

EXTRA-LONG STORY OF GREYFRIARS THIS WEEK!

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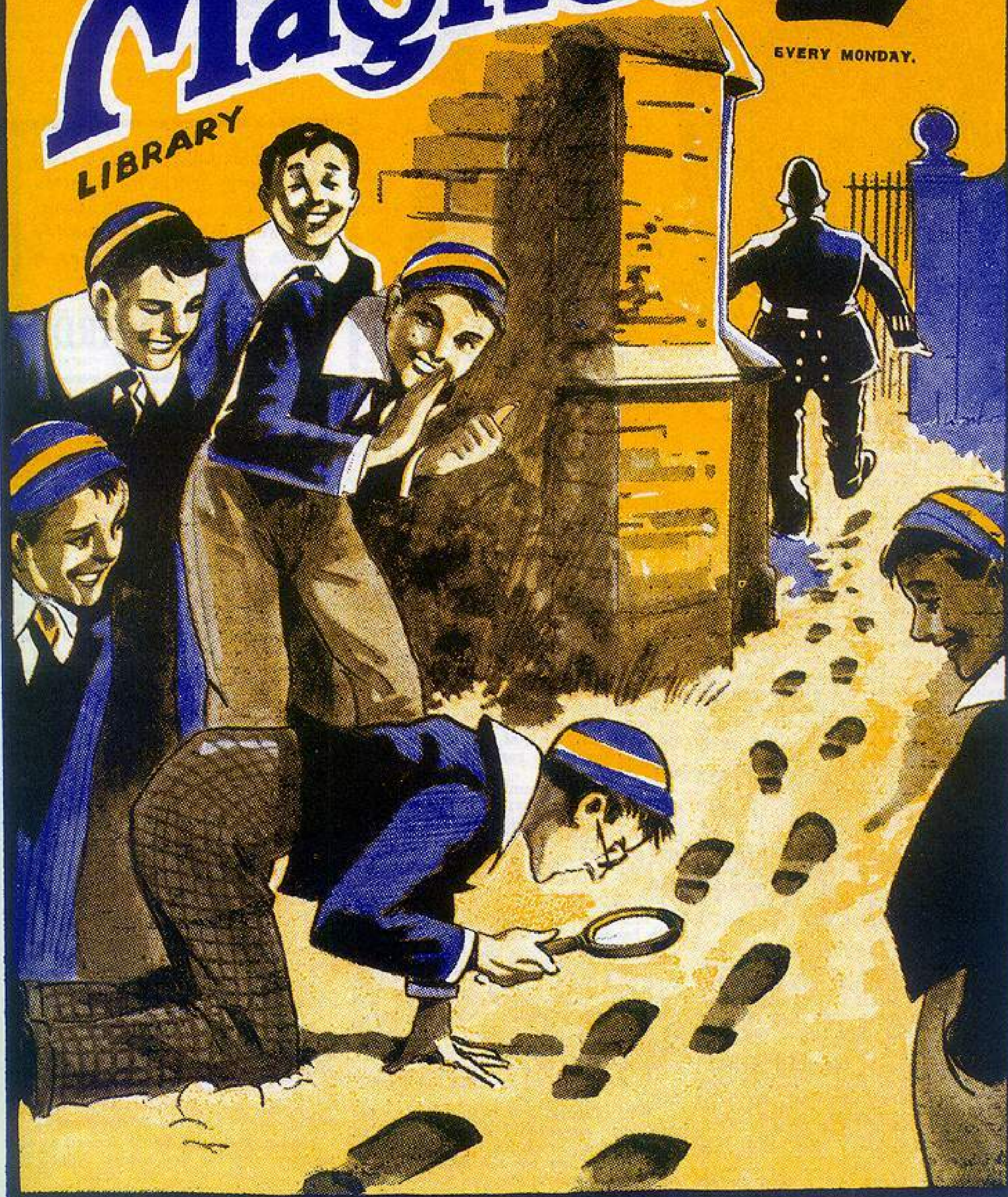
Week Ending May 28th, 1927.

# Magnet

# 2<sup>d</sup>

EVERY MONDAY.

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**FISHY THINKS HE'S FOUND A CLUE!**

*(A diverting incident from this week's grand story of the etnims of Greyfriars, inside.)*

**FISHER T. FISH'S LATEST!** Pawnbroker, Insurance Broker, Tuckshop Proprietor—these are but a few of the amazing roles that the cute American junior has filled. But his latest role knocks any of its predecessors into a cocked hat, for Fishy fancies himself as a tec!



A Splendid New Extra-Long Story of Harry Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars, featuring Fisher T. Fish—the amazing junior from America—as a detective!

By ...  
**FRANK RICHARDS**

**THE FIRST CHAPTER.**

**Fish's Latest!**

**G**REAT pip!" "My sainted aunt!" Johnny Bull and "Squiff," otherwise S. Q. I. Field, of the Remove at Greyfriars, were responsible for these two exclamations. They had just entered Study No. 14, which they shared with Fisher T. Fish, the enterprising American junior, and the cause of their surprise was a strange figure standing before the looking-glass. The figure bore some resemblance to Fisher T. Fish, but part of the face was hidden by an obviously false moustache, and the remainder was covered with streaks of paint running in all directions. To crown all, the weird apparition held a revolver at arm's length in a most menacing manner.

"M-m-m-my hat!" gasped Johnny Bull. "It's come at last, then!"

"Mad as a hatter!" said Squiff, with a nod. "I've been expecting it for a long time!"

Fisher T. Fish—for it was he—put his revolver down on the table and snorted.

"When I'm in need of your remarks, I guess I'll ask for 'em," he said. "I reckon I don't expect you two jays to understand me."

His two study-mates chuckled.

"We understand you all right, Fishy," grinned Squiff, examining the revolver with interest. "Nobody can know you for more than two minutes without understanding that you're a case for a padded cell."

"Anyway, what's the little game?" demanded Johnny Bull. "It isn't Guy Fawkes Day, and I can't see any other giddy reason for rigging up like this."

Fisher T. Fish snorted again.

"Guy Fawkes Day! Say, Bull, are you trying to be funny?"

"Has Wib given you a part in his new play, then?" asked Squiff.

"Nope! I guess I wouldn't be found dead in the goldarned show!"

"Then our first theory must be correct!" grinned Johnny Bull. "You'd better keep him quiet while I call the Head, Squiffy!"

Fisher T. Fish snorted even more emphatically than before.

"Cut it out, you mugwumps!" he said. "I guess I'll explain. Matter of fact, I was just disguising myself."

"Disguising yourself!" repeated Johnny Bull, with a stare. "Well, if it comes to that, I must say you can do with it!"

"In fact, the less you leave of the original, the better!" chuckled Squiff.

"If you two had come in about two minutes later," went on Fisher T. Fish, without deigning to notice that humorous remark, "I guess I'd have been disguised beyond risk of recognition."

"But what's the reason for a disguise at all?"

"I guess I'm coming to that. You galoots may be surprised when I tell you I may find it necessary to adopt a disguise sometimes when my new stunt gets going!"

"Your new stunt!" gasped Johnny Bull.

Fish nodded.

"That's what I said. I guess you've both heard of Tarsus X. Napperton?"

The two Removites shook their heads.

"Waal, I swow!" cried the junior from New York, in deep disgust. "You Britishers make me tired—some! Do you seriously tell me you've never heard of Tarsus X. Napperton, the greatest sleuth in the Yew-nit-ed States? Waal, carry me home to die!"

"But where does he come in?" asked Squiff.

"Why, I guess I've been studying his methods," answered Fish proudly. "I've had a kinder hunch for a long time that I'm just cut out for the detective business, and I reckon you can tell them all that I'm setting up in it, right here and now!"

"You—a detective!" gasped Squiff.

"My only hat!"

"So that's it, is it?" chuckled Johnny Bull.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Fish's two study-mates seemed to regard the matter as amusing, and they roared, while the budding Tarsus X. Napperton glowered at them.

"When you galoots have finished cackling—" he began.

"Carry on, Fishy," grinned Squiff. "You get funnier every day!"

"I've got an idea that there's money in this game," continued Fisher T. Fish. "It would be easy enough for me to act simply as a private detective, but I don't see why it should end at that. Why not organise a schoolboy detective bureau?"

"And on the other hand, why organise anything of the kind?" retorted Bull.

"When I really get warmed up to this job," went on Fish, unheeding, "things are going to hum—just a few! I can quite see branches being opened at all the leading public schools—Eton and Harrow, for instance. Why not? With a guy with brains and pep—me, for instance—to manage the thing, I guess it ought to go with a bang!"

"Great Scott!"

The idea of a great detective bureau, with headquarters at Greyfriars, and branches at Eton and Harrow, left Bull and Squiff feeling quite faint.

"And is this your new stunt?" murmured Squiff. "My hat!"

"Waal, of course, the details ain't altogether settled yet," said Fish hastily. "What I should like, before getting on to the bureau stuff, is to earn the confidence of the public by pulling off a big case myself. After that, I reckon the rest would be dead easy."

Johnny Bull and Squiff looked at one another, and the first-named tapped his head significantly; an action which Fish pretended not to notice.

"The best thing you can do, Fishy," said Johnny Bull, "is to take a nice long walk in the night air, until your

fevered brain feels cooler. Meanwhile, we want the table for our prep, so the sooner you clear away your detective stuff, the better for all concerned."

"Blow your darned prep!" grunted Fish. "Your schoolboy prep can take a back seat while we're talking over this business, I guess. The question is, are you two galoots prepared to fork out ten dollars each to help with preliminary expenses?"

"Is that a conundrum?" asked Squiff humorously.

"I'm asking you a straight question; whether, between you, you would like to speculate twenty dollars—four pounds in your weird coinage—in a venture that's certain to yield enormous profits. What's your answer—yep or nope?"

"Nope!" replied the two, with surprising unanimity.

Fish grunted. "Waal, you're missing the chance of a lifetime. I guess you needn't blame me when the greenbacks begin to roll in, and you feel you've been left."

"We won't, my pippin!" chuckled Squiff. "And now, what about this table?"

The table presented a chaotic appearance, being littered with papers, false hair, books, grease-paint, and other of the American junior's belongings.

"I guess I must ask you guys to do your prep somewhere else this evening," said Fisher T. Fish coolly. "I shall want this study as an office for a few days, until I get fixed up, I reckon."

"And I reckon you're going to guess again!" grunted Johnny Bull, pulling out his watch. "I give you one minute to clear this muck off our table; if it's not off by then, we'll take it off for you!"

"Look hyer, you slabsided jay—" yelled Fishy furiously.

"Ten seconds!" said Johnny nonchalantly.

"I guess I've as much right to the table as you! I guess—"

"Twenty!"

"If you touch any of my stuff, I'll—"

"Thirty!"

"I kinder guess I'll make potato-scrappings of you if you touch my stuff!" howled the enraged Fisher T. Fish. "I guess it won't pay you to get my mad up, Bull! You hear me?"

"Fifty seconds!" said Johnny Bull, in a voice that was deadly calm.

"I kinder reckon I'll go for you—Hyer, leggo those things, you jay—Yarooop!"

Fisher T. Fish sat down on the floor with a bump as Squiff laid violent hands on him, and he gave a yell of rage as he saw the tablecloth seized at its four corners by Johnny Bull and all his precious detective "props" wrapped into a shapeless bundle.

"Hyier, chuck it, you mugwumps!" he yelled. "I guess—"

"That's exactly what I'm going to do," grinned Johnny Bull. "I'm going to chuck it outside, my pippin!"

And suiting the action to the word, he opened the door and hurled the bulky load into the Remove passage, where it landed with a thud, scattering its contents in all directions.

"You jay! You mugwump! You—you—"

Fish could find no words adequate to express his feelings, and he tramped out of the study, with an expression on his face that would have done credit to an angry tiger.

The door slammed, and Study No. 1 saw no more of Fisher T. Fish that evening.

However, the enterprising American

junior had by no means finished business for the day, and after transferring his "stuff" to the safety of the dormitory and washing off the surviving traces of his disguise, he returned to the Remove passage and paid a visit to Study No. 1.

Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent, who were seated at their prep, one on each side of the study table, did not stop working as Fish entered, and he coughed slightly to attract their attention.

The only answer he received, however, was the busy scratching of pens.

"Ahem! I guess I've come to speak to you guys!" said Fish cautiously.

Scratch, scratch, scratch!

Fish snorted indignantly. "I kinder reckon you jays can stop your schoolboy prep for a minute to hear a proposition I've got to lay before you," he said in his most businesslike voice.

Scratch, scratch, scratch!

"Oh, come off!" grunted Fishy. "I guess I've just worked out a new stunt—a gilt-edged scheme that is going to knock spots off anything that's ever been done at this school before."

Scratch, scratch, scratch!

"I guess I've decided to give you galoots the first chance of making money out of it. I'm open to receive contributions of ten dollars from you to help with initial expenses. Got me?"

Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent, who so far had given no sign that they were aware of Fish's existence, suddenly rose from the table and stepped towards him.

"You're going to take up shares?" said Fishy, producing a notebook. "Good! I reckon—Hyier, what are you doing?"

The two Removites did not waste words in explaining what they were doing, but simply propelled him forcibly towards the door, which they opened. Fishy suddenly felt himself whirled off his feet.

He gave a yell.

"Let go, you mugwumps! I guess I'll smash you if I get my mad up! Leggo! Yarooop!"

With a terrific bump Fish landed on the unsympathetic linoleum in the Remove passage. He heard the door of Study No. 1 close with a slam, and there was a click as the key locked it against any further intrusion.

"Ow! The jays! The mugwumps!" groaned Fisher T. Fish. "I'll show 'em! I guess I've got my mad up now! I'll smash the silly jays!"

He picked himself up and made a rush at the study from which he had just been ejected, and commenced to beat a tattoo on the panels of the door with his clenched fists.

Bang, bang, bang!

Several doors along the passage opened, and the disturbed occupants who looked out stared at the sight of Fish hammering at the Remove skipper's door.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" yelled Bob Cherry from Study No. 13. "What's the row, Fishy?"

"I guess I'll show 'em!" howled Fishy, emboldened by the fact that the door still remained locked. "Come out hyer, you jays, and I guess I'll make potato-scrappings of you—just a few!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bang, bang, bang!

"I guess you've got cold feet—some!" roared Fish through the keyhole. "You'd better come out and take your gruel right now! I guess I'm waiting!"

"Great pip!"

"Fishy on the warpath!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" Suddenly the door of Study No. 1 opened and Harry Wharton strode out, with a grin on his face.

"Hallo, Fishy! Did I hear you call me?"

Fish hastily moved away, his sudden courage oozing away rapidly now.

"N-nope! I guess I made a mistake. I thought it was Russell's study!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, here I am," said Dick Russell, coming out of Study No. 9. "What do you want me for?"

"Ahem! I meant Mauleverer!"

"Begad! This is where I live, my dear fellow!" came the leisurely voice of Lord Mauleverer from the end of the passage.

"I guess I didn't mean you!" groaned Fish. "I kinder reckon I'd best be going now. I've got an appointment downstairs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Removites returned to the studies, and Fisher T. Fish, feeling that the life of an American business man at an English public school was not worth living, limped away from the scene of his unfortunate attempts to "raise the wind" for his latest "stunt."

## THE SECOND CHAPTER.

### The Missing Plate!

CLANG! Clang! Clang! The familiar sound of the rising-bell rang out on the morning air, and there was a chorus of yawns in the Remove dormitory as the juniors began to stir.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" cried Bob Cherry, leaping out of bed. "Show a leg, you slackers! Turn out, Mauly!"

"Gerraway, m'dear fellow!" murmured Lord Mauleverer, without opening his eyes.

Bob Cherry went over to a washstand and loaded his usual early-morning weapon—a sponge—with cold water.

"His lordship will now take a bath in bed," he grinned. "Walk up, you chaps, and see this unusual feat, performed by a real live genuine member of the aristocracy!"

There was a laugh as Lord Mauleverer hastily jumped out of reach of the dripping article in Bob's hand.

"What about Bunter, then?" asked Bob Cherry, making for the bed where the porpoise of the Remove lay snoring.

There was a yell from Bunter, which contrasted strangely with his previous somnolent appearance.

"Here, gerroff, Cherry, you rotter! I'm getting up!"

And, with many groans and yawns, Bunter rolled out of bed, glaring at Bob with a glare that ought to have shrivelled that cheerful junior up—but didn't!

"Who says a sprint before brekker?" cried Bob Cherry, who was brimming over with energy.

"I'm game!" said Harry Wharton; and half a dozen others signified their willingness to join in.

Ablutions were hurried forward, and the juniors were soon dressed and ready for a sprint.

They quitted the dormitory and made their way out of the building. It was a bright morning, and they felt very cheerful as they sped along the grave-path leading from the steps of the School House.

"We'll make for the Head's house, then cut over to the gates," said Harry Wharton, who was leading with Bob Cherry.

"Right-ho!"

The juniors were not destined, however, to complete their run that morning.

As they swept round the Head's garden the portly figure of a police-constable appeared round the corner, and there was a yell as Wharton and Cherry crashed into him.

Bump! Bump! Bump!

All three sat down with a terrific concussion, and simultaneous howls of pain and surprise combined.

"My only hat!" said Frank Nugent, coming to a halt. "It's Tozer!"

It was, indeed, P.-c. Tozer, of Friar-dale, and, judging by the roars he was giving, he must have been considerably hurt by his fall.

Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry ruefully picked themselves up, and Frank Nugent and Johnny Bull helped the injured limb of the law to rise.

P.-c. Tozer glared at them with a face that was rapidly changing from crimson to purple under the intensity of his emotions.

"You—you—you—" he managed to choke out.

"Awfully sorry, Mr. Tozer," said Harry Wharton, really concerned for the moment. "I hope you're not hurt!"

"Not 'urt!"

P.-c. Tozer's glare became really terrific.

"Ho, no!" he said, with elaborate sarcasm. "Ho, no—I'm not 'urt—not by no means! A crowd of young rips smashes into me and bowls me over like a skittle, but I'm not 'urt. I just feels a kind of ticklin', that's all!"

The Removites chuckled.

"Well, we're really sorry, anyway," said the skipper of the Remove.

"These things will happen," said Frank Nugent, with the air of a sage. "Anyhow, you're the last person we expected to see here at this time of the morning."

"Yes, what's up, Mr. Tozer?" asked Squiff.

"He's come to arrest Skinner for being drunk and disorderly," suggested Johnny Bull brightly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

P.-c. Tozer lost some of his truculence at the mention of his business at Greyfriars at that early hour, and his chest swelled with official importance.

"Which I'm 'ere this mornin' on a lurgent case," he said, a very lofty expression appearing on his stolid countenance. "Dr. Locke communicated with me a hower ago, informin' me 'is plate 'as disappeared durin' the night, and I've jest been surveyin' the scene of the burglary."

"Phew!"

"Great Scott!"

The juniors whistled. The Head's collection of plate was known to be very valuable, and the marauders, whoever they were, must have secured a record haul if they had taken the lot.

"Well, it's a rotten shame, and no mistake," said Bob Cherry. "I'm sorry for the Head."

"Same here."

The juniors were genuinely sorry to hear the news. Dr. Locke was deservedly popular at Greyfriars, with the Remove no less than with any other Form, and the Removites could appreciate that his loss would be a heavy one, from the sentimental as well as the material point of view, for his collection included many irreplaceable trophies.

"Which I must be gettin' on with the work," said P.-c. Tozer. "I think the burglars escaped by the dinin'-room winder, and I'm just a goin' to examine

the ground hunder the winder for footprints before I report."

"By Jove, this is interesting!" said Harry Wharton.

"Can't we come with you?" asked Bob Cherry.

Mr. Tozer appeared to give the matter very weighty consideration, then he nodded.

"There's nothink ag'in you watchin', so long as you keep away from where the footprints may be," he said, possibly rather pleased at the idea of an admiring audience to see him engaged in his investigations.

The juniors followed him to the garden gate, which he unlocked with a key he held in his hand. Then they crowded after him in the direction of the Head's house, till they reached the dining-room windows.

Here P.-c. Tozer halted, and, pulling out a bulky notebook, ran his eye over the ground and took one or two notes.

"Sherlock Holmes at work," whispered Bob Cherry.

And there was a chuckle from the juniors.

P.-c. Tozer's next step was to tramp over the flower-beds beneath the windows, searching for footprints, and very effectively obliterating any there might have been, in the attempt.

It was not long before the imprint of Mr. Tozer's hobnailed boots was scattered all over the place. It had rained a little in the early morning, and the marks came out very distinctly.

"The silly ass won't leave a square inch of soil that doesn't bear his trademark," whispered Johnny Bull.

The pompous village constable soon afterwards closed his notebook with a snap.

"Finished?" asked Bob Cherry, with a grin.

P.-c. Tozer nodded. "Yes, Master Cherry, and I might tell you, in confidence, that I don't think it will be very long before we get 'em. Which I'm off now!"

He rolled away towards the gate with an air of tremendous importance, and the Removites hurried after him to get out before he locked the gate.

"Well, I don't think much of the Head's prospects of recovering the plate if it's left in the hands of that merchant," said Frank Nugent, as they watched the constable's portly form moving in the direction of the school gates.

"Still, I suppose Tozer will have to report to Courtfield, and they're a bit smarter," said Harry Wharton. "You ought to put your tame lunatic Fish on the case, Johnny. I understand he is turning his attention to detective work."

Squiff chuckled.

"Why not put him on the track? We can tell him the thieves got out of one of the dining-room windows, and he's bound to hunt for footprints. Old Tozer has left plenty behind him, so Fishy can have the pleasure of following him home."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Not a bad idea!" grinned Bob Cherry. "Let's go and find Fishy!"

They returned to the School House and ran into Fisher T. Fish on the steps.

"I guess I want a word with you galoots," said the American junior, as they came up. "I hyer the Head's plate has been rustled during the night. Do you know anything about it?"

"We do; we doer!" said Bob Cherry gravely. "We've just had the official news about it, as a matter of fact, Fishy. What's more, we hear that the thieves escaped through the dining-room window facing on the Head's garden."

"Say, are the police on the case?" asked Fish eagerly.

"Not at present," said Frank Nugent, which was quite correct, though perhaps a little misleading to Fish.

"I guess I'm off!" said Fisher T. Fish. "I guess this is where you see things happen, sir—some! I reckon when F. T. Fish is on the trail, you'll soon see the crooks wearing bracelets—just a few! You just watch out!"

He fairly raced off in the direction of the Head's garden, and the Removites saw him peer cautiously over to see that he was not observed, then quickly clamber over the gate.

"I think this is where we suile," said Bob.

And then they smiled loudly.

Fisher T. Fish, hardly able to control his excitement at this glorious opportunity to display his detective ability to an astonished world, walked cautiously up to the Head's house, and the juniors chuckled as they saw him bend over the ground beneath the dining-room and examine it with professional care.

"Looks as if he's fallen right into it," grinned Squiff.

"Like a lamb!" chuckled Frank Nugent.

It certainly appeared so, for after gazing on the ground for a minute or so, Fisher T. Fish rose and walked towards the gate, with his eyes down as though he were following a track. If it was P.-c. Tozer's track that was leading him on, he had a particularly easy task, for the rain had made the ground soft, and the impression of the gallant officer's hobnails was unmistakably clear all along the path.

Fish climbed over the gate again, and made off slowly in the direction that Mr. Tozer had taken.

"Let's go over and see how he's getting on," suggested Harry Wharton, and they all sprinted over to the business genius of the Remove, catching him up just as he reached the school gates.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" cried Bob Cherry, in feigned surprise as they came up to him. "Have you lost something, Fishy?"

Fish did not even look up to reply.

"Nope! But I guess I've found something," he said, in a voice that contained a note of triumph. "I calc'late I'm on the track of the crook that rustled the Doc's plate—just a few!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I kinder reckon you jays'll sing another tune when I come home with the loot," said Fisher T. Fish. "I guess the crook is going to be on a bread-and-water diet pretty soon—you jest watch out!"

"We will!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "And if you succeed in bringing home the giddy plate, I'm dashed if I don't take up shares in your detective bureau."

"Then you can get your durocks ready," said Fisher T. Fish, who was now examining the ground outside the school gates for the continuation of the trail. "I'll say that it won't be long before I'm through with this case. Those shares are as good as yours, Cherry!"

"Aren't you coming in to brekker this morning?" yelled Johnny Bull, as Fisher T. Fish discovered the trail again, and started off towards Friar-dale.

"Nope!" replied Fish, without looking round. "I guess meals can wait while I'm on this!"

With grins on their faces, the Removites turned back in the direction of the School House, where they soon spread the story of Fish's exploits to



"I kinder reckon I'll make potato-scrappings of you if you touch my stuff!" howled Fisher T. Fish. "Yaroooop!" He sat down on the floor with a bump, as Squiff laid violent hands upon him. Then he gave a yell of rage as Johnny Bull seized the table-cloth at its four corners with all the precious detective "props" wrapped into a shapeless bundle. "Chuck it!" roared Fish. "That's what I'm going to do!" grinned Bull. "Chuck it outside!" (See Chapter 1.)

Fisher T. Fish failed to put in an appearance at breakfast that morning, and Mr. Quelch, the Remove Form master, frowned as he observed the vacant place.

"Is Fish unwell, Wharton?" he asked.

"I believe he's all right, sir," answered the skipper of the Remove.

"Does anybody know where he is?" Nobody felt himself called on to explain the reason for Fish's absence, so Mr. Quelch postponed his inquiries, and the meal proceeded without the junior from "Noo York."

He turned up in the class-room, however, a few minutes before Mr. Quelch's arrival. Judging by the savage expression on his face, his search had not been altogether successful.

He was greeted with a chorus of questions from the Remove.

"Did you catch him, Fishy?"

"Was the Head pleased?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Fisher T. Fish grunted as he went to his desk.

"Cut it out!" he said. "I guess there was a misfire somewhere or other. Anyway, I haven't really got going yet!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The talk died down as Mr. Quelch entered the Form-room. His gimlet eye singled out Fish from the rest immediately.

"Fish," he snapped. "you were not at breakfast this morning!"

"Nope!" said Fish. "I guess I was investigating, sir!"

Mr. Quelch stared.

"Indeed! And what, may I ask, were you investigating?"

"I'm after the guys who rustled Dr. Locke's plate last night, sir," explained Fish. "I guess you've heard of Tarsus X. Napperton?"

"T-Tarsus X. Napperton!" repeated Mr. Quelch blankly.

The hatchet face of Fisher T. Fish took on an expression of the utmost scorn as he perceived that Mr. Quelch certainly had not heard of Tarsus X. Napperton.

"Waal, he's one of the most celebrated of our Amurrican sleuths. I guess I've been studying his methods, and I'm aiming at putting 'em to the test, and trying to round up the crook and get back the Head's plate, sir."

"A most laudable project!" said Mr. Quelch icily. "I must ask you, however, to confine your investigations to your spare-time. And as there seems a danger of your getting into mischief in your spare time, you may fill it up to-day by writing me a hundred lines."

"Oh, Jerusalem criokets!"

Fish grunted and sat down, and the lesson started.

"Where did the trail end, Fishy?" asked Frank Nugent as they came out

of the Form-room at the end of morning lessons.

"I reckon you knew all the time!" snorted Fisher T. Fish. "Those hoof-marks were Tozer's!"

"Go hon!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Waal, experience teaches!" remarked Fisher T. Fish philosophically. "I ain't the sort of guy that breaks his heart at the first set-back, anyway, and I guess it won't be long before you're taking up those shares, Cherry!"

And with that, the budding detective genius made off towards his study to perform a task that might well have disgusted any follower of the celebrated Tarsus X. Napperton—namely, that of writing a hundred lines for Mr. Quelch.

## THE THIRD CHAPTER.

### A Painful Interview!

THE news of the burglary soon spread through Greyfriars, and there was much sympathy with Dr. Locke in his loss. The opinion of the school generally was that while the matter was left in the hands of the local police, the prospects of recovering the plate were rather remote. Greyfriars could hardly imagine P.-c. Tozer, of Friardale, or even Inspector Grimes, of Courtfield, achieving much

success against the obviously expert cracksmen who were responsible for the crime.

A rumour went round early in the day that Ferrers Locke, the famous detective, who was a cousin of the Head, was coming to Greyfriars in connection with the case. The rumour was proved to be ill-founded, however, when it was learned that Ferrers Locke was thousands of miles out of England, and could hardly be expected, therefore, to be of much assistance.

Fisher T. Fish had quite a reception when he entered the Common-room in the evening after his adventure with P. c. Tozer.

"Make way for Sherlock Holmes!" sang out Wibley as he came into the room.

"Found any clues, Fishy?"

"What did Tozer say?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, cut out all that!" snapped Fisher T. Fish crossly. "I guess I ain't hyer to be cackled at!"

"Who could help it?" grinned Dick Rake.

"What's the next move, anyway?" asked Bob Cherry.

"I guess if you keep your peepers open you'll see," said Fisher T. Fish.

"What about asking the Head for leave while you investigate the case?" suggested Frank Nugent, with a wink at the juniors.

"You've said it!" Fish answered promptly. "I calc'late that's just what I'm figuring on doing. The old boy will surely see that it's to his advantage."

"Sure thing!" grinned Bob Cherry. "I can already picture the Head falling on your neck, his voice choking with emotion and tears of gratitude in his eyes."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I guess it's in his interest to give the job to a guy with brains and push," said Fish. "If he leaves it to the local cops there's no hope. I reckon he'll see the horse-sense of bringing in the only galoot in this mouldering old show who's business from the word 'go!'"

"Why not point it out to him, then?" asked Frank Nugent.

Fish nodded.

"I can't say I've got a great opinion of the Head's think-box as a rule," he observed, "but I reckon it's easy enough for him to get this. I guess I'll see him!"

The Remove detective wasted no time. Having made up his mind, he proceeded to put his resolve into effect at once. Quite a crowd of juniors went along with him and waited about in the passage outside the Head's study with some curiosity. Fisher T. Fish walked boldly up to the study and rapped sharply on the door.

The Removites heard a deep voice from within call "Come in!" then Fish opened the door and disappeared into the study.

Dr. Locke was engaged in marking some examination papers, and he looked up with a slight frown at the interruption.

"Well, Fish?"

Fish coughed slightly.

"I guess I'd like a few minutes' talk with you, sir, if you can spare the time."

Dr. Locke put down his blue pencil and nodded.

"What is the matter, my boy?"

"It's about the plate that was raided last night," said Fish.

The Head stared at him in surprise.

"Surely you haven't any information—" he began.

"Nope!" said Fish hastily. "But I guess—"

"Then why are you wasting my time?" asked Dr. Locke, his frown returning.

"That's the last thing I figure on doing," said Fisher T. Fish quickly.

"Time's money, sir, and I'm real glad to know you're wise to it. Now, sir, the first thing I'm hyer to say is that that jay, Tozer, stands about the same chance of recovering your plate as he does of becoming President of the Yewnted States."

"If you have come here to discuss the deficiencies of the local police, Fish, the sooner this interview is terminated the better it will be for you," said Dr. Locke sternly.

Fish snorted.

"I guess I haven't explained yet, sir."

The point is this: You want the plate recovered, I calc'late?"

Dr. Locke's lips had tightened ominously, but he nodded.

"To get it back," continued Fish eagerly, "I reckon you'll want a galoot on the job that knows the game—ono who's got his eye-teeth cut. You'll need a guy with brains, nerve, resource, and pep."

Dr. Locke nodded, his lips tighter still.

"Then I guess I'm your antelope," said Fish modestly.

The Head stared at him in astonishment.

"I kinder guess this is a case where I'm the right man in the right place," went on Fish confidently. "That's why I'm hyer to-night, sir. If you'll give me leave from school work, and a free hand on the job, I guess it won't be long before the crooks that rustled your plate are on bread-and-water diet. That's the proposition I'm putting before you, sir."

Dr. Locke gasped.

"Do you seriously mean to tell me you wish to be excused from lessons while you endeavour to recover the stolen plate?" he said in measured tones.

"You've got it, sir," assented Fisher T. Fish. "I guess you won't regret it. Look me over. I'm from Noo York City, and where I come from they take correspondence courses in police work as soon as they've got the hang of the alphabet."

"Dear me!" said Dr. Locke. He appeared incapable of saying more than that for the moment. Fish seemed to mesmerise him.

Fisher T. Fish watched him anxiously.

"If you're thinking about my fee you needn't let that worry you, sir," he said.

"Fee?" repeated Dr. Locke faintly.

"I guess I'd let you off lightly as it's my first real case," said Fisher T. Fish calmly. "The publicity I'd get would be worth a whole heap of spondulics. I tell you what, sir, if you promise me full Press reports, and if you'll recommend me to your friends, I guess I'll charge you up with expenses only. Naturally, I ain't doing this for the benefit of my health, but—"

"That will do, Fish!"

The American junior jumped as the Head recovered his voice and came out with this command. The tone in which it was uttered left no doubt as to the Head's intention regarding the amateur detective's generous offer.

"If I thought you were here with the intention of playing a practical joke on me, Fish, I should flog you most severely," said Dr. Locke sternly.

"Waal, I swow!" gasped Fisher T. Fish, in great surprise. "I guess I was never more serious in my life, sir. I reckon I don't quite catch on."

"However," said the Head, "it is obvious that I am being confronted not by impertinence, but by that amazing stupidity which I must say I always associate with you."

"Waal, carry me home to die!" murmured Fish, in great indignation.

"In the circumstances," continued Dr. Locke, "I shall let you off comparatively lightly, at the same time warning you that a repetition of such ridiculous behaviour will meet with less leniency than I am exercising this time. You will find a cane in the corner, Fish!"

"Hyer, I guess I don't follow you, sir!" cried Fish, who was genuinely surprised at the line Dr. Locke had taken. "I reckon I'd like to know what I'm going to be caned for. You can't touch an American citizen without he wants to know why."

"Will you bring me that cane, Fish,

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or must I get it myself?" asked Dr. Locke, in a voice that was dangerously calm.

"I guess I'll get it, sir," said Fish hastily, and he crossed to the corner where the cane was and handed it to the Head.

"I guess I came hyer to help you," he said, as he handed it over.

"I think your motives can hardly be said to begin and end there," remarked the Head dryly. "In any case, you must learn not to waste my time with your hairbrained schemes. Hold out your hand!"

Fish reluctantly extended a bony hand, and Dr. Locke brought down the cane twice, to the accompaniment of two doleful howls from the business man of the Remove, then repeated the performance on the other hand.

"You may go!" said the Head, putting down the cane. "Possibly, when you contemplate paying me visits of this description in the future, the recollection of this interview will act as a deterrent. If so, I shall feel repaid for the time I have wasted with you this evening."

Fisher T. Fish grunted and quitted the study, squeezing his hands under his arms.

The juniors were still waiting round the corner as he came out, and they greeted his appearance with a roar of laughter.

"What's the matter with your hands, Fishy?" asked Squiff.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Has the Head given you leave?"

"Nope!" snorted Fisher T. Fish. "That moth-eaten schoolmaster gets my goat. I reckon it would serve him right if I chucked up the case. Yow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"A guy with ideas gets no encouragement in this sleepy old island," said the unhappy detective. "You Britishers are all alike—you make me tired, some! Ow!"

"Are you going on with the case?" asked Bob Cherry, with a grin.

"Yep! I guess he don't deserve it, but I'll carry on. When F. T. Fish gets going, you can bet your life it'll take more than a mouldering old British schoolmaster to stop him—just a few!"

And, after that striking declaration, Fisher T. Fish left the grinning juniors. Whatever he might do on the morrow, it was evident that he was not in the mood for further detective investigations that night.

## THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

### Wharton's Wheeze!

**W**HAT about that rehearsal?" It was William Wibley, of the Remove, who asked that question.

Wibley was the theatrical genius of the Lower School, and was known at Greyfriars as an actor of no mean ability. Under his able leadership the Remove Dramatic Society had achieved several quite remarkable successes, for Wibley's enthusiasm was infectious, and had resulted in many of the juniors becoming keen on theatricals. Wibley's latest enterprise was an American melodrama, written by himself, which he called "The Revenge of the Ku Klux Klan," and it was to this that he referred when he said:

"What about that rehearsal?"

Harry Wharton looked out of the doors of the School House. It was raining heavily outside, and, judging by the appearance of the sky, there was no likelihood of the match which had been

arranged with the Upper Fourth being played that afternoon.

"It looks as if we sha'n't be able to turn out on Little Side, certainly," he said. "What about a rehearsal, Bob?"

"The very idea!" said Bob Cherry readily. "I was just wondering what we could do with our little selves all the afternoon."

"We've got to polish up that torture scene before it's presentable," said Wibley, thoughtfully. "I think we'd better have a go at that if we can get the chaps together."

"Any old thing you like," agreed Wharton. "Where shall we hold it, Wib?"

"I expect the Rag's vacant at this time of the day. That'll do, won't it?"

Wharton nodded.

"Good enough. We'll trot round, then, and hunt up some of the fellows, if you like."

"Thanks! I'll cut off and get the Rag ready."

The skipper of the Remove went off with Bob Cherry in the direction of the Remove passage. Most of the juniors were in their studies, playing chess or reading, and those who had parts in "The Revenge of the Ku Klux Klan" were rather glad to learn that a diversion in the shape of a rehearsal had been arranged for the afternoon.

Quite a little crowd of amateur actors went along to the Rag. Wibley had already arrived, and was busily engaged in arranging chairs and tables in their required positions.

"I say, Wharton!" he called out, as the captain of the Remove entered. "You might go along to my study and fetch the new props. for the chaps to have a look at. I left 'em in my study packed up in a couple of bags."

Wharton nodded, and, accompanied by Bob Cherry, went along to Study No. 6.

A cricket-bag and a suitcase were lying on the study table packed in readiness, and, picking them up, the two juniors quitted the study again.

As they came out into the Remove passage a fat form rolled out of Study N. 7, and almost collided with them.

Billy Bunter—for it was he—blinked at them through his big glasses, then his eyes strayed to the bags they were carrying.

"I say, you fellows, what's on?" he asked inquisitively.

"Nothing of interest to porpoises," grinned Bob Cherry. "Scat!"

"If it's a feed, I'm perfectly willing to do all the cooking," said Bunter generously. "You know what my cooking's like."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Why, you fat chump, we had dinner only an hour ago! Do you think we all have your capacity?"

"Well, I must say, I consider it's rather mean of you to leave me out," remarked Bunter, with a sniff. "After all I've done for you chaps at different times, I think I have a right to expect better treatment than this."

"Great pip!"

"I'll carry the bags for you, if you like," said the porpoise of the Remove. "Where are you holding the feed?"

Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry looked at each other and burst into a laugh. Evidently the obtuse Bunter had made up his mind that they were going to a secret "feed," and was determined to invite himself to it. Harry Wharton winked at his chum with that eye which was out of Bunter's line of vision, and handed the fat junior his bag.

Billy Bunter grinned and took the other one from Bob Cherry.

"Thanks, Bob, old man!" he said

airily. "It's rather decent of you chaps to invite me like this."

He trotted contentedly behind the two stalwarts of the Remove, his lips fairly watering at the altogether unexpected prospect of a feed between dinner-time and tea-time.

"Well, what's the merry idea?" demanded Bob Cherry, as he strode on in front with the Remove skipper.

"I thought we'd do Bunter a good turn by helping to run a bit of his fat down!" grinned Harry Wharton.

Bob Cherry nodded, and they started the chase by making upstairs towards the box-rooms. Billy Bunter gasped painfully as he ascended the stairs. Certainly nothing on earth, with the exception of a feed, would have induced William Bunter to indulge in exercise to this extent.

By the time they had reached the top of the house Billy Bunter's face was rapidly assuming the colour of a beet-root, and he was puffing and blowing like a grampus.

"I say, you fellows, have we got much farther to go?" he gasped.

"Follow your uncles, and you'll see what you will see!" replied Bob Cherry.

Billy Bunter continued to "follow his uncles" along several passages till they began to descend another flight of stairs.

"You're going a beastly long way round, wherever you're making for," groaned the Owl of the Remove. "I say, you fellows, you might help me with these bags!"

"Well, I like that!" said Bob Cherry indignantly. "You offered to carry 'em, didn't you?"

"I didn't know you were going so far as this," said Billy Bunter, whose steps were getting slower and slower. "I believe you beasts are dragging me all this way on purpose."

"Go hon!"

Billy Bunter sat down on the stairs and dropped the bags with a thud.

"Oh, crumbs! I'm done! I can't go on any further!"

"Good! That's what we've been waiting for!" said Bob Cherry, cheerfully, and, with unsympathetic grins, he and the Remove skipper picked up the bags from the floor and walked off with them.

"I hope you're feeling duly grateful to us!" called out Bob, as they vanished round the corner at the bottom of the stairs. "If you'd only do as much exercise as that every day you'd get rid of that corporation of yours in no time. Ta-ta!"

Billy Bunter glared with a glare that almost cracked his spectacles, but he had not sufficient breath left in his fat frame to make a retort, so he continued to sit on the stairs and mop his heated brow, while the two cheerful Removites hurried along to the Rag.

"Where the dickens have you been all this time?" was Wibley's greeting, as they entered the Rag again. "I was just thinking of sending out search-parties for you."

"We've just been giving Bunter a bit of exercise," answered Harry Wharton; and he explained the cause of the delay, a chorus of chuckles accompanying his description of Bunter's fruitless trek round the building.

"Well, we'd better get to work now," said Wibley, in a business-like voice. "Lock the door, somebody! We don't want any silly asses interfering with our rehearsal."

Rake locked the door, and the Removites crowded round Wibley while he turned out the new "props." he had purchased, from the bags which Wharton and Cherry had brought along.

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The costumes to be used in the great torture scene excited a good deal of admiration. They consisted of long cloaks, with hoods that completely enveloped the head, spaces being cut out for the eyes and mouth.

"My sainted aunt!" cried Bob Cherry, as Wibley slipped one on for a moment. "I'm blessed if I should like to run up against a crowd in these togs on a dark night, Wib."

Wibley grinned as he took off the cloak.

"Rather weird, aren't they?" he said, with satisfaction. "Perhaps those of you who are taking parts as torturers would like to try 'em on, and we'll run through the torture scene."

The costumes were handed round, and half a dozen juniors donned them and prepared for their entry on the stage.

"Everything ready?" asked Wibley. "Ready for anything," grinned Rake, pulling over his hood.

"Right-ho, then! Off we go!" Wibley's last remark was a little premature, however.

Before a word had been spoken by the amateur actors, there came a sudden interruption in the form of a loud banging on the door of the Rag, and Billy Bunter's well-known voice could be heard outside:

"I say, you fellows, let me in! I know you're in there, scoffing grub—and Wharton told me I could come!"

Wibley groaned, and stopped the rehearsal with a gesture.

Bang! Bang! Bang!  
"I say, you fellows, don't be a mean lot of beasts! I carried the grub for you, you know!"

Wibley fairly fumed.  
"We can't go on with that fat idiot kicking up a row like this," he said. "For goodness' sake go out and slaughter him, somebody!"

"Yah! Mean beasts! Lemme in!"  
Bang! Bang! Bang!

The six weirdly-clad juniors tip-toed to the door, and the rest of the amateur actors watched them, with grins on their faces.

"I say, you fellows, you might let a chap in. I'll do the cooking for you, if you like."

Dick Rake noiselessly unlocked the door, ready to throw it open.

Bang! Bang! Bang!  
"I say, you fellows, I consider it's disgusting—"

"Ready?" asked Dick Rake.  
The hooded heads nodded.

"I've got a good mind to fetch some of the Fifth along! Ow! Yaroooh!"

Rake flung the door open, and the six awful figures glided out.

Simultaneously, Billy Bunter's remarks came to an abrupt end. His fat jaw dropped, and he gave a howl of terror.

"Oh, crumbs! Oh, lor'! Grooogh!"  
The hooded horrors crowded round him, and Billy Bunter's knees fairly knocked together.

"Oh, crikey! Lemme alone! Help! Murder! Police!"

There was just one opening in the circle, and with a desperate howl Bunter made a wild leap for it and escaped. With an agility surprising in one of his proportions, he darted off and raced down the passage for dear life, his fat little legs working like clockwork. Rake inspired him to still greater efforts by a blood-curdling roar, and Billy Bunter disappeared round the corner like a flash of lightning.

The juniors crowded into the Rag again, roaring with laughter, and the key was once more turned in the lock.

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"Now perhaps we can get on with the washing," said Rake.

"Half a minute," said Wharton. "I've got a wheeze!"

"Blow your wheeze!" snorted Wibley, quite crossly. "It can wait till we've finished our rehearsal, can't it?"

William Wibley, whilst in the position of stage manager, was not to be argued with, so Harry Wharton yielded and let the "wheeze" remain over till after the rehearsal.

It was nearly tea-time before the juniors concluded, and by that time even Wibley appeared to be satisfied with the way the great torture scene was shaping.

"Come along to my study for tea," said Bob Cherry as he walked out of the Rag with Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent.

"Corn in Egypt!" said Nugent. "Funds are low with both of us, and we were seriously contemplating tea in Hall."

"And I want to explain the wheeze I mentioned just now," added Wharton.

"Then come along to No. 13, my children!" said Bob cheerily. "You're as welcome as the flowers in May!"

The table was already laid in Study No. 13, and Mark Linley and Hurree Singh and Wun Lung, Bob Cherry's study-mates, were awaiting the arrival of their leader.

Funds were evidently plentiful in the study, and, as a novelist might put it, the table fairly groaned under the weight of the good things.

"Well, this is all right, and no mistake!" said Harry Wharton. "We seem to have come into a land flowing with milk and honey!"

"Sit down if you can find room," said Mark Linley hospitably. "Make the tea, Inky!"

"The pleasurefulness is terrific, my esteemed chum!"

"Pass the sardines, you young heathen!" said Bob Cherry, addressing Wun Lung, the Chinese junior.

"Pleasure to serve handsome Bob Chelly!" said Wun Lung.

"Well, what's the merry wheeze you've been burbling about?" asked Bob Cherry, when tea had been poured out and they were all seated round the table.

"It's about Fishy," replied Wharton. "It occurred to me when we scared Bunter outside the Rag that those costumes would come in handy for a jape on Fishy."

"I don't quite follow," said Bob Cherry, looking a little puzzled.

"I'll explain. As you know, Fish has set up in the detective line, and is pottering about with some silly idea in his noddle of getting on the track of the chaps who boned the Head's plate."

"That's so. What about it?"

"I thought it would be a good wheeze to lead him up the garden and get him to believe that the burglary was the work of a gang that meets secretly in the old Monk's Cell in the Priory."

"Blessed if I can see much fun in that," said Bob Cherry, staring. "What if he does believe it?"

"Why, don't you see," said the skipper of the Remove, chuckling, "when he believes that the crooks meet in the Priory, he'll set out to investigate."

"Well, I still can't see much of a joke," said Bob, still looking quite puzzled. "He'll have his walk for nothing, that's all."

"Why should he?" said Wharton.

"Eh?"

"Why should he? If we go so far, I don't see why we shouldn't go a little

farther and provide a gang of crooks for Fishy's special benefit?"

The Removites looked at their skipper in astonishment.

"And where the dickens do you suppose we are to find a gang of crooks?" demanded Bob Cherry.

"Why, that's easy! When we are wearing Wibley's props there's no reason why Fishy shouldn't take us for the gang!"

"Oh!"

The light of understanding broke over the juniors, and they grinned.

"Well, that's not a bad wheeze, I must say!" said Bob Cherry, his puzzlement gone now.

"First-rate! We'll give Fishy the shock of his natural!"

"The shockfulness of the esteemed and ludicrous Fish will be terrific!"

"We can give him a bit of genuine excitement by pretending to put him on his trial for spying," said Wharton thoughtfully. "Fishy is mug enough to swallow anything like that!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He'll take it in right enough, and when we release him it's a thousand to one he'll dash up to the School for help, and spread the news far and wide that he has tracked down the burglars and fought them single-handed!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I can just picture Fishy's face when he finds out! It'll be worth a guinea a box!"

"The great thing is," went on Wharton, "to wangle the first part of the scheme in such a way that Fish doesn't smell a rat."

"We'll do that all right," said Frank Nugent confidently. "I could invent clues enough to convince Fishy that even old Quelch was the giddy criminal!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Meanwhile, don't let your tea get cold," said Bob Cherry. "Wire in, you fellows!"

And the fellows "wired in."

## THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

### A Clue for Fishy!

"DO you really think they're the chaps who pinched the Head's plate?"

Fisher T. Fish started and listened.

He had just opened the door of Study No. 14 as that question fell on his Transatlantic ears. It was Sampson Quincey Ifly Field—generally known as Squiff—who was asking the question, and both he and Johnny Bull, who was sitting in the armchair opposite his study-mate, seemed totally unaware of Fish's presence.

Fish stood quite still, and waited to hear how Johnny would answer the question.

"Well, judging by the letter, it looks as if they are," said Johnny Bull, after appearing to give the matter weighty consideration.

"It strikes me—Hallo, Fishy! Why are you standing there looking like a mummy?"

Fisher T. Fish closed the door and assumed as amiable a look as was possible on his hatchet face.

"I guess I overheard that remark of yours, Field," he said, entering the study. "I reckon I'm interested. You've got some information about the guys that made a getaway with that plate—hey?"

"Here, not so fast!" chuckled Squiff. "I'm quite sure I didn't say anything





As Wharton and Cherry swept round the Head's garden, the portly figure of a police-constable appeared round the corner, and there was a yell as the two juniors crashed into him. Bump! Bump! Bump! All three sat down with a terrific concussion. "Yooooop!" gasped P.-c. Tozer. (See Chapter 2.)

like that! As a matter of fact, I don't know much about it."

Fisher T. Fish snorted.

"Trying to freeze me out, hey?" he remarked. "I reckon that ain't quite the treatment I might expect from the galoots in my own study. No, sir!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Don't worry, Fishy!" said Johnny Bull. "Neither of us have any ambitions in the detective line, so you can rest easy on that score. Personally, I'm not nose-y enough to find any enjoyment in prying into other people's business."

Fisher T. Fish grinned.

"Hard words break no bones!" he said philosophically. "You can say all that, and then some, if you'll let me in on this other business."

The American junior's study-mates exchanged glances.

"Well, there's nothing much to let you in on, if it comes to that," said Squiff. "We were simply talking about a letter that Wharton picked up this afternoon near the Head's garden."

Fisher T. Fish rubbed his bony hands together.

"You don't say!" he cried eagerly. "I guess it was about the plate, hey?"

Squiff looked dubiously at Johnny Bull.

"I don't know that Wharton will want us to blab this yarn all over the school. What do you think, Johnny?"

Johnny Bull shook his head.

"After all, it's not our business," he said. "Let Fishy find out for himself if he's so inquisitive about it."

Squiff nodded.

"Perhaps you're right. I don't think we'd better say anything about

it. Still, Fishy, there's nothing to stop you from seeing Wharton yourself."

"I guess I'd sooner you jays put me wise to it," said Fisher T. Fish, with painful recollections of his last visit to Study No. 1. "Anyway, if you won't, you won't, and that's all there is to it. I kinder feel I'd best see Wharton right now!"

He quitted the study, leaving Squiff and Johnny Bull chuckling.

"He seems to be falling for it all right," remarked the latter.

"I feel almost ashamed at deceiving the silly ass!" grinned Squiff. "Fishy is a bit too easy!"

Fisher T. Fish went along to Study No. 1 and rapped on the door.

"Come in, fathead!" yelled Frank Nugent from within the study, and Fish accepted the invitation and walked in.

Remembering the somewhat mixed reception he had got on the occasion of his previous visit, he was a little chary of going too far into the room at first. Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent were quite cordial this time, however, and Fisher T. Fish quickly regained his usual self-assurance.

"Welcome!" cried the skipper of the Remove.

"All hail, prince of detectives!" added Frank Nugent, with much solemnity.

Fisher T. Fish nodded, rather doubtful as to the meaning of the unusual warmth of their greeting.

"Well, Fishy, we don't often get the honour of a visit from you," remarked Frank Nugent. "What's it all about?"

"I guess I'll just explain," said Fisher T. Fish. "I'm to see what you

galoots have got some information about the burglary. Is that correct?"

Harry Wharton made a somewhat theatrical pretence of appearing annoyed.

"I suppose Johnny and Squiff have been talking?" he said. "I'm not keen on the yarn going the rounds like this."

"Oh, come off!" grunted Fish, thinking from Wharton's tone that his prospective clues were going to be withheld from him. "I guess, at a time like this, it's up to you to cut out a little of that jealousy stuff, Wharton, and hand over whatever information you've got to the guy that's likely to make the most use of it!"

"What do you think, Franky?" asked Wharton, appealing to his chum.

Frank Nugent wrinkled his brow.

"I shouldn't think there's much harm in telling Fishy," he answered. "He won't do much with it, anyway."

"I guess that remains to be seen," said Fisher T. Fish. "I've got my eye-teeth cut, just a few! If there's anything worth while in this clue you've struck, you can bet your life you'll soon see things happen when F. T. Fish gets going!"

"Well, then, I'll show you what I picked up," said the skipper of the Remove. "As a matter of fact, it's a letter."

"A real live letter!" added Nugent. "Complete with envelope!"

"It was lying in the grass near the Head's garden," went on Harry Wharton, giving Nugent a warning glance.

Strictly speaking, that statement was quite correct. Harry Wharton had, as

a matter of fact, picked the letter up from the grass near the Head's garden. He omitted, however, to let Fish know that he himself had dropped it there only a few seconds before picking it up again.

"I guess I'd like to run my peepers over that letter, Wharton!" said Fish excitedly.

"Here you are, then!"

The captain of the Remove opened a sheet of notepaper, and handed it over to Fisher T. Fish, who grabbed it eagerly, and sat down under the light to read it.

This is what he read:

"Dear Chief,—Here's wishing you the best of luck at Greyfriars School. I should think you'll make a good haul there all right. If you bring off this coup it will make a fine finish to our work in this district. As instructed by you, I have called a meeting of the whole gang for Saturday afternoon next at our old meeting-place at the old Monk's Cell in the Priory.

"Yours sincerely,  
"BILL."

Fisher T. Fish held the letter in his hand and read it through again, his ferrety eyes gleaming with excitement.

"Great Christopher Columbus!" he said. "I guess we've struck oil this time! The clue of a lifetime, by heck! I reckon you're going to let me have this letter, Wharton, hey?"

"Not so fast, Fishy!" grinned Harry Wharton, putting it back in his pocket. "What do you intend doing, anyway?"

"Intend doing?" repeated Fisher T. Fish. "I guess I'm going to keep that appointment right enough. What did you think?"

"Going to capture 'em all on your lonesome, Fishy?" grinned Nugent.

"Nope! I guess that's too much to expect of one man! But I reckon I'll find out who they are and where they live. Some of you galoots can come along and do the scrapping, if there's any scrapping to be done."

"Thanks very much!"

"Now, Wharton, I reckon you're going to be sensible and hand over that letter?"

Harry Wharton shook his head doubtfully.

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"Don't you think we ought to take it along to the police?" he asked. "If you make a mucker of it, you know, we might get into awful trouble."

"Oh, cut it out!" said Fish scornfully. "I reckon you guys have no more respect for the local cops than I have myself. Old Tozer couldn't catch a crook if he had one trussed up and chucked at him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Besides," went on Fish, "think of the glory we'll earn for the Form if we pull this off on our own."

"A fat lot you care about earning glory for the Form," chuckled Frank Nugent. "And, anyway, that's no reason why we should give you the letter."

"Aw, come on!" said Fisher T. Fish persuasively. "I reckon that letter's no use to you. In a proposition of this kind, I guess you'll be willing to admit that this is where I live!"

"Oh crumbs!"

"I'm the only guy in the Form competent to tackle a job of this size!" continued Fisher T. Fish, with characteristic modesty. "You fellows are useful to help in the scrapping and the donkey-work generally, but when it comes to the brainwork, I guess that's where F. T. Fish has to take a hand!"

"Well, if swank has anything to do with it, I imagine you'll make a stunning success of the affair!" remarked Wharton. "Anyway, what shall we do, Franky? Are we going to leave it to this detective genius?"

"Oh, give him the letter, if it will keep him quiet!" assented Frank Nugent.

Harry Wharton took the precious missive from his pocket again, and sent it skimming through the air to Fish.

"Catch!"

Fisher T. Fish caught it—in the eye—and grunted.

"Waal, the next thing is to fix things for Saturday," he said, unfolding the letter and scanning it through again. "I reckon we'd be wise to get there early."

He rubbed his sharp chin thoughtfully.

"I shall need one or two guys who can use their knuckles. I guess you'd better fix for Cherry, Bull, Squiff, and Russell and a few more of your crush to come along!"

"Well, you're a cool card, and no mistake!" said Frank Nugent, almost in tones of admiration. "After snatching the blessed case out of our hands, you expect us to do all the scrapping for you!"

"Still, we'll help the hard-necked bounder!" Harry Wharton said cheerfully. "Rely on us, Fishy!"

"Good!" said Fisher T. Fish, highly gratified. "I guess you galoots are doing the sensible thing for once in your lives. If I can rely on you to do any fighting that's needed, you can rely on me to do all the thinking!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Suppose they're armed?" asked Frank Nugent, putting on a serious expression again.

"By gum! I hadn't thought of that! I guess I'll bring my shooting-iron with me and cover you fellows if there's any trouble. I can take up a position behind a tree, and if they start any monkey tricks I guess I'll soon drill a few holes in 'em!"

"Oh crumbs!" ejaculated Nugent. "Perhaps you'd better leave your firearms at home, Fishy. After all—ahem!—I don't suppose they'll be armed, really, and we don't want you running amok with a gun in your hand. We all

believe you're going to end your days in chokey, but we shouldn't like to see you finish up on a scaffold—while you're in the Remove, anyway!"

"I guess—"

What Fishy "guessed" was never known, for at that moment there came an interruption to the conversation in the form of a loud howl from outside the study.

"What the merry dickens—"

The door of the study was flung open, and Bob Cherry entered, leading by the ear the fat form of William George Bunter, of the Remove.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" cried Bob cheerily. "I've just brought you an object I found listening outside the study!"

## THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

### Bunter's Luck is Out!

HARRY WHARTON glared at Billy Bunter, and Billy Bunter blinked at Harry Wharton.

"Leggo my ear, Bob Cherry!" howled the porpoise of the Remove, as the cheerful Bob led him to the study table.

"Not just yet, my pippin!" grinned his captor. "Let's hear what Wharton has to say about it first."

"Have you been listening outside this study?" demanded Harry Wharton, in grim tones.

"Certainly not! I shouldn't dream of doing anything of the kind!" answered Bunter promptly. "You ought to know me better by now, Harry, old man!"

"Why, your fat prevaricator, I found you with your ear glued to the key-hole!" said Bob Cherry.

"Well, if Wharton is going to take your word against mine, I refuse to discuss the matter further!" said Bunter, in his most reproachful manner.

"Don't be so idiotic!" snapped Wharton. The skipper of the Remove was far from pleased to know that his conversation with Fish had been overheard by the most talkative junior at Greyfriars. If Bunter had learned that the whole thing was a practical joke on Fish, it was quite certain that Fish would very quickly be onlightened by the fat junior. And even if Bunter himself believed that their clue was perfectly genuine, the chances were that he would broadcast the story of Fish's visit to Study No. 1, and thus give an opportunity to someone else to put the American junior on his guard.

"Do you deny hearing our conversation just now, then?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Oh, really, Wharton! If you are going to doubt my word in a matter of this description, I must decline to say any more about it!"

"Will you answer my question, or shall I get a cricket-stump for you?"

Billy Bunter blinked nervously through his big glasses.

"I consider you're a suspicious rotter!" he grunted. "As a matter of fact, I didn't hear a word you said. I did stop outside your blessed study to tie up my shoelace; but I'm sure I didn't listen to what you were saying! In any case, I'm not interested in your rotten detective stunts, and I don't want to know anything about the clues you're giving Fishy!"

Harry Wharton & Co. gasped, and could scarcely refrain from grinning. Billy Bunter usually gave himself away in his anxiety to convince his listeners of the truth of his statements.

"If you think I want to listen to your blessed talk about the Head's plate,

you're jolly well mistaken!" went on Bunter. "Still, if you happen to want my advice about that letter you've found, I shall be only too happy to help you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Even Harry Wharton had to laugh at that naive suggestion.

"Well, what are we going to do with him?" asked Frank Nugent.

"If we were living in the Yew-nited States, I guess we could lynch the fat clam!" said Fisher T. Fish.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't think there's any need to go as far as that yet," grinned Harry Wharton. "A bumping will meet the case this time, perhaps."

Billy Bunter hurriedly made a move for the door, but Bob Cherry's finger and thumb closed on his fat ear with renewed vigour, and the fat junior just as hurriedly changed his mind.

"Here, leggo, you rotters!" he yelled furiously as the four juniors closed round him. "Fair play, you know, you fellows! If I had you one at a time, I'd lick the lot of you! Yah!"

The Removites, however, did not take that challenge seriously, but seized the Owl of the Remove, and lifted him off his feet. Billy Bunter gave a yelp.

"Now for three of the best!" grinned Bob Cherry. "Ready! Steady! Go!"

Bump!

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!"

Bump!

"Yarooooop! You've broken my collar-bone, you rotters! Leggo, you cads!"

Bump!

Bunter gave a final roar and collapsed on the floor.

As he fell he made a grab at a sheet of paper that fell from Fish's pocket, and transferred it quickly to his own.

"Three seconds to clear out!" said Wharton briskly, pulling out his watch. "Otherwise, you go out on your neck! One—two—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a roar of laughter as Billy Bunter leaped to his feet, and fairly flew out of Study No. 1. Evidently the process of going out on his neck made no appeal to him.

"So much for that fat boulder!" said Wharton, laughing. "It's a pity he overheard what we were saying; but perhaps there's no harm done."

"By gum!" cried Fisher T. Fish suddenly, as he rummaged through his pockets. "I guess I put it in my pocket when you gave it me, didn't I, Wharton?"

"What do you mean by 'it'?" asked Wharton, with a stare.

"Why, the letter! I guess it's vamoosed!"

"You mean you've lost it? But, dash it all, you put it in your pocket only a few seconds before Bunter came in!"

"Then I know who has it!" broke in Bob Cherry. "I saw Bunter put a letter in his pocket while he was lying on the floor. I imagined it had dropped out of his pocket while we were bumping him."

Fish snorted.

"I guess that fat clam's walked off with my letter!" he said. "I guess I'm after him right away! I'll spifficate the silly jay! You watch out!"

He tore out of the study, and raced along to Study No. 7, where Bunter had his quarters. The study was empty, however, and Fish then raced down the stairs, and, making his way out of the house, set off in the direction of the tuckshop, which was, as a

rule, the most likely place to find the fat junior of the Remove.

As a matter of fact, Bunter was nowhere near the tuckshop. After his escape from the skipper's study, he rolled downstairs to the Common-room, where he extracted Fish's letter from his pocket, and read it through. He fairly gasped as he took in its meaning, then a fat chuckle escaped him.

"My hat!" he muttered. "This letter may be worth something!"

His first idea was to go straight to the Head about it. Billy Bunter, in spite of his deficiencies in matters of schoolboy morality and honour, and in spite of his shady tricks amounting at times to actual dishonesty, was a somewhat unsophisticated lad, and it did not occur to him at this stage that the "discovery" of the letter by Harry Wharton might be simply a practical joke on Fisher T. Fish.

On reflection, however, he decided not to go straight to Dr. Locke. Most of his visits to the Head's study had had a painful termination, which fact, in itself, was discouraging. In addition to that, it penetrated even Billy Bunter's obtuse brain that Dr. Locke was likely to be rather "touchy" on the subject of the stolen plate, and, more especially after Fish's last interview, was likely to regard the intrusion of a junior, as a form of practical joking, unless that junior were very sure of his ground.

Bunter decided that he might profit more out of the transaction by seeing someone with less authority and more credulity.

Coker!

As soon as Coker of the Fifth entered his thoughts, Bunter's mind was made up. Horace Coker considered himself rather a "dab" at detective work—or anything else for that matter. Coker would surely stand a feed, if it would put him in possession of a clue that might bring him into the limelight as a kind of second Sherlock Holmes.

Bunter rolled off towards the Fifth Form passage without any delay.

He tapped on the door of Study No. 4, which Coker shared with his two satellites, Potter and Greene, and Coker's deep voice bade him "Come in!" Bunter entered and nodded to the three Fifth-Formers, who were talking. To be strictly correct, the talking was confined to Horace Coker. Conversations in Study No. 4 were usually rather one-sided affairs.

The subject of Coker's talk was the extraordinary lack of taste on the part of Wingate, the captain of the school, in excluding Horace Coker from the school cricket eleven that was to meet St. Jim's on the following Saturday.

"Like his cheek!" Coker was saying. "Told me he'd play me when Greyfriars starts a hopscotch club—me, you know!"

"Awful!" said Potter gravely.

"I explained to him that he was no earthly good as captain, and even then he wouldn't give me a place!"

"Ha, ha! I mean, you don't say so, old chap!"

"If you're going to be funny, George Potter—" began Coker, giving his follower a very sharp glance.

"Ahem!" coughed Bunter, calling attention to his presence.

Horace Coker looked round, and condescended to frown upon the Porpoise of the Remove.

"Well, what do you want?" he asked gruffly. "Say it soon, and buzz off! I don't want fags hanging about my study!"

"Oh, really, Coker! I've come about a most important matter. I thought you'd be the most likely fellow in the school to give good advice, you know."

Potter and Greene stared at Bunter, with very peculiar expressions on their faces. They knew Bunter better than to accept that statement at its face value. Coker, however, evidently swallowed it whole, for his frown relaxed.

"Quite right, kid!" he said, in much kinder tones. "Go ahead!"

"Of course, you've heard of the Head's plate being stolen?" said Bunter.

Coker nodded.

"I thought of looking into it myself," he said. "A matter like this requires a chap with real detective ability, you know!"

"Ahem! Just so!" said Billy Bunter. "That's exactly what I was thinking. Well, I suppose you'd be prepared to pay a chap for his trouble if he brought you a real stunning clue that would put the thieves right into your hands."

"If you mean to insinuate that I'm not capable of finding clues myself—" said Horace Coker, with a frown.

"Nunno! Not at all! As a matter of fact, I think you're the only fellow in the school with the brains for this kind of thing," said Bunter, hastily. "I wonder the Head hasn't called you in to see what you can do before now."

"I don't expect the Head to do anything so sensible as that!" said Horace Coker. "Still, I must say, Bunter, that you've got more common-sense than I thought you had."

"Oh, really, Coker—"

"Did you say you had a clue?" asked the genius of the Fifth.

"That depends," said Bunter cryptically. "I may have a clue, and, on the other hand, I may not!"

"If you're going to act the giddy goat, I'll lam you with a cricket-stump!" warned Coker. "If you've found a clue, you'd better hand it over, or there'll be trouble."

"Oh, really, Coker! I may have found a letter, and, on the other hand, I may not!"

"What on earth are you talking about, you fat idiot?"

"That's telling!" said Bunter, with a fat wink. "It may be connected with the chaps who pinched the Head's plate, and, on the other hand, it may not."

"You—you—"

"I'll let you see it in a minute," continued Billy Bunter. "Then you can judge for yourself. There's only one thing I want to mention first. I've been disappointed about a postal-order—"

"Eh?"

"I've been disappointed about a postal-order from one of my titled relations," said Bunter firmly. "I expect it will be for about five pounds!"

"Five pounds!"

Billy Bunter nodded.

"Unfortunately, there's a delay in the post, and it hasn't arrived. So if you'd advance me a pound, I'd be very much obliged, Coker, old chap. Of course, you'd have it back out of the postal-order as soon as it arrives."

"Oh, I would, would I?" said Coker, glaring. "Thanks very much, Bunter, but I'm not worrying about my old-age pension yet."

"Oh, really, Coker—"

"Now I can see the real reason for your coming here," said Coker, with unusual perspicacity. "You're trying the postal-order stunt with me, eh?"

"If you put it like that, I refuse to touch your beastly money!" said Bunter loftily.

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"You won't get the chance, anyway!" growled Coker. "Coming round here, wasting my time with your begging yarns. I'll show you!"

He jumped to his feet, and Bunter made a dash for the door. Coker was too quick for him, however, and before he had time to escape the burly Fifth-Former had grasped him by the scruff of the neck and opened the door.

Bunter gave a howl as Coker flung him bodily through the doorway into the Fifth-Form passage, and there was a second howl of pain outside as the fat junior crashed into Fisher T. Fish, who was walking towards the study.

"Yooooop!"

The door slammed, and the two unfortunate juniors were left to sort themselves out. Bunter was on top, roaring like a bull, but he very quickly leapt to his feet again as Fisher T. Fish seized hold of the fat junior's flabby calf.

"Yarooop! You're pinching me, you rotter!"

"By gum! And I guess that's not the only thing I'm going to do to you, either!" said Fisher T. Fish, rising painfully from the floor and shaking his fist furiously at the Owl of the Remove. "I kinder reckon you've boned a letter from me, and I guess I'll have it back if I break every bone in your body!"

"Most of 'em are broken already!" groaned Bunter. "I've fractured my spine and dislocated my shoulder-blade, and—"

"I guess I ain't hyer for information about your shoulder-blade! Hand over, you fat clam!"

"I haven't got your rotten letter!" said Billy Bunter, with a complete disregard for the truth. "Go and ask Coker for it!"

Fisher T. Fish groaned.

"Great Christopher Columbus! If you've given it to that silly jay, I reckon I'll never get it back! You just wait till I come out, Bunter! I'll make potato-scrappings of you!"

Fisher T. Fish bestowed a final terrific glare on the fat junior, then rapped on the door of Coker's study, and walked in.

Billy Bunter evidently did not intend to wait to be made potato-scrappings of, for he rolled off at once, a fat grin on his face.

"Got rid of him!" he murmured. "Now I'll try old Quelch! He's safer rapped on the door of Coker's study thing I shall get some kudos out of it, anyway."

He made his way towards Mr. Quelch's study, making sure first that Fish's precious letter was in his pocket.

Outside the Form-master's room he halted. There was the busy clicking sound of a typewriter from within, denoting the fact that Mr. Quelch was working on his famous "History of Greyfriars."

The typewriter ceased to click as Billy Bunter tapped at the door and Mr. Quelch's voice bade the visitor "Come in!"

The Owl of the Remove accepted the invitation, and rolled in.

"Well, Bunter?"

"Ahem! I thought it was my duty to show you a letter I've found, sir," said Bunter, meekly producing the famous letter. "I believe it's got something to do with the Head's plate, sir!"

"Indeed!" said Mr. Quelch, in great astonishment. "Let me see it, Bunter."

Mr. Quelch took the letter and read it through, a very peculiar expression appearing on his face as he took in the contents. When he had finished he put it down and looked searchingly at Bunter.

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"If anybody else had brought this to me I should consider that he was playing a practical joke on me," he said.

"Practical j-joke, sir!" stuttered Billy Bunter. "This ain't a practical joke, sir! I—"

"This letter is obviously the work of a humorist imposing on your credulity," said Mr. Quelch, throwing the letter into his wastepaper basket. "Only a very foolish and stupid lad would believe that the letter is genuine. Please do not waste my time with such nonsense again, Bunter. You may go!"

Bunter blinked indignantly at his Form-master, then rolled out of the study. Evidently the stolen letter was going to bring him no reward after all.

When Bunter met Fish in the Common-room a little later in the evening, the look the latter bestowed on him was almost homicidal.

"You lying fat clam!" he said, in measured tones. "So you were kidding me when you told me Coker had that letter, hey? Gimme that letter right away, or I guess I'll slaughter you!"

Billy Bunter snorted.

"I'm fed up with the blessed letter!" he said. "I took it to Quelch, and he told me you'd been had, and that it was only a practical joke—Here, what are you doing? Oh, help! Yarooogh!"

Fisher T. Fish did not trouble to explain what he was doing. He just did it. Mr. Quelch's opinion of the letter was not likely to influence Fish's ideas in any way, for the American junior had very little respect for the opinions of any of the "sleepy old British school-masters" at Greyfriars, and he had already made up his own mind that the letter was a clue of the first water. He was therefore not unnaturally incensed at its loss, and Bunter, for the third time that day, had to suffer assault and battery.

It was seldom that Fisher T. Fish displayed much truculence, but this time, to use his own words, he had "got his mad up," and by the time the scuffle had finished Billy Bunter scarcely knew whether he was on his head or his heels.

And for the next ten minutes Bunter's only attempts at conversation consisted of remarks such as:

"Yow-ow-ow-ow! Grooogh! Ow, the beast! Yow-ow!"

## THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

### Capturing Fishy!

"GOT all the costumes?"

"I think they're all here," replied Wibley, closing a cricket-bag with some difficulty.

"And the cord?"

Wibley nodded.

"Then we're ready," said Dick Rake, taking one handle of the bag. "You chaps had better not come downstairs with us or Fishy will smell a rat. Ta-ta!"

"Don't keep us waiting too long," added Wibley. "It won't take us more than a few minutes to get ready once we're there."

Wibley and Rake took up the cricket-bag between them and quitted the box-room in which Harry Wharton & Co. had gathered.

It was Saturday afternoon, and all promised well from the point of view of the japers. The weather was bright and sunny for the trip to the Priory, and the juniors anticipated a particularly enjoyable "rag" at the expense of the egregious Fisher T. Fish.

So far, the amateur detective had not the faintest suspicion that the whole thing might be a "japo" on the part of

the humorous spirits of the Remove. Fish was in deadly earnest about it. Had he looked at it from a common-sense point of view, he might have been surprised at the amount of support he was receiving from the stalwarts of the Remove. Harry Wharton & Co. had promised to come along and do all the fighting that was necessary, and they accepted his leadership without question, which was a most unusual state of affairs. Fish, however, for all his boasted business acumen and Trans-atlantic smartness, was incapable of looking at anything from a common-sense point of view, and Saturday afternoon arrived, with Fish still in quite an unsuspecting frame of mind.

The conspirators of the Remove had arranged between themselves that Rake and Wibley were to go on in advance with the "props," and make what preparations were needed for Fish's reception in the Monk's Cell. Harry Wharton & Co. were to follow with Fish. On their approaching the Priory, Rake and Wibley, in their full "rig-out" of cloaks and hoods, were to attack them and capture Fish, his companions pretending fright and running away. It was then intended that Rake and Wibley should bind Fish securely, then blindfold him, in case he might see the Co., who were to change into their costumes, and then carry him into the old Monk's Cell. The whole crowd were then to assemble, and put Fish on his trial for interfering with the legitimate business of the "crook" profession.

Nobody but Fisher T. Fish could have been expected to take it seriously, but there were no limits to the credulity of the enterprising American junior, and the Removites fully expected Fish seriously to believe that he had fallen into the hands of a desperate gang of criminals.

"Time we looked out for Fishy," said Harry Wharton, after the two Removites had left the box-room.

"Don't worry, old man," grinned Bob Cherry. "He'll be knocking about all right. Fishy thinks there's money in this!"

They sauntered down to the Common-room and found that Fisher T. Fish was, as Bob Cherry had prophesied, "knocking about." His hatchet-face twisted into an expression that was meant to be genial as they entered the room.

"I guess I've been looking out for you galoots," he said. "I guess we'll need to be there on time this afternoon, Wharton."

"Tons of time!" answered Harry Wharton cheerfully. "We'll leave it for another five or ten minutes, Fishy."

"I say, you fellows—"

A fat form rolled into the Common-room and pushed unceremoniously into the front of the little group.

"Enter Vere de Vere!" said Bob Cherry humorously.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter snorted.

"I say, you fellows, I've been looking everywhere for you!" he said. "I want—"

"Nothing doing!" said Frank Nugent and Bob Cherry simultaneously.

"The nothingfulness is terrific!" added the Nabob of Bhanipur, in confirmation.

The Owl of the Remove stared.

"What do you mean?" he demanded. "We mean, my infant, that we're not going to cash any postal-orders in advance," Bob Cherry explained.

"Oh, don't be funny! As a matter of fact, though, I was going to ask Wharton if he could help me out of a



Swiftly Rake threw open the door and the six awful figures glided out. Billy Bunter's jaw dropped and he gave a howl of terror. "Grooogh! Oh crumbs! Oh lor'!" The hooded horrors crowded round him, and the fat-junior's knees fairly knocked together. (See Chapter 4.)

fix. I'm expecting a postal-order from one of my titled relations—"

"The same postal-order and the same relation as you used to tell us about the term before last, I suppose," grinned Harry Wharton.

"I'm expecting a postal-order from one of my titled relations," said Bunter, unheeding. "Unfortunately, owing to the rotten system of local deliveries or something, it hasn't turned up yet, and I wondered if you'd be prepared to advance me a quid, Wharton, until it comes."

"Why not make it a hundred while you're about it?"

"Oh, really, Wharton, I think it's up to you, so long as I treat you like a pal over this burglary business!"

Harry Wharton stared at the fat junior blankly.

"What do you mean, you duffer?"

Billy Bunter lowered his voice so that Fisher T. Fish, who was explaining how they dealt with "crooks" in the great "Yewnited States," should not hear.

"I don't feel altogether satisfied at allowing my pal Fish to be japed by you chaps this afternoon," he said. "I felt a sort of—ahem—a sort of pang when I saw Wibley and Rake setting off just now, you know."

"You spying worm!" hissed Harry Wharton, with a hasty glance over his shoulder to see that Fish was not listening. "How did you find out?"

"I happened to be tying up my shoelace outside your study just before dinner, when all the fellows were talking it over with you, and I—"

"That's enough!" grunted the Remove skipper. "Your shoelace will be the death of you one of these days!"

"Oh, really, Wharton! Anyway, I consider you ought to treat me as a pal, and unless you do I shall have to let my old pal Fishy know all about this low deception you're practising on him!"

"You blackmailing porker! How much do you want to keep your babbling tongue quiet?"

"If you are going to put it like that, Wharton, I—"

"You can have half-a-crown and not a penny more!" said Harry Wharton, mentally promising the fat junior a good deal more than that when it was all over.

Billy Bunter's fat paw closed greedily over the coin.

"I must say I think you ought to make it five bob!" he grunted. "I'm surprised at your being so mean, Wharton! Anyway, I'll settle this trifling amount as soon as my postal-order arrives!"

"Oh, don't be funny!" said Wharton. "You'd better scat before I kick you out!"

The Owl of the Remove hastily

transferred the money to his trousers-pocket, and rolled out of the Common-room wearing on his face a fat grin of satisfaction. Doubtless his easily acquired half-crown would be expended in Mrs. Mible's tuckshop within a very short time, but Harry Wharton hoped to be well away from Greyfriars within a few minutes now.

"Well, what about making a start?" suggested Bob Cherry. "I fancy Fishy wants to give us an exhibition of some of those 'Noo York' detective stunts he's been telling us about."

"I think we might start out now certainly," said Harry Wharton.

"We'd better get a move on." They quitted the Common-room, and after fetching their caps, went downstairs and left the School House. They left Hurreo Janset Ram Singh behind partly because there was not a costume for him and partly because his weird and wonderful English would have betrayed him ere the jape had lasted five minutes.

The juniors went down to the gates and made off in the direction of Friar-dale Woods. It was a grand day, and Harry Wharton greatly enjoyed the walk. Fisher T. Fish, however, had no eye for the beauties of Nature. His Transatlantic mind was fully occupied by the subject of the "crooks" he expected to encounter that afternoon.

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brace of shakes. That seems the quickest way."

Doctor Jotson, however, did not wait for the tree to be hued down. He valued his own life, if he did not value the lives of his patients. Many of the latter were at this moment tossing on beds of sickness, while their medicine adviser had gone off gallivanting with Herlock Sholmes.

After a grate struggle, Doctor Jotson broke free from the spiky branch upon which he was impaled. He left a portion of his nether garments behind him in the tree-top, as he came crashing down to earth in his parrychute.

The soft turf of the quadrangle broke his fall; otherwise he might have broken some bones.

"All serene, Jotson?" asked Herlock Sholmes cheerily.

"Owl! I am severely shaken up!" gasped the fat little doctor, unstrapping himself. "Moreover, I have left a portion of my garments up aloft. You must eggscuse me, gentlemen!"

And as the tree-o made their way towards the Head's study, Doctor Jotson preceded them, walking backwards.

Herlock Sholmes grinned.

"My poor Jotson, it is very distressing to have to perambulate in that manner, bekawse of a sartorial dofishency at the rear. However, I feel sure Doctor Birchmall will lend you a pair of trowsis."

"With plezsure!" said the Head. "He can borrow my Sunday worst!"

And the stranga procession—with Doctor Jotson walking backwards, followed by the grinning Head and the smiling Sholmes—proceeded to the Head's study.

## II.

"PASS the cocaine, Jotson!"

"Really, Sholmes—"

"Sorry!" said the grate detective blandly. "I was forgetting. I was thinking we were in our rooms at Shaker Street."

The Head looked horrified.

"I never touch it, Mr. Sholmes! The cocaine habit, to my mind, is disgusting and demoralising. However, I will lend you my hookah, if you like, and you may have a puff of opium."

"Thanks, awfully!"

The Head produced his hookah-pipe, and waved his hand to the jar of opium on the mantlepeace.

"Help yourself, Mr. Sholmes!"

The grate detective was soon puffing away like a house on fire; and the fumes of opium pervaded the Head's study, causing the Head and Doctor Jotson to yawn drowsily.

"Now, Doctor Birchmall," said Herlock Sholmes. "Be good enuff to tell me what you know of this affair of the Silver Cup. You may speak quite freely before my friend, Doctor Jotson. He never gives anything away. He's as mean as they make 'em!"

"Really, Sholmes—"

The Head, fidgetting nervusly under the detective's keen glance, told his story.

"Once upon a time," he began, in the conventional manner, "the Guvvners of St. Sam's decided to prezsent a Silver Cup to the finest junior sportsman in the school. The Cup—a really magnnifiscent trofee—was placed in my care."

"Ah!" mermered Sholmes, with such a sinnister inflection in his tone, that the Head coward in his chair. "Proceed, Doctor!"

"I placed the Cup, for safety's sake, in the strong-room safe," the Head went on. "A boy named Frank Fearless, THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,006.

won it, and the Guvvner's came down specially to prezsent it. But on the very eve of the prezsentation, the keys of the safe were stolen—pinched from my trowsis pocket!"

"Indeed!" said Sholmes dryly.

"Yes—honest Injun! The keys were perloined, and it was therefore impossible to open the safe. We were in a quandery, Mr. Sholmes! However, one of my Form masters, Mr. Lickam—who, in former days, was a cracksman, and a very able fellow, I beleieve—suggested blowing open the safe with dinermite. We aloud him to do so. And he did the job so thurrughly, that the safe was blown to smithereens, and we were lucky to escape with our lives!"

"And the Cup?" queried Herlock Sholmes.

"Gone to glory!" said the Head dramatically. "Blown to little bits!"

The detective puffed thoughtfully at his hookah.

"You are quite sure the Cup has been destroyed, Doctor?"

"Oh, quite!" said the Head. "No Cup could survive a charge of dinermite."

"But supposing the Cup was not there?"

"Eh?"

"Supposing it had already been stolen, before the safe was blown open? That is quite possible—nay, probable. This is my high-pothesis. The keys of the safe were stolen from your pocket, Doctor, and the thief went straight to the strong-room and lifted the Cup. So that when Mr. Lickam blew open the safe, there was no Cup there. What is your opinion, Jotson?"

"I cannot quite follow your reeoning, Sholmes, but I agree with you entirely!" said Doctor Jotson. "But we can soon ascertain weather the Cup was still in the safe at the time of the eggsplosion."

"How, my dear Jotson?"

"By paying a visit to the strong-room, and making a careful eggssamination of the fragments."

"Splendid!" cried Herlock Sholmes, bounding to his feet. "Follow me!"

Still smoking the Head's hookah, he led the way to the strong-room, followed by the Head and Doctor Jotson.

They found the room upside-down: The floor was bestroon with daybree; and there was a grate fisher in the sealing, which had been caused by the eggsplosion.

Herlock Sholmes promptly went down on his hands and neezo and commenced his investigations, with the aid of a powerful magnnifying-glass. The Head watched him rather anxiously.

The grate detective grovelled on the floor for some minnits, picking up particles and putting them to his lips. He could tell by the taste of them what they were composed of. At last he tottered to his feet.

"I am quite satisfied, gentlemen, that there was no Silver Cup in the safe at the time it was blown open," he said. "The trofee must therefore have been stolen beforehand."

"Oh," faltered the Head, his lips tremblin.

Herlock Sholmes eyed the Head narrowly.

"Can you suggest, doctor, anybody at St. Sam's who would be so despicable as to steal the Cup? Have you any boys, or masters, in this constitution with marked crimminal tendencies?"

"Lickham!" cried the Head. "If the Cup has indeed been stolen, you can bet your sweet life that Lickham has had a finger in the pie!"

"Indeed!" muttered Sholmes. "And what grounds have you, Doctor, for making such an assertion?"

"Ample grounds," replied the Head. "In the first place, Lickham was the leader of a gang of cracksmen before he was appointed a Form master at this school. He has done time in quod—or, to put it vulgarly, he has been incarcerated in a prizen for his depredations. That in itself is enuff to prove his guilt."

Herlock Sholmes smiled.

"I should require a little stronger proof than that before I condemned Mr. Lickham," he said.

"Well, I can furnish it!" cried the Head eagerly. "Mr. Sholmes, I have been doing a little detective work on my own account. This morning, while Lickham was taking the Fourth, I paid a visit to his bed-room, and went through his trunks."

"The dickens you did!" gasped Sholmes.

"Yes," said the Head, "I went through all his personal property. It was mere useless lumber, for the most part—none of it was any use to me—but in the bottom of one of the trunks I distinctly caught the gleam of silver!"

"My hat!" cried Sholmes and Jotson in corus.

"I did not investigate what it was," went on the Head, "bekawse at that moment I heard footsteps approaching—the footsteps of Mr. Justiss, the master of the Fifth. I did not want Justiss to see me going through Lickham's trunks. He has a narsty, suspishus mind, and he might have thought that I had berglarious motives."

"Quite so!" grinned Sholmes. "I wish you had told me this before, Doctor. Lead me to Mr. Lickham's room, and I will look into this matter."

The Head escorted the detective and Doctor Jotson to Mr. Lickham's bed-room. One of the trunks had been dragged out from beneath the bed, and the lid stood open.

Instantly Herlock Sholmes dived eagerly into the trunk, like a Scotsman taking part in a "lucky dip" scramble. For a moment he disappeared from view, and when he finally arose from the recesses of the trunk he was triumphantly clutching a small Silver Cup.

"Is this the stolen property, Doctor Birchmall?" he panted.

Reluctantly the Head shook his pole.

"No, this is not the Guvvners' Silver Cup," he said. "But what is it doing in Lickham's possession, anyway? Lickham has never won a Cup of any sort in his life, so this has undoubtedly been stolen! Lickham is supposed to have reformed from his bad old ways; but the Ethiopian cannot change his skin nor the leppard his thingummy-bobs. Once a crimminal, always a crimminal. A man who will steal one Cup will steal another; so it is perfectly plane that Lickham is the thief."

"I will interview this interesting young man—" began Herlock Sholmes.

"No, no!" cried the Head. "Arrest him! March him of to the plecco station! You don't want to cross-eggssamine him. He is condemned out of his own mouth—or, rather, trunk!"

"Absolutely!" chimed in Doctor Jotson. "We need look no farther for the thief, Sholmes."

But the grate detective shook his head.

"I do not beleave that Mr. Lickham stole the Cup," he said. "Indeed, I am certain he did not. You see, Lickham's only method of opening a safe was the

(Continued on page 28.)



(Continued from page 13.)

"I say, Fishy," said Frank Nugent, in somewhat apprehensive tones, "you haven't brought that revolver, have you?"

Fisher T. Fish shook his head.

"Nope! I guess I've done with that gun! I tried it out yesterday, and the darned thing nearly blew to pieces. I reckon I'm going to take it back and toll old Lazarus a thing or two—just a few!"

"Thank goodness for that, anyway!" murmured Nugent, in an undertone which Fisher T. Fish did not hear.

"I guess we'd better get under cover when we get near the Priory," said the American junior, as they entered the woods. "There are plenty of hiding-places around, so that'll be pretty easy."

He ran his eye approvingly over his followers. Besides Harry Wharton, there were Johnny Bull, Frank Nugent, and Bob Cherry, all fighting men of sterling worth. Fisher T. Fish was not a hero himself, and he was hopeful that they would be able to get through the afternoon without having to resort to fisticuffs. His own idea was to watch over the meeting of the "gang," then trail the respective members to their addresses afterwards, each junior following one individual. In the event of trouble coming, however, it was a consoling thought that he had with him the pick of the fighting men of the Lower School at Greyfriars.

"Well, here we are!" said Bob Cherry.

They had arrived at a spot in the woods from which they could see the ruins of the old Priory. The place was well known to the juniors, who had had many adventures there before.

"Don't make too much noise now, you jays!" cautioned Fish. "They might hear us if they've arrived!"

The juniors pressed forward through the bushes in the direction of the Priory. Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent were in front, and they had not gone many yards before they spotted Wibley and Rake, attired in their hoods and cloaks, in hiding at the back of a broad oak-tree. The two disguised juniors waved a greeting, then hurriedly crouched down as Fisher T. Fish hove in view.

There was no need for any special precaution, however, for Fish's eyes were glued to the ruins in front of him, and he did not notice anything that was going on at the side.

He soon realised that something was happening, however, when there was a sudden chorus of yells from Harry Wharton & Co.

"Hyer, what game do you call this?" demanded Fisher T. Fish.

No explanation was forthcoming, however. Fish blinked in astonishment as he saw that his followers were running away as hard as their legs could carry them.

"Hi, come back, you jays!" he yelled excitedly. "What's the matter

with you, you silly mugwumps? Oh, Jerusalem crickets!"

He had suddenly caught sight of the cause of their flight, and stood rooted to the ground as two robed and hooded figures rushed towards him.

"Great Christopher Columbus!" muttered Fisher T. Fish.

For a moment he felt quite faint, then, as they reached him, he gave a yell that awoke the echoes in the lonely woods and bolted for dear life.

Too late! The disguised Removites were already upon him, and, with a groan of dismay, Fish felt their hands close over his arms. The American junior was seized with terror now. He was of rather a "funky" disposition at the best of times, and the sight of these fearsome figures, following the terrified flight of such stalwarts as Harry Wharton & Co. filled the heart of Fisher T. Fish with utter horror.

"Say, I guess you've got the wrong man this journey!" he whined, as Wibley and Rake produced a large ball of cord. "I ain't the guy you want. I'm Fisher T. Fish, of Noo York."

Fisher T. Fish's captors, however, maintained a silence that, to him, was much more terrifying than the most violent abuse. They deftly trussed him up; then, as he began to yell, neatly gagged him, so that his yells changed into guttural groans. To complete their handiwork, they tied a scarf round his eyes, thus leaving the amateur detective in a state of complete helplessness. The remaining visible parts of Fish's usually pasty face had by this time become the colour of a beetroot under the stress of his emotions.

Their task completed, Wibley and Rake picked up Fish between them and carried him across to the Monk's Cell, then descended the steps leading to the interior of that ancient room.

Harry Wharton & Co. had by this time silently returned through the woods and tiptoed into the cell, where they found their costumes lying about in readiness. By the time Fish was carried in they were just completing their preparations. The juniors grinned as the unresisting detective was put down in the centre of the cell, muttering faintly. Hastily putting their hoods over their heads, they formed a ring round him.

Wibley glanced round to make sure that all his colleagues were ready, then, bending over the captive, untied the scarf round his eyes and took the gag from his mouth.

Fisher T. Fish looked up at the mysterious circle of shrouded figures and gave a howl.

"Oh, help! Say, who are you guys?" In a deep and sepulchral voice, Wibley replied:

"We are the United Cat Burglars' Society!"

## THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

### An Astounding Discovery!

"O H, Jerusalem crickets!" groaned Fisher T. Fish.

"It has come to our notice," said Wibley, "that you and your friends have lately taken up detective work. I may tell you that our society has representatives at your school, and we know all about you. We were very quickly informed of your discovery of the letter which our member dropped in the course of his recent nocturnal visit, and we determined that, whatever happened, we would capture you!"

"Oh crikey!" muttered Fish.

"Unfortunately, your companions have escaped," continued Wibley, in the same deep voice. "However, we have every reason to believe that you are the leader; so we cannot grumble. And you may depend on it, my young friend, that we have quite enough time before your colleagues return with help, to dispose of you!"

"S-say, I reckon you've got it all wrong!" said the unhappy Fish desperately. "I don't know anything about this business you're referring to! I guess I wasn't in it at all! I happened to be taking a walk through the woods, and it was just by chance I stumbled on this lot!"

There was a burst of incredulous laughter from the menacing circle of cat burglars.

"How do you reconcile that with your statement that your name is Fish?" demanded Wibley threateningly. "Our information is that the leader of this schoolboy detective work is named Fish."

"I—I guess there are two Fishes at our school! I ain't the one you want!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The members of the United Cat Burglars' Society were not put to much effort to raise a burst of laughter over that remark. It struck them as rather funny to hear the amateur detective of the Remove denying that he was himself.

"What do you think of the prisoner's explanation, fellow-members?" asked Wibley, with the utmost solemnity. "Do you believe him?"

"Not likely!"

"I guess it's true!" cried Fisher T. Fish, in quite a panic now. "Say, if you'll let me go up to the school, I—I'll fetch your man back in half an hour!"

"Well, friends," said Wibley, who was in his element in this theatrical role, "we haven't much time left in which to complete our work. What do you consider a suitable punishment for this interfering American schoolboy?"

"Death!"

Fisher T. Fish broke into a cold perspiration as that solemn chorus rang through the old Monk's Cell. It seemed almost unbelievable that he could fail to realise that the whole thing was only a hoax; but, as the juniors had anticipated, there were no bounds to the credulity of the business genius of Greyfriars, and it was quite obvious, from the terrified expression on his face, that he really believed he was in the hands of a gang of desperate criminals.

"Well, Fish," said Wibley, "you have heard the sentence of the Society. Have you anything to say before we put it into effect?"

Fisher T. Fish gave a yelp.

"Hyer, you lemme alone! I guess you jays had best not touch me, or you'll land yourself in for a whole heap of trouble! I want you to know that I'm an Amurrican citizen, and you can't do as you like with me. If you lay your paws on me, I reckon you'll mighty soon be sorry!"

Wibley laughed contemptuously.

"Do you think the United Cat Burglars' Society fears such piffling threats as that, my young friend? You'll have to think of something a good deal better than that before you're likely to influence our decision!"

"Hear, hear!" chorused the United Cat Burglars.

"I guess, if you let me go, I won't give you away!" almost sobbed Fisher T. Fish, in complete despair as he saw that his threats were unavailing.

"Is the dagger ready?" asked Wibley, turning to the rest of the members.

"D-d-dagger?" stammered Fish, turning almost green.

"The dagger!" repeated Wibley firmly. "We in this Society are of opinion that it's much more romantic to stab our victims than to shoot them. Probably it will be a little consolation to you to know that you are going to die in a romantic manner, Fish!"

Fish could only shake and watch the preparations with horrified eyes. The thought that he was about to die in a romantic manner was, as a matter of fact, the very reverse of consoling to him. Fish had no desire whatever to die in any way, romantic or otherwise.

Had he been a little calmer he would have recognised the dagger which was being passed round as one of Wibley's old "props," which had been used many times in various amateur productions at Greyfriars. In his terror, however, he did not notice that.

"Not quite sharp enough, I'm afraid!" said Wibley, examining it with a most professional air. "Pull him to his feet, fellow-members, and I'll just test it on him before we do the deed in earnest!"

"Hyer, let up!" howled Fish, struggling spasmodically as the juniors hauled him to his feet. "Help! Help! Murder!"

Bob Cherry clapped a big hand over Fish's large mouth, and his yells died away. Meanwhile, Wibley approached him from behind, holding a penknife in his hand, and suddenly applied the back of the blade to the terrified detective's neck, then hastily withdrew it. At the touch of cold steel, trussed up as he was, Fish fairly leaped from the arms of his captors, and fell roaring to the stone floor.

"Untie him while I sharpen up this weapon!" said Wibley cheerfully. And, crossing over to the other side of the cell, he began to scrape the dagger against a great stone that had fallen away from the wall.

Fisher T. Fish listened, his hair standing on end and his blood running cold at that dreadful sound.

Harry Wharton & Co. crowded round him and began to loosen his bonds. Fisher T. Fish was quite limp as they attended to this, but when they had finished he suddenly broke away and bounded up the stone steps leading to the open air.

"Collar him!" howled Wibley, dropping his sepulchral intonation at once.

Bob Cherry seized him before he reached the top, and brought him, struggling furiously, to the cell again.

"That's a bit better!" said Wibley, running his fingers more approvingly over the dagger. "Are we ready now, fellow-members?"

The "fellow-members" nodded their hooded heads.

"You know your business," Wibley continued. "Hold him tight, while I carry out the sentence, and— Yarooogh!"

The last exclamation was caused by a bony fist coming into painful contact with Wibley's face. It was not often that Fish exhibited any evidence of muscular power. On this occasion, however, he broke away from the juniors who held him, as though he had suddenly become possessed of supernatural strength, and the force with which his fist landed on Wibley's face sent the amateur actor flying.

For the second time in five minutes Fisher T. Fish fled up the stone steps.

"Stop him!" shouted Frank Nugent,

bounding up the steps with Harry Wharton, in close pursuit.

Fish felt Wharton's hand touch him, and, with a wild yell of mingled fear and rage, he turned and gave a mighty kick at his pursuers, then raced off.

There was a howl of agony from Harry Wharton, and he reeled back on to the advancing United Cat Burglars, who were close on him, causing Nugent, Cherry, Bull, and Rake to stagger back in their turn. With a terrific thud, all five juniors pitched over the sides of the steps, and landed on a pile of old sacks and rubbish that stood in the corner.

"Whoooop!"

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"Grooooooogh!"

"Gett off my chest!"

For a few seconds indescribable confusion reigned in the old monk's cell.

At last the hapless Removites sorted themselves out, and, with many groans and moans, staggered to their feet again.

"You silly cuckoos!" roared Wibley, as he took off his costume. "Look what you've done to all our new props!"

The robes of the Remove Dramatic Society were torn in innumerable places, and covered with dust and cobwebs. They certainly looked a good deal the worse for wear now, although not more so than the Removites themselves.

"Blow your mouldy props!" snorted Dick Rake, tearing off his own costume with scant ceremony. "What about my ankle?"

"And my leg!" groaned Wharton, massaging the injured limb very tenderly.

"And my face!" added Frank Nugent, whose classic features looked as though they had come into violent contact with a steam-roller.

"Oh, bother your blessed cuts!" said Wibley crossly. "They'll soon mend, but I'm thinking about my play. How do you think we can act in— My hat!"

Wibley was not questioning the possibility of Thespian performances in his headgear, the last two words in his sentence indicated that William Wibley had suddenly become very surprised.

"My only hat!" added Wibley, with emphasis, staring at the corner where the Removites had just landed.

"What's up now, Wib?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Great pip!"

Johnny Bull tapped his head significantly.

"It's turned his brain, I suppose!" he commented.

Wibley pointed a trembling finger at the spot on which his eyes were fixed.

"Look, you chaps!" he cried excitedly. Harry Wharton & Co. looked.

In the gloom it was not easy to pick out objects very distinctly; but, with their attention concentrated on the corner, the Removites perceived at once the reason for Wibley's sudden excitement, and all five gave a simultaneous jump.

"The plate!"

"What!"

Recovery from their momentary stupefaction was quick, and there was a rush for the corner. There, sure enough, was a sack lying on its side, and revealing through its open top a glittering array of cups, shields, plates, and other articles of gold and silver.

"Great Scott!" whispered Bob Cherry, almost dazed by the amazing discovery. "We must have knocked it over as we fell."

"Now I come to think of it, I heard it go," said Johnny Bull. "Thought it was just a bit of old iron among the other rubbish!"

"Well, this is a stroke of luck, and no mistake!"

"I say, you chaps, what a discovery, though!"

The very unexpectedness of the find had almost stunned the juniors at first, but they were quickly recovering their composure now, and they fairly chortled as they realised what a find they had made.

"By Jove, this is a score for us— what?" said Harry Wharton, his eyes shining delightedly.

"For me, I suppose you mean!" said Wibley, who had forgotten even his precious "props" now. "You chaps walk about with your eyes shut, you know! You'd never have noticed this lot if I hadn't spotted it."

"Well, we won't row over it!" interposed Frank Nugent. "The first point to settle is whether it is really the same stuff as the Head had taken from him."

Harry Wharton struck a match, and looked at the inscription on one of the cups.

"It's Dr. Locke's all right!" he said. "Look, you chaps, here's one of his 'Varsity trophies!'"

"Blessed if it doesn't beat the band!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "I suppose the chaps who boned it have left it here till the scare dies down and they can get it away fairly safely."

"That's about the reason!" assented Harry Wharton.

"They couldn't have chosen a better hiding-place in the whole of the county," remarked Johnny Bull. "People very rarely get down into this mouldering old show, and, even if they did, the chances are a thousand to one against their stumbling across anything in that old rubbish-heap in the corner."

"Why, if I hadn't been here, none of you would have noticed it!" said Wibley, putting in another word for himself.

"Anyway, we've found the giddy plate, and that's the main thing!" said Rake. "I vote we take it back with us right away, and let the police know afterwards!"

"Rather!"

"Won't the Head be pleased when we trot in with this little armful?" grinned Bob Cherry. "This is going to be the biggest score we've had for a long time, my infants!"

"What-ho!"

"Let's get busy, chaps!" said Frank Nugent. "Handle the stuff gently, you know!"

The juniors hauled the sack from its dark corner, and Wibley brought out his inexhaustible supply of cord, and tied it round the top.

"That's the idea!" said Harry Wharton, tugging at the knots to test their efficiency. "Now let's get back to the school with the loot!"

"Good egg!"

The juniors lifted the sack of loot to the bottom of the steps.

"Everything all right?" asked Johnny Bull. "Up she goes, then! This way to London—oh crumbs!"

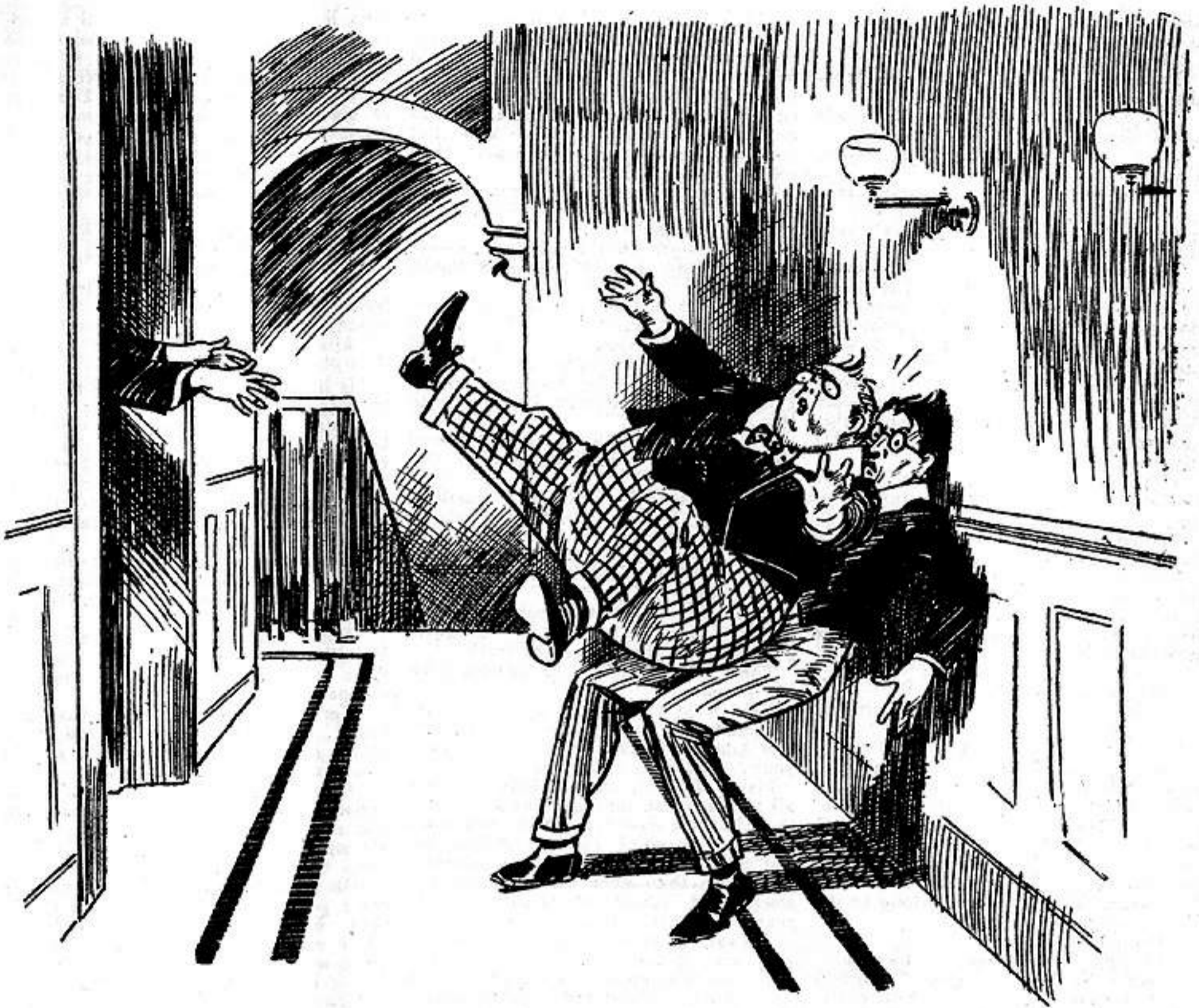
"Hands up!"

The juniors had been too engrossed in their work to notice that two newcomers had for the last two minutes been watching their movements from the top of the steps, and this sudden command came to them like a bolt from the blue.

"Hands up!" repeated the speaker, in a steely voice.

The Removites dropped the bundle and looked up, and there was a general gasp of dismay as they found themselves confronted with two ugly-looking revolvers.





Bunter gave a howl as Coker flung him bodily through the doorway into the passage, and there was a second howl as the fat junior crashed into Fisher T. Fish, who was walking past the study. "Yoooooop!" roared Bunter. "Yow-wow!" gasped Fisher T. Fish. (See Chapter 6.)

Two smartly-clad men, one smoking an expensive-looking cigar, advanced down the steps, covering the juniors with their weapons.

"It looks as if we haven't come here too soon!" grunted the gentleman with the cigar. "You boys will just oblige me by standing up against that wall, while my friend renders you a little less dangerous with the aid of some of the cord you have kindly provided for us. The first one who attempts any tea-garden tricks, gets a hole drilled in him!"

## THE NINTH CHAPTER.

### Doubting Thomases!

WHEN Fisher T. Fish fled from the old monk's cell, he ran as he had never run before. The finest athletes in the Lower School would not have outpaced him as he tore through the woods that afternoon.

He encountered two smartly-dressed gentlemen some little distance away from the Priory, and they had to jump out of his way very quickly indeed, to avoid a disastrous collision. In his terror, Fisher T. Fish hardly noticed them.

When at last he gained the road, the

perspiration was running down the face of the amateur detective in little streams. He had never had such a fright in his life, and really believed, as he hurried towards Greyfriars, that he had come within an ace of death.

"By gum!" he muttered. "This licks creation! What an escape! Ugh!"

Even now, at the thought of that dagger, he shivered and looked apprehensively behind him, as if expecting to see half a dozen robed and hooded beings in full chase. All that was visible down the lane, however, was a farm-wagon, with a sleepy labourer driving, and, somewhat reassured, Fisher T. Fish wiped his heated brow and continued walking at a rather steadier pace.

A good many juniors were returning to the school as Fish drew nearer Greyfriars, for it was getting near teatime.

Quite a number of Removites hailed the American junior as he came up to the gates, for the news of his efforts in the detective line during the week, had made Fish a butt for the wits of the Form.

"Here comes Sherlock!" cried Squiff. "Twig the determined look on his face?"

"How's Dr. Watson?" sang out Vernon-Smith.

"Found any more clues yet, Fishy?"

Fish's intention had been to go straight to the Head without delay, but at this chorus of railery, he could not refrain from putting in a few words about that afternoon's adventures.

"I guess I'm going to surprise you galoots soon—just a few!" he remarked, with a superior grin.

"Have you decided to turn honest, then?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I kinder reckon you can laugh all you want now," said Fish, unperturbed. "My turn's pretty well hyer, I guess!"

Most of the Remove, of course, knew nothing about Wharton's "jape," so this cryptic remark conveyed nothing to them.

"What's the idiot getting at?" Bulstrode demanded.

"Oh, it's only his usual bluff!"

"I guess that's just where you're wrong, Russell!" snorted the Transatlantic junior. "I rather reckon you'll change your mind when the cops bring back the Head's plate through my efforts!"

"Oh crumbs, hark at him?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Fisher T. Fish grunted.

"I guess it won't be long, now!" he said. "Perhaps you'll be interested to

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know I've just left the guys who boned the plato."

"Wha-a-at!"

There was a yell of incredulity from the Removites.

"Here, come off!" urged Bulstrode sceptically.

"Are you one of the gang, then, Fishy?"

"I tell you I've just left them!" said Fish doggedly. "If Wharton's hyer, I guess he'll tell you how we ran into them in the woods."

"Well, Wharton's not here, anyway," said Bolsover major. "And if it comes to that, what the dickens were you doing in the woods with Wharton? I didn't know you were very thick with him."

"Waal, I ain't as a rule," confessed Fisher T. Fish. "However, I needed help in rounding up the crooks this afternoon, and Wharton and his pals promised to come along."

"Oh, they did, did they?" said Bolsover. "Sounds pretty funny to me!"

"Same here!" murmured several other juniors.

"We got to know that there was to be a meeting of the crooks at the Priory, this afternoon—" continued Fisher T. Fish, going on with his explanation.

"A meeting of the crooks!"

"My sainted aunt!"

"A burglars' meeting in the Priory!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, cut it out, you silly mugwumps!" snorted Fish, quite wrathful at the hilarity with which his story was received, after all his terrifying adventures. "This is the straight goods, I tell you! After we heard of this meeting, we fixed to go along and keep our peepers open, so this afternoon, Wharton and his pals came along to the Priory, with me in charge."

"Draw it mild!"

"The idiot's wandering in his mind!"

"Can't you let a guy speak?" howled the detective of the Remove furiously. "Anyway, we hadn't even got as far as the Priory, before a couple of guys, all dolled up in robes and hoods, jumped out on us and went for our crowd like fury!"

"Go hon!"

"All the other white-livered jays greased off in a mighty hurry," said Fish graphically. "But I stood up to 'em, alone, and—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That sounds like you, Fishy—I don't think!"

"What an imagination, though! He ought to become a novelist!"

"You silly darned jays, it's all true!" roared Fisher T. Fish. "I tell you I fought the whole bunch of them—darned great huskies they were, too—none of them less than six feet high!"

"Oh crumbs!" murmured Field, who was one of the most interested listeners, being one of those who had helped in the preparations for the jape. "Are you positive they were that tall, Fishy?"

"Six feet, if an inch!" asserted Fish firmly. "Not a man was shorter than that! Naturally, I couldn't beat 'em to it, and in the finish they tied me up, and took me down to that old cellar in the Priory!"

"Great pip!"

"He's getting better and better!"

"When they'd got me down there they gave me to understand that they'd been plumb scared from the moment they heard I was on the trail," continued Fish. "They told me there was only one way out for them, and that was to get rid of me. After that, they set about me with daggers!"

"Daggers!" howled Bolsover. "Ye gods!"

"This is rich!"

"They swore they'd murder me—"

"Pity they didn't!" chuckled Squiff heartlessly.

"But, just in time, I broke away and went for 'em!" said Fish. "I guess I'd got my mad up—just a few! I knocked those crooks about right and left, and they went over like ninepins! Then I came away, and now I'm going to the Head!"

"G-g-g-going to the Head!" stuttered Vernon-Smith. "With that yarn! Oh, my hat!"

"Sure thing!" said the amateur detective. "Don't you silly jays believe me yet?"

"Oh, don't be funny!" said Vernon-Smith. "You didn't expect us to believe you, did you?"

"You silly jay! Of course I did!" hooted Fish indignantly. "I guess I've told you the downright truth!"

There was a chorus of protest from the juniors.

"No need to carry it too far!" said Bulstrode. "'Nuffs as good as a feast, you know! Now, own up, it's only your weird idea of a jape!"

Fisher T. Fish almost choked. After all he had gone through that afternoon, the hilarious incredulity with which his tale was received was too disheartening for words. The amateur detective felt more than ever that life on the sleepy old island of Great Britain really was not worth living.

"Waal, I swow!" he managed to gasp out at last. "I guess you're the most sceptical crowd of mugwumps I ever met! I guess I'll know better than to tell you anything another time. I reckon even the doc. will see that this is true!"

"Do you really mean to say you're going to the Head?" demanded Kipps. "After the reception you got last time, too?"

"Yep! I'm going, right away!"

"Great Scott!"

"He must be potty!"

"I guess I'm going to score heavy this time!" said the American junior, whose confidence remained unshaken in face of the incredulity of the crowd. "You just watch out, and you'll see things happen—just a few!"

And, bestowing a patronising nod on the Removites, he hurried off, leaving them in a state of great hilarity, not unmixed, however, with a certain amount of surprise, for the direction he took was that of the Head's house.

"Surely the silly duffer's not going to spring all that on the Head!" exclaimed Kipps.

"Especially after what happened the other night!"

Evidently it was Fish's intention to visit the Head for some purpose, however, and the Removites could only conjecture that he was "pulling their legs," and that his reason was altogether different from that which he had given them.

Chuckling over the affair, they moved off towards the School House.

There was no hesitation about Fishy's actions as he knocked at the door of Dr. Locke's study that afternoon. This

time he was fresh from actual experiences with the burglars themselves, he reflected, instead of being a mere novice in detective work, asking permission to look into a case. The hour of his triumph was at hand.

Dr. Locke looked up with a slight frown as Fish entered. He did not like wasting his time, and he had not forgotten the American junior's last visit.

"Well, Fish, I trust you have not come here to explain any more of your schemes to me, this time!"

"Nope, sir! I'm down to brass tacks by now, instead of worrying around over theories," answered Fish. "I kinder reckon you're still wanting that plate back, sir!"

"Is it possible that you have returned to reopen that absurd talk for which I punished you previously?" said Dr. Locke sternly. "Please understand, Fish, that I am quite worried enough by the loss of my plate already, without having to tolerate stupid references to the matter by juniors with a misplaced sense of humour."

"B-but I guess you haven't listened, sir!" gasped Fish. "I guess you haven't heard what I've got to tell you!"

"What have you to tell me, then, Fish?" asked Dr. Locke, impressed in spite of himself by Fish's earnest manner.

"I'm hyer to let you know that I've found the crooks that rustled your plate, sir, and I want to ask you to phone the cops, right away."

"Dear me!" said Dr. Locke, whose knowledge of the American language was not extensive. "I wish you would attempt to make your remarks intelligible to English people, Fish!"

"Oh, Jerusalem crickets! I guess I can't put it much plainer than that!" said Fisher T. Fish, in perplexity. "I've run across the guys that did the crook-work the other night, if you can follow that, sir!"

"Bless my soul! Am I to understand that you have identified the burglars who absconded with my plate?"

"You've got me, sir!" said Fish, with a grin. "I guess I'll put you wise how it happened, sir!"

For the second time since his escape, Fish narrated the story of his expedition into the woods with Harry Wharton & Co. Dr. Locke listened to Fish's excited sentences in grim silence, and he stroked his chin reflectively as Fisher T. Fish described his escape from the dagger of death in the old monk's cell.

Fish concluded his story at last. Contrary to his expectations, Dr. Locke did not rise and shake him warmly by the hand, then pick up the telephone to ring for the police.

Dr. Locke, as a matter of fact, did not appear to be moved in any way by the American junior's recital. He still continued to stroke his chin reflectively and frown.

"Have Wharton and the others returned yet?" he asked.

"Nope! I guess I'm going to tell those mugwumps a thing or two when they do come in, sir, too! I'll give 'em vamoose the ranch and leave me at the mercy of those gaol-birds!"

Dr. Locke sighed.

"Dear me, Fish, your stupidity really seems to have no limits! Do you seriously imagine that a gang of desperate robbers would dress up in robes and take you to the Priory for the purpose of murdering you?"

Fisher T. Fish groaned. Even the action of the "crooks" refused to credit

**ANSWERS**

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his story! This was indeed the last straw!

"Waal, I reckon you don't believe I've made it all up, do you, sir?" he snorted.

Dr. Locke smiled.

"Not at all! But hasn't it occurred to you that it may be a practical joke on the part of your schoolfellows?"

"Then ain't you going to phone the cops?" gasped Fisher T. Fish. "I guess they'll get busy with their fingerprint stunts or something around the Priory, and you'll soon be convinced that they were genuine crooks!"

"I am not likely to do anything so absurd as to ring the police," the Head replied. "You have obviously been hoaxed, and although I do not approve of such thoughtless practical joking, I must say that your extraordinary stupidity would encourage almost anybody to have fun at your expense."

"Waal, I swear!"

"Don't make ridiculous exclamations, Fish!" said Dr. Locke. "I expect Wharton and his friends know a great deal more about this affair than you seem to suppose. Please tell them that I wish to see them when they come in. You may go."

Fisher T. Fish stared at the Head speechlessly for a second or two. Intent as he was on scoring a great success as a detective, the Head's common-sense theory as to the real nature of the affair left him quite cold. Fisher T. Fish believed with all his Transatlantic heart and soul that his hosts in the old Monk's Cell had been genuine crooks.

He opened his mouth to speak, then,

just in time, he remembered the painful termination to his last interview with the Head.

And with feelings too deep for words Fisher T. Fish quitted the study.

### THE TENTH CHAPTER.

#### Bob Cherry's Way Out!

ONE by one the chums of the Remove were bound hand and foot by one of the well-dressed newcomers, while the other held his revolver menacingly in the direction of the dismayed juniors.

At first Harry Wharton felt convinced that, somehow or other, their superiority of numbers would get them out of the scrape. When the first man began to tie the Removites up with Wibley's cord the captain of the Remove had high hopes that it would be possible for one or two of them to slip their bonds and take their captors unawares. As he watched the man at work, however, that hope speedily vanished. It was quite evident that here was an expert at knot-tying, for each junior when finished with seemed to have been rendered absolutely helpless. Not content with tying their arms behind their backs, he secured their legs in such a way that movement seemed out of the question. To finish off his handiwork, he linked his prisoners together by the arms and feet, and then attached the cord securely to an iron ring in the wall. It seemed that every hope of escape from this unenviable position was cut off.

"A very neat job!" commented the man with the revolver, transferring the weapon to his pocket, and surveying the crestfallen juniors with great

satisfaction. "I must say these boys gave me quite a turn when we first came up. I suppose this is a kind of meeting-place of some schoolboy society or other."

"Well, now what's the next move, Lytton?" demanded his companion, casting an uneasy glance up the stone steps. "It strikes me we must get the stuff away at once. If these boys are missed, and there's a huc-and-cry, we are booked for certain trouble unless we get to work very quickly. I wish to goodness we had taken it away before, as I suggested!"

"You weren't very keen on coming here in the daylight before, anyway!" retorted the other, with a shrug. "If it hadn't been for your getting scared and wanting to come and inspect the lie of the land before fetching it away, I'd have had a car here this afternoon, and we'd have been back in town in the next hour with the whole of the stuff!"

"Well, don't start a row!" said the first speaker. "It was bad luck in the first place to get a breakdown so near the school. The main thing now is to get the car round here as soon as we can, and get right out of this neighbourhood!"

"I suppose one of us had better stay here and keep guard over these lads while the other fetches the car," said the non-smoker of the precious pair.

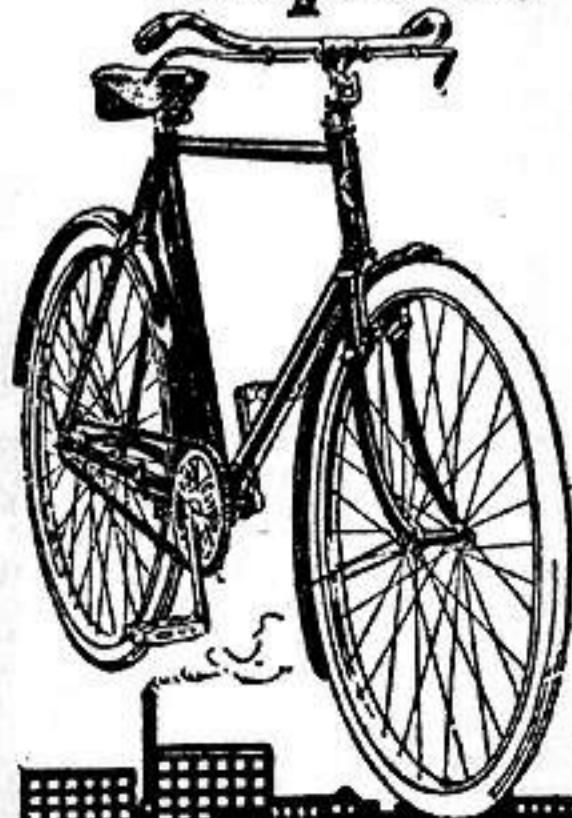
The man with the cigar knitted his brows.

"What about the others? They must be warned that the Highcliffe job is off for to-night. Look here, you had better run down to the village and get on the phone while I'm getting the

(Continued overleaf.)

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car from Courtfield. I'll meet you in Friardale. These boys will be safe enough. They'll never get away from your slip-knots!"

"They'll shout though!"

"Gag the young whelps, and they won't do much shouting then!"

Harry Wharton & Co. struggled spasmodically as the two approached them again, but any kind of resistance was impossible now, and they had perforce to submit to having handkerchiefs stuffed into their mouths, their prospects of attracting help by shouting thus being annihilated.

When they had accomplished this task the two men, after a final examination to see that their captives were absolutely secure, ascended the stone steps and hurried off.

Helpless and stifled, the juniors could only look at each other and blink and grimace. It seemed that only by sheer luck could they expect to be released now. If only a passer-by would come down into the old cell and stumble across them, was the thought that ran through six minds as the Removites lay in acute discomfort, helpless in every limb, and unable to make a sound beyond a stifled croak. That, unfortunately, seemed very unlikely. The Priory, at the best of times, was a lonely spot in the woods, and of the infrequent visitors very few indeed ventured down into the damp and dirty old cell.

There was one among the six Removites, however, who had not given up all hope.

Bob Cherry, from the moment the two rogues had left, moved the muscles of his face about in such a way that the others began to feel alarmed that he might be choking. Harry Wharton, however, after a momentary doubt, realised that Bob Cherry meant to convey something to them.

What that something was, however, Harry could not understand at all. He could only perceive that Bob was continually fixing his eyes on one particular spot on the floor.

Looking down, the Remove skipper observed that the glowing end of the cigar which the leader of their captors had thrown away was still smouldering. This fact gave him no clue as to what Bob Cherry was getting at, but, realising that the cigar-end was nearer him than his chum, he shuffled his foot a little and sent it rolling towards Bob.

Bob Cherry nodded, and then did a thing that simply astonished the rest.

Bending over as far as he possibly could, he applied his lips to the well-chewed "smoke" and drew at it as vigorously as possible. His chums could see that he had worked his handkerchief to one side of his mouth in order to allow a clear passage of air, and in spite of his tremendous handicap, he succeeded in stimulating the dying cigar tip and making it glow quite brightly again.

The effort almost choked him, for his face went scarlet, and a flood of tears began to course down his cheeks, while stifled coughs escaped him.

The others began to see light now, for immediately he had got the cigar-end glowing to his satisfaction, he applied the cord that bound his wrists to it, and pressed as hard as was possible in his cramped position.

The Removites watched with the utmost interest. It was obvious now that Bob Cherry intended to burn through his bonds and get his hands free. They could all realise that if he

succeeded it would take only a few minutes to free the rest of them. Having released his hands, it would be a very easy matter for Bob to fetch out his pocket-knife and cut the cord away from his legs, and afterwards do the same for the rest of his chums.

It was no easy task, however. Bob writhed with pain as the glowing ember came into contact with his flesh, and many a lad might have given up in despair. Bob Cherry, however, stuck it gamely. It was painful work, but he was willing to go through a great deal worse, if there was a chance of getting the best of the rogues who had captured them.

The juniors' eyes gleamed with excitement as they perceived a wisp of smoke going up from their chum's wrists, indicating that the cord had begun to burn through. For a few seconds the suspense seemed awful, and the hope died out of their faces as they saw Bob tug without result, and the wisp of smoke die away as the cigar-ember petered out.

The good work had borne fruit, however, and after several more frantic efforts on Bob Cherry's part there was a sudden snap and the cord came asunder from his wrists. Bob Cherry was free!

His first action was to pull the handkerchief from his mouth, and for several seconds after that he was choking and coughing from the tobacco fumes with which his mouth was full.

"Groooooogh! Atchooooo! Oh crumbs! I never felt so rotten in my life! Ugh!"

The others were rolling their eyes expressively, apparently meaning that they wished him to release them as quickly as possible; and Bob Cherry, realising that urgency was demanded of him, overcame his sickness with an effort, and reached for his pocket-knife. Very soon he had cut himself entirely free and staggered to his feet, and after that it was only a matter of moments before the rest of the juniors were on their feet again, groaning and choking from the effects of their gagging, and rubbing themselves ruefully where the cords had cut into their flesh.

"My hat! What a couple of outsiders those chaps are!" said Johnny Bull. "I feel as if I've been through Chinese torture!"

"Same here!" groaned Wibley. "I'd like to scrag the awful rotters!"

"I think the thanks of the lot of us are due to old Bob," said Harry Wharton. "That was a real brain-wave of yours to burn through the cord with that scoundrel's cigar-tip!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Hope you're not hurt much, Bob?"

"Oh, that's all right!" said Bob Cherry. "Anyway, now that we're through with that part of the programme, what's the next item?"

Harry Wharton knitted his brows thoughtfully.

"You heard them say their car was at Courtfield. I suppose the merchant who was smoking intends catching a train from Friardale Station, so it all depends on the luck of the train service. Once he gets to Courtfield, it won't take him long to buzz back."

"Is there time to go for the police?" asked Johnny Bull.

The Remove skipper shook his head. "I don't know that there is. You see, the only man we can lay our hands on to begin with is Tozer. There's no chance of getting help from the Courtfield Police Station in time. Then, again, if one of us goes off for help

there won't be so many left here to go for the rotters when they come back. I take it we're going to stay and nab them, if we can?"

"Rather!"

"Of course, they're armed and they're desperate," said Wharton, a little worried at the thought that he might be leading his followers into too great a danger. "Perhaps we ought to ring up Courtfield, and leave it to the police."

"Rot!" said Johnny Bull instantly. "I vote we wait for them to return. We should be able to take them by surprise, and I'm particularly anxious to dot one of them on the eye and have a bit of my own back for this tying-up business!"

"Same here!"

"Well, we are all agreed, then?" asked the Remove captain.

The juniors nodded.

"Passed nem. con.," said Rake.

"Good egg!"

"Right-ho, then!" said Harry Wharton, who, incidentally, was as anxious as any of them to get an opportunity of "having a cut" at their two unpleasant acquaintances. "We must arrange everything without any delay. We've got to remember that they're armed, and that this is a bit more serious than an ordinary school 'rag.'"

"I suggest we ambush the bounders before they get here," put in Bob Cherry. "We are more likely to surprise them if we get in hiding half-way between here and the Friardale Lane."

The Remove captain nodded.

"I'm inclined to think you're right. What do you chaps think?"

There was a chorus of approval. Bob Cherry's suggestion certainly contained sound common-sense.

"We might cut down some sticks from the trees, so that we can attack the rotters if they start any tricks with their guns," suggested Rake.

"What-ho!"

"Good egg!"

"Perhaps we ought to shift the swag to another hiding-place, in case anything goes wrong," Harry Wharton remarked, eyeing the bulky sack which still reposed in the corner. "Shall we take it with us?"

"You bet!" answered Bob Cherry promptly. "Whatever happens, we mustn't let those chaps collar the loot again. Give a hand, you fellows!"

The Removites soon had the Head's plate up the steps. After that, they tramped down the footpath leading to the lane until they had arrived at a well-wooded spot about half-way between the lane and the Priory.

"We can put the plate away safely under one of these bushes till the trouble's over," said the Remove skipper. "Bung it well out of sight somewhere!"

The juniors "banged" it out of sight, and carefully noted the spot so they could find it again later.

"Now for the sticks!" went on Harry Wharton briskly. "There are plenty to choose from, so don't waste any time. They may not be very long gone, you know!"

Those of the Removites who were provided with pocket-knives busied themselves cutting down sticks, and they soon had a formidable array of weapons. It was not like Harry Wharton & Co. to wait for an enemy in superior numbers and armed with any weapons other than their fists, but they knew that this time they were up against a desperate pair of rascals, who would not hesitate to shoot if it became necessary. Against enemies of that kind kid-glove methods would certainly



To finish off his handiwork, the cracksman linked the juniors together, and then attached the cord to an iron ring in the wall. "A very neat job!" commented the man with the revolver. "That'll keep 'em safe enough!"  
(See Chapter 10.)

be ineffective. The only way was to take them by surprise, and overpower them before they had time to draw out their revolvers.

"Are we all ready?"

Harry Wharton surveyed his followers, and they nodded.

"Good! Then let's take up our stand somewhere nearer the road."

The juniors moved cautiously along the footpath until they had arrived at a particularly sheltered place where the trees and undergrowth grew in thick profusion. It was an ideal place for an ambush, and Harry Wharton halted his followers without hesitation.

"This is where we stop," he said. "We'll divide up into two parties, one on either side of the path. Make yourselves as scarce as possible, you fellows, and remember to rush the blighters the moment I yell: 'Rescue, Remove!'"

The Removites nodded, and divided up as their leader had indicated. They were by no means amateurs at scouting work, and they had very quickly hidden themselves in such a manner that a casual passer-by could not possibly have noticed them.

They waited in silence for the return of the cracksmen.

Five minutes passed—ten, fifteen!

Harry Wharton glanced restively at his watch.

Then at last came the sound that the Removites had been waiting for—the distant purr of a motor-car engine down the Friardale Lane.

Harry Wharton listened intently.

After a short interval the noise suddenly stopped.

Then followed an interval of several minutes during which nothing happened. Harry Wharton peered cautiously through a gap in the bush which sheltered him, then hastily withdrew.

"They're coming!" he whispered to Johnny Bull and Wibley, who were with him. "Get ready, you chaps!"

The Removites could hear the dull thudding of feet coming along the footpath.

The noise grew more distinct, and the juniors held themselves in readiness for the attack.

At last the two men drew abreast with them.

"Collar 'em!"

The cry rang out through the silent woods, and with a yell the juniors sprang out, and hurled themselves upon the foe.

## THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

### Fish Is not Satisfied!

WHEN Fisher T. Fish returned to Study No. 14, after his second unsatisfactory interview with Dr. Locke, he was looking very disconsolate. He had returned to Greyfriars, fully expecting to receive the admiring applause of the whole school and the overwhelming gratitude of Dr. Locke. Instead of which, both the school and the Head had received him with complete incredulity. Fish was profoundly disappointed.

"Brought in any grub with you?" asked Sampson Quincey Iffley Field when Fish entered the study and moodily sat down in the armchair.

"Nope! I guess I've got other things to think of!" he snapped.

"What did the Head say?" grinned Squiff. "Another licking?"

Fisher T. Fish shook his head.

"I guess I can't just understand the old bird," he declared. "I reckon he's got me beat all the time. He wouldn't believe a word of it!"

"Go hon!" chuckled the junior from New South Wales.

"I'm beginning to suspect him myself," continued Fisher T. Fish, looking very thoughtful. "Perhaps he's not such a boob as he looks!"

"What do you mean, ass?"

"I guess you've heard of insurance swindlers before?" said Fish. "A guy insures a thing for more than it's worth, and claims the full amount of the insurance. It's a pretty slick sort of game, and a guy wants any amount of nerve and pep to put it across."

"And you believe the Head's doing that?" gasped Squiff.

"Waal, I wouldn't say it's a frame-up all through," said Fish slowly. "But I must say he seems to be doing all he knows how to prevent the crooks being caught, so it looks pretty suspicious, and I guess he's more keen on getting the insurance money than the plate."

"Great Scott!" murmured Squiff faintly. "I shouldn't advise you to broadcast your opinion, Fishy!"

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"Nope. I reckon I'm a little too wide to do that," said the amateur detective. "I guess the proof's not too strong at present, and if it comes to that I'm rather doubtful whether a moss-grown old jay like the doc would be 'cute enough to think it out!"

"Cute enough!" echoed Squiff. "I should say dishonest enough, myself!"

"Waal, that's a matter of opinion, anyway," said Fisher T. Fish. "The guy that can put it over on an insurance company deserves to get away with it, I guess. Anyway, that's not what I'm worrying my cabeza over. I want to know whether I ought to leave the Head out of it and put the cops on the scent myself."

"Don't be a silly ass, Fishy!" urged Squiff, who knew all about the jape, and was not anxious to see the police brought into it. "Why not drop the whole thing and forget about it? As a first step to that, I suggest you run over to the tuckshop and get some grub for tea!"

"Blow tea!" snorted Fisher T. Fish. "There's another thing I've been thinking of. Where did the jays who came with me get to? There was Wharton, Cherry, Nugent, and Bull, and none of them have got back yet. Do you think they were caught by some of the crooks, or are they skulking around outside the school still?"

"Don't ask conundrums!" yawned Squiff. "I'm fed-up with the whole bizney. What I want to know is, are you going to the tuckshop, or are you not?"

"Nope!" grunted Fisher T. Fish. "I guess— Yaroooooop! Let up, you rotter!"

Squiff's patience was exhausted. He fell on the American junior and smote him hip and thigh, concluding by opening the door and propelling him forcibly out of Study No. 14 with the tip of his boot.

Fish yelled and charged back furiously into the study.

"You slabsided jay! I guess I'll make potato-scrappings of you!" he hooted, shaking a bony fist at the Colonial.

Squiff reached out for a cricket-stump and poised it as if he meant to hurl it. And Fisher T. Fish did not wait to describe what he would do to Squiff any more, but fled, slamming the door after him with a bang that made the windows rattle.

Fisher T. Fish tramped down the Remove passage and looked in at Study No. 1, which Wharton and Nugent shared. It was still empty, and with a grunt Fish quitted the Remove quarters and went downstairs.

Hurree Janset Ram Singh was on the steps as Fish went out into the Close, and he stopped to exchange a few words with the Indian junior.

"Seen anything of Wharton and the rest lately?" he inquired casually.

Hurree Singh nodded. "I have regardfully seen the esteemed Wharton and the rest," he answered; a faint smile illuminating his dusky countenance.

"Where were they?" asked Fish eagerly.

"In the study, my esteemed and ludicrous Fishy!"

"I guess I've just been there, and they're not in!"

"I did not remarkfully state that they are!" said Inky gravely.

"Waal, I swow! You just told me they were!" yelled Fish indignantly.

"So they were three hours ago, clock-fully!" said Inky. "That was when I

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regardfully saw them, my esteemed and ludicrous friend!"

Fisher T. Fish gave Inky a homicidal glare.

"You silly black jay! What sort of a game do you think you're playing with me? I guess if your funky pal Wharton turns up, you can tell him, with F. T. Fish's compliments, that I've made my getaway from the crooks, and that I've gone to the police station now."

With which remark, Fisher T. Fish turned on his heel and strode across the Close to the gate, leaving the imperturbable Inky smiling serenely.

Fisher T. Fish walked down the road that led to Friardale village at a great rate, his lean legs working like clock-work. Still unconvinced by the scepticism of Dr. Locke and the Removites he was determined to report his adventures to the police and get them to take it up. And if they did capture the "crooks," a dozen headmasters would not prevent Fish from getting some of the kudos attaching to the business.

"I guess I'll show the silly jays!" he muttered fiercely, as he came towards the village.

P.-c. Tozer was standing outside the Friardale tuckshop, in conversation with Uncle Clegg, when Fisher T. Fish entered the village. Neither of the

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two gentlemen gave him very gracious looks, as he approached them; Fish was not a very frequent customer at Uncle Clegg's, and Mr. Tozer was suspicious by nature.

"I guess I got some work for you to do, Mr. Tozer," said Fisher T. Fish, with a nod. "I kinder reckon if you come along with me, I can put you on a good thing!"

"Which I've seen some of your larks before!" said P.-c. Tozer, with a suspicious grunt. "I 'ope none of you young rips ain't tryin' to play any tricks with me this time, or there'll be trouble for you, Master Fish."

"You're safe! This is the straight goods!" said Fish.

P.-c. Tozer nodded to Uncle Clegg and walked ponderously down the village street with the American junior.

"I guess you're all out for promotion, hey?" said Fish. "Waal, I got somethink that's going to earn you your stripes, as sure as a gun! I guess you're still fooling around about that burglary up at the school, ain't you?"

"Which we've got the case well in 'and!" replied Mr. Tozer pompously. "You leave it to the Force, Master Fish, and don't you be a-worrying of yourself about things that don't concern you!"

"Aw, can that!" said Fish unimpressed. "What would you say if I told you that I could put you on the guys that rustled that plate, right now?"

"Haw, haw, haw!" laughed P.-c. Tozer. "Which you're werry funny at times, Master Fish! You houghter be a comedian!"

"Oh, cut it out!" said Fisher T. Fish crossly. "I guess I ain't used to being cackled at by a cop in a one-horse show like this. What I'm telling you is true!"

"Which it's werry 'ard to believe!" "I guess I'm willing to prove it! You just listen, while I tell you!"

He quickly recounted the story of his afternoon's adventures.

"Waal, what are you going to do about it?" he demanded, when he had finished.

P.-c. Tozer scratched his chin reflectively.

"Which there'll be trouble if you and the other young rips are 'avin' a lark with me!" he said warningly. "It ain't wise to trifle with the Lore, Master Fish!"

"I ain't playing larks!" snorted Fish. "What do you take me for? I tell you this is absolutely the straight goods, and I want to know what you're going to do about it!"

"Ow many of 'em do you say there were?" asked P.-c. Tozer, somewhat reassured.

"Six!" answered the American junior. "And they all 'ad daggers?" asked the limb of the law anxiously.

"Waal, I dunno about that—one of 'em had, anyway! What do you figure on doing?"

P.-c. Tozer grunted.

"Which I s'pose you don't hexpect me to tackle 'em all single-handed, I 'ope!" he said sarcastically.

"I guess that's your business, not mine!"

"Owever," continued Mr Tozer, "I don't mind coming along to the Priory to 'ave a look round. If wot you've said is correct, I expect they've gone before now, and we can investigate. And I might say, if it turns out to be honly your idea of a little joke, your 'eadmaster will 'ear about it!" he added.

"I guess I ain't anxious to come along with you!" said Fish hastily. "I got an appointment up at the school in a few minutes!"

"Then you're going to miss that there appointment!" said P.-c. Tozer grimly. "You comerlong of me, young man, and if we don't find any of the coves you've been talking about, I'll comerlong of you to your 'eadmaster!"

"I guess I'd rather not!" said Fisher T. Fish desperately. "I guess I ain't above admitting the truth—I ain't anxious to meet any of those crooks again!"

"Don't you worry about them!" grunted Mr. Tozer. "You've got me with you this time! Which they won't dare touch you while I'm there!"

Fisher T. Fish groaned. He had his doubts about that!

"Look hyer, you old fool!" he said disrespectfully. "I guess I ain't risking my neck any more to-day, thank you! Why don't you phone to Court-field for help?"

"I ain't going to do anythink of the kind!" answered P.-c. Tozer stolidly. "I've got me doubts about this affair, Master Fish. If you ain't 'avin' a joke on me, it strikes me some hother person or persons, at present hunknown, are 'avin' a joke on you!"

Fisher T. Fish hadn't really bargained for another visit to the scene of his previous painful adventures, and he began to turn quite pale.

"Listen hyer!" he gasped. "I guess—"

"You come with me, Master Fish, and you'll be quite orlright!" declared P.-c. Tozer.

Fisher T. Fish made a sudden bolt, but to his surprise, found that P.-c. Tozer's fat hand, which had been resting lightly on his shoulder, suddenly gripped him and held him tight.

"Let up, you silly jay!" yelled Fishy furiously. "I guess—"

"You come to the Priory, along of me, and we'll see wot we can find!" said Mr. Tozer, and despite Fish's spasmodic struggles, the corpulent constable led him down the road, without any apparent difficulty.

The Priory was not a great distance from Friardale village, and although the progress of Mr. Tozer and the American junior was not particularly rapid, it did not take them long to reach the woods surrounding the scene of Fish's earlier exploits.

"Hyer, I guess I ain't going on any further!" said Fisher T. Fish wildly, as they started down the footpath leading to the old monk's cell. "I guess you can take the risk of being murdered, if you like! I ain't so keen on dying for the love of adventure!"

"Ark!" said P.-c. Tozer, suddenly releasing his prisoner. "Wot's that? Collar 'em!"

"Great Christopher Columbus! That's Wharton's voice!" cried Fisher T. Fish. "I guess—"

## THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

### Exit Detective Fish!

"COLLAR 'em!" The Removites' former captors swung round with startled faces as the familiar war-cry of the juniors rang through the woods.

An instant later six eager juniors were upon them, and, with oaths on their lips, the two cracksmen stood at bay.

Possibly the exigencies of their profession had accustomed them to sudden shocks; at any rate, the Removites did not take them quite so much by surprise as they had planned to.

Harry Wharton, who was the first to hurl himself on the foe, had his stick wrenched out of his hand, and the man who had been smoking the cigar which had indirectly released them when they previously met, brought it down on the Remove skipper's shoulder with sickening force, sending him reeling to the ground.

"Sock it into 'em!" gasped Bob Cherry, driving his clenched fist full into the face of the other man; and he gave a yell of triumph as the rascal staggered and fell. The man was not beaten, however. He plunged his hand into a hip-pocket, and when he withdrew it, Bob Cherry could see that it contained something that glittered.

"Look out!" yelled Bob. "He's got the gun!"

Frank Nugent swung his stick over his head and aimed it at the hand that held the revolver. There was a howl of agony from the cracksmen, and he dropped the revolver.

"Good man, Franky!"

"Now bowl over the other bounder!"

The "other bounder," however, evidently had different ideas on that subject. With a furious cry, he hit out right and left, scattering the juniors for a moment. Then he abandoned his fallen colleague, and raced away down the footpath at top speed, with two or

three of the Removites chasing after him.

"Stop him!" roared Bob Cherry, although there was nobody in sight at that moment.

The man was tall, and evidently a fairly good runner, and Bob saw that a few minutes at the same speed would enable him to make his escape.

As they turned the corner of the footpath, however, a portly figure which had previously been hidden by the trees came into sight, and Johnny Bull gave a shout of joy.

"Tozer!"

At the same moment the juniors spotted Fish, close behind the Friardale constable, and they gave another yell:

"Stop him, Fishy!"

"Stop thief!"

"Catch him, Tozer!"

P.-c. Tozer eyed the oncoming cracksmen somewhat dubiously, but he planted himself firmly in the middle of the footpath. Fisher T. Fish looked very apprehensive indeed, but when he saw that the man was carrying no revolvers or daggers, he also overcame his qualms and stepped up level with P.-c. Tozer.

"Stop, in the name of the lora!" roared P.-c. Tozer.

"Come on along, and I guess we'll knock you into the middle of next week!" added the American junior ferociously.

These injunctions, however, did not seem to deter the fugitive—in fact, he put on a decided spurt when he got within ten yards of his new assailants.

"Which you'd better stop!" shouted Mr. Tozer excitedly. "You 'ear me—stop!"

Crash!

The desperate man had evidently pinned his faith to his chance of bowling over Tozer and Fish by sheer force of momentum. As a matter of fact, it was his only possible means of escape, for the obstacles in the way of trees, bushes, and undergrowth on either side of the path made it imperative for him to stick to the path itself. When he crashed into the constable, however, he found that, to his undoing, he had underestimated the resistance that would be offered him. P.-c. Tozer was no light weight, and, in anticipation of the assault, he had braced his fat muscles up to a high tension.

Crash!

There was a terrific thud as the bulky policeman and the tall cracksmen came into violent contact and dropped to the ground, clasped in affectionate embrace.

Fisher T. Fish missed the crash, but seeing that the danger was past, he took an active interest in capturing the criminal. Jumping on top of the struggling pair, he began pommelling them both indiscriminately, and there were loud yells of pain from both as his bony knuckles met the cracksmen's chin and P.-c. Tozer's broad nose.

A moment later Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull and Frank Nugent came up, and disposed of the man's last chance of escaping.

"Where's old Wib's cord?" chuckled Bob Cherry, fixing an iron grip on the rascal's arm and helping the others to "sort him out," as Johnny Bull expressed it.

"They're tying up this merchant's pal with it!" answered Frank Nugent. "Let's go back to them."

P.-c. Tozer rose to his feet with many a groan and mopped his heated brow with a red spotted handkerchief.

"Which that was 'ot work!" he remarked. "Did I 'ear one of you young gents say you'd got another besides this cove!"

"You did!" replied Bob Cherry. "If you'll come with us we'll show him to you, Mr. Tozer."

"By gum! I reckon I did that rather neatly!" said Fish, as they led their captive back towards the Priory. "Did you galoots see me stop that crook—hey?"

"No, I didn't!" said Johnny Bull, with his customary, painful frankness. "I saw you funk it until Tozer had brought him down; then you piled in all right, when the danger of getting hurt was past!"

Fish sniffed.

"You're a fine sort of guy to talk about funk!" he sneered. "I guess you jays showed a yellow streak all right this afternoon, when those two johnnies came out at us!"

"Well, we're sorry we had to leave you, Fishy!" said Frank Nugent. "We had a pressing engagement just then. How did you get on?"

Fisher T. Fish lifted his prominent nose a little higher in the air.

"I guess you galoots ought to have seen me when they got me down there," he said. "There were six of 'em—all desperate crooks, armed to the teeth!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"They tried to scare me with daggers," went on Fisher T. Fish: "but I guess it takes more than cold steel to move me! I just laughed at the guys and defied 'em!"

"And did you lick the lot of 'em, Fishy?"

"Waal, not exactly!" admitted Fisher T. Fish. "They were a pretty big crush for one galoot to tackle on his lonesome, I guess. I reckoned I'd best be getting some help, so I hopped off and fetched Tozer along! Now I'm wanting to know what all this is about! Who is this guy we've just bagged?"

"Oh, merely one of the fellows who pinched the Head's plate!" said Bob Cherry carelessly.

The Removites did not explain the full circumstances of their capture, for the time being, and for a few minutes Fishy continued to boast of his exploits in the cell, in blissful ignorance of the real identity of those six robed and hooded individuals who had entertained him earlier in the afternoon.

After the two cracksmen had been secured, and the juniors' injuries attended to, however, Dick Rake had a whispered conversation with Wibley, as a result of which the latter crept off while Fish was not looking, and descended into the monk's cell again.

Two minutes later a weird figure, arrayed in the dress Fish knew so well, appeared before him, and Fish gave a yell.

"By heck! Hyer's one of 'em! Go for him, Bull! Cherry!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a howl of laughter from the juniors, and Fisher T. Fish stared at them in astonishment.

He looked at the newcomer again, and with a gasp saw him throw back the hood and reveal the cheerful face of William Wibley.

Then Fisher T. Fish understood.

"Wibley!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you—you—" stuttered Fisher T. Fish.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I guess that licks creation!" mumbled Fisher T. Fish, utterly beaten for once in his life. "Th-then I guess all the rest of you were in it, too!"

"How did you guess that, Fishy?"

"What a brain!"

"Jevver get left?"

"Tell us again how fearless you were in the face of death."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I guess you're a set of jays!" grunted Fisher T. Fish. "But what about that letter, then?"

"That was faked, too, you duffer!" said Harry Wharton.

"Then who in tarnation are these galoots?" demanded Fish, pointing to the two captives, who were now undergoing a cross-examination at the hands of P.-c. Tozer.

Harry Wharton explained what had happened after Fish's exit from the monk's cell, and Fisher T. Fish listened in great surprise.

"Waal, I guess you wouldn't have caught the other bird if I hadn't come back, anyway!" was his comment after the story had been told, to which the juniors replied with that ancient and classic monosyllable:

"Rats!"

P.-c. Tozer fairly rubbed his fat palms with joy when the juniors removed the sack containing the plate from the bush under which it had been hidden by them, and he could hardly refrain from gloating over his two captives. Without a doubt, it was the biggest capture P.-c. Tozer had ever had in his life.

"My heye!" he kept on muttering. "This is a good day's work, and no mistake! My heye!"

The juniors accompanied him to Courtfield Police Station, where Inspector Grimes listened with surprise and considerable satisfaction to his subordinate's report. Then the worthy constable and the seven Removites hired two taxis and returned post-haste to Greyfriars.

Their arrival attracted no little attention in the Close, and quite a crowd of juniors gathered round as they pulled up. There were various exclamations of surprise at the bulky sack which Harry Wharton & Co. carried in, and the crowd was not slow to guess that this indicated that the Head's plate had been found.

"Is it the Head's plate?" asked Skinner.

"Tell me all about it, Wharton!"

"I say, you fellows, I know something about it!"

"Where are the giddy burglars, Mr. Tozer?"

"Where did you find it?"

The Removites, however, brushed past their questioners.

"All in good time, my infants!" said Harry Wharton. "We'll let you know all about it after we've seen the Head."

To say that Dr. Locke was surprised when the little crowd entered his study is putting it mildly. It was some little time before he could understand what had happened.

"Bless my soul!" he said as they entered. "Wharton—"

"Which these young gents and myself have succeeded in recoverin' your plate, sir," announced P.-c. Tozer, touching the peak of his helmet respectfully.

"Dear me! What wonderful news!" gasped the bewildered headmaster. "But how—"

The juniors put the sack gently on the floor, and Dr. Locke bent down and examined the articles inside it.

"Which I 'ope it's the right stuff, sir?" said Mr. Tozer.

"Yes, indeed! All these articles are mine," said Dr. Locke, his face posi-

tively beaming with delight now. "This is more than I dared hope for. I am delighted!"

His glance rested on Fish.

"But surely that story you told me this afternoon was not—"

"Nope, sir!" said Fish, without waiting for him to conclude the sentence. "I guess I was fooled, sir. I leave it to Wharton to put you wise to what's happened."

Wharton laughed and described the events of the afternoon, and Dr. Locke listened, with twitching lips, to his account of the capture of Fisher T. Fish.

"You have done very well indeed, my boys, and this service will not be lightly forgotten, I assure you!" said the Head, as the Remove skipper finished. "I intended to reprimand you for your practical joke on Fish, but the whole affair has had such a lucky termination that I can afford to forget that. I will grant you all an extra holiday next week."

"Thank you, sir!" chorused the Removites joyfully.

"Now, if you will leave me to talk with Mr. Tozer I will see you again later."

The juniors filed out of the study with very cheerful faces.

Outside, Bob Cherry performed a Charleston, in his delight.

"A whole holiday, you chaps! I wish something like this would happen every Saturday!"

"And now, what about tea?" suggested Johnny Bull. "Burglar hunting has made me simply ravenous!"

And there was a chorus of "Hear, hear!" from his chums.

Two days later Fisher T. Fish came up to the Famous Five, after morning school. He held a pencil in one hand and a notebook in the other, and a thoughtful expression on his hatchet face.

"I guess I want a word with you galoots," he said.

"Stony!" said Bob Cherry, briefly.

"I guess I'm repeating a business offer I made to you galoots a few days back," went on Fisher T. Fish, ignoring that remark. "I'm figuring on starting out big in the detective line, and I'm hyer to sell five-dollar foundation shares in 'Fish's Efficiency Detective Bureau.'"

"Oh, help!" gasped Johnny Bull, faintly. "Haven't you got tired of that stunt yet?"

"Guaranteed interest ten per cent per annum," said Fisher T. Fish, in a business-like voice. "What can I put you guys down for?"

"You can put me down for nothing," answered Wharton promptly.

"And I suggest that we return the compliment, and put Fisher T. Fish down for nothing!" said Frank Nugent brightly.

"Hear, hear!"

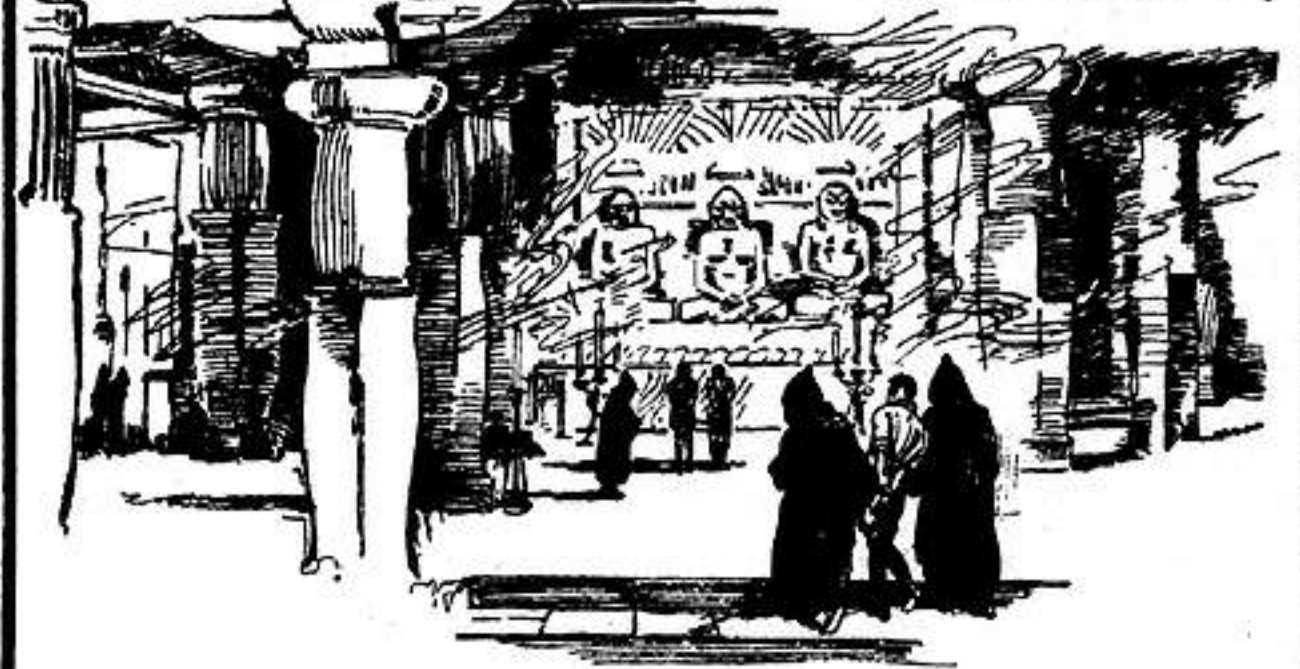
Fisher T. Fish closed his notebook rather hurriedly, and made a bolt, but before he could get away five pairs of hands grasped him, and he was whirled in the air and put down for nothing—with a bump—three times!

And that was the last the Famous Five ever heard of Fish's Efficiency Detective Bureau.

THE END.

(Next week's long complete story of Greyfriars deals with Vernon-Smith, who has forsaken the straight and narrow path and gone back to his old rascally ways. Yet you'll like him in this story—"The Bounder's Win!"—for Smithy is a rare opportunist, and he certainly makes capital out of the chance adventure which comes his way.)

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**The Long Lost Heir!**

**L**ADY HORNER tried to remember all she recalled of the boy. How once she had gone for a walk in the woods one evening, and had wandered too far. Realising that she was very tired, she had sat down on the fallen trunk of a tree, and in doing so her stick had slipped from her hand. She had tried to pick it up, but found it was just beyond her reach, and that her strength was not equal to the task. And at that moment the boy had appeared with a great dog at his heels.

She must have been forgetting the passage of time just then; she knew that with the failings of old age it often happened that she muddled the present and the past—for she had thought for a moment it was her boy who was dead. She remembered now that she had called him "Richard," and how surprised he had been.

She glanced now towards the bed. She could see Jack's face framed against the pillow, and as she looked at it she did not wonder why she had called him Richard that evening. It was amazing she had not recognised the likeness since, for he was the living image of his father. She tried to rise from her chair, but her strength was not equal to the task. She wanted to take him in her arms. He was her Dick's son—her grandson—given back to her when she had thought her life as empty as an unfurnished house. And at that moment the door opened and Mary came in.

She had a tray in her hand on which there rested a steaming bowl of chicken broth. She gave one glance at her mistress, and then hastily placing the tray on a table, hurried to the old lady's side.

"Oh, my lady, aren't you well?" she exclaimed, in a voice of concern.

Lady Horner looked up at her. The tears were streaming down her wrinkled cheeks, but she was smiling.

"Mary, do you know if people could die of happiness?"

It was a curious question, and for a moment Mary thought that her mistress had taken leave of her senses.

"I'm not quite sure that I understand what you mean, my lady. Is your ladyship very happy?"

For answer the old lady pointed to the photograph lying on the floor.

"Look at that, Mary."

The girl obediently picked the photograph up and looked at it. An expression of amazement crept into her face.

"Why, my lady, it's the very spit of the gentleman in the picture downstairs in the morning-room!"

"It's my son Richard. He was killed as a sergeant in France, Mary, and that boy is—"

"Meaning Jack?" Mary interrupted as her mistress paused.

"Is Sir John Horner, Mary—my grandson?"

"Oh, my lady!" was all Mary could say, and, remembering that she had once kissed the back of Sir John Horner's neck, she flushed crimson.

Squall at that moment rose, and went to the bedside. Some instinct had told him that Jack was waking, and even as he rested his head on the blankets, Jack stirred, rubbed his eyes, and sat up.

"Why, Squall, old fellow," he stammered.

The next instant Jack Horner became conscious of the old lady being helped across the room on Mary's arm. He stared at them both a little bewildered. Where was he? He knew the old lady, and he remembered the pretty parlourmaid Mary. But what was all this? The old lady had flung her arms about him and was caressing him.

"You're Dick's son," he heard her say. "Oh, my boy, I've found you at last!"

Jack couldn't make head nor tail of it until Mary adroitly placed the photographs of his father and mother in her mistress' hand. Then the lad was told the whole story—how the old lady's son Dick had run away from home—how they had lost sight of him—how he had been killed in France—and how they had discovered that he had been married, but had not for a long time known that he had left a child behind him.

"And, Jack, I had a visit this morning from a Mr. George Parker. He was your uncle by marriage, I understand. He produced a cap he had found in a cave, where there were bloodstains, and he told me that you were dead."

Jack grinned cheerfully at that statement.

"I did lose my cap in that cave, but if there were bloodstains there they weren't mine."

Jack then explained how Squall had defended him against the members of Black Michael's gang. The old lady started at the name.

"Black Michael? That's curious. Michael was the name of the gentleman who would have inherited the property if you hadn't been alive."

Jack's face grew grave.

"He was here talking to you that night, ma'am, when you gave me some fruit and cake. I couldn't help hearing

**THE PREVIOUS CHAPTERS.**

*JACK HORNER, who has run away from his rascally guardian, finds himself pursued from place to place by a sinister individual who goes by the name of*

*BLACK MICHAEL. This consummate scoundrel knows that Jack is heir to a valuable property and a title. Should he die, Black Michael automatically inherits both title and estates. Knowing nothing of these things, Jack, accompanied by his faithful wolf-dog, Squall, flies to London and seeks sanctuary with*

*BILL BOWKER and his good wife, who own the monkey-boat Emerald. After a series of thrilling escapes from the clutches of Black Michael, who in despair takes poison and dies, Jack goes to Weald Manor and meets, for the second time, a lady who turns out to be Lady Horner. From photographs in Jack's possession Lady Horner discovers to her great surprise that the youngster is the long-lost heir to the Horner estates.*

(Now read on.)

him talk. That was why I ran away without saying good-bye or thanking you."

Jack then told how, after leaving the house, he had overheard the plot between Black Michael and Brilliant Sing, and how he had frustrated the Chinaman's murderous attempt. There was so much to tell, so many questions to answer, such an amazing story to relate, that the old lady would have forgotten that Jack was still an invalid had not Mary reminded her of the fact.

"Sir John's chicken broth will be getting cold, my lady."

"Bless my soul, so it will!" the old lady exclaimed, with a smile. "I'm beginning to think I'm not fit to be a grandmother."

Jack's adventures were over. At any rate, his adventures as the friendless waif who had run away from his cruel guardians. He was Sir John Horner, Bart., of Weald Park, a personage with a large number of thousands a year. But he didn't recognise himself in that role. It did not turn his head, or make him puffed up. He even asked his friend, Mary, the parlourmaid, not to call him Sir John, and Mary, with mischievous dimples in her cheeks, said: "As 'ow, if her ladyship weren't about, she would call him Jack, and make no bones about it." As if to confirm that promise she kissed him for the second time on the back of his neck.

"I always said you were a dear boy that first time you come here, when I gave you that cake and fruit, and if you are Sir John, it can't be helped."

Jack was not allowed up for two days. A doctor and a specialist were attending him, and he would have had a nurse had not Mary begged to be allowed to retain that post—a request Jack backed up; and there seemed no end to the attentions that were showered upon him, some of which, after the free life he had led, he found rather cramping. But he was allowed to write letters.

One, at her request, he dictated to his grandmother. It was to his uncle and aunt, and he told Mean-as-Mud Parker that they had been very unkind to him, and that they had treated him with great cruelty. He declared that he felt no malice against them, but that he had no intention of paying them any money for what they had done.

Jack received no reply to that letter.

But there were replies to the letters he wrote in his own big, boyish scrawl.

"Dear Bill,—I am staying at this place with Squall. And I am quite happy and comfortable. Will you please come and see me. I want Mrs. Bowker to come specially. And perhaps you could get Dirk to come, too, if he's not too busy. I'm writing separately to Jim, who you must bring with you. My love to Mrs. Bowker.

"From Squall and myself.

"Yours obediently,

"JACK,"  
It didn't sound a bit like a baronet's letter. Nor did the one he wrote to Jim Snow bear any hint that he was entitled to put a red hand on his notepaper.

"Dear Jim,—I want you ever so much to come down and see me here. A friend of mine has given me a quid to pay your fare. You'll find it enclosed. So do come. There's so many things I want to talk about to you.

"Your affectionate friend,

"JACK."  
(To be concluded in our next issue.)

## "HERLOCK SHOLMES AT ST. SAM'S!"

(Continued from page 16.)

drastick one of blowing it open with dynamite. Consequently—

"He must have pinched the keys of the safe from my pocket!" cried the Head.

"Tut, tut! You are two ready to believe the worst of the man, Doctor Birchmatt. We cannot condemn him out of hand without first interviewing him. If Lickham can explain how this Cup, which we have just found, came into his possession, I shall be satisfied. Let him be summoned forthwith."

The master of the Fourth was promptly sent for, and Herlock Sholmes questioned him very closely regarding the Cup. Mr. Lickham's explanation was quite satisfactory. The Cup, he said, was his own property. It had been presented to him when a boy at Borstall, for regular attendance. As for the Cup which had been stolen from the strong-room safe, Mr. Lickham hotly denied having had anything to do with it.

In vain the Head sought to blacken Mr. Lickham in the eyes of the detective. The Form master quite satisfied Herlock Sholmes that he was as innocent as a new-born babe.

"We must look elsewhere for the thief," said Herlock Sholmes, when Mr. Lickham had departed.

And his steely eyes were glood upon Doctor Birchmatt. For some moments he stood thus, with his fourfinger pressed thoughtfully against the side of his nose, regarding the Head fixedly. The Head quaked vizzibly, and slunk towards the door.

"Eggscuse me, Mr. Sholmes!" he blurted out hurriedly. "I must be off now. I have to take my thyroid gland eggstract."

And the Head hurrid away, leaving Herlock Sholmes in Mr. Lickham's bed-room—and in a brown study.

THE END.

(Be sure you read: "The Shaddow of Suspishun!" next week's amusing yarn of St. Sam's. It's a fair corker!)

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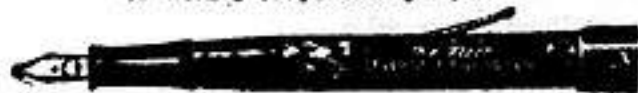
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"TWICE two!"  
The Head's voice wrapped out like a pistol-shot.  
"Four, sir!" answered Burleigh of the Sixth.  
Doctor Birchmull sighed wearily.

"Oh, Burleigh—Burleigh, you'll be the death of me!" he said. "How many times have I tried to drum it into your wooden noddle that two and two make five? Fancy a grate lout of seventeen not knowing his twice times table! Why, I knew mine before I was breeched. Putting two and two together, Burleigh, I have come to the conclusion that you are the biggest blockhead in the Form!"  
"Oh, sir!" gasped Burleigh.

Morning lessons were in progress at St. Sam's, and the Head was taking the Sixth at mathematics. He was finding his pupils even more trying than usual. Here was Burleigh, the kapin of the school, who was going up to Oxbridge at the end of the term, calmly telling the world that twice two made four. Any fool knew that they made five. Doctor Birchmull knew it himself.

The ignorance of the Sixth was truly appalling. Even Swotter, who had won his Bally-ole Skollership, and his Articulation Exam, and a whole heap of honours besides, had just informed the Head that two and six made eight, when the veriest idiot knew that they made half-a-crown! What were you to do with a duffer like that? What the Head had done with him was to make Swotter stand in the corner with a dunce's cap on his head. Doctor Birchmull's shifty green eyes glared at the Sixth.

"There will have to be the dickens of an improvement in this Form," he said sternly. "I shall put my foot down with a firm hand, and make you pull up your socks! If things don't alter they will remain eggactly as they are. Do you here?"  
"We here, sir," mermured the seniors respectively.  
The Head nodded grimly.



Herlock Sholmes puffed away like a house on fire, and the fumes of the opium pervaded the study, causing the Head and Doctor Jotson to yawn drowsily.



The World-famous Slooth & his friend Dr. Jotson "Drop In" to Investigate the Mystery of the Silver Cup.

By Dicky Nugent.



"We will now switch on to jography," he said. "This is a subject in which I have coached you very thoroughly, so I eggpect I shall find you more iggerment than ever. Tall-boy!"  
Tallboy lumbered to his feet. "What is the capital of Germany?"  
"Fool! Dolt! Nunnskull! Can you not answer a simple queeshun like that? Why, a fag in the First could tell me what is the capital of Germany, yet you, a grate, hulking lout of seven-teen, stand there silent, condemned out of your own mouth as an iggerment!"  
Tallboy fairly gasped.  
"I suppose I shall have to help you out," said the Head wearily. "You ought to be ashamed of yourself, having to be prompted. The name begins with B. Does that convey anything to your half-witted mind? B—B—B—Go on, Tallboy! Finish it off!"

Tallboy was trying to find his voice. The Head had quite bewildered him. Doctor Birchmull shrugged his shoulders impatiently.  
"Since you are so dense, Tallboy, I will help you a little further. B-E-It there, I've told you half the name!"  
Tallboy found his voice at last. "Berlin, sir!" he said.  
The Head gave a horrified gasp. "Berlin?" he almost screamed. "Berlin the capital of Germany! You will be telling me next that London stands on the River Tems! Really—really, Tallboy, I shall have to send you back to your kindergarten!"  
Tallboy, in common with the rest of the Sixth, blinked at the Head in blank perplexement.

"But—but Berlin IS the capital of Germany, sir!" stammered Tallboy. "The capital of Germany, as all the world knows, is Bernal!"  
"My hat!" gasped Burleigh. "Then the map must have been altered just recently, sir."  
"Not at all, Burleigh. The map has not been altered. Stands Scotland where it did? Yes. Stands Bernal where it did? Not half! It was, it is, and it will continue to be the capital of Germany. You may write down, Tallboy. And you will sit out a hundred times, I am a hopeless duffer at jography."

Tallboy sat down like a fowler in a dream. And the lesson continued. The Head seemed to be fairly on the warpath that morning. He doled out lines and lickings on a lavish scale to the unhappy Sixth-Formers. Every time they gave a right answer the Head jumped on them. So, after a time, they started to answer wildly and incorrectly, and then the Head's manner changed completely, and he complimented his pupils on their wonderful nollidge.

By the time the science lesson arrived the Head was his old jolly self. He started to eggplain to the Sixth the laws of gravity, and they larded so heartily at his lively Salises that the laws of gravity were broken again and again.  
"It was Sir Izick Newton," said the Head, "who first discovered the laws of gravity and how they worked. He was raising an orchard one day, as a small boy, and a large apple suddenly fell from a tree and landed on his cranium. While young Newton stood rubbing his nut, he started to wonder what had caused the apple to fall. Why did it not remain stationary in mid-air? Or why did it not descend upwards instead of ascending downwards?"  
"And why didn't it, sir?" asked Burleigh.  
"Ah!" said the Head, with a wink. "That was what puzzled young Newton. It was a fair tesser. But he brought his powerful boyish intellect to bear on the matter, and at last he discovered that the apple fell because it was heavier than the air. The air could not support it; so down it came. If I were to seize you round the waste, Burleigh, and hurl you into mid-air—"  
"You jolly well couldn't, sir!" said Burleigh stoutly.  
"P'r'aps not," smiled the Head. "But supposing I was a Hercules, and flung you into space, you would ornamentally conform to the laws of gravity and come down again!"  
"Go hon, sir!"



The farmer slooth—in a brow study.

"Anything that goes up," said the Head, "impressively, must come down."  
"What about the cost of living, sir?" queried Tallboy. And there was a chuckle from the Sixth.  
"Even that, Tallboy, will come down in time, though not in our time," said the Head. "But you see my point. If a man jumps out of an airyplane in a parachute he does not remain suspended in mid-air. He observes the laws of gravity, and, like Newton's apple, down he comes!"  
Crash! Clatter! Clump!  
No sooner had the Head spoken than there was a terrific crashing and smashing overhead, which caused the Sixth-Formers to jump out of their skins almost.

There was a large skylight in the ceiling of the Sixth Form room, and through this skylight, like a bolt from the blue, came a human figure. It descended through space with the velocity of a bullet, and landed with a sickening concussion on the floor of the Form-room. A shower of glass followed it.  
"Oh, my sainted aunt!" gasped the Head, in blank amazement. "Where did you come from, baby dear, out of the everywhere into hear?"  
The unexpected viziter sat up on the floor and smiled. He was wearing the harness of a parry-chutist. The envelope of the parry-chute was lodged in the skylight, and a long rope dangled down to the floor. The Head, in his eggstement, tripped over the rope and went sprawling. He sat up and stared at the stranger, and the stranger sat up and stared at him. In fact, it became a sort of staring contest.

"Who the—what the—?" gasped the bewildered Head.  
The stranger smiled serenely. It was quite possible that his back had been broken by the fall. But if this was the case, he did not show the least sign of discomfort. He nodded jocularly to the Head.

"Doctor Birchmull, I perceive?"  
"That's me!" said the Head. "But—but what—?"  
"I have just dropped in—"  
"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Sixth.  
"To investigate the matter of a Silver Cup which has disappeared, I am Herlock Sholmes, the world-famous detective."  
At the mention of that name—that name which had struck terror into the hearts of the boldest criminals—the Head went white to the lips. He jumped to his feet as if he had suddenly reserved an electric shock. He tugged at his long beard with twitching fingers. His eyes rolled in their sockets. But outwardly he was calm and composed, and showed not a trace of the agitation he was feeling.  
"Her-her-Herlock Sholmes!" he stuttered.

"You will pardon my somewhat unorthodox method of arrival, Doctor Birchmull. I came down from London by airyplane, as the case seemed to be urgent. I intended to land in the quad, but I must have jumped a second or so too soon, and consequently came through this skylight."  
"You are hurt, Mr. Sholmes?" cried the Head anxiously.  
"Pah! The merest trifle," said the grate detective. "In my profession, doctor, we learn how to take hard knocks. My career has been crowded with minor mishaps. I have been riddled with the bullets of despairing criminals. I have been hurled from dizzy heights, and buried in dismal depths. I have been broozed, humped, biffed, bashed, and generally malle-treated. But I am still alive to—er—tell the tale. A cast-institution, doctor, has pulled me through."  
"And now," said Herlock Sholmes, "I must go, and seek my old friend Doctor Jotson. He has accompanied me, as usual, on my mission. But Jotson, although a champion as in most respects, is a better parry-chutist than what I am. He jumped after I did, so I presume he landed safe and sound in the quadrangle. Let us go and investigate."  
The detective rose to his feet. Just as the Head was about to accompany him to the door a startling thing happened. A powerful gust of wind blew the envelope of the parrychute through the skylight. It came sailing down, and settled upon the Head, enfolding him like a cloak.  
"Gug-gug-gug!" spluttered the Head, struggling wildly to free himself.  
"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the seniors. "It really seemed as if the mantle of the profit Elijah, had descended upon the devoted head of Doctor Birchmull!"  
The more the Head struggled, the more hopelessly enmeshed he became. And he would probably have suffocated, had not Herlock Sholmes rushed to the rescue.  
The detective renched away the envelope, and the Head staggered clear, panting and gasping, his face the color of a beetroot.  
"Stop larking, you young rascals!" he snarled, shaking his fist at the hilarious Sixth.  
"This way, Mr. Sholmes!"  
The detective, still wearing his harness, accompanied the Head into the School House steps and started to scan the sky. Herlock Sholmes produced his powerful microscope for that purpose.  
"Do you see anything of my friend Jotson?" muttered the detective.  
"The Head gazed intently. "I can see what appears to be a large and ferocious bird, perched in one of the tree-tops," he said.  
"Eh? That is no bird," said Herlock Sholmes, peering through his microscope in the direction indicated by the Head. "That is the worthy Jotson! He has made a somewhat unfortunate landing. He is impaled, by his clothes, on a spiky branch, and is struggling to free himself."  
There was a loud wail from the unhappy Doctor Jotson.  
"Sholmes! My dear Sholmes! I am in a dreadful predicament—fairly up a tree, in fact!"  
The detective made a megalomane of his hands, and uttered a reassuring shout.  
"Keep cool, my dear Jotson! Help is at hand. I will soon have you safe and sound on terror firmer. I am sending Doctor Birchmull for a chopper, and we will fell the tree in a (Continued on next page.)

Herlock Sholmes went down on his hands and knees, and commenced his investigations, with the aid of a powerful magnifying-glass.



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