

THE FOOTPRINT IN THE SAND!



By FRANK RICHARDS

THE FIRST CHAPTER A RAG IN THE SECOND!

MR. QUELCH frowned. The Remove smiled. What was happening was exasperating, or entertaining, according to the point of view. On this matter, as on many others, the views of the Greyfriars Remove and their Form-master were wide as the poles asunder.

From the Second Form-room, across the corridor, came strange and unaccustomed sounds. The Remove were in class; and the Second Form were—or should have been—in class also. Judging by the terrific uproar that proceeded from the Second Form-

room, classes were "off" there—very much off!

The sound of a tin-whistle blended—more or less—with the notes of a mouth-organ. Repeated bangs indicated that some festive fag was beating on a desk-lid with a ruler,

perhaps keeping time to the music. Scuffling of feet and gasping and yelling seemed to hint that a fight was also in progress—perhaps more than one fight.

From what could be heard of them, the fags of the Second Form were having a high old time.

Mr. Quelch's frown intensified.

No doubt the din penetrated into other Form-rooms. But the door of

To Harry Wharton & Co. a visit to the old smugglers' cave at Pegg seems a pleasant enough way of spending a half-holiday. But little do the chums of Greyfriars realise the amazing discovery they are destined to make!

the Remove-room was almost opposite that of the Second, so the Remove got most of the benefit.

It interrupted lessons.

The Remove did not mind that—few of them were really keen and eager on Latin prose. But Mr. Quelch seemed to mind very much.

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated Mr. Quelch at last. "This is really growing intolerable."

Bump! Crash! Bang! Yell! came across the corridor.

"Wharton!" rapped out Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, sir?"

"Step across into the Second Form-room, and tell Walker of the Sixth that I insist upon his keeping order there!"

"Certainly, sir!"

"Tell him," boomed Mr. Quelch, "that if order is not kept, I shall place the matter before the Head."

"Very well, sir."

Harry Wharton crossed to the door of the Remove-room, and opened it. With the door open, the din rang in with additional volume. It really was almost deafening.

"Shut the door, Wharton!"

Mr. Quelch fairly barked.

Harry Wharton stepped quickly into the corridor, and closed the door after him.

He smiled as he strolled across the passage.

Walker of the Sixth was in charge of the Second Form that morning; but he did not seem to be making much of a success of it. The master of the Second had lately left Greyfriars, and the new master appointed to take his place had been prevented, at the last moment, from arriving by an attack of influenza. A temporary master had been hurriedly engaged by the Head, but he was not yet at Greyfriars. For

a few days, therefore, the Second Form had been without a master, and were "taken" by a Sixth Form prefect instead. It appeared to be the view of the Second that a Form without a Form-master was like unto the Israelites of old, when there was no King in Israel, and every man did what was right in his own eyes.

Wharton threw open the door of the Second Form-room.

Quite a startling scene met his gaze.

Gatty of the Second was extracting sweet music from a tin-whistle. Myers was blowing the mouth-organ. Sammy Bunter was beating time with a ruler. Dicky Nugent was engaged in deadly combat with another fag. Five or six fellows were stamping their feet, with the laudable object of making as much row as possible. Another enterprising youth was lifting the heavy lid of the Form-master's desk, and letting it fall again, with a series of terrific bangs.

The Second Form seemed to be enjoying themselves.

Of Walker of the Sixth nothing was to be seen. Walker was a good deal of a slacker, and evidently he had not yet arrived to take his class. While the cat was away the mice were playing.

"Here, you young hooligans——" called out Wharton.

"What?"

"Remove cad!"

"Clear off!"

"Where's Walker?" demanded Wharton.

"Walking, probably," said Gatty, ceasing the torture of the tin-whistle for a moment. "You'd better walk, too. We don't allow Remove cads in our Form-room."

"You've got to stop this row!"

"Rats!"

"Go home!"

"Chuck it!"

"Why, you cheeky Remove duffer!" Dicky Nugent disengaged himself from his adversary. "What the thump do you mean by butting into our Form-room? Beat it while you're safe!"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"You young ass! You can be heard all over Greyfriars!" he said. "Walker ought to be here——"

"Oh, he's slacking somewhere!" said Nugent minor. "He's later and later every time. Not that we'd let Walker boss us. Who's Walker?"

"I've got a message for him from Mr. Quelch," said the captain of the Remove. "This row has got to stop!"

"Tell Quelch to go and eat coke!" retorted Dicky Nugent independently. "He's not our Form-master!"

"Look here——"

"Chuck that Remove cad out!" roared Gatty. "What's he doing in our Form-room?"

"Outside!" yelled the Second.

A mob of belligerent fags gathered round the captain of the Remove. Harry Wharton did not back out of the Form-room, as would have been only prudent with the Second Form in this wild and woolly state. It was miles beneath the dignity of a Remove man to retreat before any number of fags.

"Look here, you young asses——"

"Can it!"

"Outside!"

"Hurrah! Chuck him out!" yelled Nugent minor.

There was a rush.

"Hands off!" roared Wharton.

"I tell you, I'll—— Oh, my hat!"

Three or four fags were knocked right and left, but numbers told. The captain of the Remove was swept

out into the passage, sprawling, with six or seven breathless fags sprawling over him.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Give him socks!"

"Tap his napper!"

"Whooooo!" roared the captain of the Remove, as his head was tapped—not gently—on the hard, unsympathetic floor.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Give him another!"

Bang!

"Ow! Oh, my hat! You young villains—yarooooop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Now come in again, you Remove sweep!" yelled Dicky Nugent; and the fags retreated into their Form-room and banged the door.

Harry Wharton staggered to his feet. He was dusty and breathless, and he rubbed his head ruefully. He was strongly tempted to rush into the Second Form-room, hitting out right and left. But he restrained that natural impulse and returned to his own Form-room to report.

THE SECOND CHAPTER

THE HEAVY HAND!

"SCANDALOUS!"

Mr. Quelch fairly hooted.

The news that Wharton was unable to deliver his message, owing to the absence of Walker of the Sixth from the post of duty, seemed to have an exciting effect on the Remove master.

Wharton said nothing of the rousing reception the fags had given him personally, but he had to say that Walker was not there, for as soon as he re-entered the Remove-room, Mr. Quelch demanded whether he had delivered his message. Uproar was still proceeding from the happy quarters of the Second.

"Scandalous!" hooted Mr. Quelch. "I shall leave you in charge here for a few minutes, Wharton. You will keep order here while I am gone."

"Oh, certainly, sir!"

Mr. Quelch looked at his class.

"You will proceed with your Latin papers," he said. "If there is any disorder in this room while I am absent, the whole Form will be detained this afternoon."

That was enough for the Removites. Fellows who were already thinking of allowing themselves a little relaxation while their Form-master's back was turned gave up the idea on the spot. That afternoon was a half-holiday, and there was no doubt that Mr. Quelch would keep his word. Every fellow in the Remove decided to keep the most meticulous order.

Mr. Quelch picked up his cane and left the Remove-room.

The Remove fellows grinned at one another as soon as he was gone. They relaxed so far as to grin. That, at least, was safe.

There was a sudden silence. It indicated that the Remove master had entered the Second Form-room.

And the Remove fellows grinned and went on with their Latin papers. They had no doubt that their Form-master would soon have the uproarious fags well in hand. Mr. Quelch had taken his cane with him. Properly speaking, the Remove master was not entitled to use his cane in any Form-room but the one where he reigned supreme. The Removites guessed that Mr. Quelch was about to do that to which he was not entitled.

And they were right.

Mr. Quelch opened the door of the Second Form-room, and as he did so there was a howl.

"That Remove rotter again!"

"Chuck him out!"

There was a rush of the fags towards the door. Then, as Mr. Quelch strode in, the Second Form saw who it was. They stopped suddenly.

Silence fell on the Second Form-room. The fags backed away from the awful apparition of the Remove master, cane in hand, with frowning brow, and eyes that glinted. The glance of the fabled basilisk could not have had a more dismaying effect on the heroes of the Second.

"What does this mean?" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"Oh!"

"Hem!"

"How dare you make this disturbance!"

"Um!"

"Why are you not at your lessons?"

"We—we—we're waiting for Walker, sir," stammered Dicky Nugent. "We—we were just wondering what had become of him."

Snort from Mr. Quelch.

"Our—our Form-master has left, sir," said Nugent minor, as if Mr. Quelch did not know that already, "and—and the new master, sir, can't come as he's got the 'flu, and—and Mr. Sutcliffe doesn't get here till this afternoon, and—and—and—"

"I am aware of that, Nugent minor."

"Um!"

"Take your places at once!"

The Second Form were already taking their places. They sneaked to their desks softly, but with suppressed wrath. After all, Quelch was not their Form-master. What the thump did he mean by butting into their Form-room? It was like his cheek, in the opinion of the Second. They did not, however, tell Mr. Quelch that it was like his cheek.



Bump ! Crash ! Bang ! The din that the fags made was terrific, as they thoroughly enjoyed themselves in the Form-room. Temporarily without a master, the Second Form were making full use of their freedom !

" I shall take charge of this class until Walker arrives," rumbled the Remove master.

" Oh dear ! " ejaculated Sammy Bunter involuntarily, in his dismay.

" Bunter minor ! "

" Oh ! Yes, sir ? "

" What did you say ? "

" N-n-nothing, sir ! " gasped Sammy.

" What is the lesson ? " snapped Mr. Quelch, having pulverised Sammy Bunter with a glance.

" Hem ! "

" Answer me, Nugent minor ! "

Dicky Nugent breathed hard. He

was a great favourite in the Second Form. He was popularly supposed to have nerve enough to float a battle-ship. His nerve failed him, however, under the Remove master's basilisk eyes.

" Geography, sir," he faltered.

There had never been so orderly a class at Greyfriars as that which now had the benefit of geographical instruction from Mr. Quelch. The Second Form hung on Mr. Quelch's words as if they were pearls of wisdom falling from the Remove master's lips. They watched him anxiously, eager to anticipate his wishes.

Walker of the Sixth, strolling along the corridor with his novel in his pocket, was surprised and pleased to hear no sound of disorder in the Form-room of which he was supposed to have taken charge. He had left it rather late—he realised that. He had rather feared that the young sweeps would be kicking up a row playing leap-frog, or something of the kind. Instead of which order reigned—there was scarcely a sound from the Form-room as James Walker arrived at the door.

He pushed it open and entered.

"Well, you young rascals——"

Walker broke off suddenly at the sight of Mr. Quelch.

The Remove master laid down his book. He gave James Walker one glance—one was enough. It almost shrivelled up Walker of the Sixth.

"I will now hand this class over to you, Walker, if you have time to attend to it!" said Mr. Quelch icily.

"Oh, yes, sir! Certainly, sir! I—I—the fact is, I——" stammered Walker, greatly flurried.

Mr. Quelch, ruthlessly regardless, walked out of the Second Form-room, leaving Walker stuttering.

"Oh, gad!" gasped Walker.

"I—I say, Walker, it's a shame!" said Gatty. "Mr. Quelch oughtn't to have butted in here."

"I suppose you were kicking up a row?" said Walker.

"I—I—I think somebody dropped a book," said Gatty cautiously. George Gatty was really understating the case.

"You young sweeps!" said Walker. "This may mean a jaw from the Head. You make another sound, and your lives won't be worth living!"

And James Walker sat down at the master's desk with his novel, leaving the Second to imbibe knowledge from

their geography books if they liked, and as much as they liked. That was Walker's way of taking a class when the eye of authority was not on him. The Second Form liked it better than Mr. Quelch's way.

THE THIRD CHAPTER

CASH REQUIRED!

"ROT!"

That was the opinion of Legge of the Second Form.

In the Second Form at Greyfriars they stated their opinions without any beating about the bush. In that juvenile Form Chesterfieldian politeness was at a heavy discount.

Dicky Nugent glared at Legge. Dicky Nugent regarded himself as cock of the walk in the Second. George Gatty also regarded himself as cock of the walk in the Form. This difference of views sometimes led to internecine strife. On the present occasion, however, the chiefs of the Second were in accord, and it was Legge—a mere nobody—who had ventured to characterise Nugent minor's remark as "rot."

"Did you say rot, young Legge?" inquired Nugent minor, pushing back his cuffs with an air of preparation.

"Yes, I jolly well did!" retorted Legge.

"Where will you have it?" further inquired Nugent minor.

"Wherever you can put it!" retorted Legge independently.

And then there was a pause in the discussion that was being held in the Second Form-room after dinner, while Nugent minor and "young Legge" rolled on the floor in a terrific struggle, collecting and scattering dust, gasping and spluttering, and breathing blood-curdling threats.

Nugent minor emerged victorious from the combat, wiping a crimson

nose, what time Legge struggled for his second wind under the desks.

"And now——" said Dicky Nugent breathlessly.

"I think it's a jolly good idea," said Gatty. "A bit out of the common."

"Think Sutcliffe will be pleased?" asked Myers.

"Pleased?" retorted Dicky Nugent. "I should jolly well think so. Delighted!"

"He might think it a cheek," said Sammy Bunter.

"He might if he were a silly idiot like you, Bunter mi; but we've no reason to suppose that he's a silly idiot like you."

"Look here, young Nugent——"

"Shut up, Bunter mi," said Gatty. "Nobody wants to hear your opinion. You're as silly an ass as your major in the Remove, and that's saying a lot."

"I jolly well think——"

"Shut up!" roared Gatty.

"All you've got to do, Bunter mi, is to make your contribution like other men," said Nugent minor. "We don't want your opinion."

Snort from Sammy Bunter. He would rather have given his opinion than his cash at any time. He had a serious objection to giving his cash.

"How much each?" asked Myers.

"Well," said Dicky Nugent thoughtfully, "it's six bob for a taxi from Courtfield. Say a bob tip for the chauffeur——"

"I don't believe in tipping," said Sammy Bunter.

"You wouldn't," agreed Dicky Nugent. "But I've told you we don't want your opinion, Bunter mi. Threepence each all round ought to wangle it. Where are you going, young Bunter?"

Young Bunter did not delay to state where he was going; he went. The

Form-room door slammed after him in a hurry.

"Mingy toad!" said Gatty. "We can do without his measly threepence. You fellows shell out."

Legge emerged from under the desks.

"Rot!" he said.

"What?" roared Nugent minor. "Rot!"

And Legge of the Second hurriedly departed from the Form-room. And, oddly enough, quite a number of the fags who had attended the meeting called by Dicky Nugent followed him hastily. Most of them had agreed that the "stunt" propounded by Dicky was great. But when the time came for the collection they seemed to have pressing business elsewhere.

"Well, my hat!" said Gatty, as he found himself left in the Form-room with only Myers and Nugent minor. "My only hat! What have the men cleared off like that for?"

Dicky Nugent sniffed.

"Look here, we can manage it," he said. "And we'll get a ride in the car—see?"

"Will Sutcliffe like three kids in the car with him?" asked Myers doubtfully.

"What rot! Why shouldn't he? Anyhow, if he doesn't like it he can lump it; it's our car."

"That's so."

"But that will be two bob each for us if the taxi is six bob," said Gatty. "Too jolly expensive, Nugent mi."

"I've got two bob," said Dicky.

"I've got threepence."

"Same here, and a ha'penny over," said Myers.

Dicky Nugent grunted. He had thought of a great wheeze; he was the fellow for wheezes. Most of the Second had thought it a great wheeze, too, and had been prepared to give it their moral support. Unfortunately,

moral support would not pay the taximan. Financial support was required for that, and financial support seemed to be lacking.

"Well, I can squeeze a loan out of my major in the Remove," said Dicky, after some thought. "The mater told him specially to look after me this term. He does a lot of elder-brotherly bizney. He can't expect to do it on the cheap."

"That's so," agreed Gatty. "It's against a man to have a brother in an upper Form. He ought to make up for it somehow."

"I believe those Remove bounders are going out this afternoon," said Myers. "I heard Cherry saying something about going to the smugglers' cave at Pegg."

"Buck up, then, Dicky," said Gatty. "If you don't get it out of your major, the game's up."

Dicky Nugent nodded, and hurried out of the Form-room. Three-and-sixpence was required to make Nugent minor's scheme a success; that was really not a large sum for Frank Nugent, of the Remove, to expend upon a fascinating young brother.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Is your giddy minor coming, Franky?"

"Not that I know of."

"There he is, anyhow."

Frank Nugent looked back. The chums of the Remove had left the school gates, and were tramping cheerily down the lane towards Friar-dale, when Bob Cherry glanced back at the stile and spotted Dicky Nugent.

Dicky was coming after the Famous Five at breathless speed.

The Famous Five had to cross the stile to take the short cut across the fields to the cliffs. Nugent stopped.

"Waiting for him?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Yes," said Nugent, rather curtly. Johnny's tone implied that fags of the Second were hardly worth waiting for.

"Oh, all right," said Johnny, amicably. "I'll sit down for a bit." And he straddled the top bar of the stile.

"The waitfulness is the proper caper," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh gracefully. "If the esteemed and ridiculous Dicky desires to accompany us explorefully in the caves, the addition of his honourable society will be the boonful blessing."

"Hear, hear!" grinned Bob Cherry.

And the Famous Five waited for the fag to come up. Frank Nugent was a dutiful and affectionate major. His chums did not, perhaps, quite see what there was in Dicky Nugent to inspire attachment. But they bore patiently with Frank on that subject.

"I suppose there's no harm if Dicky comes along," said Nugent.

"None at all," agreed Wharton, with great politeness.

Remove men really did not yearn for the company of Second Form fags, as a rule. But the Co. were prepared to make an exception in favour of Frank's minor—cheerfully, if not enthusiastically.

Dicky came panting up.

"Come on, kid," said Frank.

"Eh! What? Where?" asked Dicky breathlessly.

"We're going to explore the caves at Pegg—"

"Kid's game," said Nugent minor.

"What?"

"Catch me!" said Dicky derisively.

Johnny Bull winked at Bob Cherry, who turned away his head to hide his smiles. Harry Wharton coughed, and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh remained as grave as a bronze image.

"You cheeky little sweep!" exclaimed Nugent, nettled. "What the thump do you come bolting after us for, then, and making us waste time? Buzz off!"

"Oh, don't get waxy, old bean!" said Nugent minor. "I've got something on more jolly important than mucking about in silly old caves!"

"Go and get on with it, then!" snapped Frank; and he turned to the stile.

"Hold on a minute, fathead! I want three-and-six!"

"Rats!"

"Don't be a waxy idiot, Frank!" urged Nugent minor. "It's jolly important. We've got two-and-six, and we want three-and-six to make up six bob—see?"

"What's it for?" grunted Nugent.

"I don't mind telling you, old chap," said Dicky. "It's a great stunt! Look here, you lend me three-and-six, and I'll do the letter home this week. Honest Injun!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You know our Form-master's gone—your Form-master came messing about in our Form-room this



"Chuck that Remove cad out!" roared Gatty. "What's he doing in our Form-room?" A mob of belligerent fags quickly gathered round Harry Wharton. "Look here, you young asses——" began Wharton. "Can it!" yelled the Second. "Outside!"

morning," said Dicky—"and the new master can't come yet, and a man named Sutcliffe is filling the job pro tem. Well, this man Sutcliffe is arriving by the three-thirty at Courtfield—I've found that out. He's a beast, of course——"

"How do you know he's a beast?"

"Oh, don't be a goat! Ain't all Form-masters beasts? But we're going to get on the right side of him to begin with," said Dicky. "We're going to the station to meet him. We're standing him a car to the school!" added the fag, in an off-hand way.

"Oh, my hat!" said Bob Cherry.

"Some stunt, what?" said Nugent minor complacently. "The idea is, we want to welcome our new Form-master, and show him what nice chaps we are—respectful to our kind teachers, and all that—storybook stuff, you know. It was my idea."

"Sounds as if it might have been!" remarked Bob.

"Oh, don't you be funny!" said Nugent minor. "It's a ripping wheeze, and Gatty thinks so, too. Of course, we get the drive in the car, and that's worth the money, so we don't really lose anything. We meet Mr. Sutcliffe on the platform at Courtfield—we speak to him nicely, and tell him that we've got a car outside to take him to the school. Even a beast will be bound to be pleased at getting kind attentions like that from his Form. It will put him in a good temper, and it ought to get us off prep to-night at the very least."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, you can cackle," said Dicky, "but I jolly well think it's a great wheeze. You'd never have thought of it in a month of Sundays."

"They only think of these great things in the Second Form," said Bob Cherry solemnly.

"You see, Quelchy is certain to speak to him—tip him that we're a rowdy mob, and all that," said Dicky. "He carried on like a Hun in our Form-room this morning. I came jolly near buzzing my geography book at his napper, I can tell you. Only I—I didn't."

"You needn't mention that you didn't," said Harry Wharton gravely. "We can guess that."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, rats!" said Dicky crossly. "You see the idea, Franky. If he hears that we're a rowdy gang, he won't take any notice, after being met at the station and talked to nicely and respectfully, and brought to the school in a car. But, of course, we shall have to pay for the car. If he had to shell out it would spoil the effect."

"The spoiffulness would be terrific."

"You're a young ass!" said Frank, laughing. "It's a risky game pulling a master's leg."

"It isn't exactly pulling his leg, you know. We want to make a good impression on the beast," explained Dicky. "We want to bottle up Quelchy in advance, too. Anyhow, we get the ride—see? 'Tain't throwing money away, like buying a master a birthday present, f'rinstance."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, here's the tin, and I wish you luck!" said Nugent. "I've got only half-a-crown. One of you fellows lend me a bob."

"The lendfulness will be the esteemed pleasure."

"Thanks!" said Dicky, pocketing the half-crown and the shilling. "I'll settle this, of course, Franky, along with the other little lots, some time."

"This year, next year, sometime, never!" chanted Bob Cherry softly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Sorry I can't come with you," said Dicky patronisingly. "You want somebody to look after you if you're going into the smugglers' cave. It's haunted, you know. I can see you bolting when you hear the groans."

Dicky Nugent dodged a lunge of Bob Cherry's boot, and started back to Greyfriars at a run.

The Famous Five clambered over the stile, and pursued their way with smiling faces. Whether Mr. Sutcliffe, the temporary master of the Second Form at Greyfriars, would be pleased and gratified at finding a gang of fags waiting for him with a taxicab was, to their minds, a doubtful question. Still, Dicky Nugent was greatly pleased with his scheme, and as he so sapiently observed, the fags would get the ride in the car at any rate. Even if Mr. Sutcliffe wasn't pleased, a joy-ride on a half-holiday was grateful and comforting.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER

THE MAN ON THE CLIFF!

"**C**AREFUL, here!"

"You bet!"

"The carefulness is terrific."

Care was needed on the path the chums of the Remove were taking down from the great chalk cliffs to the caves. From the summit of the mighty Shoulder the beach looked a pebbly strip, the fishermen's boats like dots. It was a long way down to the caves on the sea level, and the way was perilous. Rifts and faults in the great mass of chalk formed a kind of rough staircase, and the steps were steep and irregular, and wet with the spray that dashed up when the sea was rough, as it very often was below the Shoulder.

But the five juniors were lithe and active, and they tramped down the rocky way, here and there holding on with their hands when it was necessary, their faces glowing with the rough exercise and the keen wind from the North Sea.

Half-way down there was a plateau of chalk, from which there was a magnificent view of the sea, with ships far out in the distance. There the Greyfriars juniors stopped to rest a little.

"Jolly here, isn't it?" said Bob Cherry, breathing hard and deep.

"Top-hole, old bean!"

"I don't think your minor would have been equal to this if he had condescended to come, Franky."

"We could have gone round on the level, by way of Pegg," said Nugent.

"Hem! So we could!" said Bob, closing one eye at Wharton. "It's a longer way round, and rather uninteresting; but your minor's company would have made up for that."

"Fathead!" said Frank.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! There's somebody else on the giddy cliff-path as well as our noble selves!" ejaculated Bob.

The clink of a falling stone came from below. Someone was coming up the natural stairway from the beach, and had almost reached the plateau where the schoolboys were resting.

They could not see him yet; the rough windings and projections of the chalk hid the newcomer from sight, so far.

A hat came in sight at last, rising into view up the steep, and it was followed by a clean-shaven face. The juniors were looking towards the spot where the newcomer was bound to appear as he came higher, and they saw the man before he saw them.

The expression on his face struck them a little.

He was a young man, not over thirty, with a rather hard, clear-cut face, and extremely keen eyes set close together. His expression puzzled the juniors a little ; there was something grim and dogged in it, something that told of a grim, hard determination. He was a stranger to them, though certainly he could not have been a stranger in the locality, or he would not have known his way up the rugged path on the cliff.

He clambered on to the plateau and stopped to breathe, and then he saw the juniors sitting on the chalk boulders, resting. He started violently as he saw them.

Apparently he had not expected to meet anyone on the rough cliff-path, or perhaps had not desired to meet anyone. He stood looking at them with a very unpleasant expression on his face.

Bob Cherry gave him an affable nod. The man looked anything but good-tempered ; but Bob had good-temper enough for two.

" Good-afternoon, sir ! " sang out Bob cheerily.

The man did not answer the greeting.

He had placed a bag on the ground, to relieve himself of the weight, and the juniors noticed, without especially heeding, that the initials on the leather were " J. S." They wondered a little at a man carrying a bag on a rough climb over the cliffs. The path up from the bay was not easy for a climber unencumbered.

" Hefty climb up, sir, what ? " said Bob, not at all abashed by the bad manners of the stranger.

The man seemed to think better of his bad manners, however, and he smiled and nodded.

" Yes ; it's longer than it looks from the sea," he remarked. " Is it far to the top ? "

" You're just half-way up," said Bob.

" You know the path ? " asked Wharton.

" No ; I am quite a stranger here."

" It's rather risky if you don't know the way," said the captain of the Remove.

The man nodded, picked up his bag, and went on. The juniors looked after him rather curiously. It was perfectly plain that the man had intended to sit down and rest, and had changed his intention on seeing the schoolboys there.

Why he should have done so was a mystery.

He disappeared in a few moments from sight among the windings of the cliff path.

Bob Cherry grinned.

" The dear man doesn't seem to like good company," he remarked. " At least, he doesn't seem to care for ours."

" He's a bad egg," said Johnny Bull, sententiously.

" He said he was quite a stranger here. But he isn't, or he wouldn't know this path. He's gone right up—and a stranger would never know the way without stopping and picking his way jolly carefully. He's out of sight already."

Harry Wharton nodded.

" That's true," he said. " He's been over this ground before, that's a cert. I remember the first time I came up this path I was puzzled in a dozen places. That chap came right up to where we are, and he's gone right on without having to stop to think. He knows the ground as well as we do."

" The knowfulness is terrific," agreed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

the train that was to bring Mr. John Sutcliffe to Courtfield to meet, unexpectedly, three leading members of the Form he was to take at Greyfriars.

Outside the station waited the car.

It was not a common or garden taxi; it was a car from Courtfield Garage, specially engaged by Nugent minor & Co. to carry them and their new Form-master to Greyfriars.

Keen bargaining on the part of the fags had reduced the charge for the drive to five shillings and sixpence; which left sixpence over for a tip to the chauffeur.

The three fags waited eagerly, as the train came rolling in.

Myers was a little doubtful about this stunt; Gatty was not wholly confident. But Dicky Nugent was serenely confident. As it was his wheeze, he, naturally, thought well of it.

The train stopped, and at least fifteen or sixteen people alighted from it.

Dicky Nugent & Co. scanned them eagerly as they passed.

Most of them, evidently, could not have been schoolmasters. There were only two men in the lot who could possibly have been Mr. Sutcliffe—though both of them, of course, could not have been that gentleman. The fags eyed the two warily and keenly, but could not make up their minds which of the two was their quarry.

"Well, we've got tongues in our heads," remarked Dicky Nugent. "We can ask."

And Dicky cut after the two gentlemen, who were going to the barrier.

"Excuse me, sir, are you Mr. Sutcliffe?"

"No."

"Bound to catch the wrong man first!" said Myers satirically.

"Well, the other man must be Sutcliffe," said Dicky.

And he rushed after the other man.

"Mr. Sutcliffe——"

The gentleman stared at him.

"My name is not Sutcliffe," he said, and walked on.

"Oh, my only hat!" ejaculated Dicky, in dismay.

Neither gentleman, evidently, was John Sutcliffe. The three fags gathered on the platform again, in doubt.

"Must have been one of the other johnnies that we let pass!" said Myers. "Gone now."

Dicky shook his head.

"Nothing of the kind. I looked 'em over—grocers and commercial travellers and farmers and a soldier and some girls. He's missed his train, that's what it is."

"Sure he was coming by the three-thirty?" asked Gatty.

"I heard Mr. Quelch tell Walker."

"Might have got out at Redclyffe and walked," suggested Gatty.

"Why should he?" said Nugent minor irritably. "It would be a jolly long walk from Redclyffe to Greyfriars."

"People do, though, sometimes. Might be a merchant who likes country walks."

"Oh, rot!"

Dicky Nugent refused to entertain the idea for a moment. If Mr. Sutcliffe had got out at Redclyffe, and walked by way of the Pegg road and Friardale, the scheme of meeting him at Courtfield was evidently N. G. Nugent minor, as the great chief of the Second Form, did not feel disposed to admit that any scheme of his could possibly be N. G. Therefore, Mr. Sutcliffe had not got out of the train at Redclyffe and walked!

"Lost his train, of course," said Nugent minor confidently. "He'll come by the next."

The fags waited for the next train.

They waited impatiently. But the train came in at last.

This time, they posted themselves by the barrier, and scanned each passenger carefully as he came by on the way out.

But this time, there was no one that could possibly have been taken for a schoolmaster.

Half the passengers were women, and there was a couple of schoolboys—Ponsonby and Gadsby of the Fourth Form at Highcliffe, who passed the Greyfriars fags with supercilious noses in the air. There was a stout farmer, there was a white-whiskered retired colonel, there was a man with a violin-case, and a Hebrew gentleman, and a fisherman, and two knutty youths. And that was all, and they passed out and left the fags with the platform to themselves.

"Well?" said Myers, with a touch of irony.

"Well?" said Gatty.

Dicky Nugent breathed hard.

Mr. Sutcliffe had not arrived by the three-thirty, and he had not arrived by the four o'clock train. It looked very doubtful whether he would arrive at Courtfield Junction at all. It was borne in upon Nugent minor's mind that Mr. Sutcliffe must, after all, have got out at Redclyffe and walked.

"Waiting for the next train?" smiled Myers.

"And the train after that?" inquired Gatty.

"If you fellows want to spend a half-holiday hanging around a railway station, there's nothing to stop you," said Nugent minor. "I'm going."

And he went.

Gatty and Myers followed him.

There was a somewhat heated argument with the driver of the car. His view was that he had been



GREYFRIARS RHYMES

BILLY BUNTER

(the fat boy of the school)

YOU'VE doubtless heard of "W. G."—
Not Grace, but simply Bunter—
Who, though he eats enough for three,
Is hungry as a hunter.
He pouches pies and scoffs jam-tarts
A dozen to the minute;
In fact, when Bunter really starts,
An ostrich isn't in it.

He follows on the new boy's trail
As grimly as a warder,
And unto him unfolds a tale
About a postal-order.
He cadges crowns, or even pence,
"To be repaid to-morrow,"
And varies with his victim's sense
The sum he hopes to borrow.

A fabricator, as a rule,
Is much inclined to try us;
The "Peeping Tom" of Greyfriars School
Gives points to Ananias.
He rolls out fibs in such a way,
'Tis strange how he conceives them;
They have one drawback, sad to say—
For not a soul believes them.

The good old days have taken flight,
When kings were held to ransom;
Yet Bunter, though he's not a knight,
Imagines he is handsome.
Says he: "Indeed, I'm wondrous fair—
A fine and handsome lad I!
And pretty maidens everywhere
Present me with the 'glad eye.'"

He thinks he is a ladies' man,
And when Cliff House makes merry,
He joins the revels if he can,
But keeps away from Cherry.
For Bob, in thought for Marjorie,
Won't let a pig confront her;
He puts this down to jealousy,
Does fat, misguided Bunter!

Thus Bunter figures in our eyes—
A fellow always slacking;
Who never cares for exercise,
And needs a world of whacking!
To sum him up in good round terms
(I don't think I should risk it!)
Of all the meanest, craftiest worms,
Why, Bunter takes the biscuit!

engaged for a five-and-six drive, and that he had waited half an hour over and above. However, that matter was settled more or less amicably for half-a-crown; and the three fags walked back to Greyfriars.

"After all, it will run to a jolly good tea in the Form-room," said Dicky Nugent on the way home. "We've got three-and-six."

Gatty and Myers brightened up. This was a solace; indeed, they began to perceive that it was not wholly a disaster, after all, that Mr. Sutcliffe had failed to arrive by the train at Courtfield Junction. A spread in the Form-room was a compensation.

Dicky Nugent & Co. were rather tired and dusty when they arrived at the school. Sammy Bunter was loafing around near the gates, and Nugent minor called to him.

"Sutcliffe blown in yet, young Bunter?"

Sammy chuckled.

"Long ago! You duffers were waiting for him at Courtfield, weren't you? He, he, he!"

"So he's come?" exclaimed Myers.

"Half an hour ago!" cackled Sammy Bunter. "He, he, he!"

Dicky Nugent & Co. stayed only to bang Bunter minor's head on the gate, and then walked off to the school shop, where the sum of three shillings and sixpence was expended on the good things supplied by Mrs. Mimble. The goods were carried off to the Second Form-room—where a feast of the gods was soon in progress.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER

IN THE CHALK CAVES!

"IN this style, three-and-nine!" said Bob Cherry humorously. And the Famous Five chuckled.

Harry Wharton and his comrades

had reached the bottom of the steep path down the cliff, and sand and shingle, broken by great chalky boulders, lay round them. And on a point of chalky rock lay a hat—obviously that which had blown from the head of the stranger who had passed them on the cliff. The wind had landed it there, till a strong gust should catch it and carry it away again.

"I suppose we shan't see that merchant again, and can't give him back his roof," he remarked. "But it seems a pity to leave it here—it's a good hat."

"My dear man, we can't carry other people's hats about on a half-holiday," said Nugent.

"Nunno! But—it's a decent lid," said Bob. "It must have cost the owner thirty bob or so. If there's a name in it, we might be able to send it home, if the Johnny lives about here anywhere."

"He said he was a stranger here."

"But he wasn't, or he wouldn't have known the path up the cliffs, as Johnny pointed out, old bean."

Bob Cherry was looking into the hat to see whether there was a name or other indication of proprietorship within.

He gave a yell of surprise.

"Oh, great pip!"

"What the thump——" exclaimed Wharton.

"Ha, ha, ha! We can take this tile home to the owner," said Bob. "Who'd have thought it? Look!"

He held up the hat and the juniors stared blankly at the name stamped on the inside band.

"J. Sutcliffe."

"You remember, there were the initials 'J.S.' on the bag he was carting up the cliff," said Bob. "It's the new Second Form-master for

Greyfriars. So we can take his hat home with us."

"That would be the proper and polite caper," assented Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Johnny Bull had a thoughtful look.

"I don't think much of the new master of the Second," he remarked. "A Form-master ought not to tell lies. He was telling us lies about being a stranger in this locality. Blessed if I know why, but he was!"

"He must be more or less a stranger here," said Harry. "I've heard that he was engaged from the Head's agency in London."

"But he knows the district; he's been here before, and knows the place quite well," said Johnny. "He couldn't have gone up the cliff as he did otherwise. He's an odd fish altogether. It was queer his being here at all. If he got out at Redclyffe to walk he would naturally take the Pegg road and the Friardale footpath; he's come eight miles out of his way by the beach and the cliff path."

"Might have liked a walk by the sea, old bean."

"It proves he knows the country well here. Fancy a stranger coming along the beach from Pegg, past the caves, and taking the chance of finding the path up the cliffs. If he hadn't found it he would have been cut off when the tide comes in. And it's no joke tramping over a mile of shingle with a heavy bag and then carting it up the cliff. It's not a natural proceeding for a new master coming to a school. Blessed if I make the man out at all!"

"Never mind! No bizney of ours," said Bob. "Who's going to carry this hat?"

"Findings keepings, old man. You carry it!"

"Come on, then," said Bob cheerily.

The juniors tramped along the shingle to the opening of the sea-caves. The tide was out to a great distance; there was no danger of the sea coming in yet. When the tide was in the water washed right into the caves, filling the open spaces with foam and spray.

According to legend the caves had been used by smugglers in old days. The great cliff was honeycombed with them, and the interior caves were out of reach of the tide, though, of course, cut off from access when the water was in the outer caves.

Nugent glanced out over the tumbling sea as the juniors reached the opening in the cliff.

"It's on the turn," he said.

"Lots of time," said Wharton. "I looked it out, of course, when we fixed on this excursion. The tide doesn't get in till dark—and we're not staying till dark."

"No joke to get shut in the caves by the tide," said Bob. "Some fellows were once, and they had a chilly night of it."

"No danger of that now. No danger except from the ghost of the smuggler, and we're not afraid of that."

"Ha, ha! No."

The Famous Five tramped into the cave.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! We're not the first here to-day," exclaimed Bob, pointing to a footprint in a patch of sand within the opening of the cave. "That was made since the last tide."

The juniors looked at the footprint in silent surprise. The same thought was in all their minds. Only a few days previously they had made a strange discovery in the caves beneath the new wireless station on the cliffs and on the other side of Pegg village. Surely they could not be on the verge

of finding another secret hoard of explosives beneath the massive Shoulder? The idea was absurd, and yet—the footprint! Whose could it be?

"Jolly few people come along here in the winter," exclaimed Wharton abruptly.

Bob Cherry raised his voice and shouted into the deep cave.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Anybody at home?"

His voice came thundering back in a thousand echoes. But there was no other reply.

"Whoever he was, he's gone," said Nugent. "Come on!"

Outside the cave the bright winter sunshine was sharp and clear. But once inside all was gloomy and shadowy. In hollows of the chalk lay pools of water left by the last receding tide, and the ground was almost carpeted by masses of dripping seaweed. The juniors glanced round them for other footprints, but the hard chalk showed no trace of any. They advanced a dozen yards up the rugged cave, and then Wharton turned on the light of his electric torch.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! There's the giddy spook!" exclaimed Bob suddenly. "Jolly polite of him to be at home when we're calling."

A wild and wailing sound echoed through the caves.

"The wind!" said Harry.

"Of course! But it sounds jolly human, all the same. No wonder the fishermen believe the place is haunted."

"Hark!"

From somewhere in the dense darkness, at a distance from the juniors, came a faint and painful cry.

The chums of the Remove started and drew together rather quickly. It was an eerie, unnerving sound.

"My hat! Was that the wind?" asked Nugent, in a low voice.

"Must have been," said Harry, but his face was grave. "The wind plays all sorts of tricks in these fissures and crevices. Couldn't have been anything else."

"Of—of course not!"

But the juniors stood still for a few minutes, listening with almost painful intentness. That strange, eerie cry had startled them. But though the wailing of the wind in the hollows still sounded and echoed they did not hear again that peculiar cry.

Bob Cherry shook himself.

"Dash it all! Are we getting nervy?" he exclaimed. "Come on!"

And the juniors tramped on, their electric torches gleaming about them on the wet and rugged rocks; but in spite of themselves, their faces were grave now, and their voices, when they spoke, subdued. That strange cry, echoing from the heart of the chalk caves, still seemed to be ringing in their ears.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER

THE NEW MASTER OF THE SECOND!

"WHAT's he like?"

The feast in the Second Form-room was ending.

Sammy Bunter was not one of the invited guests, but he was there. In such matters Sammy was very like his major in the Remove.

"You've seen him, Bunter?" said Gatty.

Bunter minor nodded. He was not able to speak for the moment, his mouth being full of cake.

"Well, what sort of a merchant is he to look at?" demanded Dicky Nugent. "Anything like our old Form-master?"

Bunter minor shook his head.

"Looks a beast—what?" asked Myers.

Another nod.

"Anything like Quelchy?" asked Gatty in dismay.

"Worse!" said Sammy Bunter, finding his voice at last, the cake having gone the way of all cakes. "Looks a jolly hard nut to crack, I can tell you. I heard him speaking to Mr. Quelch when he came in, and he's got a voice like—like—like an iron bar. Hard, you know. I'm jolly glad he's only a temporary beast. Shouldn't like to have a whole term with him."

"That sounds nice!" grunted Legge.

"Oh, that's only Bunter mi's rot!" said Dicky Nugent. "I dare say he's all right, and he would have been jolly pleased if he'd come to Courtfield Junction and found us waiting for him with a taxi—I mean a car. Do you know how he got here, Sammy?"

"In a taxi."

"Well, if he took a taxi from Redclyffe, he must be a silly ass," said Gatty. "It's three times the distance from Courtfield, and the fare would be enormous!"

"He didn't pay the man a big fare," said Sammy Bunter. "I saw him pay the taxi."



"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" ejaculated Bob Cherry, while the Greyfriars chums were resting on the chalk boulders. "There's somebody else on the cliff-path." A stranger came into view, and he looked at the juniors with a very unpleasant expression on his face.

"You see everything, don't you?" jeered Gatty. "Just like your major in the Remove."

"Look here, Gatty——"

"Let that cake alone, you fat brigand. You've had half of it already!"

"If you're going to be mean about a slice of cake——"

"I'm going to rap your knuckles if you don't keep your paw off it!" said Gatty belligerently.

"He's close with money, just like you fellows with a cake," said Bunter minor, reverting to the subject of Mr. Sutcliffe.

"How do you know that, then?" asked Dicky.

"The taxi-driver wanted six shil-

lings from Courtfield, and Sutcliffe made it five," said Bunter minor.

Dicky Nugent stared.

"From Courtfield?" he repeated.

"What rot!" said Gatty. "I tell you he never came to Courtfield. We waited on the platform for him."

"You missed him!" said Bunter minor.

"You silly owl, as if we should miss him."

"Well, the taxi came from Courtfield, anyhow," said Sammy. "I know the driver by sight; he's in the rank at the station there."

Myers chuckled.

"He must have been one of that lot in the first train, Dicky, after all. You missed him."

"You missed him, you mean!" said Nugent minor hotly.

"We all missed him," said Gatty pacifically; "but it's jolly queer. There wasn't a man who looked like a schoolmaster, except the two we spoke to, and they weren't Sutcliffe."

"He never came to Courtfield," said Nugent minor obstinately. "May have picked up an empty taxi on the road from Redclyffe."

"Rot!" said Legge.

"What?"

"He came to Courtfield all right. You fellows were looking for him with your eyes shut!" explained Legge.

Dicky Nugent jumped up with a war-like look.

"Oh, cheese it!" said Legge, without moving. "You can jolly well prove it if you like. Go and look at him. He's in his study now. He went there after seeing the Head. Look at him, and you'll see that he's one of the passengers you let pass you at Courtfield."

Nugent minor glared at Legge.

"I know he jolly well isn't!" he said. "I'll go and squint at him, and

if he isn't, as I know he isn't, I'll jolly well punch your head when I come back, young Legge!"

"I'll be there when you do it," said Legge.

"Look here——"

"Order!" said Gatty. "Go and squint at the man, Nugent minor; that will settle it. Ask him if prep's at the usual time. That will be an excuse for butting into his study. Look here! I'll come with you!"

"Come on, then!" said Dicky. "You wait here, Legge. I'm punching your head when I get back!"

And Nugent minor left the Form-room with George Gatty. They proceeded to the masters' corridor, and Dicky tapped at the door of the study belonging to the master of the Second Form.

"Come in!"

It was rather a hard and metallic voice from within the study. It bore out Sammy Bunter's description.

Dicky opened the door, and entered with Gatty.

Both the fags looked curiously at the man who was to have charge of the Second Form for a couple of weeks.

He was sitting in an armchair before a glowing fire, smoking a cigarette. He was a man of rather slight, but strong and wiry build, with a hard face and penetrating eyes. Certainly he did not look the easy-going gentleman that the fags had hoped to see. Whether as a beast he was equal to Mr. Quelch, they had yet to discover; but they had little doubt that he was a beast.

"Mr. Sutcliffe, sir?" said Nugent minor.

"I am Mr. Sutcliffe."

"We—we're in the Second sir" said Dicky. "I'm Nugent minor, sir."

"Indeed!"

"This chap is Gatty, sir."

"Well?"

The new master did not seem especially pleased to make the acquaintance of these two important members of his Form.

The fags were staring at him hard.

They had never seen him before, and they were quite certain that he had not been among the passengers who had arrived at Courtfield by the three-thirty or by the four-o'clock train. They would not have forgotten that hard face with its strongly-marked features.

"I—I hope you had a good journey down, sir?" said Nugent minor.

"Thank you, I did!"

"We—we went to the station to meet you, sir——" Nugent minor thought that that was worth mentioning. Having taken so much trouble on the new master's behalf, the heroes of the Second were at least entitled to the credit of it.

"What?" exclaimed the new master.

He rose quickly from his chair, as if startled.

"We—we thought you'd like it," said Dicky, faltering under the hard stare of the Form-master.

"What do you mean?" exclaimed the new master harshly. "I don't understand you. What do you mean?"

"We—we went to Courtfield——"

"To Courtfield?"

"Yes, sir. To meet your train, sir," stammered Nugent minor.

Nugent minor, when he had propounded his scheme in the Second, had declared that the new-comer would be certainly pleased by such a kind attention. Even if he was not pleased, there was no reason why he should be displeased.

But there was no doubt that he

looked displeased. He looked angry and annoyed.

For a moment, indeed, his angry look startled the fags, and they backed a little towards the door.

But the new master's face cleared the next moment.

"You went to Courtfield to meet my train?" he asked.

"Yes, sir. We—we thought——"

The new master smiled.

"Did you meet it?"

"Yes, sir—the three-thirty; but you didn't come by it," said Nugent minor, "so we missed you, sir."

"You need not have taken the trouble," said the new master. "As it happens, I lost the connection at Lantham, and came on by the next train. You may go, my boys."

Dicky Nugent gasped.

"You—you came on by the next train to Courtfield, sir?" he stuttered.

"Yes. You may go. I do not desire to be troubled by the boys of my Form till I am rested after my journey."

The two fags backed out into the passage. It was only too obvious that the new master did not want them in his study. Dicky Nugent drew the door shut, and stared blankly at Gatty.

"The next train!" he whispered.

"He says he came on by the next train. We waited for the next train, and we know he never came in it."

"What on earth is he telling us lies for?" said Gatty, in wonder.

"Goodness knows."

The two fags returned to the Second Form-room. Legge greeted them with a grin.

"Well?" he asked.

"I was right!" snapped Nugent minor. "He never came to Courtfield by train. We've never seen him before."

"Only—only he says he did!" gasped Gatty. "He's told us lies. What has he told us lies for? He says he came on by the second train, after losing the first."

"Well, so he did, then," said Legge.

"He didn't! He doesn't know we waited for the second train; but we did, and he never came in it. We looked at every passenger as he went off the platform, and there wasn't one a bit like him."

"Rot!" said Legge.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER

THE MYSTERY OF THE CAVE!

"HARK!"

Bob Cherry uttered that exclamation suddenly.

The Famous Five stopped, their hearts beating fast.

From somewhere in the gloomy depths of the caverns, far beyond the glimmer of their torches, a weird and wailing cry came.

It was like the wailing of the wind in the hidden hollows, and yet unlike. Anywhere but in the depths of the caves under the great Shoulder, the juniors would have been certain that that cry came from a human throat—that it was the cry of one in pain and despair.

As the loud echoes died down, the wailing cry came again from the hidden distance. Nugent gave a shudder.

"By Jove! I'll swear that wasn't the wind!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "Suppose somebody's got lost in the cave? There's no end of winding fissures leading out of one cave into another. People have been lost here. Might be some poor beggar yelling for help."

Bob Cherry whistled.

"It's possible," he said. "We know somebody's been here since the

morning tide—there was that footprint. We thought he had gone—but he may have got lost—whoever he was."

"In that case it's jolly lucky we came," said Nugent. "Let's look, anyhow. We may find a giddy lost tripper instead of a smuggler's treasure."

The juniors pushed in, in the direction from which the wailing sound had seemed to proceed—though in the midst of the hollow echoes it was difficult to ascertain the precise direction.

From one great hollow to another, fissures and "faults" in the chalk gave access—in some places with ample space, in others, with barely room for a fellow to squeeze through.

The cry was heard no more; and the chums of the Remove wondered whether their ears had deceived them, or whether they had overshot the mark and left the place they were seeking behind them.

They turned back at last, tramping and clambering from cave to cave, flashing their lights to and fro.

"There it is again!" breathed Bob.

The faint, painful cry awoke the echoes once more.

"We've passed the place," said Harry.

"But we've been keeping our eyes open," said Johnny Bull. "If there was anyone here we'd have seen him."

"Might have fallen into some pit—there are big holes in the chalk, in places."

"Better be careful—we don't want to follow him in."

Again and again, though at lengthy intervals, the juniors heard the cry; and they were fully convinced now that it was a human cry. The wind was wailing in the fissures of the rocks

but they picked out that strange cry at once, whenever it recurred, from the wail of the wind.

They stared round them in bewilderment.

In the massive sides of the cavern there were innumerable fissures; a day and a night would not have sufficed to explore them all. But it was inconceivable that anyone could have penetrated into one of the narrow fissures and remained there. Why should he have done so?

"This is jolly well getting on my nerves," grunted Johnny Bull. "Blessed if I don't begin to believe that it's the giddy old smuggler haunting the caves, just as the fishermen say."

"The hauntfulness is not terrific," said Hurree Singh, with a shake of his dusky head.

"Listen!"

"Oh, come on!" exclaimed Wharton. "I'm certain of the direction this time—it's over there."

He tramped across the rugged floor of the cave, flashing his light ahead. Before him as he stopped rose the slanting side of the cave, great masses of rough chalk, split by countless cracks. He flashed the light into a dozen fissures one after another.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Look!"

Bob Cherry gasped out the words. His light glimmered on a dark spot on the chalk at their feet, and he pointed to it with a shaking finger.



"Here he is!" shouted Harry Wharton suddenly. His torch revealed the bound and gagged figure of a man, lying almost at his feet! The prisoner mumbled faintly as he saw the juniors, who lost no time in releasing the unfortunate man.

Wharton uttered an exclamation.
"Blood!"

"Good heavens!" stammered Nugent, his teeth chattering.

"What on earth has happened here this afternoon?" exclaimed Wharton. "There's been foul play of some sort."

He bent over the mark on the chalk. It was a bloodstain, as if some wounded man had lain there. And now that their attention was directed to the ground, the juniors found several more spots of dull crimson on the chalk. They cast startled glances into the deep shadows that surrounded them.

Wharton pulled himself together with an effort.

"Somebody's been hurt here, and quite recently," he said. "We've got to find him. There! Listen!"

The feeble, anguished cry came again, and it seemed to the bewildered juniors that it came from the solid chalk side of the cavern, where no opening was to be seen.

But Hurree Jamset Ram Singh gave a sudden shout. The keen eyes of the nabob had detected what had so far escaped the juniors' eyes.

"Look, my esteemed chums! There is a fissure here; it has been blocked up!" he exclaimed.

"Great pip!"

"Oh, so that's it!" exclaimed Wharton.

The Famous Five gathered close to the spot, throwing the light upon it, and examining it keenly. There was a cavity in the chalk, and the mouth of the opening had been blocked up. Boulders and fragments of chalky rock had been stacked in, so carefully that scarcely a rift was left, and the block looked like a part of the cavern wall.

Wharton drew a deep breath.

"That accounts for it," he said.

"Whoever was crying out is blocked in there, shut up in a hollow of the rock. Somebody has been knocked on the head and buried alive in the chalk. What awful villain——"

"Hark!"

The weird cry came again, close at hand now. All the juniors knew now that it came from the recess in the cavern wall, so carefully blocked up by an unknown and ruthless hand.

"We'll jolly soon have him out!" said Bob between his teeth.

"Put your beef into it!"

The juniors set the torches down, with the light gleaming on the chalk wall, and set to work. With busy, eager hands they tore away the masses and rugged fragments that blocked the opening. Many hands made light work, and the barrier was rapidly torn away and the opening of the fissure revealed.

Wharton caught up his torch and plunged through as soon as the opening was large enough to admit him. Then he gave a shout:

"Here he is!"

On the chalk at his feet lay a man bound hand and foot and gagged with a handkerchief fastened across his mouth. His white, drawn face glimmered colourless in the light; his eyes stared wildly at the captain of the remove. Wharton understood now why the unfortunate prisoner of the cave had uttered that wailing cry, instead of shouting for help. The gag in his mouth prevented utterance of words. Only with painful efforts was the hapless man able to utter a sound at all. He could not speak, but he cried out faintly as he saw the schoolboys, and his dilated eyes beseeched them.

Wharton threw himself on his knees beside the bound man, and tore at the cords that fastened him.

THE NINTH CHAPTER

NOT NICE FOR THE SECOND

"I SAY, you fellows!"

It was roll-call at Greyfriars, and Billy Bunter rolled into Hall with the Remove. He blinked over the juniors and noted the absence of five members of the Form.

"I say, you fellows, Wharton's mob haven't come in," said Bunter, with a grin. "They'll be for it."

"Silly asses!" commented Peter Todd. "They've been out of gates all the afternoon. Where have they got to?"

Bunter chuckled.

"Rooting about in the caves at Pegg," he said. "Catch me spending a half-holiday rooting about filthy old caves. I say, Peter, I wonder if they've got cut off by the tide? He, he, he!"

"You fat image!" said Peter. "If they've got cut off by the tide, they're booked for a night in the caves. Is that anything to cackle at?"

"He, he, he!"

Billy Bunter appeared to think that it was something to cackle at, for he cackled unmusically.

"Tide isn't in till after dark to-day," said Redwing. "They won't stay late enough for that."

"Well, it's dark now," said Bunter. "I think it's jolly likely myself. I offered to go with them if they'd take a lunch basket. They refused. Now they'll be sorry I wasn't with them. He, he, he!"

"Silence!" called out Wingate of the Sixth.

Mr. Quelch had entered to take the roll.

Some of the Removites glanced towards the big oaken doors, expecting to see the Famous Five dodge in at the last moment and scuttle to their places in the Remove.



GREYFRIARS RHYMES

FRANK NUGENT

(a member of the Famous Five)

MAY Fate befriend you, worthy Frank—
The finest motives fire you!
Your character is void of "swank,"
For which we all admire you.
You are a white man to the core,
True blue and tender-hearted;
And all your chums would miss you sore
If fortune found you parted.

When Wharton saved Frank Nugent's life
Frank previously had licked him;
The cruel current's whirling strife
Bade fair to claim a victim.
But Harry, though a fiery youth,
Had pluck excelling passion,
Or Nugent would, in very truth,
Have died in dreadful fashion.

Right bravely Wharton saved his foe—
He was a splendid swimmer.
When Nugent thanked him, he did show
Of gladness not a glimmer.
But Franky praised him all the same,
Until the wrongs were righted;
And very soon, in friendship's name,
The pair became united.

Frank's deep affection made him glad
To serve his gallant leader;
And now he is the favourite lad
Of many a "H.A." reader.
He figures in the Famous Five—
A hero without question;
And keeps that brilliant band alive,
With every bright suggestion.

In every wheeze he takes a part,
At feeds you'll find him munching;
And Highcliff cads have learned to smart
By reason of his punching.
When in girl's garb he joined a ball,
To Smith he did his grief take;
The Bounder was not pleased at all—
His eye required a beefsteak!

In course of time poor Franky found
His name was in bad odour;
And all the fellows on him frowned,
From Vernon-Smith to Loder.
The rumour that he haunted pubs
Was viewed with keen revulsion;
With Smithy, Frank had several rubs,
And then received expulsion.

But Truth soon lifted up her head,
And Smith's deserts weren't pleasant;
But let the dead past hide its dead—
We'll think about the present.
The Bounder always was a worm—
A bugbear to the nation;
But Nugent, till his final term,
Will win our approbation!

But they did not appear, and Mr. Quelch began to take the roll.

Mr. Quelch's frown was quite formidable when he had finished. No fewer than five absentees had to be marked, and they were all members of his own Form. The Remove master's expression hinted that William George Bunter's surmise was well-founded, that the five culprits were "for it."

Mr. Quelch was not in a good temper. He was deeply annoyed by five members of his Form being absent from calling-over. Such a matter seemed a trifle light as air to the Remove fellows; but that was only one of the many matters upon which they did not see eye to eye with their Form-master. But that was not all. The new master of the Second had a severe headache after his train journey—at all events, so he declared—and the Head had asked Mr. Quelch to take the Second in prep that evening.

The Head had asked him very courteously, but a request from the Head was equivalent to a command. Mr. Quelch was not unwilling to oblige a colleague, especially on his first day at the school. But he had had enough of the Second Form for one day—too much, in fact.

Mr. Quelch was fed-up with the Second, though certainly he would not have expressed his feelings in those words.

Certainly the Second Form would have let him off the duty gladly, if they had known. Unfortunately, that did not rest with the Second Form.

Towards seven o'clock there were cheery faces in the Second Form-room, the happy fags being quite unconscious so far of their impending fate.

The rumour had spread that Mr. Sutcliffe had a bad headache after his journey, and that he was lying down

on the sofa in the study. Dicky Nugent & Co. were not, perhaps, unsympathetic towards a gentleman who was suffering from a bad headache. But they really had no leisure to think about Mr. Sutcliffe, being occupied with thinking about their worthy selves.

If Mr. Sutcliffe was lying down with a bad headache, it looked as if there might be no prep that evening. That prospect was so joyful that the Second Form naturally had no consideration to waste upon their Form-master.

"No prep, very likely!" said Dicky Nugent blissfully. "If his napper's really bad, you know, he won't want us in prep—his first night here, too. Looks like a good thing for us."

"We don't mind if Walker takes us," grinned Gatty. "Walker will let us do as we like, so long as we don't make row enough to interrupt his reading."

"May be no prep at all."

"Hurrah!"

The Form-room door opened.

"Why—what!" ejaculated Dicky Nugent.

The grim face and lean, angular figure of Mr. Quelch appeared in the doorway. There was a sudden silence as the Remove master entered. The Second Form blinked at him.

"Take your places," said Mr. Quelch grimly. "Your new Form-master has a headache, my boys, and I am taking you in preparation this evening."

"You, sir?" stuttered Nugent minor.

"I!" said Mr. Quelch, more grimly than before.

And throughout the Second Form the happy satisfaction died out of every face.

THE TENTH CHAPTER

A STARTLING DISCOVERY!

HARRY WHARTON, kneeling beside the bound man in the fissure of the smugglers' cave, did not lose a moment. The man's eyes watched him like those of a wounded animal. From the blackness of despair the unexpected arrival of the Greyfriars juniors had brought the hapless man life and hope, and he seemed overcome. The Co. looked into the fissure over Wharton's shoulders while he released the prisoner. Their faces were pale and tense.

Wharton found it no easy task to release the bound man, and he opened his knife to cut the cords. The prisoner was bound with great care and skill, and whoever had fastened him up had evidently taken a great deal of trouble over the task. He could not move a limb, and the gag had been secured in his mouth by cords winding about his head. By desperate chewing and biting the hapless man had been able to shift it sufficiently to give utterance to feeble cries. Wharton removed the gag first, but the man did not speak; his lips were white and numbed, his teeth chattered. Wharton noticed that he lay on a thick travelling-rug, but the cold in the cavern was intense.

The bonds fell to pieces at last under the sawing of Wharton's pocket-knife, and the man was free. But he did not move.

"Let me help you up," said Wharton softly. "Lend a hand, Bob."

"What-ho!"

The fissure extended back about a dozen feet into the chalk, and it was not more than four feet wide. Blocked up as it had been with fragments of rock, it was as secure a prison as could have been devised. But for the cries of the prisoner, certainly the juniors

would never have guessed that he was there; indeed, even while he was crying out, they had passed the spot two or three times unsuspecting. There was little room to move in the confined space, but Wharton and Bob Cherry grasped the man and lifted him to his feet. He gave a shrill cry of pain.

"Cramp," said Bob. "Keep your pecker up, sir. It will pass off when you get moving."

"Lift him out," said Harry.

The man was a good size, fairly tall in build. Johnny Bull lent a hand, and the three juniors lifted him out of the fissure and bore him into the cave. The man's eyes gleamed as he caught sight of the daylight in the far distance down the cave and the gleam of the tumbling sea in the sunset. It was the sight of freedom to him.

Who he was, how he had come to be imprisoned in the cave, the juniors could not even begin to guess. It was an amazing mystery to them so far. The man looked a respectable, middle-aged gentleman, rather tall in build, with a bald spot on his head. His clothes were good, but they were obviously very tight for him—he looked as if he was dressed in the clothes of a man slighter in build than himself. There was a bruise on his head, and on his colourless cheek blood was dried where it had run down from a cut.

The man stirred at last; his breathing became more regular, his face showed a little colour, and he rubbed and chafed his hands to restore the warmth. Several times he tried to speak, but his numbed lips refused to form the words. But he succeeded at last.

"Heaven bless you!" were his first words.

"Thank goodness we came here this afternoon, sir!" said Harry. "Thank goodness we found you!"

"I think you have saved my life. I should have frozen to death if I had remained there the night. And that wretch told me I should remain! He promised to send word where I could be found to-morrow. But—but I should have frozen to death before the morning; I am sure of it!"

He shuddered.

"As soon as you're able to walk, sir, we'll help you along to Pegg," said Bob. "You can get a bed at the Anchor, and a doctor, or a trap to take you home. It's only a mile, and we'll help you."

"Heaven bless you!" said the man again.

There was another long silence, but the hapless man was evidently recovering a little. He pressed his hand to the bruise on his head.

Wharton was thinking it out.

"One of us had better cut in to Pegg and telephone for the doctor from the Anchor," he said. "Dr. Pillbury can get across there in his car by the time we get this gentleman there."

"Good egg!" said Bob.

"I'll go," said Nugent.

And Frank Nugent hurried down to the mouth of the cave and scudded away over sand and shingle towards the fishing village, where the lights were already beginning to gleam out over the bay.

"Thank you for helping me like this," said the rescued man faintly.

"You are schoolboys, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir; we belong to Greyfriars."

The man started.

"Greyfriars School?" he exclaimed.

"I was going there."

"You were going to Greyfriars!" exclaimed Wharton, in astonishment.

"Yes."

The man was silent again, breathing hard; and the juniors watched him in great surprise. Their interest in the stranger deepened when they learned that he was going to their school.

"I came from London to-day," the man went on, after a long pause. "I should have gone to Courtfield Junction; but owing to that—that villain—I got out at Redclyffe to walk. He represented himself as a Greyfriars master—a falsehood, as I know now." He pressed his hands to his head and groaned. "Fool that I was! He must have been watching me, and entered into conversation with the intention of deceiving me and robbing me!"

"You've been robbed?" asked Bob.

"Everything! Even my clothes and papers, even to my boots and hat. He gave me his own in exchange, the dastard!"

"But why did he change clothes?" exclaimed Wharton, in astonishment. "He's given you a good suit of clothes, though it's rather too small for you."

"I cannot understand that. I cannot understand it at all; for I had little to make this crime worth while—a watch, a pin, a few pounds. It is amazing that he should have committed the crime for so little. We talked in the express; he told me he was a Greyfriars master, and he seemed to know a good deal about the school—and I had no doubts. As I was going to the school I was interested in what he could tell me about the place. He looked a well-dressed and respectable man. He told me there was a short cut from Redclyffe, which people belonging to Greyfriars were in the habit of using instead of going on to Courtfield."

"It's a jolly long cut!" said Bob.



"Thank you for helping me," said the rescued man. "You are schoolboys, I suppose?" "Yes, sir; we belong to Greyfriars." "Greyfriars School!" exclaimed the man. "I was going there. I am the new master, Mr. Sutcliffe!"

"I did not know that. I took him for what he represented himself to be. I got out at Redclyffe to walk to the school with him, leaving my trunk to go on to Courtfield. He said that the short cut lay by the beach, and I was glad enough to see the sea——"

"The awful rotter! The way is on the Pegg road, not in this direction at all," said Johnny Bull.

The man nodded.

"I guessed afterwards, of course, that he was tricking me into a lonely place. But I suspected nothing then; it would never have occurred to me that I was worth deluding and robbing. I had told him in our conversation that I was poor and glad of a temporary post as a master in a school.

He knew I had a little—a few things and some books in my bag—a few pounds in my pocket. What man in his senses would risk penal servitude, and perhaps the gallows, for so little? It was not as if he were some desperate tramp; he was well-dressed and looked well-off. I cannot understand it. But when we were passing this cave he told me the legend connected with it, and suggested entering. I preferred to get to the school as soon as possible, so declined; and then, to my amazement, he whipped out a pistol and ordered me into the cave."

"My hat!"

"Even then I supposed it was some ghastly jest. But as I refused to obey he struck me down with the butt of the pistol. I was half-stunned;

he led and dragged me into the cave. Then I knew that I was in desperate hands. He was stronger than I, and he had the pistol; I was at his mercy. He forced me to change clothes. Why, I cannot imagine, for his clothes were more expensive than mine—twice the value at least—and mine did not fit him; they were too large for him. His, as you see, are too small for me. He took even my hat, though it was too large for him, and he had to pad the lining with something to keep it on. Unless he was mad, I cannot understand it. But he was sane enough."

The juniors listened in amazed silence.

"Then he bound me, as you saw—bound me very carefully—and placed the gag in my mouth, and blocked me up in the fissure. I supposed that he was burying me alive. I was frantic with terror, but I could not speak. But he told me that he was simply shutting me up here to keep me safe till he was clear away, and that to-morrow morning he would send word to the headmaster at Greyfriars where I was to be found."

The man shuddered.

"Blessed if it doesn't sound like a lunatic!" said Bob Cherry. "He doesn't seem to have gained much, and he will go to prison for this for years."

"It is inexplicable. From what he said, it appears that he will not be clear away till to-night at least; and now I am free I can set the police on his track. He must be still in the vicinity."

Johnny Bull uttered an exclamation.

"It's the man! The man we saw in——"

"What?"

"The man with clothes too large

for him, and a hat too large, that blew off! Look here, sir, what's your name?"

"John Sutcliffe."

Bob Cherry gave a shout of amazement.

"Mr. Sutcliffe! The new master of the Second at Greyfriars?"

"Yes."

"Great Scott!"

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER

LIGHT AT LAST!

HARRY WHARTON AND CO. stared blankly at the man they had rescued.

The discovery was simply amazing.

Bob Cherry made a dive for the hat he had been carrying, and which he had dropped and forgotten. He picked it up and brought it to the man sitting on that chalk boulder.

"Is this yours?"

Mr. Sutcliffe took it and stared at it.

"Yes; that is my hat. My name is written in it."

"Then we've seen the man!" shouted Bob.

"I knew he was a bad egg!" said Johnny Bull sententiously. "I told you fellows so."

Wharton's eyes blazed with excitement.

"We know the man by sight. We know the way he went," he exclaimed. "We can jolly well put the police after him. The man who was wearing your hat was the man who shut you up here, that's certain."

"You—you saw him?"

Wharton explained. The new master of the Second nodded when he had finished.

"That's the man, undoubtedly," he said. "He must have passed you going up the cliff path after leaving me here. A man with strongly-marked

features and very sharp eyes, rather close together——”

“That’s the man,” said Bob. “His clobber was too large for him, and his hat blew off on the cliff for the same reason. The bobbies will know the sort of man to look for with so many witnesses to describe him.”

“But what he did it for is a giddy mystery,” said Johnny Bull. “He must have had some reason, but I’m blessed if I can get on to it.”

Mr. Sutcliffe shook his head.

“I can’t understand it,” he said. “The exchange of clothes was to his disadvantage; the rug he left with me was worth more than the money he took. He has gained nothing, or next to nothing, yet if I had died in the cave of cold it would have been a hanging matter. But I think I can move now, my dear boys, if you will help me.”

“What-ho!”

Mr. Sutcliffe rose feebly to his feet. Harry Wharton took one of his arms, Bob the other. Most of his weight fell on them as they led him from the cave, but the juniors were strong and sturdy. It was high time to be moving, for the winter dusk was thickening, and the tide was coming in.

Out of the gloomy cave the juniors tramped away over the sand and shingle towards the glimmering lights of Pegg.

The unfortunate master dragged more and more heavily on the juniors. At last the four of them lifted him bodily and carried him along. Even with four strong pairs of arms to bear the burden it was no easy task getting him to the village. As they came in sight of the Anchor Inn Frank Nugent came running to meet them.

“All serene!” he exclaimed.

“There’s a room and a bed got ready. I’ve phoned to the doctor, and he’s

coming over in his car as quick as he can. He will be here by the time we get the chap to his room.”

“Good!”

A curious crowd at the Anchor surveyed the juniors and the injured man as Mr. Sutcliffe was carried in. He was taken up and placed on a bed, and by that time the doctor’s car was heard in the cobbly street. Dr. Pillbury came up, and Harry Wharton & Co. explained to him, and willingly enough handed Mr. Sutcliffe over to the medical gentleman’s care.

“Leave him to me,” said Dr. Pillbury. “I will give him a lift to Greyfriars in my car when I’ve attended to him, and I will speak to the police. You boys had better get back to school.”

“I was thinking so, sir,” said Wharton, with a smile. “They will be wondering what on earth’s become of us.”

And a few minutes later the trap from the Anchor was bowling away by the shadowy lanes, with the Famous Five in it, and it soon reached Greyfriars.

Harry Wharton & Co. walked across to the House, feeling quite cheery. They had reason to be pleased with their exploits that afternoon, and there was no doubt that Mr. Quelch would excuse them for missing call-over when they explained what had happened. Only, as Bob remarked, they would have to be sure to start in with the explanation before Quelch started in with the cane.

“I say, you fellows——”

“Hallo, hallo, hallo!”

Bob Cherry greeted the Owl of the Remove with a cheery smack as Bunter rolled up to meet them in the lighted hall.

“Yow-ow! So you’re not drowned?” exclaimed Bunter.

"Not quite," said Bob. "Do we look drowned?"

"The drownfulness is not terrific, my esteemed idiotic Bunter."

"Bunter was going to bag your study if you were drowned," explained Peter Todd.

"Oh, my hat! Why, you fat villain!" exclaimed Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But where on earth have you been?" asked Peter. "Quelchy's got his rag out."

"That's all right. Quelchy is going to smile sweetly when we tell him the stunt," said Bob cheerily. "Come on, you chaps, and get it over."

And Bob started for the Remove master's study.

"Quelchy's not there!" called out Peter. "He's taking the Second in prep. The new master's lying down with a giddy headache."

Harry Wharton & Co. stopped dead.

"The—the what?" stuttered Wharton. "What did you say, Peter?"

"Quelchy's taking the Second——"

"I don't mean that. You said——"

"The new master's lying down with a headache," said Peter in wonder. "Why shouldn't he?"

"What new master?"

"Man named Sutcliffe."

"Man named Sutcliffe!" repeated Bob Cherry faintly. "D-d-d-did you say a man named Sutcliffe?"

"Yes, ass. Haven't you heard that there was a new boss coming to-day for the Second Form?"

"But he hasn't come!"

"He has," said Peter.

"He has come?" repeated Wharton. "What do you mean, Toddy? Are you trying to pull our leg, or what?"

"Blessed if I make you out," said Peter blankly. "Mr. Sutcliffe

is in his study now. He's got a headache after his train journey, and Quelchy is taking his Form in prep. What is there surprising in that?"

The Famous Five looked at one another.

Had Peter told them that Pontius Pilate or Julius Caesar was lying down with a headache in the Second Form-master's study it could not have surprised them more.

"Good heavens!" gasped Wharton.

The discovery was staggering. Like a flood of light, the truth came to the captain of the Remove.

The Famous Five knew now where to look for the man who had robbed Mr. Sutcliffe and blocked him up in the fissure in the smugglers' cave!

They knew where to look for him—in the Second Form-master's study, under the name of the man he had robbed!

"Great pip!" breathed Bob Cherry.

"The great pipfulness is terrific! The esteemed scoundrel is here—at Greyfriars!" ejaculated Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Let's go and see Wingate," said Harry. "We'd better tell him first."

"But what——" exclaimed half a dozen voices.

But the Famous Five did not heed them. They hurried away to Wingate's study, where the captain of Greyfriars listened, with eyes growing wider and wider, to a tale that fairly made him jump.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER

CATCHING THE CRACKSMAN!

TAP!

The hard-faced man who was known at Greyfriars as Mr. Sutcliffe, the temporary master of the Second, frowned darkly.

He had been smoking a cigarette



"What the——" Gentleman Jim rose quickly to his feet as the prefects, followed by Mr. Quelch and Mr. Prout, and Harry Wharton & Co., entered the study. The cracksman was cornered! "Hold him!" exclaimed Wingate.

before the fire, in a contented and satisfied frame of mind.

So far all had gone well for the schemer. Mr. John Sutcliffe, alias Gentleman Jim, the cracksman, was safely installed at Greyfriars.

Never had Gentleman Jim handled a "job" so easily.

Greyfriars was a "crib" well worth "cracking," in the language of Gentleman Jim. But it was not an easy crib to crack. "Inside information," so important to a gentleman of his peculiar profession, had been hard to come by.

A dozen times the rascal had visited

the neighbourhood, staying for two or three days at a time, studying the locality, picking up what information he could, in various disguises. Gentleman Jim knew the country round Greyfriars like a book now. But he had still been at a loss for "inside information." But that day he had resolved to chance it, and then his good luck—Gentleman Jim was generally lucky—had befriended him once more. A chatty and unguarded gentleman in the train—

The cracksman had known at a glance that Mr. Sutcliffe was a school-master. He had known that he was

going to Courtfield, the station for Greyfriars. He had surmised that the master might have some connection with Greyfriars School, and he had entered into talk with him with a view to extracting, if possible, some of that "inside information" he so keenly desired. The cool and wary rascal had turned a chatty and unsuspecting gentleman inside out in a few minutes, and then the scheme had come into his head.

A temporary master engaged for a couple of weeks from an agency—utterly unknown at Greyfriars. It was "pie" to Gentleman Jim, as he would have expressed it.

The whole thing had been almost too easy. It had only required nerve, iron nerve, and a grim, relentless determination. Those qualities Gentleman Jim possessed in abundance.

In the Form-master's clothes, with the Form-master's papers and credentials, the bag marked with the Form-master's initials—he was Mr. Sutcliffe, the new master. He had walked by solitary paths to Courtfield, where he had bought a new hat to replace the one that had blown off on the cliff, and taken a taxi to the school from the station.

Only one hitch had occurred—the little scheme of the Second Form fags to meet their new master at the junction.

Dicky Nugent had given the new master a shock of which he never dreamed, when he came to the study with Gatty.

But there had been no trouble. Trouble certainly might have transpired had the man attempted to take the Second Form in prep. Even Sammy Bunter would have discovered that he was no genuine Form-master.

But a severe headache after a long railway journey—that was good

enough. That saw the imposter through the first evening. And the next day he was to be gone. He was waiting only for the school to sleep—by two in the morning, at the latest, "Mr. Sutcliffe" would have vanished from Greyfriars School for ever. To save his neck, he would leave a message where his hapless victim was to be found. That lack of "inside information," which had promised to make the cracksman's job difficult and dangerous, mattered nothing now. Installed in the House, unsuspected, the job had become child's play.

So the reflections of Gentleman Jim were very pleasant and agreeable as he smoked his cigarette before the study fire.

But he frowned as the tap came at the door.

The story of a severe headache ought to have kept him clear of visitors. Some fag, perhaps, bothering him again. But he had his part to play, and he called out calmly:

"Come in!"

The study door opened, and Wingate of the Sixth entered. Gwynne of the Sixth, and Walker, and Mr. Quelch followed him in. Behind them was the stout form of Mr. Prout, and behind Mr. Prout was Gosling and Harry Wharton & Co.

The cracksman rose quickly to his feet.

"What——" he began.

Gentleman Jim was generally very much on his guard. But he was not prepared for the sudden spring with which George Wingate reached him, and he went tumbling over in the grasp of the captain of Greyfriars, almost before he knew what was happening.

The rascal was on his back on the study carpet, with Wingate on him. He knew, then, that the game was

up, and desperately strove to get at his revolver. But he had no chance. That sudden attack had been made to prevent him from getting at the revolver, and it was successful.

"Hold him!"

Gwynne and Walker were grasping the rascal; and Wingate's grip was like iron. Mr. Quelch added a tenacious grasp; a moment more, and Mr. Prout and Gosling had hold of the man.

Wingate took charge of the revolver while the cracksman was still struggling frantically but helplessly in the grasp of so many hands.

"There's the revolver," said Wingate. "Lucky those young beggars warned us about it!"

"Let me go!" panted the struggling rascal. "What does this mean? What—what——" He gasped for breath.

"Scoundrel!" said Mr. Quelch icily. "It means that some boys of this school have found your victim, blocked up in the cave at Pegg—that Mr. Sutcliffe is now here, in my study—that the police have been telephoned for, and that you will be handed over to them."

The cracksman spat out an oath.

"And it means that we've got you safe, and you can't use a weapon," said Wingate. "It means that you're going where you belong, you villain—and that's prison!"

"Hear, hear!" chortled Bob Cherry from the passage.

"Secure his hands!" said Mr. Quelch. "Take care; he is a dangerous scoundrel! Make him secure!"

The cracksman still resisted feebly; but his hands were bound together, and then his struggles ceased. Wingate pitched him into the armchair.

He sat there, panting, his eyes glittering like a snake's. And the

Greyfriars prefects remained with him, watching and guarding him, till Inspector Grimes arrived from Courtfield with a constable; and in the midst of a buzz of excitement from all Greyfriars he was taken away.

It was a nine days' wonder at Greyfriars.

The Famous Five, of course, came very prominently into the limelight.

Mr. Sutcliffe was the recipient of much sympathy. He stayed only a few days, cared for in the school hospital; the shock he had received had made him quite unable to take up his duties at the school. The Famous Five saw him off, when he went, very cordially. He had lost his temporary engagement at Greyfriars; but he told them that the Head had kindly insisted that he should be put to no loss in the matter, so that was all right. Everyone, in fact, was content with the way the matter had turned out—excepting the cracksman who was in prison awaiting trial.

But most content of all were the Second Form.

"Sorry for the old bird, of course," said Dicky Nugent to his comrades. "Sorry and all that. But we really didn't want him."

"We didn't!" agreed Gatty. "But now he's gone, so everything in the garden's lovely!"

"So long as we don't give Quelch an excuse for butting into our Form-room again," said Myers.

And the Second Form were careful to that extent. And until a new master arrived to take the Second, Walker of the Sixth read his novels in the Second Form-room, and Dicky Nugent & Co. had the time of their lives.

THE END

HARRY WHARTON'S PICNIC!

By BOB CHERRY



BUNTER'S eyes are glistening
With thoughts of grub galore!
And Bunter's ears are listening
Outside our study door!

Already he is pondering
On methods that are dark ;
Already he is wondering
If he will taste the quality,
And join the gay frivolity,
The cheerfulness and jollity
Of Harry Wharton's picnic on the Sark.

Though we have not invited him,
He joins us all the same ;
The picnic has delighted him,
He wants to share the game.
The sun is shining brilliantly
In welcome to our barque ;
We ply the oars resolutely
And start with careless revelry,
With gay, light-hearted devilry,
With sprightliness and chivalry
On Harry Wharton's picnic on the Sark.

The little waves are glittering
In answer to the breeze,
The birds are gaily twittering
Their music in the trees,
We find a spot convenient
Within old Popper's park.
We know he won't be lenient,
And if he comes up presently,
He'll look at us unpleasantly,
His wrath will fall incessantly
On Harry Wharton's picnic on the Sark.

The sausages are spluttering,
The kettle is in song,
And Billy Bunter's muttering—
When Popper comes along !
He looks at us disdainfully,
And we regret our lark,
He wields a dog-whip painfully
And sets about us viciously,
So we retire judiciously ;
Thus ends, but not deliciously,
Our first unhappy picnic on the Sark.

