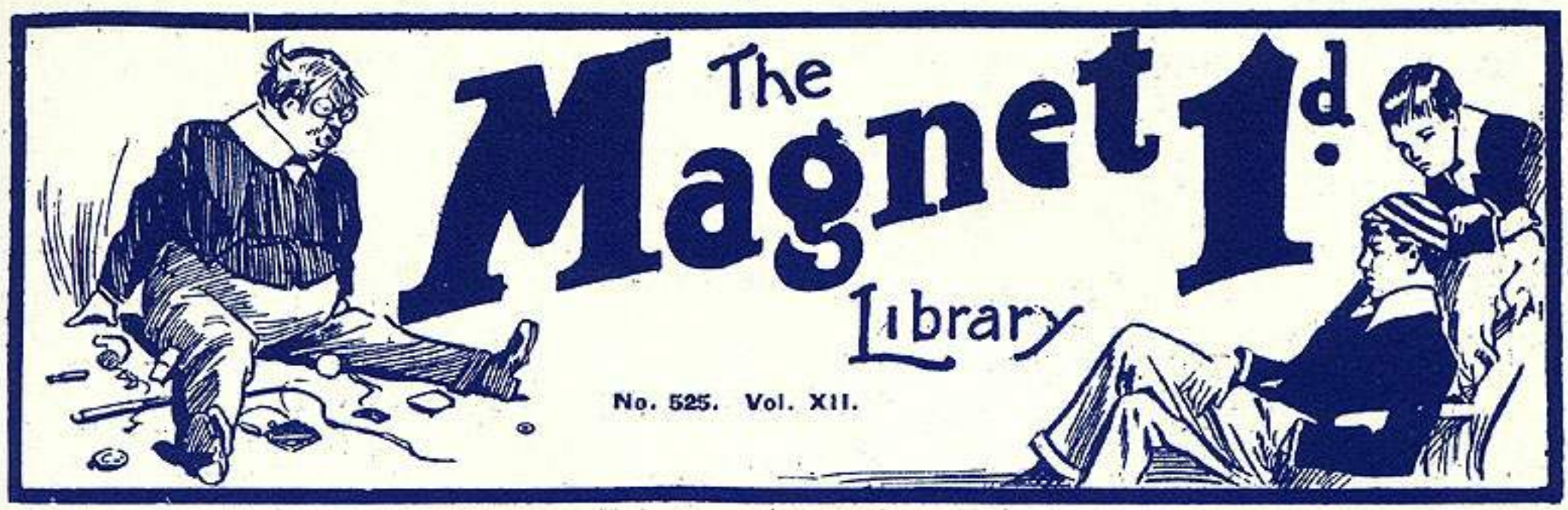
SKINNER, THE SPY!



A SET-BACK FOR SKINNER!

SKINNER, THE SPY!

By FRANK RICHARDS.

A Magnificent New Long Complete Tale of Harry Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars School.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.
A Special Blend!

"WELL, here we are!"

Bob Cherry bumped open the door of Study No. 1 in the Remove and marched in, followed by Johnny Bull and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent were in the study.

The chums of No. 1 stood at the table in their shirt-sleeves. On the table was a large tin pan. Wharton was pouring ink into the tin pan, and Nugent was stirring with the study poker.

The new-comers stared at them.

"What's that?" demanded Johnny Bull.

"That's the mixture!" replied Wharton.

"The mixfulness is terrific," remarked Hurree Singh. "The smellfulness is also great."

"Got your contributions?" asked Wharton.

"I've got mine," said Bob, in wonder. "You asked me to bring my bottle of liquid blacking. Here it is—half-full."

"And here's my gum-bottle," said Johnny Bull. "Blessed if I know what you want it for!"

"And here is my esteemed carbide of calcium," remarked Hurree Singh.

"Good! Chuck 'em in!"

"Into that pan?" exclaimed Bob.

"Yes."

"Oh, all right!"

Bob Cherry, in great astonishment, poured the blacking into the pan. Nugent continued to stir. Hurree Singh added a quantity of carbide, taken from the container of his acetylene lamp—after use. The smell of that chemical was not agreeable.

But Johnny Bull paused.

"Go it, Johnny," said Wharton.

"What's it for?" demanded Johnny Bull, who always wanted to know things. "I don't believe in wasting gum."

"It's for the mixture, fathead!"

"Well, what's the mixture for?"

"Carne."

"Eh?"

"Carne of the Sixth."

"Carne's asked you to mix up that awful mess?" exclaimed Johnny Bull, in amazement.

"Ha, ha! No. We're doing it unasked."

"But does he want it?"

"No."

"Are you going to give it to him when he doesn't want it?"

"Exactly."

"Well, I don't see——"

"You never do see, old chap," said Harry affably. "Set your mighty brain to work, and you'll guess in a week or two that we're going to chuck this mixture over Carne's napper—but not to please him."

"Oh, ye gods!" gasped Johnny Bull. "Well, if it's for that bully's napper, you can have my gum!"

And he poured it in.

"There's about a gallon now," remarked Frank Nugent. "That's enough for Carne. We'll keep the red ink for next time."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Frank stirred industriously at the horrible mixture. There was no doubt that Arthur Carne of the Sixth Form would not be pleased if he received that gift from Study No. 1—on his head. There was soot in it, and ink, and ashes, as well as the ingredients Bob and his companions had brought.

It formed a treacly mass, and Wharton added a little water from the kettle to make it stir more easily.

"What's Carne done?" asked Bob.

"He's been bullying my minor," said Nugent.

Bob Cherry grinned. Dicky Nugent of the Second Form was often in hot water.

"Of course, Dicky didn't do anything!" grinned Bob.

"Not this time," said Frank. "Carne wanted him to smuggle smokes into the school for him. Dicky refused, and the brute caned him—for sliding down the banisters. Dicky hadn't done it, as it happens, on that occasion, but that didn't matter to Carne. It was a good enough excuse, if Dicky reported him to the Head—not that Dicky would. He would have denied the cigarettes, and sworn to the banisters."

"The rotter!" said Bob. "And he's not a prefect, either. It's like his jolly nerve!"

"Dicky's had it bad," said Wharton. "He's a cheeky little sweep, but there's a limit, and Carne's going to be taught the limit. I've seen the kid's hands. They're all wealed."

"He ought to show them to the Head, then!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Better not. We can deal with Carne!"

"Well, he won't enjoy it, if he gets that stuff on his napper," said Bob. "But how on earth are you going to get Carne to stand still while you swamp him?"

"Information received, as the policemen say," said Wharton, laughing. "I got it from Skinner that Carne's breaking bounds to-night. Skinner knows their rotten games—he's thick with Carne and Loder and that gang. He knows for a cert that Carne is going down to the Cross Keys after lights out to-night. He's borrowed Loder's key to the side gate."

"Nice boy!" sniffed Bob.

"When he comes back, he's going to find us ready for him," continued the captain of the Remove. "We shall be on the wall. When Carne comes rolling home, and stops at the gate, we swamp his napper——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He won't see us—which is just as well——"

"Quite as well, I think!" chuckled Bob.

"Anyway, he couldn't say much, as he won't care to mention to the Head that he's been out till midnight," said Wharton. "Hallo! Cover that up!"

There was a heavy footstep in the passage outside Study No. 1.

Nugent hastily threw the table-cover over the tin pan, and the five juniors all assumed their most innocent expressions as a tap came at the door, and it opened.

It was Herr Gans, otherwise known as "The Gander," who presented himself in the doorway.

"C-c-come in, sir!" stammered Wharton.

The German master entered.

The Famous Five wondered what he wanted. It was unusual enough for the German master to visit the junior studies.

The Gander, though a Hun, was not unpopular at Greyfriars. He was of the Saxon race, and hated Prussians with a deadly hatred. His sympathies, no doubt, were with his own country in the war, but it was hard to blame any man for that. But the fellows had seen him grinning with glee over reports of the Prussian Guards being cut up on the Western Front. The good Herr nourished a hope that Prussia would be so thoroughly downed by the war that his "beloved Sachsen," as he called his country, would be able to throw off the iron grip of her Prussian tyrants afterwards. And in that wish everybody could sympathise.

Fellows like Skinner and Snoop, who hated work, hated the Gander also, for he made them work, having all the grim thoroughness of his race. But Harry Wharton & Co., though they did not like Huns, made an exception in favour of Herr Gans, and tolerated him.

Herr Gans generally had a face like unto the full moon, so broad and good-humoured was it. But just now his expression was anything but good-humoured. His brow was knitted, and his pale-blue eyes gleamed over his glasses.

He looked more like a real Hun than the juniors had ever seen him look before.

"Wharton!" he rapped out.

"Yes, sir?" said Harry, wondering whether the Gander would notice the covered-up tin pan on the table.

"I have lose a letter from mine study, isn't it?"

"Have you, sir?"

"Vat I mean to say is dis, tat tat letter he is taken from mine study," said Herr Gans. "Somevun he have steal tat letter."

Wharton flushed angrily.

"I suppose you haven't come to this study looking for a stolen letter, Herr Gans?" he exclaimed tartly.

"We're not Germans here!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Vat! Vat do you say, Bull?"

"I said we're not Germans here!" said Johnny Bull undauntedly. "You've no right to come here asking about a stolen letter."

"Mein Gott! You are vun impertinent poy, Bull!" exclaimed Herr Gans.

"Shut up, Johnny!" murmured Nugent.

Herr Gans' fat face had become almost purple, but he controlled his wrath, and went on quietly:

"I do not vish tat tere is misunderstanding. I come not here to find stolen letter, but to ask if you shall hear of him."

"We haven't heard anything about it, sir," said Wharton.

"It is most important letter," added Herr Gans. "He is very important indeed, and I am mooch distress and worry. If you shall find tat letter, Wharton, I shall be ferry mooch oblige."

"I'll make inquiries about it at once, sir."

"I tank you, mein poy."

Herr Gans' glance wandered to the table. It was evident that he wondered what was hidden under the cover hastily thrown over the pan. There were stains of ink and blacking, too, upon Wharton and Nugent, which did not escape his eyes. The juniors felt uncomfortable.

"I have interrupt you," remarked the Gander.

"Ye-es, sir."

"It is tat you make somezing?"

"Ye-es, sir. We—we're making a—a mixture," stammered Wharton. "We are mixing up something, sir."

"Fery vell, mein poy."

To the great relief of the juniors, the Herr rolled out without asking any further questions. They looked at one another rather guiltily as Herr Gans' heavy footsteps died away down the passage.

"Jolly lucky he didn't see what we were mixing!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"Yes, rather!"

"The ratherfulness is terrific!" grinned Hurree Singh.

"He, he, he!" came a sudden cackle in the doorway.

And Billy Bunter, the Owl of the Remove, looked in.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.
Bunter Sees It All!

BILLY BUNTER blinked at the Famous Five through his big spectacles, and raised a fat hand.

To the surprise of the Co., he pointed a podgy forefinger at them in an accusing manner.

"Detected!" exclaimed Bunter dramatically.

"What!" ejaculated Wharton.

"Detected!"

"Get out, you fat duffer!"

"Yah! Food-hogs!"

"Wha-a-at?"

Bob Cherry made a movement towards the fat junior, with the intention of introducing his boot into the conversation. Bunter did not retreat. His fat, accusing finger still pointed.

"Hands off, Cherry! I'm afraid it's my duty to go to Mr. Quelch and denounce you!"

"Denounce us?" repeated Wharton dazedly.

"Certainly! What have you got there in that pan that you've covered up so jolly carefully?"

"Find out!"

"I don't need to find out—I know," grinned Bunter. "Jolly lucky for you the Gander didn't spot it. You'd look pretty queer if you were reported for making a pudding!"

"A what?"

"Perhaps you're going to tell me that it's not a pudding?" sneered Bunter. "You are mixing a pudding in that pan, and you nearly got spotted by old Gans. Yah! Food-hogs!"

"Well, my hat!" exclaimed Johnny Bull.

"And where did you get the stuff?" continued Bunter accusingly. "I know how you got it. Sneaking about from one shop to another, getting a bit at each—I know the game. And you think you're going to keep it for yourselves, without asking a pal if he's got a mouth! Yah!"

"You fat idiot!" shouted Wharton. "It's not a pudding."

"What is it, then?"

"Go and eat coke!"

"Take that cover off, and let me see what's in the pan!" grinned Bunter. He advanced a step towards the table, evidently to peer under the cover, but Johnny Bull raised his foot, and the Owl promptly dodged back.

The Famous Five certainly had no intention of letting Bunter see the mixture. It was necessary to keep that mixture very dark, and the intended jape on Arthur Carne could not be confided to the tattler of Greyfriars.

"Stand back, you fat duffer!" growled Wharton.

"You won't let me see it?"

"No."

"And you want me to believe it's not a pudding!" sneered Bunter. "Well, I tell you what, Wharton! I'm going to have my whack in that pudding; otherwise I shall consider it my duty to go to the Head and denounce you at once. I—— Oh! Ah! Oooooop!"

Bob Cherry grasped the fat junior by the collar.

Bunter's remarks ended in a terrific yell, as he was spun round and a heavy boot was applied forcibly to his person.

He went through the doorway like a stone from a catapult.

Bump!

"Yaroooooh!" howled Bunter.

"Now come back and have some more!" roared Bob.

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"Hold him while I get a stump!" shouted Johnny Bull.

Bunter leaped up, and ran. He disappeared along the Remove passage almost in the twinkling of an eye, without waiting for the stump. Bob kicked the door shut.

"The fat rotter!" he growled. "Just like Bunter to suspect a chap of food-hogging!"

"He won't go to Quelchy, I suppose?" remarked Nugent doubtfully.

"No fear! He knows he would be skinned. More likely to hang round and demand a whack in the pudding when it's cooked."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Still, we may as well put the stuff out of sight when we've finished mixing it," remarked Wharton.

And when a final stir had been given to the ghastly compound in the pan it was slid under the study table, and the table-cover thrown over it there.

"What about the Gander's missing letter?" asked Nugent.

"We'll inquire. Very likely Skinner or Snoop. They're always up against the Gander."

The Famous Five quitted Study No. 1, turning out the light. They proceeded to No. 4, which belonged to Harold Skinner and Vernon-Smith, and found both those juniors there.

"The Gander says a letter has been taken from his study, Skinner," began Wharton.

"Does he?" asked Skinner, looking up.

"Yes; somebody's taken it."

"I wonder why?" yawned Skinner.

"Well, have you taken it?"

"Why should I?"

"Look here, Skinner!" exclaimed Wharton. "The Gander's worried about it for some reason. If you've got his letter, take it back. I know you're up against him because he makes you work; but you can let his correspondence alone."

"But I haven't got it!" smiled Skinner. "Ask Smithy!"

"I!" exclaimed Vernon-Smith.

"Yes. You're as likely to have the Gander's letter as I am, I suppose!"

The Bounder knitted his brows.

"Nothing of the kind!" exclaimed Wharton. "Smithy wouldn't do such a thing, and you would, Skinner."

"Thanks!"

"I told the Gander I'd inquire after it."

"Well, go on inquiring!" said Skinner, with a yawn.

Wharton looked nonplussed. Skinner was a fellow naturally to be suspected in such a case, but there seemed nothing more to be done. And Wharton was less inclined than usual to be down on the cad of the Remove, owing to the tip Skinner had given him concerning Arthur Carne's movements that night.

"Well, if Skinner denies it, there's nothing doing," said Bob. "I'm going to do my prep."

And Bob Cherry went his way, with Hurree Singh and Johnny Bull. Wharton and Nugent left the study, and looked in on Snoop and Stott in their quarters. But Snoop and Stott professed complete ignorance of the Gander's missing letter. Wharton, having undertaken to make the inquiry, did not like giving it up, and he went up and down the Remove passage asking whether any fellows had seen or heard anything of the letter.

But nobody had, and he repaired to the Gander's study at last. He found Herr Gans there, with a letter in his hand.

"I can't hear anything of the letter you mentioned, sir," said Harry.

The Gander smiled at him.

"Tank you ferry mooch, Vharton! I have find him."

"Oh!" said Harry.

"I joost come pack to mein study, and I find him on te floor," explained the Herr. "Somevun he fling him into te room, isn't it? Tat is a pad boy who play such tricks mit mein letter, I tink."

Harry Wharton left the German master's study with a knitted brow. His inquiry up and down the Remove passage had had that result. It had caused the purloiner of the letter to throw it into Herr Gans' study to get rid of it. This was a proof that it was a Remove fellow who had abstracted it in the first place.

It was upon Skinner that his suspicions fixed, especially as Skinner always affected to believe that the harmless old Gander was a German spy, and was very curious about his correspondence. But there was no proof, and the captain of the Remove had to let the matter drop.

He joined Nugent on the stairs, and they went back to Study No. 1 to begin their prep. Just as they reached the study they heard the door shut and the key turn in the lock.

"My hat!" ejaculated Harry, in astonishment. "Somebody's locked himself in our study."

Nugent gurgled.

"Bunter!"

"What!"

"After the pudding!"

Wharton stared at him for a moment, and then, as he understood, he burst into a roar.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

THE THIRD CHAPTER.
A Feast for a Food-hog!

BILLY BUNTER grinned in the gloom as he stole into Study No. 1.

Having seen Wharton and Nugent go downstairs, the fat junior considered that the coast was clear, and he had stolen to the study with great caution.

Tom Brown and Squiff came by, and Bunter made an elaborate pretence of tying up his shoe-lace till they were gone. Then Lord Mauleverer sauntered up, and Bunter affected to be re-settling his neck-tie. Then the coast was clear, and he stole into the study and closed the door.

As a precaution, he locked it behind him.

He did not mean to be interrupted while he was negotiating the supposed pudding.

Visions of a glorious feed floated before Bunter's mind. He was thinking of a Christmas pudding, with raisins and almonds and candied-peel galore. True, the pudding was uncooked, but those sweet comestibles were nice enough without cooking. Surely it must be an unusually gorgeous pudding, or why were its owners so careful not to let it be seen?

Judging others by himself, Bunter had no doubt that everybody would be a food-hog if he had the chance.

And he quite thrilled with indignation at the idea of the food-hogs keeping the pudding entirely to themselves. They might at least have asked Bunter to share the surreptitious feed. As they hadn't, he felt quite justified in helping himself. Not that he troubled very much about justification where food was concerned.

He felt in his pockets for matches, but hesitated. It was safer not to have a light shining under the door, and he could eat in the dark. A dim starlight fell in at the study window, which was only partly covered.

It showed that the pan was no longer on the table.

"Hidden, of course!" grinned Bunter. "That shows it's a jolly good thing. Fancy leaving me out—selfish beasts! I'll show 'em!"

He blinked round the study, and found the hidden pan under the table. He jerked the table-cover off it, and plunged his fat paw into it.

The sticky mixture that met his fingers sent a thrill of delighted anticipation through him.

He filled his fat hand with as much as it would hold, grinning with delight. There was a step outside.

Bunter did not heed it.

The door was locked, and he was safe. His large mouth was open, and he crammed into it the handful of "pudding."

The next moment there was a terrific uproar in Study No. 1.

"Gurrrg! Grooog! Yurrrrggh! Gug-gug-gug-ug!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" came in a wild yell outside the study.

"Grooogh!" spluttered Bunter. "I'm pip-pip-poisoned! Gerrrooooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Wharton, choking with laughter, rattled at the handle of the door.

"Let me in, you fat ass!"

"Gug-gug-gug!"

"My hat! He's eating it!" shrieked Nugent. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Groogh! Help! Yow-ow-woooop! Send for a doctor! Grooooch!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's the row?" yelled Bob Cherry, looking out of Study No. 13.

"Ha, ha! It's Bunter."

"Gug-gug-gug! I'm poisoned!" shrieked Bunter. "Help! Yow-ow-ow! Groogh! Gug-gug-gug-gug-gug!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Remove fellows came crowding out of their studies in astonishment. A crowd gathered outside the door of No. 1.

Inside, the most alarming sounds could be heard.

Billy Bunter was gurgling, gasping, spluttering, and snorting at a terrific rate. He had evidently not found the "pudding" to his liking.

"What on earth's the matter?" exclaimed Peter Todd.

"Begad! It sounds like a suffocatin' rhinoceros!" ejaculated Lord Mauleverer.

"Gug-gug-gug-gug!"

"Open the door, Bunter!" yelled Nugent.

"Grooooch! Gooooooogh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Wharton kicked at the door. The fat junior opened it at last, and appeared in the doorway.

His face was extraordinary in expression.

Ink and blacking stained his ample mouth, and his fingers were black. His eyes rolled behind his spectacles wildly.

"What's the matter with you?" shouted Peter Todd.

"Groogh! I'm poisoned! Yow-ow-ow! The beasts!" wailed Bunter. "They've poisoned me. I'll haunt you, Wharton! Groooogh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He's been at the mixture!" gasped Nugent. "He thought it was a pudding."

"Well, what was it?" asked Squiff.

"Ink and blacking and soot and gum!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ink!" shrieked Bunter. "Soot! Grooogh! Blacking! Yooooooch! Gr-r-r-r-r-r-r-r!"

The Removites yelled.

Billy Bunter staggered out of the study, gasping and groaning. He could not believe now that it was a pudding—Christmas or otherwise. He had the taste of blacking in his mouth, with a suspicion of soot, and a flavour of ink, and several other mixed flavours. Never had a food-hog felt so unhappy.

Wharton lighted the gas in the study, with tears of merriment on his cheeks.

"Come and have some more, Bunter!" he said. "There will be lots left if you have a good feed."

"Gerrrroooogh!"

"Shall I lend you a spoon?" sobbed Nugent.

"Br-r-r-r-r! Oooouch!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Owl of the Remove staggered away, followed by howls of laughter.

Bunter made a rush for the bath-room, and for a quarter of an hour he was busy washing out his mouth.

"But what on earth's that stuff for, you fellows?" asked Mark Linley, staring at the uncovered mixture.

"It's for a jape, but Bunter thought it was a pudding," chuckled Wharton. "It's not exactly a secret; but keep it dark. We're going to anoint Carne with it to-night."

"Oh, my hat!"

The mixture was covered up again, and the chuckling juniors dispersed to their studies.

It was some time before William George Bunter arrived at his study, however. When he did, his fat face was almost haggard in expression, and he was still gug-guggling. Peter Todd and Tom Dutton grinned at him. If Bunter had expected sympathy in his own study he was disappointed.

He glared at his study-mates with a glare that almost cracked his spectacles.

"Look here, Toddy, you grinning idiot," he howled, "if you were a decent chap, you'd lick Wharton for that rotten trick!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Peter.

"I'll hold your jacket, if you like," urged Bunter.

"I'll hold your ear, if you like," answered Peter. And without waiting for Bunter to state whether he liked it or not, he held it—hard, and there was a howl from William George.

"Yow-ow! Leggo, you beast!"

Peter grinned, and sat down to his work, and Bunter turned to Tom Dutton, his deaf study-mate. Tom was hard of hearing, but he was a great man with his fists, and Bunter wanted vengeance, and wanted it badly.

"I say, Dutton!" he shouted.

"Hallo!" said Tom, looking up.

"I've been nearly poisoned in Study No. 1!"

"They always are at this time of year," answered Dutton.

"Eh? What do you mean?" gasped Bunter.

"Didn't you say the roads were muddy?"

"Oh, you ass! No! I say, I've been played a rotten trick!"

Dutton stared at him.

"Not so thick as yours, anyway!" he retorted warmly.

"Wha-a-at?"

"Talk about a fellow's head being thick!" continued Tom Dutton indignantly. "Why, you've got the thickest head at Greyfriars!"

"Oh, crumbs! Listen to me, you goat!" shrieked Bunter. "I want you to give Wharton a good hiding! You could!"

"Wood?" repeated Dutton. "My head, do you mean?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Peter.

"There's nothing to cackle at, Peter Todd, in Bunter's rotten personalities!" exclaimed Dutton. "So my head's wood, is it, and thick, is it? I don't know why you should begin slanging me like this, Bunter, when I haven't said anything to you; but I'm not going to stand it!"

"Look here—— Oh, my hat! Draggimoff!" shrieked Bunter.

Bump!

Billy Bunter sat on the hearthrug with a heavy bump, and the look of a Hun.

Tom Dutton shook a warning finger at him.

"Now, don't give me any more of it!" he said.

And Bunter didn't! He did not feel equal to any more.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Topping!

WINGATE of the Sixth saw lights out for the Remove that evening, and when the juniors settled down to sleep there were five who determined to remain wide awake and watching.

But before ten o'clock the five had been reduced to one.

Harry Wharton was keeping awake by determined efforts, while his companions drifted off into the Land of Nod.

In a recess of the ivy, by the school wall, the tin pan of mixture was placed in readiness and in concealment. And at eleven o'clock the Famous Five were to get out of the School House and take up the watch on the school wall. Carne was not likely to return before eleven o'clock if he had stolen down to the Cross Keys to meet his sporting friends—indeed, he was more likely to keep it up till twelve. When he came back—even if it was with the milk in the morning—he would find the Five waiting for him—with the mixture.

The Cross Keys, by the way, was undergoing repairs. But the fire had been got under before it was totally ruined, and Hawke and Cobb were still able to find a corner for their "clients" who needed plucking.

At eleven o'clock Harry Wharton roused himself, with an effort, from the doze he was falling into, and slipped out

of bed. It was a cold night, and he shivered as he plunged into his clothes.

"You fellows awake?" he whispered.

Snore! came from Billy Bunter's bed, and that was all.

"Bob! Franky!"

There was no reply, and Wharton went from bed to bed, shaking his comrades. They woke up, and grunted and yawned sleepily.

"'Tain't eleven yet, surely!" murmured Johnny Bull.

"Turned eleven."

"I say, suppose Carne's put it off this evening? He may have!" suggested Bob Cherry, in a very thoughtful way. "It hadn't struck me before. But we might have all our trouble for nothing, you know. Perhaps we'd better chuck it, on second thoughts. Yaw-aw-aw!"

Harry Wharton chuckled.

"On third thoughts, you'd better turn out," he said. "Otherwise, I've got a wet sponge here——"

"Yow! I'm turning out, fathead!"

"The turn-outfulness is terrific, my esteemed, fatheaded chum!" murmured the Nabob of Bhanipur.

The Famous Five were dressed at last, very thoughtfully putting on extra pairs of socks to keep their feet warm during the vigil. They tiptoed away from the dormitory, and reached the box-room, where overcoats had been placed in readiness in an empty trunk.

Five minutes later they were on the ground, the box-room window being left unfastened for their return.

Deep gloom hung over Greyfriars, and the old quadrangle was dark and misty. But the juniors would have known their way in the deepest darkness, and they soon reached the school wall, where it bordered Friardale Lane.

The tin pan was carefully drawn from its hiding-place under the ivy.

"All serene?" asked Bob Cherry, as Wharton lifted it.

"Oh, yes! Bunter hasn't been at it again."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Shush, fathead!"

"I say, it's jolly windy on top of the wall!" remarked Frank Nugent. "We'd better take turns watching for Carne, and the rest can trot and keep warm."

"Yes, that's a good idea—ten-minute rounds!" grinned Bob.

"Right-ho! I'll begin!" said Harry.

The juniors moved along to the little gate, which was used by masters and prefects, who had keys to it.

Carne was not a prefect, but Loder was, and a loan of Loder's key was easily obtained.

Wharton was bunked up to the top of the wall, under the shadow of a big branch of the tree within, and the tin pan was handed up to him byBob Cherry. Bob received a little of the mixture down his sleeve in the process, and he made some remarks on the subject in a very expressive voice.

Harry Wharton set the tin pan on top of the thick wall, and waited beside it, quite invisible in the darkness under the overspreading branches.

He was glad he had on his overcoat and double socks and woollen gloves, for the wind blew sharply from the sea, and it was like a knife. He was glad when ten minutes had elapsed, too, and Bob Cherry clambered up to take his place. Wharton willingly dropped into the shelter of the wall.

"I say!" Bob murmured from above.

"Hallo! Is he coming?"

"No. But, I say, are you sure Skinner was telling the truth, Wharton?"

"Eh?"

"Sure Carne has gone out at all?"

"I—I suppose so," said Harry, rather taken aback. "Skinner knows his habits, you know, and he said positively that

After the feast! (*See Chapter* 3.)

Carne was booked for the Cross Keys this evening."

"He might have been pulling your leg."

"Nice time of day to make that suggestion, I must say!" grunted Johnny Bull. "You might have thought of that earlier!"

"He wouldn't dare, I think," said Harry. "If he gave us this job for nothing we'd boil him in oil! He wouldn't dare fool us like this!"

"My hat! I'll smash him if he has!" grunted Johnny.

"The smashfulness will be terrific!" muttered Hurree Jamset Ram Singh through his chattering teeth.

"Well, Skinner knows that!" said Harry Wharton, not too confidently. "He wouldn't play such a trick, and get smashed up for it afterwards."

"I suppose it's all right!" admitted Bob.

"Yes, of course it is. Keep a good look-out!"

"You bet!"

The juniors trotted to and fro under the trees during Bob's vigil, to keep themselves warm. It was as cold as it was dark.

Frank Nugent was the next to watch for Carne, and when he dropped from the wall it was turned half-past eleven.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh was the next, the nabob taking Nugent's place immediately, and watching the shadowed road with his dark, glimmering eyes.

The juniors waited impatiently.

Arthur Carne might keep it up at the Cross Keys till midnight, or later, and the jape did not appear half so attractive on that cold night in the quad as it had appeared in the study when it was planned.

The waiting japers anathematised Carne's rascality as the long minutes crawled by. He was evidently keeping it up late.

"My turn, Inky," mumbled Johnny Bull.

"Hush!" came a cautious whisper from above.

"Is he coming?" breathed Wharton.

"Some esteemed person is coming. I can hear his honourable footsteps. If he stops here——"

"Look out!"

"The look-outfulness is terrific!"

The juniors waited breathlessly. They could all hear footsteps now on the hard road outside the wall.

Hurree Singh, invisible in the darkness on top of the wall, grasped the tin pan of mixture, and waited.

Closer came the footsteps on the frosty road.

They stopped.

In the thick darkness Hurree Jamset Ram Singh caught sight of a shadow below, a faint outline of a hat and overcoat dimly seen.

He only waited to see whether that dim shadow stopped at the side gate.

It did!

There sounded the scrape of a key, feeling in the darkness for the keyhole. It grated as it was thrust in.

The nabob leaned forward, and the tin pan was silently inverted over the head of the shadowy form below.

Swoooosh!

In a swoop the terrible mixture rolled out of the pan, and descended in a clinging mass on the head below it.

There was a throttled gasp below—a gasp of astonishment, alarm, terror, and several other emotions all expressed together. The shadowy form staggered back from the gate, leaving the key sticking in the lock. A sound of horrid gurgling and guggling and spluttering rose from the road.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh dropped from the wall inside, the empty pan in his hand. The juniors choked back their laughter as they listened to the wild gurgling and sputtering outside.

"Hook it!" whispered Wharton.

"Gurr—gurr—gurrrrrrr!" came from the road. "Mein Gott! Grrrrrr! Lieber Gott! Gr-r-r! Vat is tat tat have happen to me? I am choke—I am suffocate—I am all ofer sticky mit me, mein Gott! Gr-r-r-r-r-r-r!"

The juniors, as they heard that spluttering exclamation, stood rooted to the ground, almost frozen.

"The Gander!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

It was not Carne of the Sixth, after all, who had got the mixture!

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.
After the Catastrophe!

"MEIN Gott! Gr-r-r-r-rugugh!" With one accord the Famous Five fled across the shadowy quadrangle. They paused only a minute, to shove the inky, tarry, sooty pan out of sight in the woodshed. Then they tore away for the School House, and clambered breathlessly in. Carne was given up for that night.

The mixture had been used—on a master's head! Herr Gans had been flooded with ink and soot and blacking and other things. Reckless as they were, the heroes of the Remove were horrified at what they had—unintentionally—done.

It was a sufficiently reckless proceeding to hand out the mixture to a senior—but to a master!

Harry Wharton closed the box-room window, and fastened it, and the chums of the Remove hurried to the dormitory.

There they undressed and tumbled in, in record time.

They were expecting some sort of an earthquake to follow.

Herr Gans was certain to arouse the school, and there would be a ferocious inquiry as to the authors of the outrage.

For though it was only intended as a jape, there was no doubt whatever that the Head would regard it as an outrage.

There was a natural difference, in the point of view, between the headmaster and the Lower Fourth. They seldom saw eye to eye.

"What ghastly luck!" groaned Bob Cherry. "Fancy catching the Gander by mistake! He will raise Cain over this!"

"The luck is terrific!" said Hurree Singh. "It is extremely remarkful for the esteemed Gander to be out of doorfulness so latefully. He habitfully goes off bedfully at half-past ten."

"You ass, Inky!"

"My esteemed Johnny——"

"What did you bung it at the Gander for, you fathead?"

"I naturally thought it was the disgustful Carne, as he stopped at the gate and began to open it unlockfully," groaned the nabob. "I am not an esteemed cat to see darkfully!"

"Inky's not to blame," said Harry. "He couldn't see; and we all expected Carne. I suppose any of us would have swamped him just the same. What on earth was the Gander doing out at this time of night?"

"He doesn't go to the Cross Keys, I suppose?" grinned Nugent.

"Ha, ha! No."

"It beats me!" said Bob.

It was, in fact, an amazing circumstance. It was but rarely that a master of Greyfriars was outside the walls so late as half-past eleven. As for the German master, his habits were fixed with Teutonic method. It was possible to set a clock by the time of his goings and comings, so methodical was he. With scarce a break, Herr Gans went to bed at half-past ten at night. On fine nights he would take a stroll round the quad before going to bed; but going outside the walls was practically unknown to him. Prudence as well as inclination made him thus methodical, for, as a registered alien, he might have excited suspicion by any irregular goings and comings.

It was only judicious, in his circumstances, never to leave the school precincts after dark, and he never did.

The discovery of Herr Gans coming home near midnight was a staggering one. It raised the not unnatural suspicion that the Herr's methodical habits were a mere blind.

There came a yawn from Harold Skinner's bed as the chums were discussing the unfortunate affair in low voices. Apparently Skinner had just woke up.

"You fellows got back?" he yawned.

"Yes!" grunted Bob.

"Did you catch Carne?"

"No."

"Are you sure that Carne was going out this evening, Skinner?" asked Harry Wharton very quietly.

"Yes. I told you so."

"Did you know that the Gander was going out?"

"Eh? The Gander?" yawned Skinner. "How should I know anything about the Gander? Has he gone out?"

"He was out, as it happens, and we caught him instead of Carne!"

"My hat! Not with the mixture?"

"Yes."

"Ha, ha!" howled Skinner.

"Dry up, you ass!" exclaimed Bob Cherry angrily. "They'll be along inquiring soon, and we've got to be fast asleep."

"Ha, ha!" gasped Skinner. "You mixtured the Gander—the poor old Gander! Ha, ha!"

"Jolly funny, isn't it?" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Awfully!" chortled Skinner. "Ha, ha! I say, you must be a lot of clumsy duffers!"

"Oh, cheese it!"

"Hallo! What's the row about?" came Squiff's sleepy voice.

"What's on?" yawned Bolsover major.

"Oh, a merry jape!" chortled Skinner. "The Frabjous Five have been out on the war-path, and they've swamped the Gander with ink and things, in mistake for Carne of the Sixth."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, shut up!" howled Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows, you must be dummies!" Even Billy Bunter was awake and chortling. "You must be asses! He, he, he! Don't you know Carne from the Gander?"

"It was too dark to see, you fat idiot!"

"He, he, he!"

"Oh, this is too rich!" exclaimed Hazeldene. "I say, there'll be a frightful row about this!"

"We're expecting it," said Wharton, rather grimly.

"Why didn't you ask me to lead you on the war-path?" inquired Peter Todd. "I could have managed it for you, you reckless infants!"

"Oh, rats!"

"But I don't see how it happened," continued Peter. "Where was the Gander?"

"Coming in at the side gate."

"My hat! At this time of night?"

"Yes. Who could possibly have expected that?" groaned Bob Cherry. "We were expecting Carne home from the Cross Keys. When he began unlocking the side gate, of course we thought it was Carne coming home. Oh, dear!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But what made you expect Carne?" asked Peter.

"Skinner told us he was at the Cross Keys this afternoon."

"So he was, from what I heard," asserted Skinner. "I heard him talking it over with Loder, and Loder lent him his key to the side gate. I dare say Carne hasn't come in yet. It's barely midnight."

"Did Skinner know the Gander was going out?" asked Peter Todd suspiciously.

"How should I have known?" demanded Skinner.

"Well, if you did know, it looks to me as if you were spoofing Wharton about Carne to get him to mop up the Gander," said Peter Todd coolly. "It would be just like one of your double-faced tricks, Skinner!"

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Bob.

"You cheeky, skinny worm, Peter Todd!" shouted Skinner. "Nothing of the sort! How should I know anything about the Gander? He never goes out at night—at least, we've always supposed so."

"There was a letter missing from his study this evening," remarked Peter Todd drily. "There may have been something about an appointment in that letter."

"Well, I never saw the letter," growled Skinner.

"If I were in Wharton's place, old scout, I should punch your nose on suspicion," said Peter Todd. "This meddling with other people's letters ought not to be allowed to grow into a habit with you."

"Oh, shut up, fathead!"

"I say, isn't it jolly odd that there hasn't been any row yet?" asked Vernon-Smith. "The Gander can't be taking it quietly, can he?"

"Blessed if I understand it!" confessed Wharton. "He hasn't even knocked at the door! He's had lots of time to get in."

"Are you sure you swamped him after all? It was very dark, I suppose?"

"Yes, rather! He was gurgling like a drowning hippopotamus—worse than Bunter after he sampled the mixture in our study."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, it's dashed odd!" remarked the Bounder. "He's taken it quietly, or there'd have been a row before this."

Harry Wharton listened for sounds from below.

In the ordinary course Herr Gans would have let himself in with his latchkey, and gone quietly to his room. But surely, swamped with that terrible mixture, he was not likely to do so now?

The culprits had fully expected the German master to thunder at the door, and come in raging into the School House, awakening everybody. But a considerable time had now elapsed, and there had been no sound from below.

"He must have come in and gone to bed," said Harry Wharton at last. "I suppose we shall hear about it in the morning."

"Pleasant prospect!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Well, it won't improve matters staying awake. I'm going to sleep," answered the captain of the Remove, with a yawn.

And he put his head on the pillow.

There was some more discussion of the unfortunate affair, punctuated by chuckles from a good many of the Removites. But they settled down to sleep at last, and silence and slumber reigned in the Remove dormitory. And the Famous Five slept the sleep of healthy youth, in spite of the stormy prospect of the morrow.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.
In Suspense!

CLANG! Clang!

"Yaw-aw-aw-aw!" mumbled Bob Cherry. "I believe that dashed rising-bell goes earlier every morning! Yaw-aw-aw!"

The Famous Five sat up and rubbed their eyes.

They were usually bright and cheery enough early in the morning; but the loss of sleep over-night made them somewhat heavy-eyed now.

However, they turned out with the

rest, and Bob Cherry found energy enough to help Billy Bunter out unrequested.

Harry Wharton & Co. did not have happy anticipations as they went downstairs that morning. The plot had gone hopelessly awry, and the consequences had to be faced.

Had the mixture descended upon Carne of the Sixth all would have been well. Even if the Sixth-Former had guessed the identity of his punishers, he could not have made a fuss openly. But Herr Gans had a right to be out of doors at any time he chose; and it was upon his Deutsch head that the fatal mixture had fallen.

The offence was much more serious, and the German master had no motive for not complaining. True, he could not guess who had done the business. But the juniors remembered his visit to Study No. 1 the previous evening, and they fully expected that Herr Gans would remember the covered pan and the ink-stained fingers he had seen there. It was quite on the cards that the affair would mean a flogging from the Head all round for the Co.—in fact, it could scarcely mean less if the Gander cut up rusty, as he was sure to do.

So the usually high spirits of the Famous Five were dashed as they trotted round the quadrangle that frosty morning before breakfast.

Herr Gans generally showed up in the quad before breakfast, but on this particular morning he was not to be seen. Bob Cherry surmised that he was doing an extra turn with the bath that morning. He probably needed it.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! There's Carne!" remarked Bob, as the bully of the Sixth came in sight, strolling with Gerald Loder.

Carne did not glance at the juniors, but they looked at him very curiously.

He was looking quite normal, and certainly showed no signs of having been out of bounds up to midnight or later.

Carne of the Sixth never looked so fit as fellows like Wingate or Gwynne; but he was looking quite as fit as usual, and assuredly a late night at the Cross Keys ought to have left some trace on him.

Harry Wharton's brow knitted.

He could not help suspecting that Skinner had planned the previous night's misadventure. He had taken Skinner's word without question as to Carne's intentions for that night; but suppose Skinner had been aware that the Gander had intended to go out and return late? It would have been easy for him to spin that yarn about Carne in order to land the chums of the Remove in an outrage upon the German master.

And the missing letter from the German master's study might have given him the information. Wharton was already more than suspicious that it was Harold Skinner who had purloined that letter; and the motive was supplied now, if indeed it had contained such information.

If indeed the Famous Five had walked blindly into a cunning trap set by Skinner it was a case for severe punishment; but it was necessary to have proof. Harry Wharton stopped to speak to Carne, as the latter came back with Loder from his stroll across the quad to the Cloisters.

"Stop a minute, Carne," he said quietly.

Carne stared at him.

"What do you want, you cheeky fag?" was his polite reply.

"I want to know what time you got in last night from the Cross Keys," answered Wharton calmly.

He watched Carne's face as he spoke. If Carne had been on the razzle the previous night he was sure to betray some sign of dismay or alarm at finding his shady secret known to a junior with whom he was on ill terms.

But Carne only stared angrily at the Removite.

"You cheeky little hound!" he roared. "What do you mean?"

"Wharton!" rapped out Loder. Loder was a prefect, and never slow to use his authority. "How dare you insult a senior! Take a hundred lines, and cut off!"

Harry Wharton retreated without a word.

He did not mind the hundred lines. He had served his purpose. Carne's manner of replying had convinced him of what Carne's appearance bore out—that the black sheep of the Sixth had not been on the ran-dan the previous night. And the chums of the Remove, with grim faces, looked for Skinner.

Skinner met them with a bland smile as they came up to him, apparently not noticing their black looks.

"Heard from the Gander yet?" he asked.

"No. We——"

"I've been asking Trotter about him," smiled Skinner. "Buttons says he's having his breakfast taken up to his room. Rather unusual for him. I fancy he's still got the stuff sticking to his ears! It must have been the Gander you swamped after all."

Harry Wharton looked at him steadily.

"We've found out that Carne wasn't out of bounds last night, Skinner."

"Wasn't he? Changed his mind, then, I suppose."

"Oh!" said Wharton, nonplussed again.

"I certainly heard him discussing it with Loder," said Skinner calmly. "Of course, he might think it too risky—might change his mind. Rather unlucky, as it turned out, for you."

"I—I suppose so."

"Queer you don't hear from the Gander," went on Skinner calmly. "I fancy he's going to take it lying down, come to think of it."

"No such luck!" growled Bob.

Skinner grinned.

"You see, if he reports you, you'll get flogged all round, and it will be the talk of the school."

"What would that matter to Gans?"

"Lots, I fancy!" grinned Skinner. "It would draw attention to the fact that he goes out late at night while keeping up a pretence of going to bed early."

Wharton started.

"I suppose he went out for some special reason," he said.

"Perhaps!" sneered Skinner. "And perhaps it's a reason he wouldn't like to have to explain in public. I don't trust Huns myself."

"Well, the Gander isn't exactly a Hun," said Bob Cherry; "and you hate Mossoo as much as you do the Gander, Skinner, because he makes you work."

"Mark my words," said Skinner loftily, "old Gans is a spy!"

"Oh, rot!"

"You'll see I'm right some day. If he doesn't make a fuss about being swamped last night it will prove that he's got something to hide, won't it?"

"I—I suppose so; but he will make a fuss."

"Well, see if he does. Wait and see!" smiled Skinner.

"And if he doesn't?" said Wharton.

"If he doesn't, it shows he wants to keep it dark that he goes out late—and why should he, if it's all above board? The fellows will know what to think of him then. I've said all along that he's a spy."

Wharton's eyes glinted.

"And to get all this fixed up against the Gander, you spun us a yarn about Carne of the Sixth, and got us to swamp old Gans' napper!" he exclaimed.

Skinner looked mildly surprised. If he had fooled the captain of the Remove in that treacherous way he was certainly not to be caught napping.

"Not at all," he answered. "I told you what I heard Carne say to Loder, that's all. I couldn't guarantee that he wouldn't change his mind about going out!"

"There goes brekker bell!" said Bob.

The juniors started towards the School House, Skinner smiling sardonically as he followed the Famous Five. They suspected him; but they could prove nothing, and without proof they could not act. Harold Skinner regarded his proceedings in connection with the night's affair as a master-stroke of secret diplomacy. He had revenged himself upon the German master for making him work—and he had placed the fellows he most disliked at Greyfriars in a very uncomfortable position. And they could suspect anything they liked; proof was not to be had.

Harry Wharton & Co. glanced rather uneasily at Mr. Quelch at the head of the Remove table at breakfast. But the Form-master took no special note of them. It was clear that he had not received any report from the German master as yet.

The chums felt a little easier.

After all, the Gander might not connect them with the affair at all. It was possible.

They felt still easier when they went into the Remove-room to morning lessons, and still nothing was said.

During third lessons the Head stepped into the Form-room to speak to Mr. Quelch for a few moments; and the Famous Five exchanged a grim look, and some of the Remove grinned.

But Dr. Locke was only speaking on some matter connected with school work, and he left the Form-room without glancing at the Famous Five. They breathed again.

When the Form was dismissed, they came out quite cheerfully.

As nothing had been said the whole morning, it really looked as if nothing was to be said at all.

"The Gander takes us in German this afternoon," Bob Cherry remarked. "We shall see then whether he suspects us."

"He can't have reported the affair to the Head!" said Nugent. "Something would have been heard of it before this."

"Skinner makes out——"

"Oh, bother Skinner!"

"Bother him as much as you like; but if the Gander passes over such a thing as being swamped with ink and soot and blacking he must have a jolly strong motive for it," said Johnny Bull.

The juniors looked a trifle uncomfortable. They rather liked the old Gander, in spite of his nationality.

But seriously, it began to look as if there was something in Skinner's endless insinuations on the subject of Herr Gans. And at the thought that he might possibly be mixed up in some underhand work against the country that sheltered him, Harry Wharton's brow grew very grim. If such had proved to be the case, the captain of the Remove would have had as little mercy upon him as anyone. But he shook his head.

"It's only Skinner's rot," he said. "The Gander is a harmless old donkey, that's all. He's the old-fashioned kind of German, before they all followed the Kaiser's example and went mad. He hasn't cunning enough to be a spy, if he was scoundrel enough."

"He wouldn't look on it as scoundrelism, as Germany is his country!" remarked Johnny Bull.

Wharton's lip curled.

"A spy is a scoundrel, whatever gas he may spout about patriotism," he answered. "If the Gander was a spy, I'd see him trotted off to Wapshot Camp and shot as soon as anybody. But it's all rot! I admit it's queer if he doesn't make a fuss about being swamped last night, but——"

"Master Wharton!"

It was Trotter, the house page.

"Anything wanted, Trotty?"

"Herr Gans wants you, sir," said Trotter. "You're to go to his study, Master Wharton."

"Oh!" said Harry.

"So much for Skinner's yarns!" grinned Bob. "It looks as if the merry old Hun is going to make a fuss—and he's got the right party! We'll all come."

"Well, there's no need——"

"Rats! Come on, you fellows, and we'll beard the rhinoceros in his den."

"The beardfulness will be terrific!"

And the Famous Five proceeded in a body to Herr Gans' study, prepared to face the music and take the consequences of that unlucky jape as smilingly as they could.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.
Dark Doubts!

HERR GANS frowned as the Famous Five presented themselves in his study.

He raised a fat hand and pointed to the door.

"I have sent for you, Vharton," he said. "Te odders, go!"

"But, sir——" began Bob Cherry.

"Tat you go!" rapped out Herr Gans sharply.

The juniors reluctantly withdrew, leaving the captain of the Remove to face the Gander alone.

"Close tat door, Vharton."

Wharton shut the door after his chums.

"Vharton, I haf to speak to you ferry seriously. You have acted mit dishonour, isn't it?"

Wharton flushed.

"I don't understand you, sir," he answered quietly. "I have certainly done nothing dishonourable, if that is what you mean."

The Herr blinked at him over his glasses. He was evidently very angry.

"Last night, Vharton, I am smother and choke mit stuff tat is trown ofer mein head. In your study last efening I see someting cover up. I am not fool, Vharton! Tat is vat vas trown ofer mein kopf."

"I admit that, sir," said Harry. "It was all a mistake. We—we supposed that it was somebody else."

"Vat!"

Wharton met the German master's eyes fearlessly.

"I admit that I was out of the dormitory last night, sir, and that the stuff was thrown from the wall," he said. "But we—I had not the slightest idea that you were at the gate. We supposed it was a fellow who was breaking bounds, and we meant to give him the mixture. We hadn't the faintest idea you were there."

"Tat is not true, Vharton."

"Herr Gans!"

"Mein letter was taken from mein study yesterday," snapped the German master. "In that letter it was mention tat I goes to Courtfield late in te efening. Tat is how you know tat I come to tat gate late at night, isn't it?"

"I never saw your letter, sir."

Wharton's eyes were gleaming with anger now. He needed no further proof that the whole business was a scheme of Skinner's. It was from the stolen letter that Skinner had obtained his information, and then he had deliberately tricked the chums into "mixturing" the German master in mistake for Carne of the Sixth.

"If you see not mein letter, how you know tat I come to tat gate, Vharton?"

"I've said I didn't know, sir. I was told that a certain fellow was out of bounds, and I meant to catch him as he came in."

Herr Gans calmed down a little.

"I have alvays known you to be truthful poy, Vharton. But if it is as you say, tat person who tell you tat he is person who steal and read mein letter."

"I suppose so—now, sir."

"Vat is his name?"

Wharton was silent.

"Giff me his name, Vharton—tat poy who read mein letter!"

"I can't, sir," said Harry.

"Den you are not telling truth, hein?"

"I'm telling truth, sir; but I can't sneak about a chap. I'm willing to stand the punishment for what was done last night."

"If you have done it by mistake, Vharton, I forgive you," said the Gander, with unexpected mildness. "But tat poy who read mein letter, he is dishonourable rascal, and he must be punish!"

"I think so, too, sir; but I can't give him away."

The German master made an impatient gesture.

There was a silence in the study.

The Gander evidently believed Wharton's statement that the "mixturing" had been performed on him by mistake.

He was considering the matter, and the captain of the Remove watched him rather anxiously. He was bound not to betray Skinner; but it was not a pleasant prospect to be taken before the Head for a flogging.

"Ferry well, Vharton," said the Herr at last. "I pelieve you, and I will say no more to you. But tat odder poy, who read mein letter, he must be found and punish. You may go."

"Thank you, sir," said Harry, in great relief.

He left the study at once, leaving the German master looking rather black.

His chums were waiting for him at the end of the passage.

"Well?" asked four voices in unison.

Wharton explained what had passed.

"Not a bad old goat for a Hun!" commented Bob Cherry. "I suppose he'll go to the Head, and ask him to make an inquiry after the rotter who pinched the letter."

"And I hope Skinner will get spotted and flogged," growled Johnny Bull.

"Why, the rotter fairly planted this on us! He wanted to make us go for the Gander."

The chums looked for Skinner, and found him. Skinner listened unmoved to what Wharton had to say.

"It's clear enough," Wharton concluded, "that you saw the Gander's letter, Skinner, and knew he was out of gates, and spun me that yarn about Carne to make me go for him, thinking it was Carne."

"Quite clear!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Not at all," said Skinner calmly. "Of course, I never saw the letter."

"You deny it?"

"Certainly."

The chums of the Remove looked hard at Skinner. They did not believe him for a moment. The whole thing was too evident.

"Well," said Harry at last, "there will be an inquiry. The Head may find out who pinched the Gander's letter and read it, and then you can look out, Skinner!"

Skinner smiled.

"There won't be an inquiry," he answered, "and the Gander won't go to the Head. He doesn't want to draw attention to the fact that he goes out late at night. I'll bet you two to one he passes over the whole bizney, and that nothing more is heard of it."

"Oh, rats!" growled Wharton.

But Skinner proved to be right.

For the matter was dropped. Nothing was heard of any inquiry into the subject. Neither the stolen letter nor the "mixturing" was referred to again by Herr Gans. All the Remove talked about the matter, and wondered.

It was natural enough that they should come to the same conclusion as Skinner—that the German master's chief desire was to have the incident forgotten.

It was extraordinary that Herr Gans should be willing to overlook such an incident, but so it was.

Skinner knew what to think and to say. And even Harry Wharton, who believed in the Gander's honesty, was staggered. Was it possible, as Skinner suggested, that the Gander was in the habit of leaving the school at late hours of the night, and desired to keep that fact unknown to the Head? If so, what was his motive? The motive could not be a good one.

Skinner had always averred that Herr Gans was a spy, chiefly because the Herr made him work, and Skinner did not like work. But it really began to look as if Skinner all the while had been on the right track.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.
Mysterious!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! There's the Gander!"

It was the following week after the unfortunate incident of the "mixture."

Harry Wharton & Co. were sauntering down the road towards Courtfield, on their way to Highcliffe School, to visit Frank Courtenay.

Ahead of them in the road the fat figure of the German master came in sight.

Herr Gans had his back to them, striding along towards Courtfield at a great rate. They could not see his face, naturally; but they could see that he was in a state of excitement.

He stopped occasionally on the road, as if doubtful whether to proceed; and once or twice he seemed on the point of turning back. And every now and then he brandished his walking-stick in a warlike manner.

The chums of the Remove looked at him in astonishment.

"Somebody's been worrying his Hunship," remarked Nugent.

"Better give him a wide berth," grinned Bob Cherry. "I don't like the look of that stick."

Wharton frowned a little.

"He's going to Courtfield," he said. "That's where he went the other night so late. We don't want to follow him. Let's take the short cut."

"Good idea!"

The juniors turned off the road across the common. Somewhat to their surprise, the German master, ahead of them, did the same a few minutes later. Apparently he was not going to the market town after all.

Had Herr Gans looked about him he would have seen the juniors; but he did not look. They could see his face in the distance now, and noted that it was red and angry. Again and again he brandished his stick, as if wishful to lay it across someone's shoulders.

He disappeared into a belt of trees, and the chums lost sight of him.

"Rather an excitable old Gander!" chuckled Bob. "He can't be going to a friendly meeting."

The juniors kept on. Their path took them past the trees, and as they came nearer they caught sight of Herr Gans again. He was not alone now. A man who was leaning against a tree, smoking a pipe, detached himself from the trunk, and stepped out to meet Herr Gans.

The Co. glanced carelessly at the stranger. He was not quite a stranger, either. They had seen the man before in Courtfield.

"I know that merchant," remarked Frank Nugent. "It's Bloomfield, the music merchant. Chap who teaches piano-punching. He's organist at a church there, too. I didn't know the Gander knew him."

"They're not friends, to judge by appearances," said Johnny Bull.

"The friendfulness does not seem to be terrific," chuckled Hurree Singh. "It looks like the assaultfulness and the battery."

Evidently it was not a friendly meeting.

Herr Gans' first proceeding, as he met the music merchant, was to shake a podgy fist full in his face.

The musician started back.

The Co. had no desire whatever to spy on Herr Gans. They did not share Skinner's tastes in the least. But they simply could not help looking on. It was utterly amazing for a quiet, peaceable old fellow like the Gander to come a distance of two miles from the school in order to shake a fat fist at the gentleman who met him—apparently by appointment.

"My hat! There's going to be a fight!" exclaimed Bob Cherry breathlessly. "Look here, I'm going to be bottle-holder for the Gander!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, this takes the cake!" said Harry Wharton. "A Greyfriars master coming out for a scrap! What on earth would the Head say?"

Herr Gans' voice, in deep, booming tones, came to their ears.

"Rasgal!"

"The politefulness is terrific!" murmured Hurree Singh.

"Scountrel!"

The juniors wondered how Mr. Bloomfield would accept those remarks. He did not seem to be disturbed.

"Calm yourself, Herr Gans," he answered composedly.

"I vill not galm meinself!" roared Herr Gans. "You, Blumenfeld, you are a scountrel!"

"Quiet, you fool!" exclaimed Bloomfield.

He had caught sight of the juniors.

"I vill not be quiet!" shouted Herr Gans. "How is it tat you dare write to me? You demand to see me, you rasgal! Is it not tat I haf come to your house vunce, and tat I tells you I haf noddings to do mit you? I vish not tat you write to me, and I vish not to see you. Rasgal!"

The angry Gander! (*See Chapter 8.*)

Bloomfield, with a savage face, made a gesture towards the passing schoolboys.

Herr Gans spun round and looked at them.

His face altered as he saw Harry Wharton & Co.

The juniors hurried on.

Nothing more came to their ears, and they were soon out of hearing. But a glance back, as they left the common, showed the two men in talk under the trees, Herr Gans making wild gesticulations.

"Well, my hat!" murmured Bob Cherry.

The chums of the Remove were lost in wonder.

"Did you hear what he called the man?" muttered Johnny Bull. "His name's Bloomfield, but the Gander called him Blumenfeld."

"Only his pronunciation, I suppose," said Harry.

"The man doesn't look like an Englishman," said Johnny Bull drily.

"Blessed if I understand it!" said Harry. "Anyway, it's no business of ours. No good thinking about it."

"That's so!" agreed Bob.

But it was not so easy to dismiss this strange incident from their minds. They arrived at Highcliffe, and stayed for tea with Courtenay and the Caterpillar.

The dusk was falling when they came home to Greyfriars.

They were not very much surprised to see Herr Gans' portly form in the old gateway, evidently waiting for them.

Herr Gans came towards the juniors, his fat face flushing. They stopped respectfully.

"Mein poys, you see me dis afternoon?" said the Gander, with a troubled look.

"Quite by chance, sir!" said Harry Wharton.

"Yes, yes; I know tat, Vharton! But you see me, and I am a leedle excited, I tink. I ask you not to make talk about tat among te poys."

"We sha'n't mention the matter, sir," said Bob. "No reason why we should."

"Tank you, Sherry." The Herr hesitated, apparently feeling that some explanation was required. "Tat man, Mister Bloomfield, he is not a good man," he added. "He claim meine acquaintance, and I do not like him."

"All right, sir," said Harry. "It's not our business at all."

The Herr nodded, and walked away quickly across the dusky quad. The juniors went in more slowly.

"No need to say anything about it, of course," remarked Harry.

"Not at all-fully!"

"Skinner would pile up a yarn about it, too."

"I can't say I quite like the look of it," said Johnny Bull, in his deliberate way. "If the Gander doesn't want to see the man, why should he go and meet him, and call him names? The man looks to me like a German; one of those naturalised beasts, I should say. I don't like it!"

"Well, it's not our bizney."

"It might be, if Skinner's right about the Gander."

"Skinner's wrong!"

"I'm not so sure of that now."

"Oh, rot!" said Wharton uneasily.

Hoskins of the Shell was in the doorway when the chums came in. Hoskins was looking rather gloomy.

"He's going to-morrow," said Hoskins.

"Who—the Gander?" asked Bob.

Hoskins sniffed.

"Bother the Gander! Who's talking about the Gander?"

"Well, I was," said Bob mildly. "But who's going?"

"Mr. Sharp!"

"Oh, poor old Sharp!" said Bob.

Mr. Sharp was the visiting music-master of Greyfriars. He was a stout gentleman with a bald patch, and had always seemed "awfully old" to the lively juniors, especially as he had a wife and five children. But it turned out that he was only just over forty, and he had been called up for military service after the latest re-examination.

It was a blow to Hoskins of the Shell, who was musical—so musical that he sometimes drove his study-mates to the verge of distraction.

"So he's going at last?" said Harry.

"Yes," answered Hoskins gloomily. "It's too bad! I was getting on so rippingly with my harmony."

The juniors could not help grinning. Hoskins was not thinking of the woes of the fat, middle-aged gentleman suddenly pitchforked into khaki. He was thinking of his own woes in having his harmony studies suddenly cut short. That, to Hoskins, was the more serious matter of the two.

"Never mind," said Bob consolingly. "Somebody else will take his place. Perhaps you'll get a lady teacher."

The Shell fellow snorted.

"What do women know about harmony?" he said disparagingly. "Sharp said my sonata in B flat was good—very good. I was going to make some improvements, with his help—or, rather, advice. It's too bad! I don't see why they couldn't take my Form-master instead."

"Why, Hacker's close on fifty!"

"What does that matter? This seems to me carrying the thing altogether too far," said Hoskins, with a serious shake of the head. "Fancy old Sharp forming fours instead of punching the piano! And my sonata——"

"Oh, bury it somewhere!" suggested Bob.

Hoskins did not heed.

"You fellows know anything about Bloomfield?" he asked.

Five juniors jumped at once at the mention of that name.

"Bloomfield?" ejaculated Wharton.

"Yes. I hope he's a good man—in music, I mean," said Hoskins anxiously. "If he's coming here in Sharp's place——"

"My only hat!" said Bob Cherry, in astonishment.

"Are you sure he's coming here in Sharp's place?" asked Wharton.

"Skinner says so."

"How does Skinner know?"

Hoskins shrugged his shoulders.

"Ask me another. Skinner seems to know everything. He says Bloomfield is going to take Sharp's place. I wonder what kind of man he is—whether he's strong on harmony and counterpoint? Do you know?"

"Blessed if I know!" grinned Bob. "What is counterpoint, anyway?"

"Oh, you're an ass!" said Hoskins crossly. "I don't want to have my contrapuntal studies mucked up. It's too bad! Now, with Sharp——"

But the Famous Five did not stay to listen to Hoskins' grievances. They went into the School House, and in the Remove passage they came on Skinner.

"How did you know anything about the new music-master, Skinner?" asked Harry Wharton directly.

"A little bird told me," answered Skinner airily.

"Was there anything about it in the letter you pinched from the Gander's study?" growled Bob Cherry scornfully.

"What letter?" asked Skinner calmly.

"Oh, rats!"

The juniors passed on, leaving Skinner smiling.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.
Skinner's Little Scheme!

"SMITHY!"

Vernon-Smith had finished his prep, and as he leaned back in his chair his study-mate addressed him in quite affectionate tones.

The Bounder smiled sarcastically.

When Harold Skinner called him "Smithy" in that chummy way it was a sure sign that Harold Skinner wanted something.

"What is it?" asked the Bounder. "Geegees gone wrong again—stony? Sorry."

"Nothing about geegees," said Skinner. "The fact is, I'm following your example, Smithy. I've chucked up geegees and smokes and things."

"Go hon!"

"Honest Injun, Smithy!"

"Your Injun isn't a very honest specimen, I'm afraid, Skinner. But if it's true, I'm glad to hear it," said the Bounder carelessly. "You ought to go in for reform. You need it as badly as any fellow at Greyfriars. It will do you good."

Skinner smiled feebly.

"The fact is, I—I have," he said. "I'm going in for serious study this term, Smithy."

"Ha, ha! Are you going to bag the prizes instead of Linley? Good luck to you, if you mean it!"

"Not exactly prizes. The fact is, I'm going in for music."

"You—music!"

"Why not?" said Skinner.

"Well, you need it," said Vernon-Smith. "The only music I've ever heard you produce was on the tin whistle, and it was shockingly out of tune. But Sharp's going to-morrow, I hear."

"There's another music-master coming in his place—a man from Courtfield, I believe. Music lessons will go on just the same. Business as usual during alterations, you know. Sharp's place is being kept open for him, of course. This man Bloomfield is temporary. I'm going in for music this term. The worst of it is that music's an extra here."

"Any chap can take up all the extras he can digest if he chooses."

"Only—only, I don't think my people would stand the extra two guineas, in war-time, too," said Skinner, "especially as it's rather late in the term to begin a new study."

"Leave it till next term, then."

"I'm anxious to begin. Look here, Smithy! You've got lots of money," said Skinner, with some hesitation.

The Bounder stared. It was true that he had lots of money, and he frequently made his study-mate little loans, without much expectation of seeing them again. But two guineas was a considerable sum.

"Well, of all the nerve!" exclaimed the Bounder. "You surely haven't the cheek to ask me to stand two guineas for you to take up a thing you don't care twopence about?"

"You might lend it to me, Smithy," urged Skinner. "I—I feel I've got a musical gift, you know. It's a shame not to cultivate it."

"Oh, come off!" said Vernon-Smith gruffly. "If you meant it I'd stand the two guineas. But don't tell me crams, Skinner. I'm too old a bird. Tell me what you've really got in your mind, and we'll see. Stick to the facts!"

Skinner coloured a little.

He hesitated a good deal before he went on, but he realised that it was not much use lying to the keen-witted Bounder. His little deceptions were quite transparent to Vernon-Smith.

"Well, I want to join the music class when the new man comes," he said at last.

"You don't care twopence for music," answered Smithy. "If you did, you wouldn't whistle in a way that sets a fellow's nerves on edge. You don't know the difference between a major sixth and a major in the Army, and you don't want to."

"Well, perhaps I don't."

"What's the game, then?"

More hesitation. Vernon-Smith was curious by this time, and he eyed his shifty study-mate very keenly.

"You know I'm a patriotic chap," said Skinner at last.

"I don't!" answered the Bounder coolly. "It isn't patriotic to wolf all the grub you can lay hands on, as you do. But what's patriotism to do with it, anyhow?"

"You know what I think about the Gander?"

"Oh, rats!"

"There was talk about a letter being missed from his study last week——"

"You pinched it. You needn't tell me that."

"I've got a copy of it here, anyway."

"I don't want to see it!" snapped the Bounder.

"I'll read it to you."

Without waiting for the Bounder to reply, Skinner read out from a page in his pocket-book:

"'Dear Herr Gans,—I have hopes of being appointed to the vacant place of music-master at Greyfriars School. I hope I may rely upon your putting in a word for me if required. Anyway, I should like to talk it over with you, and I will expect you at my house this evening at ten o'clock.—Yours sincerely,

"'G. BLOOMFIELD.'"

The Bounder raised his eyebrows.

"That's a copy of the missing letter," said Skinner.

"And that's how you knew the Gander would be going out that night, and spoofed Wharton into swamping him over the napper!" exclaimed the Bounder.

Skinner grinned.

"That was only a little joke on Wharton, Smithy."

"It was a beastly mean trick, you mean!" said the Bounder sharply. "The Gander might have got him a flogging for it."

"He shouldn't be such a silly ass! As if I should tell him how to get at Carne!" sneered Skinner. "But never mind all that. Now, it's never come out before that the Gander knows this man Bloomfield. Bloomfield is a German-looking man. I've seen him. I've always suspected the Gander, as you know. He's let Wharton off, so as not to attract attention to the fact that he was out at night, seeing the man at his house. It looks suspicious to me."

"Pretty nearly everything looks suspicious to you, Skinner!" remarked the Bounder drily.

"I jolly well believe the Gander is a spy——"

"Because he makes you work?"

"Oh, rats! I believe this Bloomfield man is another of the gang."

"Oh, there's a gang, is there?"

"I believe so," said Skinner, unheeding the Bounder's amusement. "I think it's a fellow's duty to keep an eye on them and find out things. They may be giving assistance to the German air raiders. My idea is to join the music class when Bloomfield comes here, and—and——"

"And spy on him?" said the Bounder, with a curling lip.

"It's a fellow's duty to spy for the sake of his native land!" said Skinner, with much loftiness.

"I don't suppose there's a sneaking cad in existence who doesn't agree with you!" remarked Vernon-Smith caustically. "No good ever came of playing the sneaking spy. A decent cause doesn't want bolstering up by dirty tricks. It's good enough for the Huns."

"Oh, you're a silly ass!" exclaimed Skinner impatiently.

"I'd rather be a silly ass than a spy, any day!"

"Suppose they help the Huns to drop bombs on Greyfriars?" demanded Skinner.

"Well, we ought to be glad of that."

"Glad of it, you howling ass!" yelled Skinner.

"Certainly. The Huns make bombs to drop on people. If they're fools enough to drop them on civilians instead of on soldiers we ought to be pleased. It means saving lives at the Front. When the civilians have had as many casualties as the soldiers it will be time for them to begin to howl."

"Oh, you're a dummy!" growled Skinner, who certainly was not likely to look at the matter in that light.

Skinner's skin, in his own eyes, was more valuable than the lives of whole battalions.

The Bounder laughed.

"Anyway, it's a chap's duty to show up a German spy if he finds him out!" said Skinner.

"Yes, that's right."

"Well, that's what I want to do. I want to watch this man Bloomfield——"

"And catch him doing unpatriotic harmony and pro-German counterpoint?" chuckled the Bounder.

"Oh, don't be an ass! I want to watch him and find him out, and the Gander, too. That's why I want to join the music class. Dash it all, Smithy, two guineas isn't much to you!" urged Skinner.

"Quite so. But helping a spy is a lot—more than I feel inclined to take on," yawned the Bounder. "Leave me out, Skinner!"

"Look here, Smithy——"

But Vernon-Smith did not "look here." He rose and went out, smiling, leaving Harold Skinner with a black brow.

In his role of amateur spy the cad of the Remove was not likely to get much assistance from the Bounder.

Vernon-Smith stepped out of the study, and uttered an exclamation as he almost fell over Billy Bunter. He grasped the Owl of the Remove angrily by the collar.

"Yow! Leggo!" roared Bunter. "I wasn't listening!"

"You fat cad!" exclaimed Vernon-Smith, shaking him.

"Yaroooh! Leggo!" yelled Bunter.

Vernon-Smith, with an angry brow, slammed the fat junior against the wall and strode on. Billy Bunter slid down to the floor, and sat there and gasped. Skinner ran out of the study with gleaming eyes.

"You fat beast, you've been listening!"

"I—I haven't! Keep off! Yaroooh!"

"You sneaking spy!" yelled Skinner, using his boots with great effect. "Take that—and that—and that!"

"Help! You're a spy, ain't you?" howled Bunter. "You told Smithy you wanted to be a spy. Yaroooh! Yow-ow! Help! Fire! Murder!"

It was a true bill; but Skinner evidently had no fellow-feeling for other spies. Apparently he regarded spying as his own special province, and Bunter as a trespasser. The fat junior wriggled away and fled, with Skinner behind him. And he bolted wildly into Study No. 1, and slammed the door on Skinner's nose.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Nice for Skinner!

"YOU silly ass!" roared Harry Wharton.

"You frabjous dummy!" shrieked Nugent.

Crash!

The chums of No. 1 were at work in their study when Billy Bunter bolted in. The fat junior crashed into the table, and papers and ink went flying.

"I—I say, you fellows!" gasped Bunter, clutching at the reeling table. "I—I say, you know——"

Wharton and Nugent jumped up.

"Yah! Keep off!" roared Bunter, dodging round the armchair. "I say, that beast Skinner's after me!"

"Look what you've done!" shouted Nugent wrathfully.

"Well, I couldn't help it," gasped Bunter. "The beast was after me. He's been kicking me. Yow-ow-ow! He's a rotten spy! Yow-ow! I say, you fellows, you ought to stop him spying on the Gander, you know!"

Wharton had picked up a cricket-stump; but he laid it down again at that remark. The words had had the desired effect.

"What's that cad up to now, then?" snapped Wharton.

Billy Bunter spluttered out the whole story. He was keenly desirous of seeing Skinner handled, after being kicked along the passage.

Harry Wharton listened with a dark brow.

"The utter rotter!" he exclaimed hotly. "This is getting too thick! Skinner's got to be stopped. He's a disgrace to the school!"

"Bunter's not much better," growled Nugent. "He must have had his ear to the keyhole to learn all this."

"I—I hadn't!" gasped Bunter. "I had simply stopped to tie my shoelace, and—and it took me about a quarter of an hour——"

"Oh, get out!" said Wharton gruffly.

He took the fat junior by the shoulders and spun him out of the study. Then he picked up the scattered papers.

"It is pretty rotten," remarked Nugent. "I know very well that Skinner's only after a mare's-nest. It's disgraceful for a Remove chap to start as a spy!"

"He's going to be stopped," said Wharton savagely. "The mean cad! We know now he stole old Gans' letter and read it. Keeping a copy of the letter, too, the worm!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Wherefore that black scowl, my son?" asked Bob Cherry, coming into the study with Hurree Singh and Johnny Bull.

Bob whistled when he heard of Bunter's story.

"The mean beast!" he ejaculated. "Look here, spying isn't good enough for the Remove! Skinner ought to be made an example of. Why, it's all rot! He's making out that Gans and the music chap are two spies together; and we saw the Gander shaking his fist at Bloomfield, and heard him slanging him a treat. They're enemies, not friends. Skinner's always suspecting somebody of something, and it's time he was stopped!"

"A jolly good hiding is what he wants!" remarked Johnny Bull.

"My esteemed chums——"

"Well, what do you think, Inky?"

"The thinkfulness is terrific, my esteemed and ludicrous chums," said the Nabob of Bhanipur. "I have a wheezy good idea."

"Ha, ha! What's the wheezy good idea?"

"The esteemed and dishonourable Skinner goes spyfully after the Gander's letters. It would be the kind and considerate action to provide him with a letter which would contain the awful and terrific evidence he wants against the unfortunate Hun."

"What on earth are you driving at?" demanded Wharton. "It's all a mare's-nest, and there isn't any evidence."

The nabob grinned.

"With an esteemed pen and paper, and some honourable ink, it is easyful to produce a terrific letter full of guilty secrets," he remarked. "The excellent Skinner spoofed us last week, and one good turn deserves another. We will make the esteemed Skinner find a letter which will be manufactured in this honourable study——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob. "What a ripping idea! Something about hidden bombs for blowing up the school——"

"My hat!"

"And a bit about air-raids and things," chuckled Nugent. "We can plant the letter somewhere for Skinner to find——"

"So that he will think it is the esteemed Gander's property," grinned Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Famous Five roared over the scheme. Prep being done, they sat down round the table to manufacture the guilty letter. There were many chuckles heard in Study No. 1 during the next half-hour. The spoofer of the Remove was to be rewarded with a little of his own spoof.

Harry Wharton & Co. were in cheery humour when they left the study and went down to the Common-room.

Skinner was there, and he eyed them very uneasily as they came in.

He was aware that they must have learned all the facts from Bunter, and that they knew now that he had deliberately spoofed them in "mixturing" the German master on that celebrated occasion. He was rather uneasy as to the consequences.

But, to his suprise and relief, there were no consequences. The Famous Five took no notice of him whatever.

Skinner was puzzled, but he was very much relieved. He had expected a severe bumping at the very least.

Later in the evening Skinner repaired to Snoop's study for a game of nap with that cheery young person and Stott; and after he had gone the Famous Five might have been observed chatting in a corner of the Common-room with the Bounder. What they said, however, was not heard by the other fellows; but Billy Bunter, who saw them grinning, was quite sure that they were planning a feed in spite of the food regulations.

The next day was Saturday, and Herr Gans, as his habit often was, left the school after dinner for a stroll on the shore by the sea—always carefully keeping within the five-mile limit.

Skinner watched him go from the doorway of the School House with a morose look. Vernon-Smith joined him.

"Still watching the Gander?" he queried, with a smile.

"Suppose I am?" snapped Skinner. "My belief is that he does a lot of spying on the coast. He ought to be prohibited in this district."

"What does he spy on?" asked the Bounder blandly. "The sad sea waves, or the winkle-shells left by the trippers?"

"Oh, rats!"

"Chance for you to explore his quarters," grinned Smithy. "You may find a set of bombs in his desk, or a Zeppelin hidden under his table. I think the Zepp's very likely, myself."

"Oh, don't be an ass!" said Skinner irritably. "As a matter of fact, I believe there's probably lots of incriminating papers there. But the villain would keep them locked up, of course."

"Wouldn't you be justfied, as a patriot, in burgling his desk?"

"Oh, cheese it!"

"Well, I'm going to take these lines to his study," said the Bounder, laughing. "If I see any bombs, I'll tell you, and you can call in P.-c. Tozer."

And he went along to the German master's study with his impot in his hand. His face was very grave as he came out of Herr Gans' room, as Skinner noted at once. The Bounder came back towards him, and then seemed to hesitate, and turned away to the staircase.

That was more than enough to excite Skinner's curiosity.

"Hold on a minute, Smithy!" he called out, hurrying after the Bounder.

"What for?" exclaimed Vernon-Smith impatiently, looking down from the stairs. "I'm in rather a hurry."

"You weren't in such a hurry a few minutes ago."

"I want to speak to Wharton."

"Look here, what's the matter, Smithy?"

"Nothing!"

With that the Bounder hurried on upstairs, leaving Skinner standing and staring after him. After a moment's thought he hurried after the Bounder again, only in time to see him disappear into Study No. 1, and to hear the door close. Skinner glanced hastily along the passage. Nearly all the fellows were out of doors, and the Remove passage was deserted.

Without the slightest scruple, Skinner bent his head to the study door to listen to the hum of voices within.

The voices were very low, which excited his curiosity still more; but he heard Wharton's voice clearly.

"You didn't look at the letter, Smithy?"

"Well, I couldn't help seeing a few words." Then the Bounder's voice became too subdued for Skinner to hear further.

"It's not our bizney, anyway!" came a remark from Frank Nugent. "Let's get down to footer, and bother the Gander and his blessed letters!"

"That's a good idea," said Wharton.

Skinner stepped back hurriedly from the door, his heart throbbing. It was evident that the Bounder had made some discovery in the Gander's study, and had taken counsel with the captain of the Remove. Skinner scuttled down the stairs. Whatever that discovery was, Skinner meant to make it, too.

The study door opened, and the chums of the Remove came out as Skinner vanished down the staircase. They caught a glimpse of the top of his head as he went. The Bounder chuckled softly.

"Fairly landed!" he remarked.

"You're sure he was outside our door?" grinned Nugent.

"Quite sure. I heard the board creak; besides, he's just gone downstairs, and I left him at the foot of the staircase when I came up."

"We'll soon see!" said Harry.

The juniors ran downstairs, and looked along the lower passage—just as Harold Skinner passed in at the door of the German master's empty study. Then they looked at one another and smiled.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.
In Black and White!

HAROLD SKINNER was breathing hard as he stepped into Herr Gans' study and closed the door behind him.

He had no right in the room; but discovery was not likely. Moreover, he could make plenty of excuses for being there—he had come to ask a question about German grammar, if necessary.

His quick, birdlike eyes roved round the study, in search of whatever it was that had so startled the Bounder.

Half-hidden under the blotting-pad on the table was a letter. Half the letter lay in sight, and Skinner spotted it at once.

He did not need telling that this must be what the Bounder had seen. Skinner ran to the table. He jumped as he caught sight of a few written lines:

"... take care to be absent from the school on Monday night, or your life may be lost with the rest. The bombs——"

That was all Skinner could see, as the letter lay.

He stood rooted to the carpet.

He had had the blackest suspicions of Herr Gans, founded only on personal dislike, and the fact that the Gander was a Hun. Here was "confirmation strong as proof of Holy Writ."

The carelessness of the German master in leaving the letter there was amazing. But Skinner knew that Herr Gans was not careful in such matters, with all his methodical German ways; for only the previous week Skinner had been able to purloin a letter from that room and read it.

A better fellow than Skinner might have felt that he was justified in investigating that letter, after seeing so much. Skinner had no hesitation. He took the sheet from the blotting-pad, and read it from the beginning. The letter, in full, ran:

"Dear Gans,—All is prepared now. The last article has been placed in readiness in the old crypt. Mein lieber freund, take care to be absent from the school on Monday night, or your life may be lost with the rest. The bombs are no respecters of persons. I need not

impress upon you the necessity of keeping up an appearance of indifference, as suspicion may be fatal to you—and to me. I shall join you on Saturday afternoon with my camera. Auf wiedersehen.

"G. B."

Skinner fairly gasped.

Bombs concealed in the old crypt—and lives to be lost on Monday night! The whole dastardly plot was only too clear. It was Bolo out-Boloed.

"G. B!" muttered Skinner breathlessly. "That's Bloomfield's initials, of course. I knew they were hand in glove. It's a foreign sort of writing, too. Ten to one that chap is a German—in fact, he must be!"

Skinner's eyes devoured the letter again. It was written in a very angular hand, bearing a resemblance to the difficult German script.

The spy of Greyfriars was thrilling with his discovery. He grasped the letter in his hand, and strode out of the study.

The Famous Five were chatting in the doorway of the School House with Vernon-Smith and Squiff. Wharton looked round at Skinner.

"You've been in the Gander's study again, Skinner!" he exclaimed sharply. "More of your spying, I suppose."

Skinner laughed a sneering laugh.

"You can say what you dashed well like!" he retorted. "I've saved your life by my spying, as you call it."

"What?" exclaimed Wharton.

"Draw it mild, Skinner!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Look at that, then!" said Skinner. And he held up the letter dramatically.

"That's the letter I saw, you fellows," said the Bounder very quietly.

"We've no right to look at Herr Gans' letter."

"Well, under the circumstances——" said Bob.

"Perhaps you'll look, when I tell you there's a plot to blow up Greyfriars, and everybody in it excepting that dastardly Hun!" sneered Skinner.

"Oh, don't be an ass!"

"Well, look, then!"

Skinner's words had been heard by a dozen fellows. There was a crowd of juniors gathering now.

"I say, you fellows, we shall all be murdered!" howled Billy Bunter, as he blinked at the letter in Skinner's hand.

"My hat!" exclaimed Wharton, staring at the letter. That was all he could say.

"Where did you find it, Skinner?" demanded Nugent.

"On the Gander's table. It's his! Smithy saw it, too, and wasn't going to say anything about it," said Skinner.

"Well," began the Bounder hesitatingly, "I asked Wharton what he thought——"

"This isn't a time for asking Wharton what he thinks!" jeered Skinner. "There's bombs in the crypt to blow up the school. I'm going to Mr. Quelch with this!"

"What?" shouted Bob.

"Skinner! Stop——"

"Rot!" snapped Skinner.

He dodged Wharton's hand, outstretched to stop him, and fairly ran to the door of the Remove-master's study. The clicking of a typewriter within showed that Mr. Quelch was at home. Skinner thumped on the door, threw it open, and dashed in.

Harry Wharton & Co. looked at each other in blank dismay.

It was very well to pull Skinner's leg; but they had never dreamed that the Form-master would be called in.

But it was done now! From Mr. Quelch's study they heard the sharp, irritated tones of the Remove-master.

"Skinner! How dare you rush into my study in that way!"

"Look at that letter, sir!" panted Skinner.

Mr. Quelch rose to his feet and glared at him.

"What do you mean, Skinner? What letter is that? Are you out of your senses?"

"Look at it, sir! I've suspected Herr Gans all along of being a German spy!"

"What!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

Skinner backed away, somewhat daunted; but he stuck to his guns.

"Look at that letter, sir—it's proof!" he exclaimed.

"Pish! Tush! Nonsense!"

But the Form-master took the letter, and glanced at it. He started violently as he read the awful communication, written in a foreign hand.

"Bless my soul! What is this, Skinner?"

"I found that in Herr Gans' study, sir."

"And what were you doing in Herr Gans' study, Skinner?" demanded Mr. Quelch sternly.

"I've a right to show up a spy, sir!" answered Skinner, feeling that he could afford to speak out, with such overwhelming proof in his hands. "I've suspected him all along. I went there for proof, and I've found it. Shall I telephone for the police, sir?"

"No, Skinner!" thundered Mr. Quelch. "You will do nothing of the kind. Do you think you can deceive me, sir, into believing harm of a per-

fectly harmless man by manufacturing this ridiculous letter?"

Skinner staggered.

"I, sir?" he babbled.

"Yes, you! You wrote this letter, Skinner! That is the only way it could have come into existence."

"I didn't!" howled Skinner. "Come to the crypt, sir, and see for yourself. The bombs are there!"

"Do you dare to assert that this letter is genuine, Skinner?"

"I swear it, sir!"

"Very well," said Mr. Quelch grimly. "I will come to the crypt with you, Skinner. And then I shall punish your audacity in a fitting manner. Come!"

He whisked out of the study, with Skinner at his heels. They passed the dismayed juniors in the doorway, Skinner giving them a vaunting look in passing. He did not care for Mr. Quelch's anger. That anger would speedily change into admiration and gratitude when he discovered the bombs in the old crypt, and realised that all Greyfriars owed its preservation to the spy of the Remove!

"Well, my hat!" gasped Bob Cherry as they went. "That ass Skinner——"

"Oh, crumbs!" murmured the Bounder. "I thought he'd take a crowd of fellows there, but Quelchy——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The wheezy scheme has worked out terrifically!" murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, rather ruefully.

As a matter of fact, the wheeze had worked out rather more terrifically than the nabob had expected.

Mr. Quelch strode away rapidly, with Skinner trotting at his side. They reached the ruins, at some distance from the School House, and Mr. Quelch descended the steps into the crypt.

"Take care, sir!" exclaimed Skinner anxiously. "The bombs may go off if you tread on them!"

"Don't be ridiculous, Skinner!"

Mr. Quelch strode into the vault. It was very dark there, but Skinner produced his pocket electric-torch. He flashed the light round the dark vault.

Almost at their feet lay a box. Nothing else was to be seen, save damp flags and oozy walls of stone.

"They—they must be in that box, sir!" stammered Skinner. "That must have been put here. It doesn't belong here, anyway."

"Show a light, boy!" said the Remove-master, in a grinding voice.

"Mind you don't touch it, sir!"

"Silence!"

Mr. Quelch threw back the lid of the box. There was nothing in it at all save a sheet of cardboard. But upon the cardboard words were daubed with a brush:

"TO SKINNER, THE SPY!

"Dear Spy,—Next time you find a German spy's letter, make sure it was not written in Study No. 1 for your especial benefit.

"(Signed)

"RATS."

Skinner's eyes bulged as he read that message. Mr. Quelch blinked at it, and for a moment his angry frown relaxed.

"Bless my soul!" he ejaculated.

"Oh, crumbs!" murmured Skinner.

His knees knocked together. He understood it all now. The Bounder had actually placed that letter on the Gander's table for him to find, and then had proceeded to excite his curiosity; and during the whispered confabulation in Study No. 1 the fellows must have known he was outside listening. Skinner's teeth came together savagely. He could see it all now—rather late.

"So, Skinner"—Mr. Quelch's voice was like rumbling thunder—"so, you wretched boy, your pretended discovery turns out to be a practical joke of your Form-fellows, apparently in punishment of your spying proclivities? Follow me to my study, Skinner!"

Skinner almost crawled after Mr. Quelch to the School House. He gave the Co. a malignant look as he passed them again, and Bob Cherry gave him a cheery wink in return.

In the study Mr. Quelch selected his stoutest cane.

"Skinner!"

"Ow!" mumbled Skinner.

"You have admitted playing the spy upon Herr Gans. You have acted in a low and degraded manner, Skinner. Your Form-fellows have shown their contempt of you. If I did not think, Skinner, that you are as stupid as you are ill-natured, I should report you to the Head for a flogging. As it is, Skinner, I shall cane you severely!"

The next five minutes was exceedingly painful to Skinner. When he crawled out of the Remove-master's study at last he looked as if he found life hardly worth living. Harry Wharton & Co. were smiling now.

"Had it bad?" asked the Bounder.

"Ow-ow-ow!"

"How could you be ass enough to go to Quelchy?" exclaimed Wharton. "We never thought you would be such a burbling chump as that!"

"Ow, ow, ow!"

"Never mind, Skinner," said Bob Cherry consolingly. "You've saved all our lives, you know! Think what would have happened if you hadn't discovered that old soap-box in the crypt!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow-ow-ow-wow!" was Skinner's reply.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And during the next hour or so anyone passing Skinner's study in the Remove passage might have heard proceeding from it a kind of chorus of:

"Ow-wow-wow-yow-ow-yow!"

And, sad to relate, fellows only chuckled as they heard it. Spies were not popular in the Greyfriars Remove. But, as it was to turn out, the Gander was not yet done with Skinner, the Spy.

(DON'T MISS "BUNTER'S LATEST!"—next Monday's grand complete story of Harry Wharton & Co., by FRANK RICHARDS.)

The Editor's Chat.

For Next Monday:

"BUNTER'S LATEST!"

By Frank Richards.

More than once has it happened to William George Bunter to tell the truth and to meet with general disbelief for his story. It seems hard to Bunter; but it is not really so. Few people are ready to believe in a miracle, and truth from the Owl is too like a miracle for most.

In next week's story he tells the truth, and is disbelieved.

Then, again, Bunter has on several occasions been quite useful through finding out—in the Bunterish manner, which includes tying of bootlaces—things which he ought never to have known, yet which were best not kept secret. This happens again. At such times Bunter takes no end of credit to himself after the event. But no one else considers that he deserves any.

This, too, happens again. And that is all I am going to tell you about the story—except that I feel sure that you will like it, and that, though the sort of thing that chances in it has chanced before, there is nothing stale or hackneyed about it. It is a standing wonder to me that Mr. Richards should be able to give us quite a new story which is still on quite familiar lines. He can do it because he is a genius, I suppose!

ABOUT OUR NOTICES.

I hope that these will soon tail off a bit. We are getting altogether too many, and the consequence is that some of them will have to wait for months before they can be inserted. And I find it hard to believe that all of them are the real expression of a strong wish for anything asked for. I fancy some of you send along notices just to be in the fashion. Don't, please! It is weak-minded, and your notices only stand in the way of those of your fellow-readers.

This week I am cutting down my Chat to make room for the notices. But it would need a full page to make much real difference to the pile I have in hand, and a full page is quite out of the question.

NOTICES.

Football.—Matches Wanted By:

VALLEY RANGERS—16-17—5 mile radius.—G. Reed, 114, Milling Street, Gateshead.

NORLAND RANGERS.—J. Best, 17, Charles Street, Queensdale Road, W. 11.

VICTORIA ROVERS—16—5 mile radius.—H. Smith, 16, Wythes Road, Silvertown, E.

BULWELL RANGERS—16½—7 mile radius.—G. Robinson, 5, Brady Yard, Main Street, Bulwell, Nottingham.

CLEVELAND ATHLETIC—15½.—F. G. Moss, 26, Rothschild Road, Chiswick, W. 4.

CHILTON—15—R. Bennett, Chapel House Farm, Maghull, Liverpool.

Other Footer Notices.

H. Webber, 92, Albany Street, Regent's Park, N.W. 1, wants to join club within 5 miles—15-16.

A Walthamstow team requires good left-back and left-winger—16-17.—A. E. Fisher, 47, Grange Road, Walthamstow.

Members wanted for Albany Sports Club—all seasons—15-17½.—Apply between 7 and 9 any evening to George H. Elam, 38, Doctor Street, Walworth, S.E. 17.

S. Covill, 86, Samuel Street, Woolwich, S.E. 18, wants cheap pair footer boots, size 6.

Back Numbers Wanted.

By D. Griffiths, 4, Brynawel Terrace, Llandilo—"Wingate's Folly," "Tom Merry Minor," "Boy Without a Name," also any six MAGNETS before 200.

By Clem Fisher, 151, Clare Road, Cardiff—"Penny Popular," No. 222; "Gem" dated Feb. 6th, 1916—3d. each offered.

By J. Searle, 45, Dudley Street, Luton—MAGNET, Nos. 1-300—3d. each offered. Christmas Numbers, 6d.

By J. Townsend, 58, Duke Road, Chiswick, W.—"Gem," No. 493, also any Christmas Numbers of "Gem" before 1916—clean. Please state price.

By W. Laidler, c/o Westwalker Co., 57, Water Street, Vancouver, B.C., Canada—MAGNET, No. 484, "Penny Popular," No. 226.

By Edgar Issalene, 41, McAslin Street, Glasgow—"Boy Without a Name," "Kaiser or King," "Worst House at Ravenshill," "Flying Armada," "Britain Invaded," "Britain at Bay," and "Britain's Revenge." Please state price.

By Jack Makin, 12, Whitby Street, Tue Brook, Liverpool—back numbers of "Gem" and MAGNET, especially Double Numbers of MAGNET before 1914, "Bob Cherry's Barring-Out," "Tom Merry in the Rockies," "Figgins' Fig-Pudding," and "Gem" containing "Race to the Tuckshop."

By S. L. Higgins, 72, Burlington Street, Aston Manor, Birmingham—"Gem" and MAGNET back numbers before 350—clean.

By T. Aston, 53, Rathbone Street, Rochdale—"Through Thick and Thin," "Tom Merry & Co.," "St. Jim's Tournament."

By J. W. Ferguson, 26, Bank Street, Cambuslang, Lanark—MAGNET, Nos. 45-195; also Christmas Numbers 1913 and 1914

Your Editor

Extracts from "THE GREYFRIARS HERALD" and "TOM MERRY'S WEEKLY."

SLUMMING WITH SKIMPOLE!

By MONTY LOWTHER.

ONE day in the hols old Skimmy called at my place. His visit came as a pleasant surprise. My people were not at home, and I had nothing to do at the moment. Otherwise, the pleasure would have been more on his side than mine, you bet! I noticed the servants stared at the fellow no end. They must have thought I was starting a natural history museum. I think you know what Skimpole looks like! Skimpole didn't notice it, though, and he started gassing without delay.

"Ahem, my dear Lowther," he observed, "you may possibly have divined that I have called upon you for a definite—nay, an important purpose!"

I told him that I was very well, thank you. And would he mind—er—proceeding with the washing?

He looked surprised. I don't think he quite caught on. Humour is wasted on Skimpole.

"Really, Lowther," he began, "I think you mistake the drift of my remarks. I have not come here on behalf of a laundry. I merely wish you to accompany me on an expedition to the—er—East——"

"Great Scott, man!" I exploded. "Name the place! Egypt or China or South Carolina—what? Anywhere you like! Let me see—East, I think you said? What about Antananarivo?"

Skimpole looked pained. After that he proceeded with his remarks.

"I intend to write a paper for Mr. Mindgone—you know, the editor of 'Twaddlesome Talks.' I wish to write upon the subject of the poorer parts of London and their inhabitants. It occurred to me that it was a dangerous mission, and I should wish you, as an individual of considerable muscular development, to accompany me."

"Oh, I see! When you get into trouble, I'm to spank you, and cart you home by the scruff of your neck! All right! What's the pay?"

Skimpole looked serious. His mind soars above little things like jokes, and he took what I said quite literally. But I think he was a trifle surprised.

"Well, if two shillings would——" he sighed. Skimmy is never really well off. He spends a precious sight too much on twaddle.

"You burbling ape!" I began. "Do you think I want any money?" I snorted. "You blundering baboon! Why, I'm coming for the fun of the thing." Then, in a stage aside: "I wonder how much a decent funeral costs?"

Well, after some more chin-wag, we started off. Skimmy took me to a tram. Skimmy knew where to find the slums, he said—just where. I had only general ideas on the subject.

The tram was not very crowded, fortunately. I had the shock of my life when I found that the return fare was only a tanner! I thought it was about eight miles each way!

Well, we started off. I noticed that they seemed rather a rought lot aboard, and I mentioned the same to Skimmy. He said it was a godsend. He would start collecting copy right away. Instead of Mahomet going to the mountain, the mountain had come to Mahomet.

The man on Skimmy's right was a fine specimen of the "Bargee Vulgaris." He couldn't have shaved within the memory of the oldest inhabitant, and he couldn't have washed that week. He was over middle age, but he looked as tough and strong as a wire cable. He smoked a pipe that was an offence to earth and heaven.

However, it is an adage that fools will rush in where angels fear to tread. Skimpole leant over towards this fine specimen of British manhood, and began speaking to him in such a loud voice that I think everybody in the tram must have heard it.

"My good man——"

I don't think Skimpole could have hit upon a worse style of address. It irritated the man no end. Besides, it is quite probable that the fellow objected to having a great, ugly creature like Skimpole hanging over him. Anyhow, his next remark suggested that he did not feel really brotherly.

"Where are yer a-shuving to? Get off o' me, you skinny ape!"

Skimmy was hardly pleased. The man was not flattering. But I saw him take out his notebook, and write down in it something that looked like "Irresponsibility." Skimpole likes long words. I think he gets it from Professor Barmycrumpet.

"My good man," Skimpole proceeded, "may I ask you how much your present employers are paying you every week?"

"Thirty shilings. And it's a rank, rotten screw, so it is, when a pore workin' man has a wife and three childer to keep outer the work'us. Wot I say is, we ain't got the right men in Parl'ment. If we 'ad, the war would be——"

Skimpole interrupted him with another question. He flourished his notebook as he asked:

"And what does your Trade Union say about it?"

He listened greedily to the man's reply, and took it down verbatim.

"Blinkin' set of fools! They don't squeeze the employers enough. They're afraid, that's what they are! If I had my own way, I'd tie the lot of them up in a sack and throw them into the river, the bloated——"

The rest of his speech has been censored. Then his eye caught his questioner's book, and he grew really fierce. By this time everybody in the tram—or, rather, on the upper deck—was straining his ears to catch the conversation. The fellow growled:

"Look a-here, mate! What have you been writing in that there little book o' yourn? Lemme look!"

He snatched at the book, and Skimpole held it out of reach.

A woman who sat next him whined:

"It's all right, young gent. Don't you be afeard; he can't read!"

But Skimmy did not stop. He made a bolt for the stairs, calling for me to follow him. The tram had been standing still for the moment, but now it started with a jerk. Skimpole pitched down the steps headlong.

I followed him, in a less hurried manner. The gent with whom we had been chatting followed also. It was quite a race. By this time the tram had got up full speed. Skimpole jumped off. Now, I've often seen people leaving or boarding trams while they were going a very fair pace, but I've never seen anyone do what Skimpole did. He seemed to have invented a new process all by himself. He just stepped off quietly, as though he had been going downstairs.

The consequence is quite obvious to the trained mind. His feet were swept from under him by his own velocity. His centre of gravity was disturbed. In fact, it started going ahead in a most independent manner. It never even waited for his feet. In short, Skimpole fell.

I jumped backwards as hard, and as far clear of the tram, as I could go. I was all right. At least, I wasn't exactly run over by another vehicle that was coming the opposite direction. It only caught my shoulder and threw me in the mud!

The tram stopped. I think the conductress was anxious about Skimpole. When they saw that he wasn't dead, they started off again, just as the indignant coalheaver, or whatever the fellow was, had decided to jump off. He tumbled off, too. I think our example must have been infectious.

We escaped him. We left him swearing, and caught another tram without mishap.

In due time we arrived at our destination. I don't know quite where it was—but that is no odds.

Now our task really began. Skimpole had decided to turn off into one of the side-streets which bore an unsavoury reputation. It was supposed to be the haunt of crooks.

I was disappointed. It was a dirty street, true. But in that respect it was not different from a good many other streets I have seen. Crime, as crime, did not brood palpably there. That is to say, there were no squinting, slouching villains of the American crook play type stalking from house to house. It's an odd fact, but it had never occurred to me before that a thief might not look so different from the rest of the world in his spare time.

Skimpole was not satisfied, either. So he went up and knocked at the first house. The door was opened to him by a slatternly woman. I have a shrewd suspicion that she had been watching us through the keyhole before she let us in. Her first question was brief and to the point.

"Watcherwant?"

"My good woman——" Skimpole began, then stopped. What did he want? "Er—nothing, only I——"

He finished his speech to the closed door.

Within came sounds as of bolts being drawn, and hoarse whispers filtered through the woodwork.

"'Tec, is he?" "Small? Shall I bash him?" "Wot did 'e say? Couldn't quite ketch!" "'Ere yer are! Git out this way, 'Arry!" This last in a woman's voice.

Skimpole looked troubled. He looked upon stealing in a very tolerant light, I think. He regards the nation's money as common property. Still, they regarded him with suspicion. Should he enter and set forth the great principles of Socialism? His guardian angel—that's me—settled the matter by dragging him away.

But the whole road was roused. Angry murmurs came from all quarters. Ruffianism had taken it into its head that we were guardians of the law. They decided to give us a warm time.

Something flew from a window, and landed on Skimmy's keranium. It was an old shoe. Luckily, there was so little of it left that it didn't weigh much. It was quickly followed by all the refuse of the neighbourhood. We might have been carrying "All rubbish to be shot here" notices!

I ran. The disciple of brotherhood ran, too. It was wonderful the way he covered the ground. I didn't think he had it in him to run so fast. However, I suppose he's so scraggy that his legs only have to carry a light weight!

Then they started chasing us. I think they recognised by now that we had nothing to do with the great twin principles of law and order. But they resented our intrusion, and they wanted to make things hot.

"Guys like them there enterin' a respectable workin' man's home!" exclaimed one fellow, who looked as though he had never done an hour's honest work in his life. "What are we a-comin' to? That's what I want to know!"

Poor apostle of brotherhood! Skimmy's clothes were filthy and muddy. He was puffing like a grampus. A cabbage had landed on top of his head, and, by a sheer miracle, was balancing itself there. His collar was splashed with an unpleasant liquid that smelled like a rotten egg. His hat was lost. I can't truthfully say that I was in a much better condition.

At last we were clear of that hooting crowd. We found ourselves in a small side-street that led down to the river. We must have looked a pair of beauties. My wrath was rising, and my tongue was preparing to loosen the great flood of my wrath on the fellow's head. Skimpole turned to me, and said reproachfully:

"My dear Lowther, I consider your conduct has been most injudicious. You had no

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right to desert me in that manner. It was your running away as you did that aroused the feelings of these—er—good people. If you had only waited, I could have explained the matter to everybody's complete satisfaction. Now I have got my garments in a most reprehensible condition, and I have lost all my prospective copy. I repeat—though it pains me to censure you—that your conduct has been most—most injudicious!"

I collapsed. The cool cheek of that innocent, bespectacled freak clean took my breath away. We hurried along in silence. The road appeared to be a cul-de-sac—there was no exit. Yet to go back would be very awkward. It was a difficult problem.

I looked at Skimpole, and Skimpole looked at me. We were both silent and thoughtful. At last Skimmy said:

"My friend, it is quite clear that we must return. I do not wish to swim the river. There appears to be no outlet this way."

"All right; lead on, fathead!" I exclaimed. "We can't get in a worse mess than we are at present."

We tried to sneak back quietly along the way we had come. It was fatal. A brute of a small boy spotted us, and we were treated to another dose of curtain fire. I say no more. It was lucky, though, that most of the inhabitants had run short of ammunition!

. . . . . .

We found the tram, and returned to civilisation; looking sorry spectacles. The journey took over an hour, and the whole of that time we were exposed to the admiring wonder and the audible comments of our fellow-travellers. When I recovered my breath I explained matters to Skimpole as they appeared from my point of view. Skimmy was very silent during my harangue. He did not relish some of my phrases. Howbeit, they were quite fit for print. Although the editor has censored them ruthlesly, I repeat they were quite fit for print. The people in the tram stared. I don't know what they thought of us. I noticed that they looked jolly significant when we passed Bedlam.

We parted as soon as possible, and in silence. Our feelings were far, far too deep for words.

And as I changed my ruined garments I vowed that never, never again would I accompany Skimmy on a slumming expedition. He didn't give me a chance of refusing again, though, because he has never asked me. I think he is tired of the slums.

THE END.

A KNIGHT IN THE NIGHT!

By R. A. DIGBY.

"WHAT rot are you reading now, Gunny?" asked Grundy sleepily, as he half sat up in bed.

It was at Eastwood House during the Christmas holidays, and Grundy, Gunn, and Wilkins had but that day arrived.

Originally they had gone to their respective homes, but nearly all their male relatives were "carrying on" across the water, and their mothers and sisters had brought a plentiful supply of maiden aunts to keep them company. Maiden aunts didn't suit those three, and they didn't suit the aunts, either.

They had written to Gussy, stating the case and imploring him to put them up at Eastwood House. Gussy, like the soft-hearted old chump he is, did so; and, as there was not room anywhere else, three beds had been prepared in a kind of lumber-room.

It may have been the foreboding suits of mail which kept the trio awake that night, but I rather fancy it was the howling of the bleak wind without as it drove the feathery flakes of snow slantwise through the darkness.

"You read some awful rot, Gunny, you know," said Grundy, stifling a yawn. "What is it now?"

"Not rot at all!" said Gunn warmly. He was sitting propped up in bed with bell, book, and candle—at least, he had a book on his knees and a candle by his side. The nearest bell available was in the old clock-tower, and Gunny preferred to let it remain there. "It's about the good old far-away days, you know, when chaps clanked about in suits of armour, and good knights and bad knights fought duels knee-deep in snow, generally the last thing on Christmas Eve. Then, just as the good knight is about to thrust home, the church bells begin to ring, and the knights make it pax, and go home together for a jolly good feed round the cheery old Yule log."

"H'm!" murmured Grundy thoughtfully. "I wish I were living in those times! I'd be a knight, and challenge all jealous knights, such as Merry and Blake, to mortal combat. Of course, we wouldn't have swords; they're too dangerous. We'd have it out with the gloves——"

Gunn grunted.

"Deficient ain't the word for old Grundy's mental faculty!" he muttered.

"Saying something about fish, Gunny?"

"Nunno! I was—I was speaking about a place called Fishant in this story." A very ingenious youth is Gunny! "It's the place a good and valiant knight—Sir Mentali—hails from."

"Sir what?" asked Grundy curiously.

"Sir Mentali—Sir Mentali de Fishant in full," said Gunn. (I'm afraid Gunn will come to a very bad end!)

"Rather a good name!" approved Grundy. "It sounds familiar somehow. Sir Mentali de Fishant! It would suit me down to the ground. I'll be the ghost of Sir Mentali. See if I don't give those bounders in the other rooms a scare!"

Grundy had shaken off all his tiredness in the enthusiasm of the idea. He hopped out of bed, and struggled into one of the suits of mail.

Now, it happened—as romance writers sometimes begin—that the Study No. 3-ites were not the only ones who couldn't sleep. None of us could, in fact; and, with a complete disregard of Food Controllers which we show but once a year, we had ransacked the larder and made the table in the banquet-hall groan beneath the appetising viands.

"Wathah a shame to leave those thwee in the lumbah-woom out of it, deah boys!" said Gussy. "Pway wun and fetch them, somebody!"

"Oh, I'll go!" volunteered Lowther. And he mizzled.

"Wharrer you making that row for, Grundy?" Wilkins burbled, displeased at his slumbers being thus broken.

In the lively conversation which ensued the unattractive visage which peered round the door escaped notice.

Monty Lowther returned to the hall in a few minutes, his ears united by a broad grin.

"I do twust, Lowthah," said Gussy, gazing at the humorist severely, "you are not goin' to spwing a joke upon us?"

"Don't be an ass!" grunted Lowther. "You're as big a chump as Grundy! Know what he's up to now, you chaps? He's sar-

dined himself in a coat of mail, and is going to walk the night in ghostly grandeur. He'll visit each dorm in turn—the utter ass! Suppose we humour him a little. It might improve our appetites—if that's possible. Where's our theatrical box? We brought it with us, I know, to give a show to the village kiddies."

We hunted up the box, and speedily metamorphosed Tom Merry and Lowther into a couple of ruffians of the lowest order. Pretty easy to do, you know—doesn't really take much make-up!

Blake, Gussy, Herries, and I shared a room, and we got into bed again. Then all but Tom and Monty made themselves scarce. These two stood one on each side of Gussy's bed.

Presently there came the sound of distant clanking, and metallic footsteps clumped along the passage. The knight of the night entered!

"Grab 'is legs, 'Erb!" grated Monty Lowther, in a thick voice. "Carry 'im down to the pool, pitch 'im in, and the Eastwood jools is ours!"

How drowning Gussy would put the Eastwood jewels into these fellows' hands wasn't quite clear, but Grundy never thought of that. He jumped forward like an avalanche of old iron.

"Blake! Herries! Digby! Wake up!" he roared from inside his helmet. "They're going to drown Gussy!"

"Outer this door!" snarled Ruffian No. 2. "Quick, Josh!"

The pair vanished, carrying Gussy between them.

They didn't really leave the room, as a matter of fact. They merely dodged behind a screen near the door.

Grundy darted through the doorway, and careered heavily down the stairs, roaring like a wild bull. He was not intercepted by any of the servants, for the simple but sufficient reason that they had sipped rather too frequently at the cup that cheers, and were not in a condition to move.

Wilkins and Gunn came pattering along the passage.

"Where's Mentali?" demanded Gunn.

"Eh? Who?"

"Sir Mentali de Fishant. That's what he calls himself."

"Ha, ha, ha! He'll be pounding across the snow to the pool, I fancy. We're just going after him! Coming?"

Well wrapped up, we followed the deep footprints.

At the brink of the pool stood the impressive form of Sir Mentali de Fishant, looking with great anxiety for anything suggestive of a gap in the ice.

The terrible thoughts uppermost in his mind were summarily put to flight by the receipt of a soft snowball at the back of his neck. He had taken off his helmet, and was holding it under his arm.

He spun round quickly, just in time to get another snowball full in the mouth, followed by one in the eye, another on the ear, and a couple on the nose. He made but one remark, but that one was impressive:

"Oooohrrrroooogh!"

Believing that he had cold-blooded criminals to deal with, and forgetting in the heat of the moment—and the cold of the snowballs—that desperate murderers don't usually carry out their grim work in this fashion, Grundy rushed recklessly to the attack.

He really hadn't an earthly, for the fusillade of snowballs kept the gallant knight from seeing anything at all. In a few minutes he was like a snow-man with an iron inside shell, if so I may speak; and he sank down helplessly.

Then we took pity on poor Sir Mentali de Fishant. He had meant well all along.

"Why, here's Grundy, you fellows!" cried Blake, running forward. "Collared the kidnappers, old chap? We heard you shout!"

"I—I——"

Grundy staggered to his feet, and looked at us suspiciously after he had gouged the snow out of his eyes.

Grundy was feeling a little at a loss.

"How did you get away from the scoundrels, Gussy?" he asked, regarding his host doubtfully. "Didn't they take you to the pool?"

"Weally, I can't wemembah bein' taken vewy far!" replied Gussy, scratching his chin. "Pewwaps I was chloroformed or somethin'——"

"What you want most, Grundy, old fellow," put in Blake, "is to get thawed by the fire, and have a rattling good spread with us. Come on, if you like the idea!"

Grundy seemed to like it. He came.

Sir Mentali de Fishant was heard of no more.

THE END.

THE GREYFRIARS GALLERY.

No. 61.—Miss PHYLLIS HOWELL.

PHYLLIS HOWELL is not so old a friend of ours as Marjorie Hazeldene, or Clara Trevlyn. Those two have appeared in the stories at intervals almost from the outset; but the dashing Phyllis only came upon the scene at a much later stage.

It was that very popular story, "School and Sport," which introduced her to the readers of the Greyfriars yarns.

The sports contest told of in that book was for a cup presented by Lieutenant Dalton Howell, an old Greyfriars boy, who was killed at Neuve Chapelle. Another old boy, and a great chum of the famous "Dolly Howell," came to the school bearing the dead warrior's last message. Captain Crawley told them all how Howell had desired, whilst dying, that something should be done to keep his memory green at the school he had loved so well, and had thought of the Cup scheme.

It was through Dr. Locke, the Head of Greyfriars, that Dalton Howell's sister Phyllis came to Cliff House, where she soon became a chum of Marjorie and Clara.

She has more dash and go than either of those two; there is something of the masculine in her nature, though it would be unfair to call her a mere tomboy. When an emergency arrives she is better fitted to do things than the gentle Marjorie or the very feminine Clara. Marjorie can bear with quiet fortitude, and has any amount of moral courage; but there is more boldness in Phyllis. When she found by chance a letter from Skinner to Ponsonby which proved that the cad of the Remove was plotting with the leader of the Highcliffe nuts, meaning to betray his own school, she rode over to Greyfriars in the darkness to warn Harry Wharton & Co. They had never seen her before, but that did not matter to Phyllis.

Since then she has naturally been as close a chum of the Famous Five as her friends. Of them all she undoubtedly likes Bob Cherry best. They suit one another, being alike in many ways. And Bob admires the fair Phyllis; but he still puts Marjorie first, for there is strong loyalty in rugged, honest, cheery Bob.

If the relations between the Famous Five and the Cliff House girls were of the foolishly flirtatious sort all this might mean trouble. But they are not. And there is no jealousy between Marjorie and Phyllis on Bob's account, though that rascally Hun, Ruprecht von Rattenstein, did his best to arouse it; and succeeded at the other end by making Harry and Bob fall out. They were going to fight, but Phyllis stopped that. Her boldness and quickness of decision are seen to advantage in such an emergency. She stepped in when Marjorie might have hesitated and Clara would have hung back; and she knew how to say the right thing and to bring those two old chums, who ought never to have quarrelled, to their senses.

She did not hesitate to intervene again when Piet Delarey and Squiff were in combat. Again it was Von Rattenstein who had made the trouble. This time Phyllis was too late to prevent the fight; but after the two had shared in rescuing her from the peril of the mad dog, and she had played her part as well as any boy could have done in the rescue of one of them from another danger, she saw them reconciled.

But her pluck had been proven beyond possibility of doubt before that. In her early days at Cliff House, while the sports for her dead brother's cup were in progress, she intervened to frustrate the schemes of the leagued Greyfriars and Highcliffe rotters to sink the boats, and so prevent the boat-race. She slapped Ponsonby's face, and he turned on her in fury. But Skinner could not stand that, and Merton backed up Skinner.

Perhaps that incident gave Phyllis a better opinion of Skinner than he deserved. Anyway, she saw—or thought she saw—some good in him. She could forgive him, she said, if he did something great by way of atonement. To us, who know Skinner so well, it sounds like a wild dream. But it came off. Bob Cherry, diving for plates in the bath, struck his head on the ladder, and became senseless. It was Skinner who pulled him out, after Wharton had made an unsuccessful attempt. And Phyllis spoke soft words of praise and kindness, and the hard heart of Harold Skinner was touched, and perhaps he had his wild dreams for the next day or two—dreams of becoming a decent fellow whom everyone could like and respect. Phyllis would have helped him, and Bob, and Harry Wharton, and gentle Marjorie.

Why didn't he stick to it? Well, I suppose it was too much trouble. It meant changing everything—his habits, his tastes, his companions. He tried his best in the Marathon, and came out of the race with credit. But after that he chucked it. Not good enough for Skinner! Or too good—which?

Phyllis had no real success with Skinner; but failure is not often the result of her efforts. She played her part in the defeat of the Terrible Two, who had given the Remove quite a lot to ponder over. But they were good sorts, the Williams brothers; and when they went it was in all friendliness with the Remove and the Cliff House girls alike.

There was not so much sympathy in Phyllis as there was in Marjorie for Peter

Todd, when he was so unlucky as to fall alone into the clutches of the Highcliffe nuts, and was put through it so cruelly. There he lay, his forelock cut off, his hair jagged from Pon's clumsy trimming, his face daubed with raddle, his arms and legs bound; and Phyllis and Clara were more than half inclined to think that it served him right for having the audacity to set himself up against Harry Wharton! The girls all like Harry, as is natural; but they had all liked Peter also till then, and if they had known to what an extent Harry had been to blame for the quarrel between the two they would not have been so down on Peter. But Marjorie, though Harry is more to her than any of the rest, played the ministering angel to his rival. And Peter much preferred that it should be Marjorie. Later the other two came to see that they had been wrong about Toddy—the best of good fellows, and man enough to own himself wrong. I don't know about Miss Clara, but there can be no doubt that Phyllis thinks more than ever of Peter now. It was just the sort of thing she would appreciate—his standing up before the whole Remove to say that he was in the wrong, and asking them to vote Wharton into the captaincy again.

The kiss which Miss Howell gave Bob Cherry caused quite a lot of excitement among our readers at the time. Some of them wanted more kissing in the stories; they seemed to look forward to a perfect orgy of it! They did not get it. That was a special kiss—one by itself—on a very special occasion. There was any amount of friendship in it—affection even—no one needs to be ashamed of loving honest Bob—but it was chiefly excitement, and it was not the very least spooniness. Phyllis wanted Greyfriars to come out on top in the sports every bit as much as any Greyfriars fellow could want it; and she was almost beside herself with joy when Bob told her the result. Perhaps she would not have kissed any of the others, even in those circumstances; but that does not matter much.

Phyllis Howell is the type of girl more often met nowadays than in the days of our mothers and grandmothers. When one says she is bold the word is not used at all in the sense of "fast." It is a plucky boy's boldness that she has. And there is about her much of a boy's frankness. She is good at games, active, strong. There are many such girls to-day, and the more of them there are in the future the better for the country they call their own!

NOTICES

Correspondence Wanted.

Miss Lilian Trudell, Waterloo House, Waterloo Street, Tipton—with girl readers anywhere.

Back Numbers, Etc., Wanted.

By J. Jeffrey, 14, Court Road, S.E. 27—"Secret of the Seas," "Mystery Island," "On the Trail of the Redskins," and any others by Everard and Storm. Please state price.

By G. McKinley, 8, Langford Street, Belfast—"Special Constable Coker," "Schoolboys' Treasure," "Schoolboy Renegade," and "Gem," Nos. 337, 358, 352, and 273.

By C. J. R. Remmer, 5, Dongola Road, Greengate, Plaistow, E. 13—any numbers of "Boys' Friend" 8d. Library.

By A. Walton, 95, Lozell Street, Aston, Birmingham—"Bob Cherry's Barring-Out" and "Boy Without a Name."

By L. Williams, Illtyd House, 7, Hanmoor Terrace, Burry Port, S. Wales—Double Numbers of "Gem" and MAGNET, 1916.

By Alick Hayes, 93, Norfolk Street, Glasgow—MAGNETS, 1-5; "Gem," No. 11, old series.

By J. L. Lyster, 12, King Street, Athlone, Ireland—"In Nelson's Day," "Boys' Friend" 3d. Library.

By Chris Webb, 2, Pleasant Terrace, Church Road, Tottenham, N. 17—"Wun Lung's Secret," "Bob Cherry's Barring-Out," "Figgins' Folly," "After Lights Out."

By L. Considine, Burrungull, Mt. Gambier, South Australia—"Boy Without a Name," "School and Sport," "Rivals and Chums," and "After Lights Out."

By Arthur Wroe, Sandcliffe, Midway, Burton-on-Trent—"Bob Cherry's Barring-Out," "Barring-Out at Greyfriars," "Figgins' Fig-Pudding," "Figgins' Folly," and No. 1 of "Gem," MAGNET, and "Penny Popular."

By A. Jepson, 13, Marlborough Terrace, Barnsley—"Gem" and MAGNET Double Numbers, 1910-1916—offers 2/

By C. Phillips, 49, Kinder Street, Cannon Street, London, E. 1—"Bounder of Greyfriars," "Drummed Out of Greyfriars," "Yankee Schoolboy," "Bob Cherry's Barring-Out," "Bob Cherry in Search of His Father," "Bully's Brother," "Hidden Horror," "Bully's Chance," "By Sheer Grit," and "The Schoolboy Earl."

By C. Armstrong, Nyera, 11, Beach Parade, Geelong, Vic., Australia—MAGNET, Nos. 1-350; 3d. each offered for first ten numbers.

By R. Redding, 14, Prior Street, Lincoln—MAGNET Christmas Numbers, 1912, 1913, and 1914.

By Geo. Lusby, 2, Northlands Road, Winterton, Lincs—"Tom Merry Minor," "Through Thick and Thin," "Loyal to the Last," "Talbot's Triumph," "Nugent's Folly," "Kildare for Ireland," "Son of Scotland," "Rivals and Chums," "Slackers' Eleven," "Bob Cherry's Barring-Out," "Bob Cherry in Search of His Father," "Rival Ventriloquists."

By R. F. Nicholson, 34, Alverstone Road, Wavertree, Liverpool—offers 1/- each for No. 1 of "Gem" and MAGNET; 1/6 for No. 1 of "Boys' Friend."