Is it the sack, you fat ass?" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"Oh lor'! I—I never did it!" wailed Bunter. "I told the Head I never did. I don't know why he wouldn't believe me. Oh lor'! He—he—he says I'm sacked! Fancy that, you fellows! Me, you know?"

"What on earth did you expect?" asked Hazel. "Didn't you know you'd be sacked for it, if you were found out?"

"I never did it!" moaned Bunter.

"Oh, draw it mild!" grinned Skinner. "You've been bragging all day that you did."

"Beast!" moaned Bunter. "I—I never! I told the Head I never! He seemed to think I had done it, because Lamb told him I said I had."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors were sympathetic. They were sorry for poor old Bunter getting bunked like this. But, really, they could not blame the beaks for taking him at his own word.

Billy Bunter had been swanking all that day as a bold bad ragger, who didn't care a boiled bean for beaks, and didn't worry a hang about the sack. It was rather too late for him to declare that he hadn't done it.

Lamb could hardly want any evidence more conclusive than Bunter's own statement on the subject, neither could the Head. Really and truly, a fellow could hardly complain of being condemned on his own evidence.

"Oh, cackle!" moaned Bunter. "I never did it!"

"You said you did, you howling ass!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"Well, I—I may have said so," moaned the unhappy fat Owl. "But—but—but I—I never! It was a—a—a joke, really."

"Did you tell the Head that?" asked Bob.

"Yes. I told him I only said it for a joke, and I told him that I never said it at all, but—but he didn't believe me."

"I wonder why?" remarked Johnny Bull sarcastically.

"That's what I can't make out!" groaned Bunter. "I mean to say, 'tain't as if I was untruthful like some fellows."

"Eh?"

(Continued on next page.)

GREAT FUN FOR YOU AND YOUR CHUMS

8/6 DOWN brings a Riley "Home" Billiard Table, carriage paid. **7 DAYS' FREE TRIAL.** Balance monthly. Write to-day for free illustrated catalogue.



E. J. RILEY, LTD.,
Belmont Works, Acerrington, or
Dept. 30, 46-47, Newgate Street,
London, E.C.1.

"I mean, if it was one of you chaps, it would be different; but I think the Head ought to take my word. This wouldn't have happened if Quelch had been here," moaned Bunter. "I wish now that old Quelch never had been kidnapped. It seemed rather a catch at first; but I wish now it had never happened. Old Quelch would stick up for a chap. That beast Lamb is down on me like a ton of bricks. I believe he thought it was me all along, because I had the paint; and I told him I never took it, and that I thought it was jam when I took it——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Cackle!" moaned Bunter. "I've got it in the neck. The Head says I'm sacked. That's what they call justice here!"

"You blithering chump!" said Peter Todd. "What do you expect the Head to think, when you said yourself that you did it?"

"Beast!"

Billy Bunter leaned on the banisters of the landing, and groaned.

He did not look some lad now. Temple of the Fourth would never have remarked now that he had got a nerve; neither would Hobson of the Shell have said that he was the limit. The unfortunate fat Owl crumpled up under the disaster he had brought on himself.

"When are you going?" asked Bob.

Groan from Bunter.

"The Head says I'm to go and pack my box. He says there's a train to-day. I'm to take it. I—I—I say, you fellows——" Bunter blinked round at the crowd of faces with a faint hope. "I say, d-d-do you think he was just—just joking?"

"Oh crumbs!"

"Hardly!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's about time for the fellow who did it to own up," remarked Lord Mauleverer. "That fat chump has asked for it—begged and prayed for it—but he never painted Lamb's study."

"Rot!" said Skinner. "I knew all along that he did!"

"I suppose he knew whether he did it or not, Mauly," said Squiff. "He's been telling everybody that he did."

"He never did!" said Mauly, shaking his head.

"I—I—I say, Mauly, was it you?" asked Bunter eagerly. "If it was, you ought to own up."

"Oh gad! No, old man!" gasped Lord Mauleverer.

"Well, look here, if it was you——"

"It wasn't, ass!"

"I fancy it was," said Bunter. "You say you know it wasn't me—well, then, how could you know, if it wasn't you? You ought to own up. I say, you fellows, you make Mauly own up, if he did it!"

"You howlin' ass!" gasped Lord Mauleverer.

"You can call me names," said Bunter hotly, "but I think it's pretty mean to let a fellow get it in the neck like this when you did it."

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,674.

"You burbling chump, Mauly never did it!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Eh? Was it you, Cherry?"

"Me? Oh, my hat!"

"Well, if you're so jolly certain that it wasn't Mauly——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You blethering, blithering, benighted bandersnatch!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "Try to tell the truth for once—did you do it, or not?"

"No!" howled Bunter. "Did you?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Wharton gave the fat Owl a fixed, searching look.

He had had strong doubts of the fat junior's claim to be a bold, bad ragger on Smithy's lines. Certainly Bunter looked anything but a bold, bad ragger now.

But if the fat Owl, as he now declared, was not guilty, Wharton knew who the wanted man really was.

He quietly left the crowd on the landing, and went up the Remove passage.

If, as he had suspected, the culprit was the hidden Bounder, there was a chance for Bunter yet—if Vernon-Smith was still within the walls of Greyfriars School.

Leaving the other fellows crowded round the unfortunate Owl on the landing, the captain of the Remove hurried up the passage, and ran up the box-room stair.

He stopped at the door of the disused garret, and turned the door-handle. If Smithy was back in his secret quarters that door would be locked again. It was locked.

Harry Wharton tapped lightly.

There was no sound from the garret. He stooped and whispered through the keyhole:

"Smithy! It's Wharton here—all safe! For goodness' sake open the door, if you're there, Smithy!"

There was a pause; then the key clicked on the inside of the lock and the door opened.

SOMETHING LIKE A SURPRISE!

HERBERT VERNON-SMITH looked out—with a black scowl on his brow. His eyes gleamed, at the captain of the Remove.

"You fool!" he muttered.

Wharton drew a deep breath of relief. Smithy was there again—he had not, after all, gone for good.

"You fool!" repeated the Bounder, in low, savage tones. "What have you come here for? I knew you'd spotted me. Haven't you sense enough to keep clear and leave a fellow alone?"

"Yes; but——"

"Get out of it, then! Keep clear and hold your silly tongue!" snapped the Bounder.

"I've kept clear—and I've held my tongue!" answered Harry Wharton quietly. "But I must speak to you now, Smithy! Look here, was it you who painted Lamb's study on Monday night?"

"You've guessed that, have you?" sneered the Bounder.

"Yes, I guessed it—I thought it was Bunter at first, but I soon guessed. You got the paint from his study—it was you?"

"Well, what about it?" snapped Vernon-Smith. "That's only the beginning—I'm going to make Lamb tired of life before I'm through with him. You're not going to give me away, I suppose?"

"Bunter's up for it!"

"What rot! What silly idiot fancies that Bunter had the nerve to do it?" snapped Vernon-Smith contemptuously.

"The fat ass has been bragging that he did it!"

"Oh gad!"

"He fancied it was safe, as nobody was found out—now he's nailed on his own fatheaded brag! He's sacked!"

"Sacked!" repeated Smithy blankly. "Bunter sacked! Well, it won't be much loss to anybody!"

Harry Wharton looked at him.

"You can't let that silly idiot get it in the neck, Smithy, old man," he said. "A word from you will see him clear."

The Bounder set his lips.

"And give up my game here—chuck it all up because that fat fool chooses to play the giddy ox? No fear! I'm here to watch Lamb—I'm going to land him—I'm going to get him kicked out of Greyfriars, as he got me kicked out!" said the Bounder savagely. "And I can tell you I've got on to something, too—I know more about him than I did! That man's breaking the law somehow—I don't know how yet, but I know that much!"

"Never mind Lamb now——"

"I'm here for Lamb!" snarled the Bounder. "Think I like camping in a mouldy old garret? I'm here till I get Lamb! That fat fool can take what's coming to him!"

"You can't do it, Smithy!" said the captain of the Remove quietly. "You know you can't, without my telling you!"

The Bounder gave him a black look.

There was a long moment of silence. Then, without speaking, Herbert Vernon-Smith stepped out of the garret.

Wharton did not speak; he knew what that meant. At any cost to the success of his vengeful plans, the Bounder of Greyfriars could not let the fat and fatuous Owl take the consequences of what he had done. His brow was black, his eyes glinting with savage temper; but he knew what he had to do, and what he was going to do. He came out of the garret slowly; but he came.

He paused outside the door. He seemed to hesitate.

"This knocks it on the head!" he muttered. "If I let out that I've been here, the game will be up—I shall have to clear!"

"It's the right thing, Smithy!" said Wharton quietly.

"Oh, rats!" snarled Smithy.

He paused—but not for long. Then he tramped down the box-room stair, and Harry Wharton followed him down.

Vernon-Smith was scowling as he tramped down the Remove passage to the landing at the end. But the scowl left his face and he grinned sardonically at the stare of utter amazement that greeted him when he arrived on the Remove landing.

"Smithy!" yelled a dozen voices.

"Oh gad!" exclaimed Lord Maulverer. "Smithy!"

"Smithy here!" gasped Skinner.

"I—I—I say, you fellows, it's Smithy!" stuttered Billy Bunter, his eyes almost popping through his spectacles in astonishment.

"Smithy!" exclaimed Tom Redwing. He ran towards his chum. "Smithy, old man, how—where—how—"

"It's me—not my ghost, old bean!" grinned the Bounder. "You men didn't know that you've been entertainin' an angel unawares, what?"

"But what—how—" gasped Redwing blankly.

He was utterly amazed by the unexpected sight of his chum in the school from which he had been expelled the week before.

"I couldn't tear myself away from Lamb!" said the Bounder airily. "You know how fond I am of Lamb!"

"How long have you been here?" gasped Peter Todd.

"Since last Saturday!"

"Oh crumbs! Then—was it you—"

"Exactly!"

"I say, you fellows, I shouldn't wonder if it was Smithy painted Lamb's study, as he's here!" squeaked Billy Bunter.

"What a brain!" said Smithy. "Fancy Bunter guessing that!"

"You beast, I've got expelled for it!" yelled Bunter.

"Serve you jolly well right!"

"Why, you—you—you beast—"

"And why have you shown up now, Smithy?" asked Skinner. "Nobody knew you were here. Why—"

"Oh, I've got tired of that garret," drawled the Bounder, "and I want a chat with the Head—always enjoy a pow-wow with the old bean! Sorry I can't stop—I've got to go down to see the jolly old Beak! I'll kick Bunter before I go!"

"Yaroo! You stop kicking me, you beast!" roared Bunter. "Why, you rotter, you kick me again, and I'll—yaroooooooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Bounder, with his hands in his pockets, strolled across the landing to the stairs.

All eyes followed him. On the study landing, three or four Fifth Form men stared at him blankly. On the staircase, Temple of the Fourth almost fell over at the sight of him. A buzz of voices followed him—and another buzz from below greeted him as he appeared.

"Is—is—is that Vernon-Smith?"

It was the Lamb's voice.

Mr. Lamb, at the foot of the staircase, was talking with Mr. Prout. Both the masters stared at Smithy—they almost goggled at him.

"Amazing!" boomed Prout. "What is this boy doing here? This boy has

COME INTO THE OFFICE, BOYS AND GIRLS!

Your Editor is always pleased to hear from his readers. Write to him: Editor of the MAGNET, The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House, Farringdon St., London, E.C.4.

TWO letters I have read this morning, coming from readers living miles away from one another, and both keen readers of the MAGNET at that, make me realise more than ever how careful an Editor must be in his selection of stories. The first correspondent likes the series of yarns of the "gay dogs"—like Vernon-Smith, Hazeldene, and Skinner & Co. These characters, he says, are really true to life, and Mr. Richards is at his very best when writing stories around them. The yarns starring Bunter, my chum says, are very funny, but not quite so satisfying. Be that as it may, the answer to my chum is that a fat and fatuous personage like William George Bunter is highly entertaining. Correspondent No. 2 states with great enthusiasm his fondness for the lighter, humorous yarns with Billy Bunter "getting up to his funny tricks." He states that he prefers these to the serious stories featuring the scapegrace Bounder Vernon-Smith, Hazeldene's temptations, and the caddish antics of Skinner & Co. Nevertheless, these two chums assure me that they read every MAGNET yarn, whether it is about their favourites or not. If we had no other type of school story each week but a serious yarn, or the opposite, a "Bunterish" one, the MAGNET wouldn't stand so high in the fiction world as it does to-day. Variety, after all, is the spice of life. Still,

been expelled! What is he doing here?"

"Vernon-Smith!" stuttered Lamb.

"It—it—it is you!"

"Sort of!" drawled the Bounder.

"Did you like the style of painting in your study, Lamb? I'll give it another coat some other time!"

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

The crowd of juniors staring down over the banisters chortled.

Herbert Vernon-Smith walked away, Lamb staring after him as if petrified. A buzz, or, rather, a roar of amazement, followed the Bounder as he went. Smithy's game was up! But Smithy loved the limelight, and perhaps the sensation caused by his unexpected reappearance in the school was a consolation to him.

GONE!

TAP!

"Come in!" said Dr. Locke. The door of the Head's study opened.

Dr. Locke gave an almost convulsive jump! His eyes seemed to bulge from his majestic countenance as the

I'm grateful for these two friendly letters.

The next letter comes from E. Parkington, of Horsham, who wants me to tell him how to make shoes waterproof. His reason for making this request is that he has to cross two fields on his way to school, with the result that the dampness penetrates his shoes. A very excellent remedy, my chum, is to get a tin of dubbin and rub it well into the shoes.

Space is running short, so I cannot reply to any more queries this week, but I must thank the following readers for their kind letters and suggestions: A. J. Wontman (Sussex); John le Vierge (Barnet); E. H. Tritt (Notts); "J. S." (Birkenhead); T. Ward (St. Leonards-on-Sea); A. Sear (Wardrop Place); and B. Bennett (Stoke).

Looking forward to next week's yarn, chums? Good! Frank Richards has certainly written a real top-notch for you in:

"THE BOUNDER'S TRIUMPH!"

the final yarn in our series telling of Vernon-Smith's determination to get even with his enemy, Mr. Lamb, the mystery master of the Remove. Up to now, Ferrers Locke has been no match for the cunning crook, but where the Baker Street detective has failed, Smithy resolves to succeed. As this is one of the best yarns our popular author has yet given us, I strongly advise all "Magnetites" to slip along to their newsagent at the first opportunity and ask him to reserve a copy of next Saturday's MAGNET. You'll feel like kicking yourself if you miss this smashing yarn of Greyfriars.

YOUR EDITOR.

Bounder of Greyfriars walked into his study.

Never had the headmaster of Greyfriars School been so astonished. He stared at Herbert Vernon-Smith with almost unbelieving eyes.

Smithy gave him a cool nod.

"How's things, old bean?" he asked.

"Wha-a-t?" stuttered the Head.

He rose from his chair in wrath.

"Vernon-Smith! How dare you come here! You have been expelled from this school! How dare you enter its precincts! I cannot understand how you have been admitted! I—"

"My dear old bean—"

"Wha-a-t?"

"My dear old bean, I've been here for days—parked in a garret!" drawled the Bounder. "I'm goin' now, unless you'd like me to stay and give Lamb's study another coat of paint!"

"What! Was it you?" gasped the Head.

"Guessed it in one!" agreed the Bounder. "I painted Lamb's study, old tulip, and I'd have done the same to his new study, but—"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,674.

"You—you have been here—you have been concealed in the House—you—you—you were guilty of that outrage in Mr. Lamb's study—"

"Right on the nail! I'd give him a few more attentions, if I had time, but I judge from your look that you're rather keen to speed the parting guest—what?" drawled Smithy.

"Bless my soul! I—I—"

There was a hurried footstep in the passage.

Mr. Lamb, almost breathless, shot into the study.

"Dr. Locké! That boy—Vernon-Smith—he has had the audacity—"

"He is here, Mr. Lamb! He has confessed that it was he who perpetrated the outrage in your study indeed, I should have known as much,

had I been aware that he was concealed in the school! I—"

"I will remove him, sir!"

"Pray do so at once, Mr. Lamb! I have never heard of such impudence such audacity—such effrontery! Take him away at once!"

Lamb stepped towards the Bounder. His face was grim, and his eyes glinting. He did not look much like the Pet Lamb now.

"Hands off, Lamb!" said the Bounder coolly. "I'm goin'. I only came in to chin for a minute with the old bean!"

"Remove him!" gasped the Head.

Mr. Lamb grasped the Bounder by the shoulder and led him to the door.

At the door, Vernon-Smith suddenly turned on the art master, grasped him, and hooked his leg! So suddenly was it done, that Mr. Lamb went over before he knew what was happening.

Bump!

"Oh!" gasped the Head, as the art master sprawled backwards and landed on the carpet with a heavy bump.

"Ow!" roared Mr. Lamb.

The Bounder grinned in at the doorway, at the sprawling art master, and the gasping Head, for a moment. Then he was gone. And a roar of voices and laughter from the quad showed that nearly all Greyfriars was seeing the Bounder off!

Billy Bunter, after all, was not bunked.

Bunter, in spite of his own assertions, hadn't painted the Lamb's study. All Greyfriars knew now that the Bounder had been hidden in the school ever since he had been expelled, and that he had done it! It was the biggest sensation of the term at Greyfriars—Smithy's name was on every tongue; and, if he was gone at last, he had left his old school plenty to remember him by.

"But is he gone?" Bob Cherry asked with a chuckle. "Old Smithy's a sticker—no end of a sticker! My beloved 'ears, you can bank on it that we haven't seen the last of Smithy here and Lamb hasn't seen the last of him!"

Which proved quite an accurate prediction!

THE END.

(The final yarn in this popular series is entitled "THE BOUNDER'S TRIUMPH". Watch out for it in next Saturday's MAGNET, chums!).

"MAGNET" PEN PALS

A free feature which brings together readers all over the world for the purpose of exchanging views on matters of mutual interest. If you wish to reply to a notice published here you must write to the Pen Pal direct. Notices for publication should be accompanied by the coupon on this page, and posted to the MAGNET Pen Pals, Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

A. Westmorland, 117, Shirley Road Southampton, Hants; 15-16; stamps, magazines, films, and books.

A. Graves, 37, Portfields Road, Tolladine, Worcester; aviation and naval pictures; all letters answered promptly.

R. Cunningham, 15, Bedford Street, Stockbridge, Edinburgh; 10-13; swimming, reading, films, football, and aviation.

Miss E. Spencer, 38, Shetline Lane, Tong Street, Dudley Hill, Bradford, Yorks; 16-18; snapshots, cycling, and swimming; Scotland or South of England.

L. Hollidge, 22, Howbury Road, Nunhead, S.E.15; girl correspondents anywhere.

F. Groves, 74, Hampden Crescent, Harrow Road, Paddington, W.2; stamps, reading, and photos; England only.

Miss E. Grimshaw, 292, Tong Street, Dudley Hill, Bradford, Yorks; 15-18; hobbies, film stars, swimming, cycling, and snapshots; Scotland or U.S.A.

Miss P. Eastlake, Belle Vue House, Tenby, Wales; 16-19; books, films, swimming, and general topics; anywhere.

A. T. W. Kiehy, R.E., B. Coy, A.T.S. Boys, Chatham, Kent; 15-17; films, books, and general topics; anywhere; all letters answered.

J. Harding, 29, Guildford Street, Chertsey, Surrey; girl correspondents; films, dance music, and general topics; all letters answered.

Mr. Mendelsohn, 5424, Hutchison Street, Montreal, Que., Canada; 14 upwards; stamps and newspapers; all letters answered.

R. Aistle, 386, Barking Road, East Ham, E.8; 17-20; anything; anywhere.

H. R. Hudson, 75, Norwood, Beverley, Yorkshire; 18-35; books, writing, theatre, and films; not British Isles.

K. Binnington, 67, Woodhouse Road, Doncaster; 12-16; stamps, picture post-cards, and films; anywhere; all letters answered.

W. Parkinson, South View, Park Road, Hale, Cheshire; 10-12; languages.

D. A. Hardy, 4, Derby Road, Burton-on-Trent, Staffs; 14-16; stamps, aeroplanes, and ships; anywhere; all letters answered.

D. Bacon, 104, Swannington Street, Burton-on-Trent; 12-14; riding, nature study, and stamps; Australia.

Miss M. Horrocks, 45, Larchview Road, Moorclose, Middleton, near Manchester; 15; girl correspondents; anything; anywhere except British Isles.

J. Delnero, 10a, Walton Street, Exford; 15-17; painting, football, and films; anywhere.

D. Segal, 183, Vaughan Road, Toronto, Ontario, Canada; 14-16; tropical fish, model aeroplanes, building, and stamps; anywhere except North America.

T. J. Arlidge, 32, Bowling Green Lane, Clerkenwell, E.C.1; 10-12; Royal Navy and art; anywhere.

S. Wilkinson, 18, Bellingham Road, Kendal, Westmorland; 15-16; chemistry, books, sports and stamps; British Isles; all letters answered.

F. G. Stevens, "St. Margarets," Green Lane (5), Catherington, Portsmouth, Hants; 14-15; sports and general topics; British Empire or U.S.A.

I. Cullen, 15, Dixon Road, Crosshill, Glasgow; 13-14; scouting, camping, general topics; New Zealand, Australia, Canada.

P. Osborne, 339, Unthank Road, Norwich; girl correspondents; 16-19; hobbies, model aeroplanes, and flying; Norfolk district.

D. N. Carter, 22, Westbourne Grove, Darlington, Co. Durham; aeroplanes, pets, and stamps.

R. Gibson, 77, Washway Road, Sale, Manchester; 14-16; U.S.A. or Canada.

A. S. Grater, 85, Shakespeare Avenue, Wells, Bath, Somerset; 12-16; stamps, science, aviation, or films; anywhere; all letters answered.

Miss J. Cooper, 27, Orchard Avenue, Windsor Lane, Burnham, Bucks; 12-14; stamps, pets, and general topics; anywhere except England.

W. M. Brown, 3, East Avenue, Gt. Sankey, Warrington, Lancs; 11-13; stamps and general topics; Canada and U.S.A.

G. Smith, 40, Beasham Avenue, Gateshead, Co. Durham; 14-16; stamps and general topics; anywhere except British Isles.

Miss A. Rolfe, "St. Heliers," Upland, Horley, Surrey; 11-13; film stars and general topics; anywhere; all letters answered.

J. Brooks, 15, Cypress Terrace, Bentley, near Doncaster; stamps, cigarette cards, and aviation; anywhere.

A. Salkow, "Withok," P.O. Glenroy Rail, Transvaal, S. Africa; sports and general topics; anywhere; all letters answered.

M. C. Clifford, 209, Westcombe Hill, Blackheath, S.E.3; boy correspondents; 12-14; films, reading, and animals; British Empire and U.S.A.

MAGNET
PEN PALS' COUPON
16-3-40



- FOR ONLY 1d

that's
Milky Way



HAVE YOU A RED NOSE?

Send a stamp and you will learn how to rid yourself of such a terrible affliction free of charge.

Address in confidence: T. J. TEMPLE, Specialist, 32, "Commerce House," 72, Oxford Street, LONDON, W.1. (Age 39 years)

When Answering Advertisements Please Mention This Paper.

86 PACKET FREE, incl. 25 BRITISH Colonials, SELANGOR, Philippines, Trinidad, Airmail, ANZAC, 50 diff. Horse-man, St. Pierre, Nioucolon, Encluse 2d, postage; request approvals. — ROBINSON BROS. (A), MORETON, WIRRAL.

BE TALLER!

Inches put you Miles Ahead! Increased my own height 10 6ft. 5ins. Details 6d. Stamp. — MALCOLM ROSS, Height Specialist, Scarborough.

GT 29

Printed in England and published every Saturday by the Proprietors, The Ambigram Press, Ltd., The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Advertisement offices: The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Registered for transmission by Canadian Magazine Post. Subscription rates: Annual and Abroad, 11s. per annum; Six 6d. for six months. Sole Agents for Australia and New Zealand: Messrs. Gordon & Gotch, Ltd.; and for South Africa: Central News Agency, Ltd. — Saturday, March 16th, 1940.

LI.

master's study has been painted—or, rather, drenched—with green paint. The boy who has done this must have left his dormitory during the night and descended to Mr. Lamb's study to carry out this extraordinary prank. That boy will be expelled from Greyfriars—he will leave the school this morning!"

Dead silence.

"I shall question you first, Bunter." said Dr. Locke. "There appears to be some reason to believe that paint—green paint—in large quantities was in your possession yesterday."

"Oh, no, sir!" gasped Bunter. "I never went near Gosling's lodge yesterday, sir. I—I was quite surprised when he came to the Form-room and said that the paint was gone."

Mr. Lamb gave him a look.

"I dismissed the matter yesterday, sir," he said, "as there appeared to be no definite proof, and it seemed improbable to me that any boy would remove a quantity of paint from the porter's lodge. I could not imagine any use to which it could be put by a Remove boy. Now, however—"

"Now," said the Head, "it is only too clear to what use it was intended to be put. Bunter, you say that you did not go near Gosling's lodge yesterday—"

"Nowhere near it, sir!"

"Did you not tell me, Mr. Lamb, that Bunter gave the porter a message which caused him to leave his lodge for a time?"

"I did, sir," said Mr. Lamb grimly.

"Oh! I—I only wanted to oblige Gosling, sir!" groaned Bunter.

"I—I'm such an obliging chap, sir—I'm always doing these good-natured things."

"I warn you to speak the truth, Bunter," said the Head sternly.

"Oh, yes, sir! I—I always do, sir! I—I can't ever remember having done anything else, sir!"

"What a memory!" murmured Skinner; and the silence in the Remove was broken for a moment by a suppressed chuckle.

"Bunter! You have said that you went nowhere near the porter's lodge—"

"Nowhere at all, sir. I was up in my study at the time."

"You admit that you gave him a message!" exclaimed the Head.

"That was only to oblige him, sir!"

"Bless my soul!" said Dr. Locke, gazing at that remarkable member of the Remove, "are you impenetrably stupid, Bunter?"

"Yes, sir. I—I mean, no, sir! C-can I go back to my place now, sir?" asked Bunter anxiously.

"You have admitted," said the Head sternly, "that you went to Gosling's lodge. You gave him a spurious message. While he was absent—a matter of only a few minutes—the paint was taken away. There can be no doubt, Bunter, that it was taken by you."

"It wasn't, sir—I mean I never—that is, I didn't!" gasped Bunter. "I—I couldn't have carried the box, sir—it was too heavy. You can ask Wharton, sir—he knows I couldn't get it past the middle landing."

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,674.

"Wha-a-t?"

"And the other fellows, sir—Bull and Cherry, and Nugent, and Inky—they all know!" gasped Bunter. "It was too jolly heavy for me—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!" exclaimed the Head. "Then you admit, Bunter, that you took away the box of paint and conveyed it as far as a landing in the House—"

"Oh! No, I never touched it!" howled Bunter.

"Upon my word!"

"The matter appears to be clear, sir!" said Mr. Lamb.

"Quite!" said the Head.

"Obviously, Bunter abstracted the paint from Gosling's lodge, and no doubt placed it in concealment, as it was not found in his study. From his own words, it appears that other boys saw him in the act of taking it into the House. It is clear that that is the paint that was used to disfigure your study last night, and—"

"It wasn't me, sir!" shrieked Bunter. "I never took that box, and I never left it in my study, and some body else took it away while I was downstairs, too. Mr. Lamb knows, sir—he looked for it and it wasn't there. And I asked a lot of fellows to take it back, only they wouldn't—and I'd have taken it back myself, only if I had, Gosling would have made out that I had prigged it—and I didn't. I never touched it at all!"

"Say no more, you stupid and untruthful boy!" said Dr. Locke. "The matter is quite clear now, and for such an offence—"

"I never—" moaned Bunter.

Harry Wharton exchanged a glance with his friends. It was settled, in the Head's mind, that Bunter had annexed that paint—as, indeed, he had. As it was the same paint that had been daubed over Lamb's study, he could not doubt that Bunter had taken it for that purpose. The thing seemed absolutely conclusive. But there was a point in Bunter's favour of which the obtuse and terrified Owl had not thought.

"May I speak, sir?" asked Harry.

Dr. Locke glanced at him.

"Certainly, Wharton, if you know anything about this matter!"

"I think I ought to tell you, sir, that Bunter did not know that there was paint in the box when he took it," said Harry. "What he may have done since, I don't know—but he never took that paint intending to play tricks with it in Mr. Lamb's study."

"I do not see how you can know this, Wharton."

"A lot of fellows know, sir! Bunter thought it was jam—"

"Wha-a-t?"

"Jam, sir!"

"What do you mean, Wharton? Are you deliberately wasting my time?"

"He silent! Were other boys present at the time you speak of, Wharton?"

"Yes, sir! A whole crowd!"

"We opened the box for him, sir!" said Bob Cherry. "We all thought it was jam, as Bunter said so—"

"I didn't!"

"We never knew he had snaffled it from Gosling, sir," said Johnny Bull.

"But we all thought it was jam, and Bunter did—"

"I never—"

"Bless my soul!" said the Head. "This places a very different complexion on the matter, Mr. Lamb!"

"Quite so, sir!" agreed Mr. Lamb. "If it is a fact that Bunter did not know that the box contained paint."

"He silent! Were other boys present at the time you speak of, Wharton?"

"Yes, sir! A whole crowd!"

"We opened the box for him, sir!" said Bob Cherry. "We all thought it was jam, as Bunter said so—"

"I didn't!"

"We never knew he had snaffled it from Gosling, sir," said Johnny Bull.

"But we all thought it was jam, and Bunter did—"

"I never—"

"Bless my soul!" said the Head. "This places a very different complexion on the matter, Mr. Lamb!"

"Quite so, sir!" agreed Mr. Lamb. "If it is a fact that Bunter did not know that the box contained paint."

"Bend over and touch your toes, Bunter!"

Billy Bunter had six—all good ones! Considering that he had had a narrow escape of the sack, Bunter really was in luck—but he did not seem to regard himself as a lucky man! Those six swipes were delivered to the accompaniment of six fiendish yells which woke the echoes far and wide—and for quite a long time afterwards Billy Bunter, like Rachel of old, mourned and could not be comforted!

GONE FOR GOOD!

SMITHY?"

"Yes!" said Harry Wharton.

"But—"

The captain of the Remove had a very thoughtful expression on his face when the Form came out after third school. He had been doing some thinking that morning—with the result that he had guessed the solution of the mystery that puzzled all the Remove, as well as their Form-master.

"Look at it!" he went on quietly. "We know that Smithy came back here after he was sacked—we saw him at that garret window on Sunday morning. He can only have come back for one reason—to get on with his feud with Lamb!"

Bob Cherry whistled.

"You think he's still here?" he asked.

"I'm pretty certain he is! And if he is, he doesn't stick in that garret all the time!" said Harry. "He can get out easily enough without being spotted, if he chooses his time. When the school's at meals in Hall, or in class—nobody about to spot him, then."

"Bunter had the paint!" said Johnny Bull.

"It was snaffled from his study while we were at dinner yesterday—that's pretty plain! And Smithy did it!" said Wharton. "I'll bet he jumped at the idea of painting Lamb's study as soon as he saw that cargo of paint."

"He would!" agreed Bob. "I suppose he was wandering about, while the coast was clear, and spotted it. But—"

"We can't give him away!" said Nugent.

"No! But this won't do!" said the captain of the Remove. "I think we'd better root him out and tell him. This isn't his first trick on Lamb—there was a rag in the Pet Lamb's study one day, and Bunter was whopped for it, and he said he had nothing to do with it—"

"Bunter would say anything!" remarked Johnny.

"Yes; but there was a boot chucked at Lamb's napper from a window, and Skinner and his mob were whopped for it—and they all say they had no hand in it. Now this has happened! Smithy will be getting all the Remove whopped in turn, if this goes on."

"Or sacked, by gum!" said Bob.

"If you hadn't spoken up for Bunter, he—"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,674.



Vernon-Smith, peering round the stone pillar, watched the man groping in the ivy. The Bunder saw it—a leather wallet!

time?" exclaimed the Head. "How could even a stupid boy like Bunter mistake paint for jam?"

"It was in a dozen small pots, sir, packed in a wooden box!" explained the captain of the Remove. "The box had contained jam pots at one time—it was an old empty box that Mr. Clegg used to pack the paint pots in. Bunter saw 'Slivers' Jams' marked on the box and fancied it contained jam pots."

"I didn't!" yelled Bunter. "I never touched it! As if I'd take Gosling's jam! Besides, it was hoarding—"

"Be silent, you utterly stupid boy!" exclaimed the Head. "Cannot you see that Wharton is speaking in your favour?"

"I never—"

"Mr. Lamb, this foolish boy has placed himself under suspicion by his greed and stupidity," he said. "But I think it will be necessary to look farther for the culprit."

"I think so, too, sir!" said Mr. Lamb, his eyes glistening over the class.

It was, in fact, clear now that Billy Bunter was not the culprit. He had begged that paint by mistake, and he had tried to get other fellows to take it back where it belonged. That was fairly clear evidence that Bunter had had no use for the paint. It dawned on all the Remove, and was clear to the headmaster, that the unknown painter had bagged that box of paint from Bunter's study for his own purposes.

"Some other boy in this Form," said the Head, "must have taken that paint and used it in the night in your study, Mr. Lamb. It remains to discover that boy!"

There was a long pause. Suspicion against Bunter had faded away—but against any other fellow there was not a spot of suspicion. It might have been any man in the Remove. There was no clue.

"There must be the strictest investigation, Mr. Lamb!" said the Head, at length.

"Such a matter cannot be allowed to rest! You will deal with Bunter for having taken the box from Gosling's lodge. In the meantime—"

"I shall make the very strictest inquiry, sir!" said Mr. Lamb. "I have no doubt that I shall discover the offender."

"I shall leave the matter in your hands, Mr. Lamb—and you will report to me when a discovery is made!" said Dr. Locke.

Then, to the relief of the Remove, the Head left the Form-room.

Billy Bunter eyed Mr. Lamb un- easily as he picked up a cane from his desk.

"Mum—mum—may I go to my place, sir?" mumbled Bunter.

"You may not, Bunter!" answered Mr. Lamb grimly. "I shall cane you very severely for having taken the box of paint from the porter's lodge."

"But I—I—I didn't, sir—"

"That fact appears to be established," said the Head. "Bunter must be exonerated from having obtained the paint deliberately. Thank you, Wharton—I am glad you have spoken, Bunter!"

"It wasn't me, sir."

"After you had found out that the box contained not jam, but paint, what did you do with it?"

"Nothing, sir! I—I never saw it!"

"Grant me patience!" gasped the Head. "Wharton, do you know what Bunter did with the box?"

"It was left in his study, sir, when the dinner-bell rang. After that, he was asking fellows up and down the Remove to take it back."

"You are sure of this, Wharton?"

"He asked more than half the Form, sir!" said Harry. "He didn't want it, as it was paint!"

"Of course I didn't!" wailed Bunter. "I shouldn't have touched

"He silent! Were other boys present at the time you speak of, Wharton?"

"Yes, sir! A whole crowd!"

"We opened the box for him, sir!" said Bob Cherry. "We all thought it was jam, as Bunter said so—"

"I didn't!"

"We never knew he had snaffled it from Gosling, sir," said Johnny Bull.

"But we all thought it was jam, and Bunter did—"

"I never—"

"Bless my soul!" said the Head. "This places a very different complexion on the matter, Mr. Lamb!"

"Quite so, sir!" agreed Mr. Lamb. "If it is a fact that Bunter did not know that the box contained paint."

"He silent! Were other boys present at the time you speak of, Wharton?"

"Yes, sir! A whole crowd!"

"We opened the box for him, sir!" said Bob Cherry. "We all thought it was jam, as Bunter said so—"

"I didn't!"

"We never knew he had snaffled it from Gosling, sir," said Johnny Bull.

"But we all thought it was jam, and Bunter did—"

"I never—"

"Bless my soul!" said the Head. "This places a very different complexion on the matter, Mr. Lamb!"

"Quite so, sir!" agreed Mr. Lamb. "If it is a fact that Bunter did not know that the box contained paint."