

"ONE AGAINST THE SCHOOL!"

THIS WEEK'S AMAZING STORY OF THE CHUMS OF GREYFRIARS!

No. 1,008. Vol. XXXI.

Week Ending June 11th, 1927.

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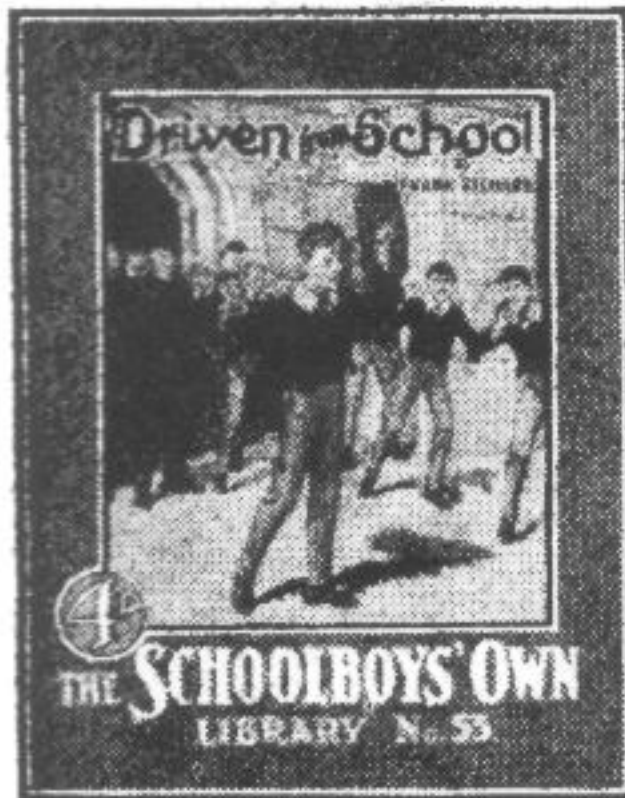
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SILVER PAPER!

IT'S surprising how the habit of saving silver paper for the benefit of our hospitals has caught on just recently, and from the numerous letters I receive it is apparent that Magnetites are doing their little bit in this good cause with great enthusiasm. Several of my chums have written and asked me where to send their collection of silver paper. They should post it to the Ancient Order of Druids, 70, High Street, Clapham, London, S.W.

JU-JITSU!

In reply to Ajax and "Johnny," of Preston, the standard work on Japanese wrestling is issued at 2s. from 1, Vine Street, New Oxford Street, London.

THE BIKE!

A correspondent sends me an indignant protest about the assertion that the jigger was out-of-date. Who made that assertion? He was right off the rails, whoever he was! Why, there are more bicycles than ever on the road these days, and the number increases with every season. It must be remembered, too, that the bike can go where the motor-car can not. It's a pleasant exercise, is cycling, and it's within the reach of everyone's pocket. Whilst on this subject I would like to rub in the fact that you cyclists should see that the brakes are in good order before setting out on a spin. Safety first in this direction is not to be sneered at, you know.

FROM CANADA!

A Canadian chum tells me that he experiences great difficulty in getting his copies of the "Schoolboys' Own Library." That shouldn't be. If he gives a definite order to his local newsagent the difficulties will disappear.

TOM REDWING!

Quite a number of readers are getting anxious about Tom Redwing since he left Greyfriars. "Is he coming back?" is the general query. I've posted these letters on to Mr. Frank Richards, with a few added remarks, and I think I can promise these "pals" of Tom Redwing that the fisherman's son will return to Greyfriars one of these days. How's that?

Next Monday's Programme.

"HUNTED DOWN!"

By Frank Richards.

This is the final story in the short series of Vernon-Smith yarns, dealing with the Head's guest, Captain Spencer, and the mystery of the Lantham Bank robbery. You'll enjoy it no end!

"THE CURSE OF LHASA!"

This story of the Tibetan monasteries and the sinister Kang Pu gets more interesting each week. If any of you chaps miss next Monday's long instalment you'll regret it—for thrills it can't be beaten.

"LAID BY THE HEALS!"

By Dicky Nugent.

At last Herlock Sholmes and his pal, Dr. Jotson, arrive at the conclusion that Dr. Birchmell is the giddy culprit who pinched the silver cup, but that doesn't worry old Birchmell. He manages to wangle out of the consequences. You'll like this shocker by young Nugent, chums. Order your MAGNET early. Chin, chin!

YOUR EDITOR.

PUNISHED FOR SPEAKING THE TRUTH! That's the extraordinary position the Bounder of Greyfriars finds himself in, for he knows that his Headmaster's guest is a scoundrel of the worst type, yet no one at Greyfriar believes the Bounder. Indeed, the Head regards his story as a "malicious slander," and punishes him accordingly!

DETENTION ROOM



One against the School!

A New Long Complete Story of Harry Wharton & Co. and the Bounder of Greyfriars.

By Frank Richards.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Smithy is Warned!

"WHAT'S the worry?" Skinner of the Remove asked the question, with a grin.

Herbert Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars, was moving restlessly about the study.

It was time for prep, but Smithy was thinking of anything but prep.

With his hands in his pockets, and a moody frown on his face, Vernon-Smith moved about the study, as if unable to keep still.

Evidently there was some problem on the Bounder's mind—a problem that he did not seem able to solve.

Skinner had come up for prep, and he was seated at the table with his books; but he seemed more interested in the Bounder than in his work. For some time he watched him in silence, with a covert grin, the Bounder seeming quite unconscious of his presence. But Skinner spoke at last.

"Eh, what?" Vernon-Smith came to a stop and looked at Skinner.

"What's the jolly old worry?" smiled Skinner.

"Nothing I'm goin' to tell you," answered Vernon-Smith.

Skinner's grin broadened.

"I fancy I know," he remarked.

"Rubbish!"

"I should say it's about even bettin' whether you get a Head's floggin', or the boot, old bean," said Skinner. "No wonder you're wearin' a worried look. I should feel worried if I were standin' in your shoes just now."

Herbert Vernon-Smith stared at his study-mate.

"What are you burblin' about?" he inquired politely. "I've nothin' to be afraid of that I know about."

"You cut detention this afternoon," said Skinner. "You come back an hour late for callin'-over. There was a hold-up at Lantham—a bank was robbed by some johnny who got away with a lot of plunder. That put it into your head to spin about the biggest yarn you've ever spun, Smithy. Where you got the

nerve from beats me. A fellow who would tell the Head a tale like that—"

"Like what?" snapped the Bounder.

Skinner chuckled.

"You've told the Head that you came on the bank robber in the wood near Lantham, and that that was why you were late for call-over. You hid in a tree because he had an automatic."

"Well?"

"Smithy, old man, if you're bunked from Greyfriars you should try writing for the films," said Skinner. "That's the kind of stuff they want. You fairly took the fellows' breath away when you told them in the Rag that you'd spun the Head that yarn. Is it gammon, or did you really hand out that stuff to the Head?"

"I did."

"Talk about nerve!" said Skinner. "Lots of nerve! But I don't see the sense of it. If the Head believed you he—"

"He did."

"I suppose he must have, as he let you off a licking. But don't you see that it can't stop there? If the Head swallows it he is bound to tell the police about it."

"I believe he's telephoned to Lantham Police station already," said the Bounder.

"Well, then, that means a policeman coming to see you about it."

"Quite."

"Mean to say that you'll have the nerve to tell the same story to a police inspector?" demanded Skinner.

"Word for word," said the Bounder.

Skinner whistled.

"Well, it's jolly serious if you do," he said. "You may be able to stuff a schoolmaster, but you can't stuff a policeman. They're a bit too wide."

"It doesn't occur to you that my little tale may be true?" asked the Bounder sarcastically.

"Well, not exactly."

"It is true, you ass!" said Vernon-Smith. "I got into the tree in Lantham Chase to keep clear of Wingate of the Sixth, who was after me for breaking detention. I kept there in case Win-

gate was still hanging about. That was how I came to see the bank robber."

"Go it!" grinned Skinner.

"He changed his clothes and took off his disguise—a beard and horn-rimmed spectacles—and hid them in the hollow tree. He shoved in a bag of plunder after them."

"Good!"

"After he had cleared I got down from the tree and fished out the bag, with more than eight hundred pounds in it."

"Not eight thousand?" asked Skinner.

"No."

"Not eight million?"

"No."

"Might have made it a lump sum," said Skinner. "Eight hundred is too modest. But seriously, Smithy, did you tell the Head all that?"

"All that, and more."

"Well, it's you for nerve!" said Skinner. "Can't you see that the Head will have to report it to the police if he believes it? Why, he will telephone to the bank manager and tell him you know where the money is, if he swallows the yarn. The bank johnny will come hopping over here to see you."

"I expect him to come about as fast as a taxicab will bring him," said Vernon-Smith.

"Phew!"

There was a knock at the door of Study No. 4, and it opened, and Harry Wharton, the captain of the Remove, looked in. Wharton's face was exceedingly grave. Wharton was not on very friendly terms with the Bounder, but he was concerned about him now.

"Smithy," he said, "you're here? I say, you're wanted."

"Who wants me?"

"The Head. I say, a gentleman has come in a taxi, and has gone in to see the Head," said the captain of the Remove. "Mauly knows him by sight, and he says it's the manager of the Lantham and County Bank."

There was an explosive chuckle from Skinner.

"Then the Head's told him!" he exclaimed. "He's come for the quids!"

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You're for it now, Smithy, and no mistake!"

Vernon-Smith laughed.

"Smithy," said the captain of the Remove, "I heard, of course, what you told the fellows in the Rag. If you've spun the Head that yarn—"

"I have," said Smithy.

"Well, it will be jolly serious if you've pulled the Head's leg and made him fetch the bank manager over here for nothing," said Harry. "We're not exactly friends, Smithy, but I wish you'd take a little friendly advice. If you've been stuffing the Head, for goodness' sake own up at once and don't spin any more yarns. It's not safe."

"Thanks for the tip," said the Bounder, and he left the study.

Wharton followed him down the Remove passage to the stairs, and Skinner, deeply interested, quite forgot prep and followed on. Skinner was not a credulous youth, and really Smithy's story of the happenings of that eventful afternoon was a very startling one. Skinner, certainly, did not believe a word of it, but in that he was not alone. Not another fellow in the Remove believed a word of it, either, but all the Form wondered at the Bounder's nerve in spinning Dr. Locke such a yarn.

Quite a crowd of fellows awaited Vernon-Smith at the foot of the staircase. All of them knew that the bank manager from Lantham had arrived, and was now with Dr. Locke in his study. They expected to see the Bounder showing some signs of uneasiness, at least. His cool and confident manner puzzled them.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's Smithy!" said Bob Cherry. "Feeling a bit nervous, Smithy?"

"Not at all."

"I say, Smithy, put some exercise-books in your bags!" chuckled Billy Bunter. "You'll want 'em!"

"For goodness' sake, Smithy, don't tell the Head any more whoppers!" said Frank Nugent.

Unheeding, the Bounder walked on to the Head's study. The Remove fellows followed him as far as the corner of Head's corridor. They saw him tap at Dr. Locke's door, and enter, and saw the door close behind him.

"Now look out for squalls!" said Skinner.

—4—

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Something Like a Sensation!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. waited.

More and more juniors joined the crowd at the corner of Head's corridor.

Interest in the Bounder's fate was very keen.

That the amazing story he had told was true, not one fellow supposed for a moment. The black sheep of Greyfriars was too well known for his unscrupulous methods, when he was dealing with the school authorities. Among his Form-fellows the Bounder was generally "square" enough; but he seemed to regard any deception as justifiable in dealing with the masters. There was a lawless kink in his nature which set him against authority as a matter of course. He had broken detention that day, and broken bounds, and earned a severe punishment. It was known well enough that the Bounder would not hesitate to tell any unscrupulous yarn to evade his just punishment, and the fellows believed that he had told an even

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"steeper" yarn than usual, that was all.

But that yarn, if there was no truth in it, could scarcely be kept up now that the bank manager had come to Greyfriars to see him. It was really impossible for the Bounder to "get away with it," as Skinner expressed it. He was booked for a flogging at least, and the only question really was, whether he would be flogged before the Lantham gentleman left, or after.

"We shall be listening to the band in a minute or two," opined Skinner. "That bank johnny has been brought over here for nothing, and he will be wild. The Head will let him see Smithy flogged."

"The flogfulness is sure to be terrific!" remarked Hurree Janset Ram Singh. "The compassion for the esteemed Smithy is great."

"Oh, rot!" said Johnny Bull. "If he's told the Head a pack of lies, he jolly well ought to be flogged, and jolly hard, too!"

"Well, he hasn't told him the truth, that's a cert," said Peter Todd.

Harry Wharton knitted his brows in thought.

The Bounder's story was startling enough; but the captain of the Remove was beginning to wonder whether there might be some truth in it, after all. It was like Smithy to tell any reckless story to pull wool over the eyes of his headmaster; but it was very unlike him to tell a story that would be disproved at once when investigation was made.

"Blessed if I can make it out," said Harry. "Of course, it might have happened just as Smithy said."

"It might!" grinned Bob Cherry. "And it mightn't! With the odds on the mightn't."

"Too thick," said Hazeldene. "These things happen on the films. Not off them."

"Well, there was a hold-up at Lantham," said Harry. "Some of us were on the scene, and heard the shot fired that wounded the bank cashier, and saw the man getting away."

"I say, you fellows, it's rather a pity I wasn't there," remarked Billy Bunter. "If I'd been there, I'd have run—"

"No need to tell us that," said Bob. "We know you'd have run, Bunt, and jolly fast, too."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I mean, I'd have run after the bank robber—"

"After he'd gone, do you mean?"

"No, I don't!" roared Bunter. "I'd have run after him and collared him. I shouldn't have been afraid of his pistol, like you fellows!"

"Why, you fat idiot!" exclaimed Bob Cherry indignantly. "We did run after him, only he was on a bike—"

"He was off like lightning," grunted Johnny Bull.

"Any excuse is better than none!" said Bunter loftily. "If I'd been there I should have rushed him—"

"Well, you've rushed everybody in the Remove, at one time or another, and you've rushed Mrs. Mible at the tuckshop," said Bob. "But I fancy that bank robber wouldn't have let you rush him, Bunter."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly ass, I don't mean that—I mean—"

"Never mind what you mean, old fat man; just dry up," said Peter Todd. "I keep on telling you that you talk too much, Bunter."

"Oh, really, Toddy—"

"Shut up, Bunter! I say, I can't hear the Bounder yelling yet," said Squiff. "It doesn't look like a flogging."

"Oh, the Bounder always takes his gruel quietly!" said Skinner. "He won't make a sound. But he will look pretty sick when he comes out. I must say he's asked for it this time."

"Begg'd for it," said Snoop. "I can't understand Smithy spinning such an absolutely footling yarn. Even Bunter could have told a better story than that."

"Oh, really, Snoop—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's the Head's giddy guest!" murmured Bob Cherry, as a slim and rather handsome young man, limping slightly with his left leg, came up to the corner from the direction of Masters' room.

It was Captain Spencer, an old boy of Greyfriars, now the guest of Dr. Locke.

The captain paused, and raised his eyebrows in surprise, at the sight of the army of juniors swarming at the corner of the passage. So close to the Head's study juniors were not supposed to congregate.

"Something on, what?" asked the captain, with a smile.

"Yes, sir," said Skinner. "Flogging or bunking, we don't know which yet."

Captain Spencer looked grave.

"I'm sorry to hear that," he said.

"Well, Smithy's fairly begged and prayed for it," said Skinner. "We're all sorry, of course. It's Vernon-Smith of the Remove, sir. He's with the Head now, and the bank manager."

"The bank manager?" repeated Captain Spencer.

"Lantham & County Bank," said Skinner, "where the hold-up was this afternoon, sir. I dare say you've heard of it."

Captain Spencer nodded.

"Yes, I have heard it spoken of," he said. "A very daring affair—though the bank robber has probably been caught by this time. Some of you boys saw the outrage, I believe."

"Yes, sir," said Harry Wharton. "Half a dozen of us were in Lantham at the time, and, as it happens, just outside the bank. We saw the man go in, and he rushed through us when he got away."

"Quite an exciting experience for you," said the captain.

"Smithy knows more about it than that, according to his story," grinned Skinner. "Knows the man without his disguise, and knows where to put his hand on the loot."

Captain Spencer started.

"How does that happen?" he asked. "That is very extraordinary!"

"Very — if true!" said Skinner. "Only Smithy's gas, of course. And he will take it all back now he's up before the Head."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here he comes!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

The door of the Head's study, along the corridor, opened. A plump gentleman in a frock-coat came out, and Herbert Vernon-Smith followed him. Some of the fellows knew the plump gentleman by sight; it was the manager of the Lantham bank. To the amazement of the juniors, he was treating Smithy with politeness and respect. They simply stared, as the bank manager came down the corridor with Vernon-Smith; and they stared still more as they caught some of the Lantham gentleman's words.

"... Greatest possible service. We owe you our thanks, our deepest thanks. Master Vernon-Smith! You have saved the bank from a loss of eight hundred and twenty-five pounds ten shillings. I was greatly astonished to receive your headmaster's telephone message, that a boy of this school had recovered the



The Bounder did not rise when Captain Spencer entered the study, but the captain did not seem to notice his lack of politeness. He stood leaning one elbow on the mantelpiece, and looked down at Smithy with an agreeable smile. "You must excuse my buttin' in like this," he said, "but the fact is I heard of your exploit, Master Vernon-Smith, and it struck me as extremely interesting. I should like you to tell me about your little adventure." (See Chapter 3.)

money stolen from the bank this afternoon. I could, in fact, scarcely believe my ears. Indeed, only my knowledge of Dr. Locke prevented me from supposing that it was a hoax."

Harry Wharton & Co. looked at one another.

Skinner fairly gasped, with his mouth open.

The Bounder's story was true; that was certain now. The bank manager's words could mean nothing else.

"Well, my only hat!" stuttered Bob Cherry.

"The only-hatfulness is terrific!" ejaculated Hurree Jamsot Ram Singh. "The esteemed and ridiculous Smithy was telling the truthfulness!"

"Well, this beats it!" said Peter Todd blankly.

The Bounder gave the amazed juniors a vaunting glance. Then he saw Captain Spencer standing with the Removites, and his eyes fixed on the captain's face. There was a hard, derisive grin on the Bounder's face as he fixed his eyes on Captain Spencer. So strange was his expression that many of the juniors followed his glance and looked at the captain also.

Eric Spencer's handsome face was almost white.

He looked like a man who had received a sudden, sharp shock—so sharp and sudden that he had not been able to brace himself to meet it.

But as so many glances—one of them grimly mocking, the others wondering—

fastened on him, the captain pulled himself together. He strolled away towards the Head's study, as if pretending to go in to Dr. Locke, now that his caller was going. But he did not enter the study; he walked on past the door.

Vernon-Smith smiled.

He walked to the big door of the House with the Lantham bank manager and went out with him to the waiting taxi. A dozen fellows followed on, in a state of breathless excitement. The plump gentleman shook hands with great cordiality with the Bounder before he stepped into the taxi; and as he sat in the taxi he leaned out to shake hands again, with a beaming smile upon his plump face. Obviously, he was so extremely pleased with the Bounder that he found it difficult to testify how very pleased he was.

The taxi whirred away at last, leaving the Bounder standing on the House steps, with a crowd of fellows round him.

He turned to go back into the House. "Smithy!" exclaimed Skinner.

"Then it was true!" Harry Wharton ejaculated.

Vernon-Smith laughed lightly.

"Quite!" he answered.

"You—you—you got back the loot that the bank robber bagged in Lantham!" exclaimed Johnny Bull.

"Just that."

"And it wasn't merely a yarn, after all!" said Frank Nugent.

"I told you it wasn't."

"Hem! Yes, but—"

"The butfulness is terrific!" grinned Hurree Jamsot Ram Singh. "The esteemed Smithy does not always stick to the excellent truth."

The Bounder laughed again and went to his study. He left the Remove fellows in a buzz of amazement.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Captain Spencer Wants to Know!

HERBERT VERNON SMITH had gone to his study, but not to prep. He did not think of giving any time to prep that evening. Much more weighty matters were on the Bounder's mind. He threw himself into the armchair and took a cigarette from his pocket, but did not light it. He sat with a deep line in his brow, thinking—thinking. There was a problem in Smithy's mind—one that he had to solve, but which he had not yet been able to solve.

An impatient look crossed his face as Harold Skinner came in, soon afterwards. The Bounder did not want company just then. He wanted to think. Skinner gave him a very curious look.

"Well, you've beaten Banagher this time, Smithy," he said. "You've brought down the house, and no mistake!"

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The Bounder nodded without speaking. He knew that he had made the sensation of the term; and he was glad to know it. The Bounder dearly loved the limelight. But he was thinking of other things now.

"What's the worry now?" asked Skinner. "You're all right with the Head, and Mr. Quelch will have to swallow his wrath. He was as mad as a hatter at your breaking detention, but he can't do anything now. You're a giddy hero—of sorts. You've roped in no end of kudos. Nothing to wrinkle your brow about now, is there?"

"Lots," said the Bounder briefly.

"I don't see it," Skinner sat down at the table and yawned as he drew his books towards him. "I say, aren't you going to do any prep?"

"Blow prep!"

"Quelch will rag you in the morning," warned Skinner. "He's bottled up now, but he will break out again at the first chance. You've fairly got the old scout's rag out."

"Let him!"

"Oh, let him, if you like," said Skinner. "I'd give the stuff a glance or two if I were you, though."

"Rot! We've got a visitor comin'."

"You've asked somebody to supper?"

"Oh, no. I'm expectin' Captain Spencer to call in."

Skinner laid down his pen, turned in his chair, and stared direct at the Bounder. He was utterly astonished.

"Captain Spencer?" he repeated.

"Yes."

"The Head's guest?"

"Yes, ass!"

"You expect him to butt into a junior study—and during prep, too?" exclaimed Skinner.

"Just that."

"Why on earth should he?"

"To see me," answered the Bounder calmly.

"You don't know him, do you?"

"Not in the least."

"Ever spoken to him?"

"Never."

"I suppose you're pulling my leg, then," said Skinner. "I don't see the joke. Captain Spencer can't be coming here. I don't suppose the Head would care to have his guest butting into junior studies, especially during prep. You don't know him, and I don't know him. Why should he come here?"

"Wait and see," grinned the Bounder.

"Oh, rot!" said Skinner testily. And he turned to his Latin again.

But Skinner's prep was destined to be interrupted once more. There was a footstep outside a few minutes later, and a tap at the door. Skinner spun round as the door opened and stared at the handsome face of Captain Spencer looking in.

"Is this Master Vernon-Smith's study?" asked the captain pleasantly.

"Yes," gasped Skinner. "He's here."

"May I come in?"

"Certainly, sir!"

Captain Spencer entered Study No. 4. The Bounder did not rise. He sat in the armchair and looked coolly and steadily at the handsome, rather hard face of the young man with the limp. Captain Spencer did not seem to notice his lack of politeness. He stood leaning one elbow on the study mantelpiece and looked down at Smithy with an agreeable smile.

"You must excuse my buttin' in like this," he said. "But the fact is I have heard of your exploit, Master Vernon-Smith, and it struck me as extremely interesting. A very extraordinary thing,

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in fact. I should like you to tell me about your little adventure."

Skinner blinked at the captain. The visit was explained by those few words; but it was odd enough that the Head's guest should come to the study, all the same. He had never spoken a word to Herbert Vernon-Smith—could not have known him even by sight, and it would have been much more natural for him to speak to Mr. Quelch or to the Head if he felt curious about the matter. But what staggered Skinner more than anything else was Smithy's fore-knowledge that the captain would come to the study. How had Smithy known that?

As in a glass darkly, Skinner seemed to see something behind all this, something that he could not understand. And the sarcastic smile on the Bounder's face added to that impression. Smithy was not only lacking in respect to the Head's guest, but he seemed to desire to make his lack of respect quite pronounced in his looks and manner. Eric Spencer did not notice it—or did not seem to notice it. But it was plain enough for the least observant to notice.

Vernon-Smith did not immediately reply to the captain's remarks. He watched the young man with a sarcastic smile, that was all. But as the captain waited Smithy spoke at last.

"You're very good, sir; but it's hardly worth tellin'."

"I think you're mistaken there, my boy," said the captain genially. "It appears to me a most extraordinary exploit for a schoolboy."

"Not at all," said Smithy.

"Is it an actual fact that you have recovered the money looted from the Lantham Bank this afternoon?"

"Yes, that is a fact."

"The bank robber hid it somewhere, I suppose, and you found it?" asked Captain Spencer.

"Something like that," said the Bounder.

Skinner eyed the Bounder. Smithy had told Skinner most of the details, and the rest of the Remove knew the story more or less. Why he should not care to tell the Head's guest, was a mystery to Skinner. But evidently the Bounder did not choose to do so.

"Did you actually see the man?" asked the captain.

"Well, yes, I saw him."

"How very interesting! What was he like?"

"Oh, his description's fairly well known," said Smithy. "A man looking about sixty, with a grey beard, and horn-rimmed spectacles."

"You told me that that was the disguise he had on," said Skinner.

"Oh, quite! I believe most people thought that the johnny was in disguise," said the Bounder carelessly.

"He was so spry in gettin' away, that he couldn't possibly have been as old as he looked."

"Well, well, an extraordinary adventure," said the captain, with a cold glint in his eyes at Smithy, though his lips still smiled. "You have told this to your Headmaster, of course."

"Oh, yes!"

"Surely he will communicate with the police?"

"Naturally."

"Then you will be able to aid the police in doing their duty."

"I hope so," said the Bounder lightly.

"Especially if you had a glimpse of the bank robber without his disguise?" suggested the captain.

"Yes, especially in that case," said Smithy.

It seemed as if he were seeking to

force the captain to ask him a direct question. If so, he succeeded.

"Did you see the man without his disguise, Master Vernon-Smith?"

"Yes," said the Bounder, with his searching eyes fixed full on Eric Spencer's face.

But there was not a sign to be read there, that Smithy's answer affected the young man in any way.

"That should be very useful information," said Captain Spencer. "You will be able to describe the man."

"Quite accurately."

"The police will be very grateful, I imagine, for such assistance. It should be a great help to them."

"I've no doubt about that."

"But you have told them nothing so far?"

"I've reported the matter to my headmaster. He will report it to the police, and I shall see Inspector Gray from Lantham when he comes over," said the Bounder.

"Quite an interesting experience," said the captain smiling. "Well, I must not delay you any longer. I see that I have called at a busy time."

And with a nod and a smile to the juniors, Captain Spencer strolled out of Study No. 4. Skinner closed the door after him, and then looked at the Bounder, puzzled and curious.

"The Head's guest seemed jolly interested, Smithy."

"He does," assented Smithy. He glanced at the study window, glowing red in the sunset. "Nice evening for a bike ride."

"Eh? We can't go out after lock-up."

"Captain Spencer can go out when he likes."

"I should think his limp would rather be in the way of biking," said Skinner.

"He's got a 'game' leg, you know."

"I don't think that will stop him. I'll lay you ten to one in doughnuts that he's gone to borrow a bike from some Sixth Form man for a ride."

"I don't see how you could guess, if he has. And why should he?"

"Because there's no train to Lantham now."

"You think he's going to Lantham?"

"I know he is."

"What utter rot," said Skinner. "You're talking out of the back of your neck, Smithy. I can't make you out."

The Bounder laughed.

"Will you take my bet—that he's gone to borrow a bike for a ride?"

"I jolly well will!" said Skinner, with emphasis. "You can't possibly know if he has."

"Done, then."

"I'll jolly soon find out," said Skinner.

And the puzzled Skinner left the study. He came back in about ten minutes, with utter wonder in his face.

"Your win, Smithy," he said. "He borrowed Wingate's jigger, and he had to get Gosling to unlock the bikeshed for him. Look here, Smithy, how did you know?"

"That's telling," said the Bounder, with a laugh. "I'm a giddy magician, you know. You owe me a doughnut."

And leaving Skinner in a state of absolute perplexity, Herbert Vernon-Smith sauntered out of the study.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Smithy Seeks Advice!

HARRY WHARTON and Frank Nugent had finished prep in Study No. 1, and were about to go down to the Rag, when Vernon-Smith looked in at the half-open door.



"Do you think it's up to you to manage this 'ere school, Master Wharton?" said Gosling wrathfully. "I'll tell you what I think," said Wharton cheerily. "I think you're a rusty, crusty, old codger, and that you talk too much—much too much!"
(See Chapter 6.)

"Busy?" he asked.

"Finished!" answered Harry. He coloured a little. "Smithy, I'd better say I'm sorry I doubted what you told us—but—it sounded so steep—"

"My dear man, I'm not offended," said the Bounder coolly. "You know I'd spin the beaks a yarn if it served my purpose. It happened to be the truth I told. Quite by chance, I assure you."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"I want to ask your advice, Wharton," went on the Bounder. "It's a rather important matter—a problem that's got me beat. We're not friends—"

"We're not enemies, I hope."

"Anyhow, you're Form captain, and a Remove fellow in trouble and tribulation has the right to come to you for your fatherly advice."

"Go ahead," said Harry, laughing. "Good advice is kept on the tap in this study. Any old thing."

The Bounder glanced at Nugent rather expressively.

"All right—I'll clear," said Frank good-humouredly, and he left the study and closed the door after him.

Wharton waited, a little uneasily. He did not want any confidences from the Bounder, and he would have preferred Nugent to remain. Vernon-

Smith read his thoughts, and smiled sarcastically.

"I'm not goin' to talk about myself, and let you into the secret of any shady scrapes," he grinned. "Nothin' of that sort."

"All serene," said Harry. "Go ahead."

"About that hold-up at Lantham," said Smithy. "When I told the Head the story, I hadn't seen Captain Spencer. I've seen him since—once in the Rag, and also when he came to my study a short time ago."

Wharton stared blankly.

"What has Captain Spencer to do with it?" he asked.

"Lots! He's the bank robber."

"Eh!"

"The bank robber."

Wharton stared and then frowned.

"If that's a jest, Smithy, it's in rotten bad taste," he said. "Captain Spencer is the Head's guest, and an Old Boy of Greyfriars. You can't make jokes like that about him."

"I'm not jokin'."

"Then what the thump do you mean?" demanded Wharton impatiently. "Trying to pull my leg? You don't expect me to swallow that, do you?"

"Do you think the Head would believe it if I told him?"

"Of course not."

"What would he do, do you think?"

"Lick you for your dashed impudence, I suppose. You're not thinking of playing the goat like that, I suppose?"

"I don't know what to do," said the Bounder frankly. "If anyone told me such a story, I shouldn't believe it. Only I happen to know that this is true, because I can believe my own eyes. It's not much use telling the Head, if he will turn it down; but can I keep it secret? There's the giddy problem that's been worrying me ever since I saw Captain Spencer in the Rag."

"You don't really mean—"

"I do."

"You believe that Captain Spencer is the man who held up the bank at Lantham!" exclaimed Wharton. "Seriously?"

"I know he is."

"What utter rot!"

"Let me tell you about it," said Vernon-Smith. "I was doggo in a tree and the bank robber hid his plunder in that very tree, which had a hollow in the trunk. He hid his disguise there. Naturally, he took it off to hide it. I saw his face quite clearly. I watched him all the time from above and made

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a note of his looks—every giddy feature. I knew that I should know him again anywhere, if I saw him. When Captain Spencer came into the Rag you could have knocked me down with a feather. I knew him at once!"

"You mean it?"

"I'm prepared to swear it in a court of law, if necessary," said the Bounder quietly. "You know I'm no fool, Wharton. I've got good eyesight, and a good memory for faces. Captain Spencer's face isn't one that you see every day, either. I know he's the man!"

Harry Wharton could only stare at the Bounder. Smithy's statement took him utterly by surprise.

"You must be dreaming!" he said at last. "Captain Spencer is an Old Boy of Greyfriars."

"Old Boys of Greyfriars have gone to the dogs before now," said the Bounder cynically.

"Possibly. But the Head knows him; he's asked him here as a guest. How could he be a bad character?"

"The Head doesn't know him so well as he thinks," grinned the Bounder. "For instance, he's taken in by the jolly old captain's limp, which is quite artistically done. But when I saw him in Lantham Chase he had no limp."

"That alone knocks your belief on the head. Captain Spencer got his limp in the War."

"And got over it since," said the Bounder. "He keeps it up in private life for his own reasons. All the more distinction between him and his other character—the secret one."

Wharton shook his head.

"You don't believe me?"

"I can't. I believe that you think so, of course, but I can't believe you're right. It's impossible!"

"Not only possible, but true," said Vernon-Smith. "I know the man as well as I know my face in the glass. After all, the Head knows little of him. I heard him tell Prouty that he hasn't seen Spencer for years. He takes him on trust as an old Greyfriars man. Look here, I've heard that you fellows came back from Lantham in the same train with him."

"That's so."

"What sort of clobber was he wearing?"

"Clothes?"

"Yes; the bank robber in Lantham Chase changed into light grey tweeds, with a tweed cap, and a Greyfriars tie. I watched him all the time."

Wharton started.

"Captain Spencer was dressed in light grey tweeds when he got on the train at Lantham," he said slowly.

"Doesn't that settle it? He was dressed in dark clothes when he came into the Rag; he changed after he got here. I never knew he had worn tweeds coming here, excepting that I saw the bank robber change into them."

"A coincidence. Lots of men travel in tweeds."

"There are other coincidences. What was he doing at Lantham at all?" asked the Bounder. "He came from a greater distance. We know he doesn't live at Lantham. Why did he break the journey there at all?"

"I suppose he had some reason."

"Another coincidence, what?" grinned the Bounder. "And Bob Cherry mentioned something about his baggage coming on to Courtfield by an earlier train."

"Yes; I remember that. He must have got out at Lantham and left his baggage in the train to come on and wait for him at Courtfield. Nothing very extraordinary in that."

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"Only another coincidence," said Smithy. "He couldn't carry a big suitcase with him when he held up the bank. There are too many coincidences about this man Spencer. I'll tell you some more. He saw me with the bank manager in Head's corridor, and that was his first news that his loot had been taken. Did you see his face? I did."

Wharton started again. He remembered that strange, white, startled look on Captain Spencer's face.

"Another coincidence?" chuckled the Bounder. "I can tell you, too, that he came to my study and asked me to spin him the yarn."

"Well, he might be interested."

"Oh, quite! And when he was gone I offered Skinner ten to one in doughnuts that he was gone to borrow a bike."

"For what?"

"To cut across to Lantham before the police get there and take a squint at the hollow oak in Lantham Chase," said the Bounder. "He may hope to find some of his loot left there; and, anyway, he would want to remove the disguise he stacked up there; he wouldn't want the police to find it. There might be some clue in it. Anyhow, he certainly would want to know exactly what had happened at the hollow oak. I felt sure of that, and sure that he would want a bike to get across to Lantham; the trains are over now. So I offered Skinner ten to one in doughnuts."

"You'll lose."

"I've won!" said the Bounder coolly. "Skinner went along to find out, and found that Captain Spencer had borrowed Wingate's bike."

"Oh!" exclaimed Harry Wharton, quite taken aback.

"Does that make it clear?"

"It's impossible!" said the captain of the Remove. "I can't get it down, Smithy! An Old Boy of Greyfriars—the Head's guest! Impossible! You saw somebody like him. It's impossible!"

"I wanted your opinion and your advice," said the Bounder quietly. "So far as I am concerned I know that Spencer is the man. But am I to say so to the Head, and to the police-inspector who is coming over from Lantham?"

Harry Wharton was silent.

"You think the Head won't believe a word of it?"

"I know he won't!" said Harry.

"And the police johnny?"

"I don't know; but I imagine not."

"Shall I tell them? I want your advice as head of the Form."

There was a long pause.

Wharton hardly knew what to say. The Bounder's statement seemed to him utterly wild, and he could not feel absolutely certain that Smithy believed it himself. There was always the possibility that the mocking, sardonic Bounder was pulling the long bow, from a sheer love of mischief. That Eric Spencer was the bank robber of Lantham Wharton did not dream of believing for a single moment.

Smithy watched the captain of the Remove with a sarcastic grin.

"Well," he said at last, as Wharton did not speak, "I'm entitled to advice from the head of the Form."

"Yes, if you want it," said Harry slowly.

"What's the tip, governor?" grinned the Bounder.

"If you really believe what you say, Smithy, I suppose you ought to tell the Head," said Harry at last. "Dr. Locke will tell you whether to mention your belief to the police-inspector. If you believe it—"

"If!" sneered Smithy. "So you doubt even that?"

Wharton coloured.

"Sorry!" he said. "But you're such a queer customer, in some ways, Smithy. It would be like you to spin a yarn, laughing in your sleeve all the time."

"Not a yarn like this."

"Well, perhaps not. I suppose you believe what you say, though I'm quite sure you've made a mistake. I don't think there's any doubt at all about that. But if you believe it tell the Head."

"That does it," said Vernon-Smith. "He won't believe me, and he may lick me for cheek. But I'm bound to tell him, you think?"

"Yes, I think that."

"It's settled."

The Bounder left the study and went downstairs. Harry Wharton followed him slowly. Wharton went to join his friends in the Rag, and he noticed that Vernon-Smith went in the direction of Dr. Locke's study. The Bounder, apparently, meant to tell Dr. Locke what he had told Wharton, and the captain of the Remove wondered what effect it would have on the Head. His brow was very thoughtful as he went into the Rag.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

The Vials of Wrath!

MR. QUELCH, the master of the Remove, sat in his study with a deep frown on his brow.

Seldom had the Remove-master of Greyfriars been in so bitter a temper as he was that evening.

He was thinking of Herbert Vernon-Smith, who had defied his authority that day—and defied it successfully.

There had been rebellious spirits in the Remove before, but it was the first time Mr. Quelch had been defeated in a contest with a member of his Form.

The defeat rankled deeply.

A long course of insolence and insubordination had reached its climax that afternoon when the Bounder had coolly walked out of detention, regardless of Mr. Quelch and his commands.

A severe flogging from the Head would have rewarded him, and might have brought him to his senses, as Mr. Quelch considered it. But luck had befriended the rebel of the Remove. The Head had felt that he could not punish the junior who had been instrumental in recovering the large sum of money taken from the Lantham and County Bank by the "hold-up" man. Mr. Quelch agreed with him, with his head, but not with his heart. The Bounder's escape from punishment, his vaunting triumph, added to the anger and humiliation of the Form master.

The Bounder's exploit condoned his offence, but the offence remained. If the junior had shown any regret or respect it would have been different, but he had shown none. He had almost openly enjoyed his triumph. Mr. Quelch knew that the Remove fellows talked of the Bounder as a sportsman, who cared not two straws for masters or prefects; he knew that his resentment was no secret from his Form. It was a painful position for a Form master who had

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always ruled his Form with an iron hand.

So bitterly angry was Mr. Quelch that probably he would have been pleased had the Bounder's story turned out to be false. But even the Remove master had had to believe a story that was backed up by the production of the stack of notes taken from the bank at the hold-up.

No doubt Mr. Quelch was glad that the stolen money had been recovered, that a member of his Form had proved so useful in the cause of law and order. But he was not feeling glad, as he sat in his study, busy with exam papers, but allowing his thoughts constantly to stray from his work and dwell upon his defeat and humiliation.

There was a tap at the door and Trotter, the page, looked in.

"The Head wishes to see you, sir."

"Very well."

Trotter retired.

Mr. Quelch rose slowly from his table. He did not desire to see the Head, but the wish of his chief was a command. He supposed that Dr. Locke desired to speak on the subject of Vernon-Smith and the hold-up, and he was tired of the subject—more than tired. Owing to that affair Vernon-Smith would be more and more in the limelight. He would be wanted to make a statement to the police; he would be an interesting figure to all the Remove, and Mr. Quelch would have been very glad to crush him back into his proper position of a junior schoolboy of no particular importance.

The Remove master made his way slowly to Dr. Locke's study. He was not surprised to find Vernon-Smith there. But, rather to his surprise, he found the Head frowning, and the Bounder looked dark and bitter. Apparently the hero of the hour was already in disgrace with the headmaster, and Mr. Quelch's gloomy brow lightened a little as he noted it. Praise and impunity, in Mr. Quelch's opinion, were only likely to make the reckless scapegrace more reckless and insolent than ever; what he needed was punishment—or at least, stern repression.

"Mr. Quelch," said the Head, in a rather agitated voice, "you must hear what Vernon-Smith has just stated to me. Is it your opinion, Mr. Quelch, that this boy is capable of making an utterly unfounded statement for the sole purpose of causing trouble and discomfort, and making himself of importance?"

"Undoubtedly," said Mr. Quelch.

"I can hardly bring myself to repeat the absurd and senseless statement that Vernon-Smith has made reflecting upon an honourable gentleman, once a Greyfriars boy," said the Head. "It will appear to you incredible, Mr. Quelch, that this boy has accused Captain Spencer of being the unknown ruffian who robbed the bank at Lantham."

Mr. Quelch almost staggered.

"Impossible, sir!"

"He has said so, Mr. Quelch."

Wrath and indignation gathered in the Remove master's brow.

"Then, sir, I recommend a severe flogging, to teach this insolent boy to refrain from such reckless slanders!" he exclaimed.

The Bounder smiled cynically.

He had not expected to be believed; he had known that the Head could not believe such an accusation against the man he had admitted to Greyfriars as a guest, at least without the strongest proofs. And the Bounder had no proof but his own statement that he recognised the man.

Yet, knowing what he did, the

Bounder had little choice but to speak. He had hesitated, and he had taken the unusual course of asking advice from the captain of his Form. But he had known all the time that he was bound to speak out. He could not have concealed his knowledge of the fact that the bank-robber was at Greyfriars. Believed or unbelieving, the statement had to be made.

The Head was shocked, pained, indignant. Mr. Quelch's feelings were more bitter still. In this reckless, senseless slander, as he regarded it, he saw a justification for his dislike of the Bounder. He looked on Vernon-Smith as a reckless young rascal, puffed up with his recently acquired importance, and ready to make any wild statement to enhance his importance.

The Bounder had had to speak out; but he had had to take risks in doing so. It was quite on the cards that he might be flogged for making such a statement.

He stood cool and composed, facing the two angry and indignant masters. Frowning brows had no terrors for the hardy Bounder.

"I hardly know how to deal with the boy," said the Head, after a long pause. "Inspector Craven is even now on his way to Greyfriars to see Vernon-Smith and take down his statement. Undoubtedly the boy saw the bank robber at close quarters, as he has told us. He can give a description of the man. I must allow him to see Inspector Craven."

Mr. Quelch nodded.

"That can scarcely be prevented, sir. But surely even this reckless and bad-hearted boy will not dream of making such an accusation against your guest to the official police."

"I trust not!" said the Head, glancing at the Bounder.

"If you forbid me to do so, sir, I shall not do so," said Vernon Smith coolly. "I am bound to obey my headmaster. But the responsibility will be yours, sir."

"What—what?"

"I believe that I am bound by law to tell the police all I know, in such a matter, sir."

"All you know, undoubtedly," said Mr. Quelch. "But not all you may surmise in a wicked and unchecked imagination."

"Precisely," said the Head.

"If I describe the man I saw, sir, his description will be that of Captain Spencer."

"I hardly think that the boy is actually lying, merely to create mischief," said the Head. "No doubt the man he saw may bear some resemblance to Captain Spencer. He is not an uncommon type."

"He is the same man, sir."

"Nonsense! You saw some young man of about Captain Spencer's age and general appearance—there are hundreds such in every town."

"I saw Captain Spencer."

"Silence!"

The Bounder stood silent.

"I cannot understand why this reckless boy has picked on Captain Spencer," said Mr. Quelch. "The gentleman is a stranger to him; he cannot have roused Vernon-Smith's malice by any offence, real or imagined. Had that been possible, I should have known what to think. You have not forgotten Vernon-Smith's attempt to blacken the boy Dallas when he was here, sir; an utterly unscrupulous accusation against a boy who was proved innocent, but who had offended him."

"I remember!" said the Head.

"But your guest, sir, cannot be supposed to have given any offence to this wretched boy. I can only suppose that the accusation is made from the sheer love of causing a sensation."

"It would appear so," said the Head. "If you should venture to repeat your statement outside this study, and cause a scandal in the school, Vernon-Smith, your punishment will be very severe."

"I have already told Wharton, of my Form, sir. I asked his advice about telling you."

"I am assured that Wharton did not believe you," said Mr. Quelch. "Neither would he have advised you to tell such a wild story to your headmaster."

"He advised me to tell the Head, if I believed it myself, sir," said the Bounder.

"Quite so. But you cannot persuade
(Continued overleaf.)

'You can
taste the
cream'



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me that you believe the story yourself," said the Remove master sternly.

"It is true, sir."

"Nonsense!"

"The whole thing is inexpressibly painful, Mr. Quelch," said the Head. "Captain Spencer is to remain my guest here for some weeks. Imagine his feelings if a hint of this should reach his ears."

"I am amazed at the boy's reckless audacity, sir. You will, of course, command him not to repeat this wicked story to anyone."

Dr. Locke paused.

"I am bound to tell Inspector Craven, sir," said Vernon-Smith. "I shall, of course, obey Dr. Locke if he forbids me to mention Captain Spencer's name. But I am bound to tell the police that I have seen the man since he hid the money in Lantham Chase, and that I know where he is to be found. If Inspector Craven disbelieves me, sir, the matter ends. But he has a right to know what I know."

Mr. Quelch's eyes glittered.

"Do you set yourself up against your headmaster's authority, Vernon-Smith, as well as against your Form master's?"

"I have my duty to do, sir."

"Duty! You, the most undutiful and insolent boy at Greyfriars, dare to speak here of duty!" exclaimed the Remove master angrily. "Be silent."

"The position is very difficult, Mr. Quelch," said the head slowly. "I cannot forbid the boy to make a statement to the police, if he believes it himself. If he believes it, I fear that it shows that he has a bad and suspicious mind. Nevertheless—"

"After all, sir, Inspector Craven is an experienced man," said the Remove master. "He will know how much importance to attach to a wild and foolish statement made by a schoolboy who desires to attract attention and cause a sensation."

"That is true," assented Dr. Locke. "I shall, then, allow you to make this statement to the police inspector, Vernon-Smith, in my presence, if you persist."

"Thank you, sir!"

"At the same time, I shall warn the inspector that you are known to be untruthful and unscrupulous," added the Head sternly. "Mr. Craven may be here any minute now. Remain here until he arrives."

"Very well, sir."

At the same moment, the sound of a car was heard without.

"I have given instructions for the inspector to be shown in the moment he arrives, Mr. Quelch," said the Head. "Doubtless that is he. Please remain, Vernon-Smith, for the last time, I warn you to think carefully before you make a statement that cannot be recalled."

"Certainly, sir."

A few moments later, Inspector Craven of Lantham was shown into the study.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Great News for Bunter!

HARRY WHARTON left the Rag and the House. After what he had heard from Vernon-Smith, the captain of the Remove was in no mood for the cheery gossip of the Rag. He did not, and could not, believe what the Bounder had told him; but it was borne in upon his mind that Smithy himself believed it, and he wondered what would come of it.

A number of circumstances, trifling in

themselves, seemed to bear out the Bounder's belief; certain it was, at least, a singular coincidence if the captain had hurried out of Greyfriars immediately after hearing the Bounder's story. A man with a "game" leg would not naturally be expected to go on a bicycle spin, and it would be rather out of the common for a guest of the headmaster to borrow a machine from the bike-shed. But Wharton was not at all sure that it really had occurred, and that the Bounder's imagination had not been at work to help him with his remarkable theory. It was easy enough to ascertain; and Wharton walked down to the bike-shed with that intention.

The bike-shed was unlocked, long after the hour at which it was usually locked up for the night. Wharton entered and struck a match. He knew Wingate's machine well enough—a handsome Sunbeam. The glimmer of the match showed that the stand was vacant—Wingate's machine was gone! The captain of the Remove knew that Wingate himself was in the House; he had seen him talking to Gwynne at the corner of the Sixth Form passage. Evidently, therefore, Wingate himself had not taken the machine out.

With a very thoughtful brow, Wharton went down to Gosling's lodge. The Greyfriars porter had the key of the bike-shed.

Gosling looked out of his window as Wharton knocked. He did not look amiable. At that hour of the evening, William Gosling naturally expected to have done with "dratted" boys.

"Ho!" said Gosling. "You! Well?"

"The bike-shed's unlocked, Gosling," said Harry.

"You've come 'ere to tell me that?" inquired Gosling sarcastically. "Well, I unlocked it meself, Master Wharton."

"Wingate's machine is gone!"

"Is it really?" said Gosling, still sarcastic. "Any law agin Captain Spencer borrrerin' it if he so wishes?"

"Not at all!" said Harry, laughing.

"So you've come along and disturbed a man arter a 'ard day's work to tell him that, 'ave you?" said Gosling. "Did you think a blinking burglar 'ad got in and pinched the machine? Did you think I'd leave the bike-shed unlocked for burglars? Do you think it's up to you to manage this 'ere school, Master Wharton?"

"I'll tell you what I think, Gosling," said the captain of the Remove cheerily. "I think you're a rusty, crusty old codger, and that you talk too much—much too much! I think—"

Slam!

The window slammed before William Gosling could hear any more of the Remove's thoughts.

Harry Wharton walked away smiling, but his face grew grave as he went back to the House. He knew now, beyond doubt, that Captain Spencer had borrowed Wingate's machine and gone out on it. Possibly the fine evening had tempted him to go for a spin; as an old Greyfriars man, he might be keen to look around ancient haunts of his boyhood. Still, it was unusual, and it gave some colour to the Bounder's theory. And it was odd, too, that a man with a "game" leg should be given to cycling. A man who still limped from a wound received in the War, would not have been expected to use a push-bike. Was that limp, as the Bounder declared, only a pretence? Anyone wondering who the disguised bank robber might possibly be, certainly would not have thought of a man with a limp.

But, if it was so, the captain was a

man leading a double life—a life of pretence and false appearance. In that case, the Lantham affair could hardly be his first exploit. He was a thief by profession, in secret, while outwardly leading the life of an old public school man. The thing was possible—such things had happened. But—

But it was much more likely that the Bounder had been deceived by some chance resemblance, aided by his desire to get into the limelight by making a sensational statement.

Wharton went back into the House, but not to the Rag. A little later a car came up the drive, and he saw Inspector Craven, of Lantham, conducted to Dr. Locke's study. Would the Bounder have the nerve to make his statement to the Lantham inspector? What would be the outcome, if he did? Wharton was deeply interested, as well as uneasy and troubled. He remained near the doorway, and a quarter of an hour later, Inspector Craven came back to his car. He did not come alone. Herbert Vernon-Smith was with him.

The inspector's cool, keen face expressed nothing. But there was a smile on the Bounder's face.

He gave Wharton a nod.

"You've told him?" asked Harry, in a low voice, as the inspector went out to the car.

"Yes."

"He doesn't swallow it?"

"I don't know," Vernon-Smith grinned. "The Head's no end upset, and Quelch's almost raving."

"No wonder."

"The inspector wanted to speak to Captain Spencer," grinned the Bounder. "Even the Head was surprised, when he learned that the giddy captain had gone out, and couldn't be seen."

"And you—"

"I'm going with Mr. Craven to point out the hollow oak—no time like the present. Quelch is awfully ratty at having to let me go, but, of course, he can't say so." Vernon-Smith chuckled. "Quelch is comin' out at the little end of the horn, all along the line. I expect he will make me sit up in class to-morrow."

"Very likely. You've made him pretty wild to-day!"

"I'll make him wilder," said the Bounder coolly. "They're both down on me now—down on me like a ton of bricks—and why? Because I'm helpin' the police to nobble a bank robber. I'm goin' to make both of them look utter fools. It's up to me, now. If Spencer pulls the wool over the inspector's eyes, I'm goin' to show him up myself somehow. You'll see. I shall have the deuce of a time now from Quelch and the Head. But they'll have to sing small when Captain Spencer is run in for bank robbery."

"When!" said Harry, with a slight smile.

"You don't believe it yet?"

"I can't!"

"Well, wait and see. I'm promised a flogging if I say a word about it in the school."

"Better say nothing, anyhow."

"Think so?" said the Bounder grimly. "Perhaps I might have kept mum if they'd treated me decently. But they won't allow even that it might be a mistake—not even that. It's a lie—a slander. Just a mischievous trick to cause a sensation. That's what they call it. They've put it up to me now. I'll make Greyfriars ring with it!"

The Bounder's eyes glittered.

"Unscrupulous—untruthful—reckless slanderer!" he said between his teeth. "I'll show them!"



Billy Bunter took advantage of the general attention being concentrated on Captain Spencer to sidle off the cricket field. Bunter had a supply of toffee in his pocket; sucking toffee under a shady tree appealed to him much more strongly than cricket practice.

(See Chapter 11.)

"Smithy, old man," said Wharton earnestly. "For goodness' sake don't play the goat! If you're right it will come out—the police will find it out. Don't say a word to the fellows!"

"That's your advice, is it?" sneered the Bounder. "I've been called a liar and a slanderer, and I'm to take it lying down."

"Yes, yes; but—"

"Bunter!" called out Smithy.

"Yes, Smithy?"

"For goodness' sake, Smithy," exclaimed Wharton, in alarm, "not a word to Bunter! It will be all over Greyfriars—"

"That's what I want!"

"Have a little sense! The Head will—"

"You shut up, Wharton!" exclaimed Bunter. "You let Smithy tell a pal. What is it, Smithy, old chap?"

Bunter was agog with excitement now. It was plain to him that Wharton was trying to keep some secret from his podgy ears, and that was enough for Bunter. Bunter always wanted to know.

"The bank robber," said Vernon-Smith, in a clear and distinct voice that was heard by others as well as Wharton and Bunter. "He's at Greyfriars now, Bunter!"

The fat junior jumped.

"What?" he yelled.

"It's Captain Spencer—"

"Eh?"

"Captain Spencer is the bank robber."

Bunter's round eyes grew almost like saucers behind his big spectacles. Wingate of the Sixth strode across the hall

towards the Bounder, with a black brow.

"Vernon-Smith, you young rascal, how dare you say such a thing!" he shouted.

The Bounder looked coolly at the captain of Greyfriars.

"Because it's true!" he answered.

"You dare to say—"

"I dare to say that Captain Spencer is the man who held up the bank at Lantham, and I'm going to prove it!" retorted the Bounder, in a loud, clear voice, heard far and wide.

With that, Herbert Vernon-Smith turned and ran down the steps after the Lantham inspector. The car drove away with both of them. There was a buzz of astonished voices in the Hall. Billy Bunter rolled off to the Rag at once, his fat face ablaze with excitement. The Owl of the Remove had an item of news to impart now that was calculated to set the Rag in a roar, and banish all lesser topics.

Almost breathless with excitement, Billy Bunter rolled into the Rag, and spluttered out his amazing news.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Struck Down!

THE Bounder, sitting beside Inspector Craven in the car that ate up the miles on the Lantham road, glanced several times curiously at the keen, composed face of the official. Inspector Craven had heard his amazing story—with shocked interjections from the Head, bitter comments

from Mr. Quelch. What he thought of it, whether he believed a word of it or not, the Bounder did not know and could not guess. He was keen enough to realise, however, that a police-inspector's point of view would be very different from that of a schoolmaster.

To Dr. Locke, the captain was an old Greyfriars man; to Mr. Quelch, he was the Head's respected guest. To Inspector Craven, he was simply a member of the public, and the question was one of evidence only, with no prejudice whatever either way. That, the Bounder knew, must make a great difference to the inspector's judgment. To the Head, an old Greyfriars man was almost above suspicion. But it was probable that Mr. Craven had put the handcuffs on the wrists of more than one old public school man, and to him Greyfriars was no more than any other school. He had an open mind on the whole subject.

The Bounder spoke at last.

"Will you tell me whether you believe me or not, Mr. Craven?"

"I believe that you have spoken to the best of your knowledge," said the inspector.

"That's something," grinned the Bounder. "But you think I've very likely been taken in by a chance resemblance in looks?"

"I keep an open mind on that point." "You haven't seen Captain Spencer?"

"No."

"But you will see him?"

"Certainly!"

"And look into his past record?"

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Mr. Craven made no answer to that. The Bounder smiled sarcastically. He did not really expect a police official to discuss his intentions with him. But he was irritated. And Mr. Craven's composed face told him nothing, keen as his eyes were.

"You don't want any further help from me, Mr. Craven?"

"I want you to guide me to the hollow oak you have described, where the bank robber's disguise is to be found."

"And nothing more?"

Mr. Craven gave the Bounder a keen, quick look. He could see that the schoolboy was keeping something back.

"Have you anything more to tell me?" he asked.

"If I choose," said the Bounder coolly. "My belief is that I can help you put your hand on the man in circumstances which will make the whole thing clear. What about that?"

"Go on."

"One good turn deserves another," said Vernon-Smith. "I'll tell you this. I know where Captain Spencer is at this minute, and I know his game. Do you want me to tell you?"

"Yes," said Mr. Craven curtly.

"Then answer my question first. Do you take enough stock in my story to look into Spencer's past record?"

Inspector Craven frowned. He was silent for a moment or two, and he compressed his lips. But he was keen, very keen indeed, in getting on the trail of the desperate man who had held up the bank at Lantham in broad daylight, and he understood that this cool-headed junior might be useful in that task. He did not like the Bounder's tone, and he did not like the Bounder; but business came first.

"Yes," he answered at last; "I shall take steps immediately to look into Captain Spencer's record."

"That does it, then," said the Bounder. "If you're taking the thing up seriously, I'm as keen as mustard in helping. And I can help. We're going to Lantham Chase now to see the hollow oak. If we lose no time, we shall find Captain Spencer there."

The inspector started.

"What do you mean?"

Vernon-Smith succinctly explained the theory he had formed—that the captain had taken Wingate's bike to get to the hollow oak before the police could get

there. Mr. Craven listened with deep attention. With the reserve natural in a police-officer dealing with a schoolboy, he did not state whether he attached any importance to the Bounder's belief. But he signalled to the chauffeur to increase speed, and the car fairly flew along the Lantham road. That was enough for the Bounder. It demonstrated that the inspector was anxious to reach Lantham Chase at the earliest possible moment.

"When did Captain Spencer leave Greyfriars, according to your belief?" asked Mr. Craven abruptly.

"Nearly an hour ago."

"On a push-bike?"

"Yes; a good machine."

"With his limp he would not be a fast rider."

The Bounder laughed.

"His limp is a trick. Captain Spencer wears a limp, like the bank-robber wearing horn-rimmed spectacles."

The inspector made no comment on that remark.

"He cannot have reached the oak yet, if he has gone there," he said. "The distance is at least nine miles."

"He's a hefty man, and he knows the country." The Bounder looked at his watch. "He's had three-quarters of an hour. I think he can't be there yet. We ought to beat him in this car. I had that in mind all the time."

The inspector sat silent, watching from the window. The car raced along under the summer stars. It halted at last, where a footpath left the road, and the inspector jumped out.

"Come!" he said curtly.

The Bounder followed him. He noticed that there was something in the inspector's hand as they plunged into the shadows of the footpath. Mr. Craven was armed; which looked as if he did attach importance to Smithy's story. As for the Bounder, he did not feel anything like fear, though he knew that it was quite probable that a desperate man would be cornered at the hollow oak—a man armed with deadly weapons that he had proved himself ready to use.

"Look!" breathed the Bounder.

In the darkness of the wood a light glimmered afar among the trees and underwoods.

"Is that the place?"

"That's about it," said Smithy. "I couldn't find the oak again without turning on a light—"

"Don't do that!" rapped out the inspector.

Smithy chuckled.

"I don't mean to. My belief is that that light will guide us to the hollow oak. He just did it on the bike."

"Silence, please!" said the inspector curtly. "Remain on the footpath. I am not authorised to take you into danger."

Mr. Craven plunged into the wood, heading in the direction of the glimmering light under the trees.

Vernon-Smith laughed softly. He had not the slightest intention of being left out. Softly, cautiously, he trod on the track of the Lantham inspector, deeper and deeper into the wood.

The light was stationary. It came from an electric torch fixed on a shrub or low tree. Several times a moving shadow dimmed the light. The Bounder was quite assured that the light was shining on the trunk of the hollow oak, and that the bank robber was groping in the hollow.

All of a sudden the light vanished.

Smithy heard a muttered word from the Lantham inspector. He knew that the man at the hollow oak had heard the rustling in the underwoods, and taken

the alarm, and extinguished the light. Throwing caution to the winds, Mr. Craven rushed on, crashing through the thickets, with the Bounder almost at his heels. There was a sound of a collision, a struggle of an instant's duration; then a sharp cry and a heavy fall. Vernon-Smith, running on with throbbing heart, stumbled over something on the ground, and almost fell. From somewhere in the dark came the sound of rustling, brushing bushes, as someone, unseen, fled into the night.

Smithy regained his balance, and groped in his pocket for his electric torch.

He knew what had happened—what must have happened. The Lantham inspector's grasp had been actually upon the bank robber when he had been struck down.

The man who was fleeing through the wood was the bank robber—that was obvious. It must be the inspector who was lying at Smithy's feet.

The Bounder flashed on his light.

He gave a stare round him first, and saw the hollow oak, in the branches of which he had been hidden that eventful afternoon. At the foot of the oak lay a black coat; half inside the hollow of the trunk hung another black garment. The man who had been dragging the discarded disguise from the tree had been interrupted, and had not ventured to make any attempt to finish his task. He had struck down the inspector and fled, leaving everything as it was, very probably in the belief that the constables were at hand, for he must have heard the Bounder's footsteps. Vernon-Smith turned the light on the man at his feet.

Inspector Craven lay on his back, with a streak of crimson running down his face. The fierce, sudden blow had stunned him for the moment, but he was already recovering consciousness.

Vernon-Smith helped him to his feet, and Mr. Craven leaned heavily against a tree, breathing hard.

The footsteps of the fleeing man had died away. Pursuit was of little use now; the deep, dark woods of Lantham Chase had swallowed him up.

"He's gone," said the Bounder.

"You did not see him?"

"No. But he was here—as I told you he would be."

The inspector did not answer. His face was pale, and he was dabbing the blood from his face with a handkerchief. Vernon-Smith waited for him to speak. His story had been proved to a certain extent; the man who had been at the hollow oak, who had struck down the inspector and fled, could only be the bank robber. But he had not been seen, and the theory connecting him with Captain Spencer remained an unproved theory.

The inspector did not speak, and the Bounder broke out impatiently at last.

"He's on his bike now, hurrying back to Greyfriars. We can run him down in the car."

Mr. Craven continued to dab his face.

"You are a keen lad, Master Vernon-Smith," he said quietly. "But I do not think you are quite old enough to teach a detective-officer his business. If matters are as you think, the man is not cycling back to Greyfriars on any road on which he could be run down in a car."

"Oh!" exclaimed the Bounder.

"He is much more likely to circle round the country, my boy, and reach Greyfriars from the opposite side."

"Oh!" said the Bounder again. His quick mind caught on at once. "And he will spin some yarn to account for



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getting in very late, of course. He may have struck in any direction now—any direction except Greyfriars. I see that now."

The inspector smiled grimly.

"You had better go back in the car now, Master Vernon-Smith," he said. "It is already past your bedtime, I think. I am very much obliged for the assistance you have given me, and probably you will see me again."

"Very well," said Vernon-Smith. "But you're hurt, sir."

"That is nothing."

The Bouncer went back to the footpath, leaving Inspector Craven busy with the disguise that the bank robber had not been given time to remove. A few minutes more, and the car was whizzing back to the school with the Bouncer. The Remove were all asleep in bed when Vernon-Smith arrived, and Mr. Quelch, with a hard, cold face, conducted him to his dormitory without a word. The Bouncer turned in cheerfully.

"Good-night, sir!"

The Remove master did not reply. He left the dormitory, and the Bouncer grinned as he laid his head upon the pillow.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

In the Limelight!

CLANG! Clang!

Harry Wharton turned his eyes on the Bouncer's bed as he rose at the clang of the rising-bell in the early summer morning.

Vernon-Smith was there. He was awake, and he met Wharton's eyes with a grin.

The Remove had not fallen asleep early the previous night. Discussion of the Bouncer's amazing accusation against Captain Spencer had kept them wide awake long past their usual time. But they had all been asleep when Vernon-Smith had got back from Lantham.

Bob Cherry was the second fellow to turn out, and he also glanced at the Bouncer's bed.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! You're there, Smithy! I began to think you were making a night of it!"

"Anything happen at Lantham?" asked Peter Todd, sitting up in bed.

"Lots!" answered Smithy.

"Did the catchfulness of the esteemed and ludicrous bank robber come off?" inquired Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh.

"Not quite!"

"Is Captain Spencer in a cell yet?" asked Bolsover major sarcastically.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a general chortle in the Remove dormitory.

The Bouncer's amazing statement had made a sensation in the Form. It had been the one topic until the juniors fell asleep the night before. But not a fellow believed a word of it. It was too utterly improbable, and the fellows only wondered at the Bouncer's nerve in daring to utter, or even hint, such an accusation against the headmaster's guest.

It was certain that before long the masters would hear of it; the Head himself would hear. That meant trouble for Smithy. Many fellows were of the opinion that it meant expulsion for him. It was past the limit; the Head was certain to be in a royal wax when he heard that his guest was the talk of the school in connection with a bank robbery. Where the Bouncer found the nerve to risk it was a mystery. What put the idea into his head was another mystery. But assuredly he was not

likely to find a single believer in the Lower Fourth. Even Billy Bunter, delighted as he was with such an item of news to retail, did not think for a moment of believing it.

The Bouncer glanced round at the laughing faces and shrugged his shoulders.

He was discredited now—regarded as a reckless ass by most of the fellows, as a slanderer by some of them. But his justification would come when the bank robber was caught at last.

He felt, rather than knew, that Inspector Craven agreed with him. Mr. Craven, naturally, had not told him so. But all his actions of the previous evening indicated as much. And the inspector's opinion in such a matter weighed more than that of all Greyfriars.

"I say, you fellows, Smithy will be sacked to-day!" chuckled Billy Bunter. "The Head is sure to come down heavy when he hears!"

"No need to jaw about it, Bunter," said Squiff. "No need for the Head to hear! Least said, soonest mended!"

"He's bound to hear," said Toddy.

"Of course, I sha'n't talk about it," said Bunter. "I'm not the fellow to tattle, I hope!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"I mentioned it to you fellows in the Rag, and some of the Fourth were there," said Bunter. "I told Hobson of the Shell in confidence. I mentioned it to the Shell of the Fifth. But—"

"Fathead!"

"Oh, really, Toddy—"

"What does it matter?" asked the Bouncer coolly. "Wingate of the Sixth heard me tell Bunter, and a dozen other fellows, too. I dare say it's reported to the Head by this time. Besides, I told the Head and Quelchy."

"Well, you've got a nerve!" said Skinner.

"The nervefulness is terrific! The flogfulness will be the next item on the esteemed programme!"

"If not the bunkfulness!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Remove fellows were rather excited when they went down that morning. They did not suppose for a moment that Captain Spencer was concerned in the hold-up at Lantham. But they wondered what would happen to the Bouncer when Dr. Locke heard that he had made his guest the talk of the Lower School.

At breakfast Mr. Quelch favoured the Bouncer with a cold, steely glance of disapproval. But it was clear that he had not yet heard of the thrilling topic among his Form. Vernon-Smith had been forbidden by the Head to speak on the subject in the school. That he had directly disobeyed that order the Remove master was not likely to guess—until the talk about Captain Spencer reached his ears, as it was bound to do sooner or later.

After breakfast the Removites were still talking of the affair, and Mr. Quelch noticed that there was some topic of unusual interest among his Form. Still, he did not guess what that topic was. In the quad, Wingate of the Sixth came up to the Bouncer, who was strolling at ease under the elms, with his hands in his pockets. The Greyfriars captain's face was very grim. Vernon-Smith stopped, at a sign from the prefect, and looked at Wingate with a mocking smile. He knew what was coming.

"I haven't had a chance to speak to you before, Vernon-Smith. I want to know what you meant by what you said yesterday evening, where a dozen

fellows heard you?" said Wingate sternly.

"I meant exactly what I said."

"You dare to connect the name of your headmaster's guest with the bank robbery at Lantham?"

"Yes."

"Are you out of your senses?" exclaimed the captain of Greyfriars, more amazed than angry.

"Not at all. The Head's guest was very nearly nailed last night, at the hollow oak in Lantham Chase, if you want to know," said Vernon-Smith. "He knocked Inspector Craven down and escaped, but it was a near thing."

Wingate stared at him.

"What happened while you were with Mr. Craven?" he asked.

The Bouncer explained tersely.

"You did not see the man?"

"Not bein' a cat, I can't see in the dark. But I knew it was Captain Spencer. I knew why he had borrowed your bike."

"Captain Spencer borrowed my bicycle to take an evening spin, to look at some old places he knew when he was a boy at Greyfriars," said Wingate quietly. "Nothing extraordinary in that. As you seem to believe this absurd rubbish, Vernon-Smith, I will tell you that Captain Spencer did not ride in the direction of Lantham at all. He went in the opposite direction, and was never within ten miles of Lantham."

"And he came in very late," grinned the Bouncer.

"How do you know that?"

"Because he must have. It must have taken him a long time to get back from Lantham and ride out in the opposite direction."

Wingate compressed his lips.

"As it happens, he did get in late," he said. "I have seen him this morning, and he mentioned that he rode as far as Woodend, which is nearly as far from the school one side as Lantham is on the other. His old wound in the leg gave him trouble, and he had to rest a good deal on the way back, which caused him to get in late."

"Quite a good story," said the Bouncer, laughing. "I did not expect him to tell you that he had been to Lantham Chase."

"He went to Woodend."

"So he says."

"You dare to doubt his word?"

"Yes, rather!"

Wingate looked at the Bouncer, his face growing grimmer and grimmer. So far as he could see, this amazing conduct on the Bouncer's part was simply reckless insolence, designed to bring him into prominence, and cause him to be talked about. The accusation seemed, to the Sixth-Former, as unfounded and absurd as if it had been brought against Mr. Quelch or Mr. Prout, or any other man at Greyfriars School.

"Does this mean, Vernon-Smith, that you intend to stick to this story, and make a scandal in the school on the subject of the Head's guest?" he asked very quietly.

"I intend to stick to it, certainly."

"I warn you that you're heading for serious trouble, then. It is my duty to report what you have said to Dr. Locke."

"I've no objection."

Wingate stared at him. He was greatly disposed to thrash the Bouncer there and then. But it was too serious a matter to be dealt with by a prefect's licking. Without another word, the captain of the school walked away, leaving the Bouncer grinning.

(Continued on page 17.)

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I.

"WELL, hit, sir!"
 "Good old Jack Jolly!"
 "Bravo!"

The applaws rang like newsick in the ears of Jack Jolly, the kaptin of the Fourth Form cricket team.

The St. Sam's junior IIIIIIIII (this is how it is written in Roamin' liggers) were playing a match against their deadly rivals of St. Bill's.

Jack Jolly was in tremendus form. He flogged the feeble boling without mersy. He had the Grace of a Hobbs, and was Abel to keep his end up without a Hitch. Time and again the ball crashed on to the pavilion roof; time and again it was driven clean out of the ground, to alite on the head of some passing peddestrian. Time and again the ball was lost compleatly, and a new one had to be fetched; until at last the supply of cricket-balls belonging to the junior IIIIIIIII had been eggshasted. But the juniors were nothing if not resorceful. They made a new ball by tying up some peaces of rag with string. There wasn't much bounce in the new ball, but it answered the purrpuss.

Jack Jolly continewed to smite merrily. And Frank Fearless, his partner at the wickets, backed him up like a Britton.

The score rose by leaps and bounds, until Jack Jolly was within an ace of his sentury.

At first, the St. Bill's bolers had boled with grate inspiration. Now, they were boling with grate perspiration. As for the unhappy feeldsmen, they lay sprawling in the grass, in various stages of eggshastion. They were fairly run off their legs.

It was at this eggssiting junkcher—when Jack Jolly only wanted one more run to compleat his sentury—that the Headmaster of St. Sam's came on the seen unsean.

There was a very sinnister eggspresion on the Head's face, and his movements were sly and stelthy, like those of a thief in the nite.

When the applaws was at its height, the Head sank to a very undignified depth. Making sure that he was not being watched, he darted suddenly into the pavilion, and closed the door behind him.

"Ha, ha!" he muttered, with a mocking, mirthless larf. "The time, is now ripe for my dasterdly deed!"

Hanging on the row of peggs in the pavilion were a number of blazers, belonging to the St. Sam's IIIIIIIII. Like a cunning old rat, the Head slunk towards the nearest blazer, and dropped something into one of the pockets—something that glittered. Then, after peeping from the winder to make sercain that the coast was clear, he quitted the pavilion with the suddenness of a happy-rition.

"That's that!" he chuckled, with a grin of mallishus sattisfaction. "I have laid the trap, and one of the juniors—I don't know which one—will tumble headlong into it. He will be found guilty of steeling the Silver Cup which has misteriously disappeared. He will be eggsposed; and condemmed, and kicked out on his neck—or, to put it vulgarly, eggspelled from the school! I am sorry, in a way, to have had to resort to such a low-down trick; but it was necessary, in order to save my own skin."

If the Head had a consence—which was eggstreemly doubtful—he soon unxceeded in setting it at rest.

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Shrugging his shoulders, he strode on to the playing-pitch.

Jack Jolly was shaping for his stroke, when suddenly, out of the corner of his optick, he saw the familiar figger of the Head reproaching.

"Stop!" cried Doctor Birchmall. "Jolly! Fearless! Cease this foolish childspil immediately, and fall in and foller me!"

Jack Jolly dropped his bat in his astonishment. He wealed round, and stared blankly at the Head.

"Oh, crumbs!" he ejackulated, in dismay. "I really can't stop now, sir. This is a jolly important match. Besides, I am ninety-nine—"

"Don't tell me woppers, Jolly!" said the Head sternly. "You are fourteen."

"I mean my score is ninety-nine, sir. One more run, and I shall compleat my sentury!"

"Ratts!" said the Head, with a leer. "You would probably have been clean boled by the very next ball, if I had not been thoughtful enuff to step in and stop the game."

"Oh, my hat!"

"In any case, I am not going to stand here argewing the toss," said the Head. "You will round up the members of your IIIIIIIII, Jolly, and proseed to my study fourthwith!"

Jack Jolly groaned—a deep and dismal groan. It was frightfully ruff luck, to have to stop playing when he only wanted one more run for his sentury. But the Head's word was like unto the laws of the Swedes and Parisians. It could not be defied.

Very reluctantly, Jack Jolly left the wicket, and rounded up the other members of the team. They went into the pavilion and put on their blazers. Then, looking very sheepish, they went like lambs to the Head's study. Doctor Birchmall followed the procession, with a mischivvus gleem in his eyes.

Arrived at the study, the wondering juniors found a very stout gentleman, and a very scraggy gentleman, bizzily engaged in a game of noughts and crosses.

The scraggy gentleman was none

other than Herlock Sholmes, the imminent detective. The stout gentleman was his friend and ally, Dr. Jotson.

"Game, Jotson!" cried Herlock Sholmes, hurriedly inscribing a final cross on the slate, as the prosession of juniors trooped in. "We must now wawe our plezzant diversion, and turn our attention to more serious matters. Is this the junior cricket IIIIIIIII, Doctor Birchmall?"

"It is—it are!" said the Head, with a smile.

"You wish me to cross-eggssamin them?"

"Hear and now!"

The grate detective nodded abruptly, and puffed furiously at his brace of pipes. His hatchet face was turned towards the juniors; his peercing green eyes seemed to pennytrate their very soles.

"My boys!" cried Herlock Sholmes, in a harsh, metalliok voice. "You are all aware, I presoom, that a Silver Cup has been appropriated—"

"Pinched!" corrected the Head.

Herlock Sholmes frowned.

"Weather the Cup was appropriated, pinched, perloined,

lifted, abstracted, or bergled, it has certainly gone!"

he said. "And I have been engaged by the Guvvners of this school to discover how it went, and where it went. The Silver Cup was to have been prezented to Fearless of the Fourth for winning the junior sports. It was in Doctor Birchmall's charge, and he placed it in the safe in the strong-room. The keys of the safe were stolen from the Head's trowsis

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Trail!



pocket; after which the Cup was found to be missing. Are you aware of these facts, my boys?"

"Yes, sir!" eggsclamed the juniors, in chorus.

"Very well!" said Herlock Sholmes. "I have already subjected the masters and boys—with the eggseption of yourselves—to a searching eggssamination. I now propose to do the same to you. I will deal with you one at a time. Who is the kaptin of this cricket team?"

"Jolly!" said the Head. "Stand fourth, Jolly!"

"Certainly, sir!" said Jack Jolly.

And he promptly stepped behind Merry and Bright and Frank Fearless, pushing them towards the Head's desk. The Head frowned feercely.

"Do you here me, Jolly?" he thundered. "Why are you screening yourself behind these boys? I distinctly ordered you to stand fourth!"

"I am standing fourth, sir," said Jack Jolly, in serprize. "There are three fellows in front of me, and I'm the fourth."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Herlock Sholmes and Dr. Jotson.

The Head promptly settled the argewment by sezing the junior by the sholders, and heaving him to the four.

"Now, Jolly," said Herlock Sholmes, fixing a sort of hipnottick spell upon the startled junior, "who helped you to bergle the strong-room safe?"

"Nobody helped me, sir."

"Ah! It was a solo effort, what? You carried out

the theft of the Silver Cup off your own bat?"

Jack Jolly drew himself up with hawter.

"I am not a thief, Mr. Sholmes!" he cried, in wringing tones. "I have often stolen a march on other fellows; I have often pinched my pals, just for fun; and I have lifted a good many things in my time, just to show off my grate strength. But I have never theved!"

At this point the Head stepped forward. His face was working, and an ugly smile played about his lips. His eyes glinted croolly.

"I think the time is ripe, Mr. Sholmes, for applying Third Degree methods," he said. "These young rascals will never tell the trooth unless it is dragged out of them by force. I will interjuice a mild form of torcher, in the hope that we may get better rezults."

So saying, the Head sezed Jack Jolly by the nose, between his thum and fourfinger, and twecked it—hard!

"Yaroo!" yelled Jack Jolly. "Leggo by dose, you awful rodder!"

"Not just yet, my pippin!" said the Head cheerfully. "I'm going to make you confess! Did you, or did you not, have a hand in the pinching of the Silver Cup?"

"Do, I did dot!" spluttered Jack nasally. "Leggo my dose!"

"Think again!" said the Head perswasively. "Another little think won't do you any harm, as the old song says."

He released Jack Jolly's nose, which resembled a crushed storberry, and suddenly sezed the junior by the rist. He gave a savvidge twist.

"Ow-ow-ow!" yelped the leader of the Fourth, farcly dancing with angwish. "Leggo my rist, sir! You're strangling me!"

"I will leggo," said the Head, "when you have confessed—and not before! If you want to avoid further torcher, speak up like a man! Did you pinch the Silver Cup?"

"Ow—no!"

The Head gave Jack Jolly's rist another rench.

"You did!" he hissed.

"Wow—I didn't!" screamed Jack Jolly.

"You jolly well did!" hooted the Head.

"Yaroooo! I jolly well didn't!" wailed Jack Jolly.

The Head released the junior's rist, and turned to Herlock Sholmes.

"May I trubble you to pass me my birch-rod, Mr. Sholmes? This boy is as obstinate as a mule, but I will skweeze a confession out of him somehow!"

The grate detective shook his head.

"Let him go, Dr. Birchermall. He has suffered enuff. No useful purrpuess can be served by prolonging this brootality."

"Brootality?" gasped the Head.

"Savvidgery, if you prefer that term. It is obvious to me that Jolly is as innoesent of this theft as you are—possibly more so!"

"Really, Mr. Sholmes—"

"He has a frank, open countenance," said the detective, glancing kindly at Jack Jolly. "He is not the type of lad to commit a safe robbery—or an unsafe one."

"Thank you, sir!" mermered Jack Jolly gratefully.

"We must look farther for the thief," said Herlock Sholmes, replennishing his brace of pipes from the Head's opium jar. "Personally, I do not think he will be found in the junior cricket IIIIIIIIIII."

"Bet you he will!" cried the Head eggssitedly.

"I do not gambol, sir," said Herlock Sholmes gravely. "Make the next boy stand fourth!"

And the Head, with a scowling brow, commanded Frank Fearless to step to the four.

II.

ONE at a time, the members of the junior cricket IIIIIIIIIII were put through a riggerus cross-eggssamination.

The Head grew more and more waxy as the investigations proseeded. Try as he would, he could not ring a confession from any of the juniors. He continewed to apply Third Degree methods, but without suxxess.

The juniors suffered like Stoicks. Raising the roof with their yells, they endured their torchers in diggnified silence. They were innoesent, one and all; and they had no intention of confessing to a crime they had never committed.

When the last junior had been cross-eggssaminated, Herlock Sholmes turned to the Head, with one of his inscrootable smiles.

"I should have won my bet, Dr. Birchermall," he said quietly. "The guilty party is not hear; not among these juniors, at all events, though he may possibly be in this study."

The Head turned dethly pail. "W-w-what do you mean by that criptick remark, Mr. Sholmes?" he stuttered.

"There are only three persons prezzant, apart from these juniors. There is me, you, and Dr. Jotson. Neither you nor your friend could possibly have pinched the Cup—however badly you might have wanted to—bekawse at the time of the theft you were not hear, and knew nothing of the trofee's eggssistence. You surely do not suggest, Mr. Sholmes, that me, the headmaster of this school, had anything to do with the theft?"

"I suggest nothing, Dr. Birchermall. I leave suggesting and theorising to

(Continued on next page.)

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In a game of noughts alley, Dr. Jotson.

Scotland Yard. It is my job to elucidate the mystery, track down my man, and hand him over to justiss!"

The Head shuddered.

"I have put these boys through a searching cross-examination, and am satisfied that their hands are clean," said Herlock Sholmes.

The juniors promptly tucked their hands into their pockets.

"You may go, my boys," said Herlock Sholmes, waving his hand towards the door.

"One minnit!" interrupted the Head horsely. He still had his trump card to play. "You have not searched these boys, Mr. Sholmes!"

Herlock Sholmes larfed outright.

"Really, sir, this is too loodicrus! You don't suppose that a boy could conceal a massiff Silver Cup about his person?"

"No," said the Head; "but the key of the safe, which was stolen from me, might be found on one of these boys."

Herlock Sholmes yawned.

"As you will," he said.

So the juniors, who were hartily tired of being mawled and messed about, had to line up again, while Herlock Sholmes and Dr. Jotson ran through their pockets.

The Head watched the proceedings with a sinnister smile.

Prezzantly, Herlock Sholmes gave a low wissle of serprise. From the pocket of Jack Jolly's blazer he suddenly wiped out a bunch of keys. They jingled mewscically as he held them up for inspection.

"Are these the keys, Dr. Birchmall—the keys of the strong-room safe?"

The Head nodded.

"Those are them!" he cried dramattick-ally. "Mr. Sholmes! We have discovered the thief! He stands unmasked before us!"

It was a terribul moment for Jack Jolly. The study seemed to swim around him. Accusing eyes seemed to peer out at him from every corner and creviss of the apartment. Accusing voices seemed to be saying: "Theef!"

Jack Jolly realed. He would have fallen, had not Merry and Bright caught him in their arms.

"Buck up, old man!" muttered Merry.

Jack Jolly glanced wildly round the study. Some of the faces around him were horryfied and accusing. The Head's was mocking and triumphant. Herlock Sholmes' was, as usual, inscrutable.

"So it was you, Jolly, who stole the Silver Cup?" said the Head freezingly.

"It wasn't!" cried Jack Jolly hotly.

"You stand condemned!" said the Head friggidly.

"I won't stand being condemned!" cried Jack Jolly warmly.

"Bah! You are a thief!" said the Head icily.

"Yah! I'm nothing of the sort!" cried Jack Jolly, boiling over.

Herlock Sholmes came forward.

"Pray cease this eggexchange of compliments," he said. "Tell me, Jolly—how do you account for the keys of the safe being found in your pocket?"

"I—I can't account for it, sir!" stammered Jack Jolly. "Some awful rotter must have put them there, so as to throw suspishun on me!"

"What rot!" said the Head. "There is no one at St. Sam's who would be so base. You are a hardened young reprobate, Jolly, and will be delt with accordingly!"

So saying, the Head pressed a button on his desk, and Binding, the page, appeared.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,008.

"Tell Fossil, the porter, that I wish to speak to him," said the Head.

Binding departed, and Fossil appeared.

"Tell Burleigh of the Sixth that I wish to speak to him," said the Head.

Fossil went out, and Burleigh came in.

"Tell Mr. Lickham that I wish to speak to him," said the Head.

Burleigh sloped, and Mr. Lickham was presented.

"Tell Mr. Justiss that I wish to speak to him," said the Head.

Mr. Lickham scampered out and Mr. Justiss romped in.

"Ah, Justiss!" said the Head, having secured his man by this rather round-about process. "Pray take this retched boy to the punishment-room and lock him in securely; otherwise, being a clever young cracksman, he will escape. He is to be placed on a bread-and-water diet, and kept in close confinement until the morning, when his name will be spunged—or, rather, expunged—from the school register. He is to be sacked from the school!"

"What for, sir?" gasped Mr. Justiss.

"Yours not to reezon why!" said the Head. "But if you must know, Jolly

Cup is a mistery no longer. Our work hear is compleat. Let us therefore fold our tents, like the Arabs, and silently steal away."

Herlock Sholmes blew an alternate wiff from each of his pipes.

"Not so fast, my dear Jotson! Our work hear is not compleat, by any manner of means. The mistery of the Silver Cup has not yet been satisfactorily solved."

"Eh?" The fat little doctor stared at his companion in amazement. "But we have proved that the boy Jolly stole the Cup!"

Herlock Sholmes smiled.

"It may have been proved to the Head's satisfaction, but it has not been proved to mine," he said.

"But the keys of the safe were found in Jolly's possession——"

"But he is not gilty," said Herlock Sholmes. "Listen to me, Jotson! I have just made a most important discovery! It is the first real cloo I have found—a cloo of such importance and usefulness that in a few short hours I hope to lay the thief by the heals!"

Dr. Jotson gasped.

"You astound me, Sholmes! And what is the cloo, pray?"

"A pawn-ticket," said the grate detective, taking a card from his pocket. "I found it in a vase on the Head's mantlepiece, while I was in the act of loading my pipe from his opium-jar."

"Good grashus!"

"The ticket is made out to Doctor Birchmall, and it concerns a Silver Cup which has been pledged. The pawn-ticket was issued by a Mr. Ikey Moses."

Dr. Jotson looked farely flabbergasted.

"Grate jumping crackers!" he eggclaimed. "Can it be possible, Sholmes, that the Cup was stolen by Doctor Birchmall—by a grave and reverend Headmaster?"

"It is more than possible, Jotson; it is eggstreemly probable. But we have not yet proved our case, so please do not raise your voice. If the Head happened to hear us speaking of him as a thief he would soo us for definition of carracter."

"But—but fancy Doctor Birchmall being such an old scamp!" gasped the amazed Jotson. "Do you suggest, Sholmes, that he smuggled the keys of the safe into Jolly's pocket?"

Herlock Sholmes nodded.

"It was a rascally, low-down trick!" he said. "Suspishun has fallen upon that poor lad, and he has been greevusly wronged. But, come, Jotson! We must not allow the grass to grow under our feet. Let us borrow a couple of jiggers from the juniors and peddle over to Muggleton to interview Mr. Ikey Moses, the pawnbroker. We can then find out all we want to know, and prove our case up to the hilt!"

Little did the Head dream, as he paced two and fro in his study that the toils were closing in upon him—that the links-like eyes of Herlock Sholmes had discovered the pawn-ticket—and that in a few short hours Nemmysis would arrive on the premises!

And little did Jack Jolly dream, as he paced two and fro in the dark and dismal punishment-room, with black despere gnawing at his victuals, that the hour of his deliverance was at hand!

THE END.

(Next week's topping yarn of St. Sam's: "LAID BY THE HEALS!" will take you by storm. Don't miss it, chums, whatever you do.)



Like a cunning old rat, Dr. Birchmall slunk towards the nearest blazer and dropped something that glittered into one of the pockets.

has been found gilty of sticking and peeling—I mean picking and steeling. He stole the Silver Cup!"

In the iron grasp of Mr. Justiss Jack Jolly was marched away to the punishment-room.

Merry and Bright hurled simperthetic glances after him, and he was greatly struck—by their loyalty. In that dark hour Jack Jolly needed all the simperthy he could get.

The door closed behind the prisoner and his escort. And the Head, with an airy wave of his hand, dismissed the other members of the junior cricket IIIIIIIIIII.

The juniors went back to the playing fields and resumed their match with St. Bill's. But they had little hart for cricket while their gallent chum and leader, Jack Jolly, was langwishing in the punishment-room, in the dark shadow of the sack!

"All is over, my dear Sholmes!" It was Dr. Jotson speaking, as he strolled with the grate detective in the quadrangle. "You have added yet another triumph to your formidable list of suxxesses. The mistery of the Silver



(Continued from page 13.)

That his present course meant trouble for him Smithy knew well enough. Nevertheless, he was enjoying the situation. There was something in being the cynosure of all eyes, in being the centre of the sensation of the term. There was something in knowing that he was in the right, when all the others were in the wrong. But that was not all. A dangerous and desperate man was masquerading under false colours. The Lantham hold-up was not his first exploit, and it was not likely to be the last. It was everyone's duty to do his utmost to bring such a dangerous outlaw to justice. The Bounder, it was true, was not a "whale" on duty, as a rule. He was, indeed, lawless by nature. But there was a limit, and Smithy was very keen to unmask the pretender, and to put an end to the peculiar activities of the bank-robber. From good motives, and from other motives not so good, Vernon-Smith was urged on his present course. But, with his usual cynicism, he acknowledged to himself that his chief desire was to get into the limelight and keep there.

There was no doubt that he was in the limelight now, though it was a sort of limelight that few fellows would have envied him.

When he strolled into the Form-room for class all eyes were turned on him at once.

"Here he is!" chortled Billy Bunter. "Not bunked yet, Smithy. He, he, he!"

"Not yet," assented the Bounder. "I guess you've got it coming!" chuckled Fisher T. Fish.

"Who knows?"

"I can't see what else the Head can do when he hears of this," said Bob Cherry. "It's altogether too thick, Smithy."

"It may come to that," said the Bounder coolly. "But what's the odds? It will all be set right again when Captain Spencer is arrested for the hold-up at Lantham."

"When?" said Bob.

"The whenfulness is terrific."

"For goodness' sake, Smithy, chuck it!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "You don't seem to understand what you're heading for."

"I understand quite well, and I'm not goin' to chuck it. I'm goin' to tell everybody who will listen that Captain Spencer is the bank-robber of Lantham," said the Bounder deliberately.

"Hush!" breathed Bob, as he sighted Mr. Quelch in the doorway of the Form-room.

There was a sudden breathless hush. The petrified expression on Mr. Quelch's face showed that he had heard the Bounder's words.

For a moment a pin might have been heard to drop in the Remove-room. Mr. Quelch stood transfixed. Even the Bounder felt a twinge of uneasiness.

The Remove master found his voice at last.

"Vernon Smith!"

"Yes, sir."

"You—you have dared—you have dared to repeat this ridiculous and

wicked slander in the school, in spite of your headmaster's commands to say nothing on the subject."

The Bounder set his lips.

"The Head told me it was a lie and a slander," he answered. "That put it up to me. Even the Head has no right to forbid me to speak as I like of a dangerous criminal!"

Mr. Quelch gasped.

"You dare to apply such a name to the Head's guest?"

"That is his description, sir."

"Insolent boy! This is beyond all toleration!" exclaimed the Remove master. "You are presuming, with utter recklessness, upon the service you rendered yesterday. But that will not save you, Vernon-Smith. I shall take you to Dr. Locke."

"I'm ready, sir."

"Follow me!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"Certainly, sir."

Herbert Vernon-Smith followed his Form master from the Remove-room.

"That's torn it," said Skinner. "It's the sack for Smithy this time. What else did he expect, I wonder?"

And Skinner's opinion was generally shared in the Remove.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Where is Smithy?

"BUNKED!"

"Poor old Smithy!"

"Well, he asked for it."

Nothing was known officially. All the Remove knew was that Mr. Quelch had come back to the Form-room alone, and that classes had been taken without the Bounder.

In the morning break there had been an eager rush to look for him, but no one had seen anything of him.

In third lesson he was absent as before.

Mr. Quelch's face was far too grim and forbidding for the fellows to think of asking him a question.

They wondered what had happened; but few doubted that Herbert Vernon-Smith had been expelled.

If that was so there was nothing surprising in it. The kindest and most patient headmaster could scarcely have tolerated the Bounder's conduct. Right or wrong, Smithy had made an accusation against a guest of Dr. Locke, which to all but Smithy seemed absurd and ridiculous; yet which, absurd as it was, was certain to cause the police to interview the young man.

Absurd it might be, but that did not make it any the less unpleasant. As Skinner remarked, if you throw enough mud, some of it is bound to stick. Nothing could alter the fact that Eric Spencer's name had been coupled with crime—that one fellow, howsoever reckless and unreflecting, had declared that he recognised him as the Lantham bank robber. The position was simply intolerable with the headmaster.

After third lesson the Remove fellows looked for Smithy again, and again they did not find him.

The general conclusion was that he was gone.

"Short and sharp," remarked Skinner. "Of course, they wanted to shut him up as quick as possible."

"Locking the stable door after the giddy geegee's stolen!" said Hazeldene. "All Greyfriars knows about it now!"

"Still, they've cut it off at the source!" grinned Skinner. "Fellows will be careful what they say now that Smithy's been made an example of.

They must have whisked him off while we were in class. Sorry for the chap!"

Skinner did not look very sorry. Certainly he was likely to miss a wealthy study-mate who had been very useful to him. But the cynical philosopher has told us that there is always something gratifying in the misfortunes of our friends. That was true of Skinner, at least. The Bounder had carried his head high, and if it had been brought very low all of a sudden Skinner was not the fellow to mourn.

Nobody indeed was likely to feel the Bounder's disaster very keenly. He had made himself more enemies than friends at Greyfriars—indeed, he had not cared to make friends. With the exception of Tom Redwing, who had left after breaking with him, it could not be said that Smithy had ever had a friend in the school. But if he had not been liked, at least he had made a considerable figure in the eyes of his Form-fellows. He might be disliked, but never despised or forgotten. The Bounder was a fellow to make his presence felt, wherever he was. For that reason the Remove were likely to miss him from his accustomed place.

Harry Wharton, indeed, was the fellow who felt something like real regret. He had had trouble enough with Smithy, and of late their ways had lain more and more apart. But the captain of the Remove had always hoped that Smithy would pull up before he came a "mucker." He had hoped that the breach between them might be healed, and that Smithy might again take his place in the school games. He knew that there was very much good mingled with the evil in the Bounder's peculiar nature, and it seemed to him hard that he should have to go.

It seemed to him, too, that there was something to be said for the Bounder in this case. If he really believed his own statement, he was bound to inform the Head and the police-inspector. Certainly he should have said nothing in the school; he should have left that to the judgment of older and wiser heads. No purpose was served by causing a scandal even if his accusation was well-founded. The matter was in official hands, and that was enough.

Still, there were extenuating circumstances. Believing that he was speaking the truth, it was hard to be told that he was a slanderer, a reckless disseminator of false statements. In his exasperation he had spoken out, in spite of the Head's command. Certainly he should not have done so, but there were excuses for him.

That the Bounder was, anyhow, gone was accepted as a certainty by the Remove and by fellows in other Forms. That afternoon he was not seen. The fellows did not expect to see him at Greyfriars again.

The juniors wondered whether Captain Spencer had heard of the Bounder having spread his accusation through the school. That he had heard of what Smithy had told the Head was certain. Dr. Locke, however reluctant, must have told him that; for, wild as Smithy's statement was, the police were bound to take some heed of it and at least to interview the captain. When Captain Spencer left the school that afternoon with Dr. Locke in the Head's car many of the fellows guessed that he was going to Lantham Police Station for that interview. Later, it was a known fact when Skinner had elicited the information from the Head's chauffeur that he had driven the car to

Lantham and waited an hour outside the police-station while Dr. Locke and Captain Spencer were in the building. The Head, with unquestioning loyalty to his guest, had accompanied him on that rather unpleasant journey.

But whether Captain Spencer knew that the affair was the talk of the school the juniors did not know, and they wondered.

After the return from Lantham Captain Spencer was seen walking in the quad with Mr. Quelch, in cheery conversation.

Certainly he did not look like a man who had any weight on his conscience or any fear on his heart. Looking, indeed, at his handsome, careless face, fellows could only wonder what had possessed the Bounder to couple his name with the bank robber of Lantham.

"I say, you fellows!" said Billy Bunter, coming on the Famous Five after class. "Do you think the Spencer bird knows that the whole school's talking about him?"

"Ask him," suggested Bob Cherry.

"I was just thinking that one of you fellows might ask him," said the Owl of the Remove.

"Think again, old fat man!"

"You could put it tactfully, you know," urged Bunter. "Tell him that we all sympathise with him over what Smithy has said. See?"

The Famous Five grinned.

Bunter wanted to know; but like the monkey in the story, he wanted another hand to pull his chestnuts out of the fire.

"Go and sympathise with him yourself," said Johnny Bull. "I dare say he will kick you. If so, good!"

"Oh, really, Bull—"

"I hope he doesn't know that Smithy has made his name the talk of Greyfriars," said Wharton. "And the less you say, the better, Bunter. Let it drop."

"It jolly well won't drop, you know," said Bunter. "If Smithy has been sacked, his father's sure to make a fuss about it. Old Vernon-Smith will take the matter up."

"Old Obadiah's got more sense than young Obadiah," said Bob. "He will know that it's all rot!"

Bunter grunted discontentedly and rolled away. Very much he wanted to know whether Captain Spencer was aware that his supposed connection with the bank robbery was discussed from one end of Greyfriars to the other. But he did not venture to put the question to the captain himself.

It was odd enough, if the captain was the only person at Greyfriars unaware of that sensational topic. Even Gosling, the porter, had heard of it now, and discussed the matter with Mr. Mumble, the gardener, and Mrs. Mumble at the school shop. Trotter, the page, had heard it, and carried the news below stairs, where it was breathlessly discussed by the cook and the maids. Captain Spencer could not stir outside his room without curious glances following him.

Certainly his position would have been uncomfortable if he had known what was being said. But he gave no sign of being aware of it. No one certainly was keen to tell him. When he dropped into Masters' Common-room for a chat with Mr. Prout, conversation in that room, which had been going strong, ceased with startling suddenness. But he did not seem aware that he had been the topic.

It was after tea that the Remove

received sudden startling news, and learned that Herbert Vernon-Smith was not, after all, gone from Greyfriars.

Billy Bunter burst into Study No. 1 with his fat face full of excitement and his eyes almost bulging through his big spectacles.

"I say, you fellows!" he gasped.

"Well, what's the latest?" yawned Nugent.

"Smithy!" gasped Bunter. "He's not gone."

"Not gone?"

"No. He's still at Greyfriars!"

"Where?" demanded Wharton.

"In the punishment-room—locked up!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Skinner had gone round the old chapel for a smoke," explained Bunter. "You can see the window of the punishment-room from there. He saw Smithy at the window."

"Sure?" asked Wharton doubtfully.

"You fellows come and see," said Bunter. "Lots of chaps are going round. I can't make out his face at the window, but Skinner says it's quite plain."

The Famous Five, keenly interested, left the study. Outside the House they found that the news was spreading, and that quite a crowd of fellows were going round the buildings to stare up at the window of the punishment-room. There were twenty or thirty fellows on the spot when Harry Wharton & Co. arrived there with Bunter.

"There's Smithy!"

High above was a barred window, and at the glass a face could be seen. It was difficult to recognise at the distance, but there was no doubt that it was Vernon-Smith's, for no other Greyfriars man was missing from his usual place.

"So he's not gone," said Bob Cherry, with a deep breath.

"I'm glad," said Harry.

"Same here!"

"The samefulness is terrific!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"The esteemed Bounder is a prisoner." Skinner was waving his hand to the prisoner in the punishment-room. The little window high above opened, and a hand came through the bars to wave back.

"What are you fags doing here?"

It was Wingate's voice. Evidently the crowding of the juniors to that secluded spot had been observed. Wingate of the Sixth came up with a frowning brow.

"Clear off!" he snapped. "This is out of bounds for the Lower School. Any fag found this side of the old chapel will be licked. Get out!"

And the crowd dispersed, eagerly discussing the latest development of the peculiar case of the Bounder.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

The Prisoner!

HERBERT VERNON-SMITH was still at Greyfriars.

While the Remove fellows were discussing his fate, the Bounder had spent a weary day in the punishment-room.

Shut up in that lonely apartment, far from the rest of the school, out of the sound of voices and footsteps, left entirely to himself for the greater part of the time, Smithy found the hours drag heavily.

But his spirit was unbroken.

He was not left to idleness. Mr.

Quelch had set him tasks for the day, and warned him very plainly that he would be caned if his tasks were left undone. But it was not the Bounder's cue at present to slack. And, besides, even his task was a relief from the dismal monotony of the lonely room. When Mr. Quelch visited him he found nothing to complain of. Indeed, he gave the rebel of the Remove a word or two of commendation.

"You can do well when you choose, Vernon-Smith," he said. "It is quite within your powers to become a credit to your Form, instead of a disgrace to it."

"Thank you, sir!" said the Bounder, with mock humility.

And Mr. Quelch's eyes glinted as he departed and locked the Bounder in again.

Twice, while the fellows were in class, Smithy had been taken out of the punishment-room for necessary exercise; but he was not allowed downstairs. Each time, with a prefect's eye on him, he had been allowed to walk for an hour on an open stretch of leads near the punishment-room. Then he had been locked in again. Trotter brought his meals on a tray, and Trotter had made up a bed for him, which indicated that Smithy was not to be permitted to return to the Remove dormitory that night.

The Bounder was still defiant.

The Head's decision was that until he withdrew his accusation against Captain Spencer, apologised for having made it, and promised never again to allude to the matter, he was to remain secluded from the rest of the school.

It was a little difficult to see how otherwise the headmaster could have acted, and the Bounder was quite able to realise that. But he was quite determined not to give in. He believed what he had said. Indeed, unless his eyes had deceived him that afternoon in Lantham Chase, he knew that it was true. He could not and would not give in.

But as one weary hour dragged after another through the long summer day the Bounder began to doubt whether he had done wisely.

He was up against forces that were much too strong for him, and he realised at long last that, in his headstrong recklessness of consequences, he had made a mistake. In spreading the story through the school he had made it unavoidable for his headmaster to take drastic action. His first impression had been that he would stand it, and prove himself game. But solitude and silence had their natural effect on him. An audience was essential to the Bounder.

By the time Trotter brought in his tea Herbert Vernon-Smith was utterly and completely fed-up.

He was glad to exchange even a few words with Trotter, for the sake of speaking to somebody.

"Where's the jolly old bank robber now, Trotter?" he asked.

Trotter grinned.

"Oh, Master Vernon-Smith!" he said.

"You know whom I mean," said the Bounder.

"Captain Spencer has been over to Lantham," said Trotter.

"Any news of another hold-up there?"

"Oh, Master Vernon-Smith!"

"Stay here while I have my tea, kid," said Smithy. "I'm fed-up with my own company. Yours is better than none."

Trotter chuckled.



Bunter sat motionless, thankful that the thick foliage screened him from the view of Captain Spencer and his companion. Not for worlds would Billy Bunter have made a sound or movement then. For he knew that he was in the presence of desperate men; that Captain Spencer was the Lantham bank robber! (See Chapter 11.)

"Agin orders, sir."

And he retired and locked the door on the outside.

Vernon-Smith grunted, and sat down to his tea. It was after tea that he became aware of the crowd gathering under the window, and waved his hand to the juniors below. It was a relief to see the fellows again, and he scowled blackly as he watched Wingate of the Sixth clearing them off.

Once more he was left in dismal solitude, until Trotter came back for the tray.

"The 'Ead's sent a message, sir," said Trotter.

"Cough it up!"

"He's coming to see you."

"Tell him he's welcome, and ask him to bring me some smokes."

"Oh, Master Vernon-Smith!"

And the grinning Trotter took away the tray and locked the door.

It was half an hour later that the Bounder heard footsteps outside, and the key grated in the lock.

He rose respectfully as the Head entered.

Dr. Locke's face was cold and severe.

"I trust, Vernon-Smith, that I find you in a better frame of mind," he said icily.

The Bounder did not speak.

"Had you obeyed my command and said nothing of your wild and absurd suspicion in the school, this need not have happened," said the Head. "But even you, headstrong and obstinate as

you are, must realise that I cannot allow any Greyfriars boy to traduce a guest under my roof."

"I know that, sir," said Vernon-Smith. "Only what I said is true, and I'm certain that Inspector Craven thinks so."

"Nonsense! I may tell you that Captain Spencer, in consequence of your assertion, has had a long interview with Mr. Craven this afternoon, and that the inspector is perfectly satisfied."

The Bounder grinned involuntarily.

"He would not be likely to tell Captain Spencer if he wasn't, sir," he answered. "Naturally, he will say nothing until he's got the case clear."

The Head compressed his lips.

"It is futile to speak to you, Vernon-Smith," he said. "This state of affairs cannot continue. Only my impression that you really believe what you say has prevented me from sending you away from Greyfriars. But if you persist you must go."

He paused a moment.

"Captain Spencer was naturally much surprised and shocked when he had to be told of your accusation, Vernon-Smith. But he has very kindly made allowances for you. He thinks that you saw someone resembling him, and made a mistake. He has begged me not to expel you, great as your offence has been."

The Bounder made no answer. He was quite sure in his own mind that

Captain Spencer did not want to see him expelled. Certainly, Mr. Vernon-Smith, the millionaire, would have taken the matter up, vigorously, had his son been expelled from school. The man who had a dangerous secret to keep could not possibly want that. The captain undoubtedly would have been glad to see the last of the Bounder, but not by a method which would have led to rigorous investigation.

But the Bounder could not tell the Head what he thought, and he remained silent.

"I had hoped to find you in a better frame of mind," the Head went on. "So long as you dare to traduce a man whom I honour and esteem, you cannot be allowed to associate with other Greyfriars boys. But the present position cannot last indefinitely. You cannot remain in the punishment-room for more than a few days. If you remain obstinate, therefore, I must send you away from Greyfriars. I require you to withdraw your accusation against my guest."

"I can't, sir."

"Very well! I warn you that my patience is very nearly exhausted, Vernon-Smith!" said the Head sternly. "So long as you persist in this unscrupulous story, you remain here!"

The Head left the punishment-room and locked the door.

Vernon-Smith went to the window, THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,008.

and stood looking out into the red sunset. His face was dark and gloomy.

He had made a mistake, in his overweening self-confidence; he knew that now. Had he remained silent, he would have been free; free to observe, and free to act. He would have been a dangerous enemy on the trail of the man who was leading a double life. Now he was locked in, a helpless prisoner; and he had, to that extent, played into the hands of the man he suspected. But it was too late to retrieve that mistake now; and the Bounder could only bear the consequences with his usual cynical hardihood.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Billy Bunter Makes a Discovery!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. saw nothing of the Bounder on the following day.

They knew that he was still in the punishment-room, that his meals were taken there, and that he was allowed out on the leads for exercise when the other fellows were in class.

But he was not seen; and one or two fellows who had ventured along the long corridor had been spotted by watchful prefects and caned. After which no one was keen to attempt to exchange a word with the prisoner through the keyhole.

On Saturday it was the same; and by that time the Remove fellows were getting used to the Bounder's absence.

Meanwhile, Captain Spencer was still the Head's guest at Greyfriars. It was known that he had come to stay several weeks; but some of the fellows had expected that, in the curious circumstances, he would cut his visit short.

He showed no sign of intending to do so, however.

Every day he was seen strolling in the quad or walking, with his slight limp, in the Head's garden. His room, in the Head's house, had a balcony, overlooking the gardens, with steps down to the ground; and he was often seen in a deck-chair on the balcony, smoking a cigarette, and reading. He often dropped into the Masters' common room for a chat, and was quite popular there.

He often talked to Wingate and other Sixth Form men, and they liked him. He was keen on cricket, and had been a great cricketer in his day; but the injury to his leg had knocked him out of games.

The juniors capped him respectfully when they came across him, and sometimes the captain would stop for a chat with some of them, and talk about his old days at the school. But he never showed whether he knew that his name had been endlessly discussed in the passages and the studies. He never made any reference to the Bounder, and seemed indeed to have forgotten the existence of that youth. That he was still a free man was taken by the Greyfriars fellows as a convincing proof that the police, like themselves, regarded the Bounder's story as absurd.

On Saturday afternoon the captain sauntered down to Little Side, where the Remove were at games practice.

"I say, you fellows, here he comes!" called out Bunter.

Harry Wharton glanced round and lifted his cap politely to the captain.

Eric Spencer nodded and smiled.

"It's like old times to see you lads at

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games practice," he said genially—"like my old days at Greyfriars. I used to be a bowler, of sorts. Like me to send you down a few?"

"Yes, rather!" said Harry at once.

"I'd like to see whether I've lost my old skill," said the captain, with a smile.

"The honourfulness to our esteemed selves is terrific," said Hurrell Jamset Ram Singh, handing the captain the ball.

"Put your best batsman in," smiled the captain.

"Go it, Wharton!"

Harry Wharton took his bat, and the captain went on to bowl. The Remove fellows looked on with keen interest.

Captain Spencer could hardly have made a more popular move, if he wanted to be liked in the school, than this. Every cricketer there was gratified by the Old Boy taking a keen interest in their games.

Eric Spencer soon showed that his old skill with the ball was not gone. Wharton's wicket was a wreck in a few moments.

"Good man!" said Bob Cherry.

"Well bowled, sir!"

"Try that again," said Harry.

"Pleasure," said the captain.

Squiff tossed the ball back, and the captain caught it easily with his left. His limp was very pronounced as he took a little run to bowl again. But he bowled remarkably well. For a junior, Wharton was a first-class bat; but he had great difficulty in keeping his sticks intact; and a few minutes later his bails were down again.

All the cricketers were keen on watching the Old Boy bowl; but Billy Bunter was not a cricketer. Billy Bunter took advantage of the general attention being concentrated on Captain Spencer to sidle off the field. It was compulsory practice that afternoon—the only reason why William George Bunter was there at all.

As Form captain, it was Wharton's duty to see that the fellows turned up for games practice, and to see that they did not clear off too early. Wharton's attention being quite occupied now, William George Bunter did not lose his opportunity.

The Owl of the Remove rolled away, and at a little distance he broke into a trot. There was a fat grin on his face as he rolled out into the road, safe from games practice for that occasion, at least.

Bunter had a supply of toffee in his pocket, and he looked for a shady spot to sit down in comfort and devour it. Sucking toffee under a tree appealed to Bunter much more strongly than cricket practice.

"Oh, lor!" ejaculated Bunter suddenly.

Wingate and Gwynne of the Sixth came strolling along the road, and Bunter halted in dismay.

If the prefects spotted him, he would be ordered back to Little Side at once, probably with a cuff to reward him for slacking. That was not what Bunter wanted—not at all.

He backed out of the road among the trees by the wayside, and turned a deaf ear when he heard his name called.

"Beast!" he murmured.

The fat junior plunged on among the trees, and stopped at last, panting, in a deep thicket. There, screened from view on all sides, he sat down to rest his weary, fat limbs. It was extremely unlikely that the Sixth Form prefects would take the trouble to look for him;

but Bunter was leaving nothing to chance.

In the deep, shady thicket, he sat and leaned against the trunk of a tree, and proceeded to devour toffee.

He was soon quite happy and sticky. Then Billy Bunter's round eyes closed behind his big spectacles, and he dozed. He grinned sleepily as he thought of the other Remove fellows slogging at games practice on Little Side in the sun. Dozing in the shade was an immense improvement, from William George Bunter's point of view.

He did not fall asleep; but probably he would soon have been in the embrace of Morpheus, had not a rustle in the wood aroused him. He opened his sleepy eyes and blinked round him.

Someone was coming through the trees, directly towards the spot where Bunter lay hidden among the thickets. The fat junior sat very quiet. It would be like that beast, Wharton, and specially like that beast, Cherry, to hunt for him and march him back to Little Side by the scruff of his neck. The fat junior scarcely breathed.

But the rustling stopped; the newcomer, whoever he was, did not seek to enter the thicket where Bunter lay. The scent of a cigarette came to the Owl of the Remove.

He grinned.

Obviously, it was not Wharton or Bob Cherry. More likely Skinner or Snoop, retired to that secluded spot for a smoke.

A minute or two later, a voice came to his ears. To his amazement, it was the voice of Eric Spencer. He knew the quiet, cultivated tones of Captain Spencer at once.

"You're on time, Ransome."

"To the minute, captain," came a rather husky voice, very unlike the cultivated tones of the captain. "I read about it in the papers—you were in luck."

"Not as it turned out."

"No. I see a report that the money has been taken back to the bank. What 'appened, then?"

Billy Bunter sat as if frozen.

He almost wondered whether he had, after all, fallen asleep, and was dreaming this.

For one of the voices he heard was that of Captain Spencer, the Head's guest at Greyfriars; and he was discussing the Lantham hold-up with the man he addressed as Ransome—and he was discussing it as the man who had robbed the bank.

Bunter sat motionless, staring blankly at the thick screen of foliage that hid the speakers, not four or five feet away. Not for worlds would Billy Bunter have made a sound or movement then. For he knew that he was in the presence of desperate men—he knew, what only the Bounder had known before, that Captain Spencer was the Lantham bank-robber.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Bumps for Bunter!

BILLY BUNTER did not stir. Even when a guat settled on his fat little nose, he did not venture to move a hand to brush it off. He sat frozen with amazement and terror combined.

Captain Spencer was speaking in a low, hurried voice—but the dazed Owl of the Remove did not follow his words. He was not thinking of listening, he was thinking only of the astounding discovery he had made, and of his own



The Famous Five came across a fat figure leaning against a buttress, wriggling painfully. "Hallo, hallo, hallo! Cramp or jim-jams?" asked Bob Cherry cheerily. "Ow! Wow! Wow!" groaned Billy Bunter. "What on earth's the matter?" asked Wharton. "That beast Quelch!" gasped Bunter. "Ow!" "How many?" "Ow! Six! Yow!"
(See Chapter 13.)

danger if the two law-breakers should find him there. He could not see either of the men, so thick was the screen of foliage. Only their voices came to him. He started, and gave a little attention, as the man Ransome spoke again.

"You'll 'ave to cut, then, captain?"

"Impossible! If I left Greyfriars now, it would fix suspicion upon me at once. I've got to see it through."

"The old schoolmaster don't suspect."

"Not in the slightest. I am quite safe where I am—only one young scoundrel, a lad named Vernon-Smith, knows anything, and he is generally discredited as a reckless slanderer."

There was a husky chuckle.

"But it's different with the police," went on Eric Spencer. "The Head thinks I quite satisfied Inspector Craven at my interview with him—but I could see that the man was not wholly satisfied. He attaches some importance to what the schoolboy told him—how much, I cannot find out. Certainly he does not feel that he can act on the information given him by Vernon-Smith; and I have not been able to discover whether he is keeping me under any observation. But—"

"But it makes the game risky, captain. The school ain't the safe place to operate from that you reckoned it would be."

"No. But—I must have money. I

made a big haul at the Lantham and County Bank last Wednesday—over eight hundred. That would have seen us through. But every shilling was lost, owing to the meddling of a schoolboy. It has left me worse off than before, as I have had to spend money, of course, on the enterprise. The luck has been rotten all through. I shall have to fix up an absolutely perfect alibi on the next occasion. But I can't take the risk yet in any case. The school may be watched—it's difficult for me to find out, of course. My comings and goings may be observed. It is useless to leave; if I am watched here, I shall be watched elsewhere. And going before the normal end of my visit would look suspicious."

"That's so, governor. But what do you want me to do?" asked the other. "I came when I got your line, but I don't see—"

"You're not known in this neighbourhood. You can put up at some inn, and hang round the place—as a pedlar. Your old game."

"Yes; but—"

"I want you to find out whether I am being watched. If Inspector Craven suspects me, from what the schoolboy said, it's pretty certain that he has a man observing the school. If that is the case, you will soon spot it, from outside."

"That's so."

"If you come upon me, of course, we are strangers. But I shall take a walk on the Friardale road every day after lunch, and a pedlar can stop me to offer something for sale, without exciting remark."

Ransome chuckled again.

"Leave it to me," he said. "In less than two days, governor, I'll be able to tell you whether they're keeping an eye on the school. You leave it to me."

"That's all then. I must get back now—I'm due for tea in a Form-master's study."

There were a few more muttered words, and then the sound of receding footsteps.

Silence followed.

Billy Bunter still sat motionless.

It was a quarter of an hour before the Owl of the Remove ventured to make a movement.

Then he scrambled to his feet, his fat limbs trembling.

"Oh, lor'! breathed Bunter. "Oh, lor'! The awful villain! He's the bank-robber—Smithy was right all the time. Oh, lor'!"

Bunter was in no hurry to leave the wood. He was haunted by the fear that Captain Spencer or his associate in crime might still be lingering, and might see him. But he rolled out into

the road at last, and blinked up and down the highway uneasily. There was no one in sight.

The fat junior rolled away to Greyfriars.

He was safe now; and being relieved of his terrors for his own fat self, he was beginning to realise the importance of the discovery he had made.

Smithy had been right—Bunter knew that now. Captain Spencer was the man who had held up the bank at Lantham; and he had imposed on the unsuspecting hospitality of Dr. Locke, with the intention of making Greyfriars School his headquarters, while he carried out a series of robberies. It was the Bounder who had prevented that. The rascal dared make no further movement until he learned just how much importance the police attached to Smithy's information.

It was in Bunter's power now to show the man up, and the fat junior swelled with importance at the thought.

"The awful spoofer!" murmured Bunter. "Coming down to Little Side for the cricket, just before meeting the other rotter. He must have a nerve."

Bunter chuckled.

The cunning rascal had been a little too cunning. His joining the cricketers on Little Side had been a clever move, to keep up his character of an Old Boy of Greyfriars, interested in games. But it was his visit to Little Side which had given Bunter his opportunity of slipping away—and had led to this startling discovery.

"Awful villain!" murmured the Owl of the Remove. "Fancy an old Greyfriars man taking to bank robbing, and using his old school to hide in. The Head will boot him out when he knows. I'm jolly well going to show him up."

And Bunter rolled in at the school gates, and headed for the House.

Outside the School House, he discerned a group of juniors in flannels, and bore down on them at once.

"I say, you fellows!" gasped Bunter.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

"Here he is!"

"You fat slacker!"

"Bump him!"

The Famous Five gathered round William George Bunter, and several pairs of hands closed on him.

"Leggo!" yelled Bunter. "I tell you I—"

"You cut off from games practice while Captain Spencer was there!" said Wharton.

"Yes; but—"

"Wingate's jawed me for letting you sneak off. He saw you in Friardale Lane," said the captain of the Remove.

"Well, you can jaw me if you like," gasped Bunter. "I don't mind if you do jaw me, old chap."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The jawfulness is not the proper caper," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "The bumpfulness is necessary."

"Oh, really, Inky—"

"No good jawing you, you fat slacker," said the captain of the Remove. "You've cut games practice, and got me a wiggling. You're going to be bumped."

"Oh, really, Wharton— Yaroooh!"

Bump!

"I say, you fellows—"

Bump!

"Groooogh! Leggo! I say, you fellows, I've found something out—something important!" spluttered Bunter.

"You're always finding something out," grinned Bob Cherry, "and it's always important. Give him another!"

Bump!

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"Yoooooooooop!"

"One more," said Harry Wharton, laughing.

"I say, old chap, I want to tell you— Whooooooooooop!"

Bump!

"Gr-r-r-r-rooogh!"

The Famous Five walked away, leaving William George Bunter sitting on the ground, struggling to get his second wind. Billy Bunter was chock-full of important news, but he had no breath left with which to tell it.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Chuck it, Bunter!

"PETER—"

"Enough!" said Peter Todd.

Peter Todd was at tea with the Famous Five in Study

No. 1.

In No. 7, Billy Bunter was his study-mate, and possibly Peter had enough of Bunter's company in No. 7. He did not seem to want any of it now.

"But I say, Peter—" urged Bunter, blinking in at the doorway.

He did not venture inside. Bob Cherry had picked up a loaf and was taking aim. When William George Bunter dropped into a fellow's study at tea-time, he had to be prepared to dodge.

"Enough!" repeated Peter Todd distinctly. "When I say enough, Bunter, I mean exactly what I say, and that's enough. Catch on?"

"The enoughfulness is terrific, my esteemed fat Bunter," said the Nabob of Bhanipur. "The clearfulness would oblige."

"Peter, old chap—"

"Assez!" said Peter.

"What?"

"Assez!" Toddy apparently hoped to make his meaning clearer in French.

"Look here, you fathead—" roared Bunter.

"Genug!" said Peter genially.

"What the thump do you mean by genook?" hooted Bunter.

"Genug means assez, and assez means enough," explained Peter Todd. "Would you like it in Italian?"

"Oh, really, Peter—"

"Abbastanza!" said Peter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly chump!" roared Bunter. "I've got something to tell you, you blithering idiot, and it's important!"

"Now look here, Bunter," said Peter Todd, "I've told you in four languages, and it's time you caught on. If you want me to put it in Latin, you'll have to fetch me the dick."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Peter—"

"My hat! He's still going it!" exclaimed Peter Todd. "Will one of you fellows lend me a cricket stump? A cricket stump speaks a language that even Bunter can understand."

The Famous Five chuckled, and Wharton obligingly passed over a cricket stump. Toddy took a business-like grip on it.

"If you're still there, Bunter—"

"Oh, really, Peter—"

"Where will you have it?"

"I—I say, it's really important!" gasped Bunter. "I've found it all out about Captain Spencer!"

"Wha-a-a-t?"

Bunter grinned. He had succeeded in making an impression at last. Six pairs of eyes turned on him inquiringly.

"He's a spoofer," said Bunter. "He's an impostor. He's just what Smithy said, and I've found it all out."

Peter Todd rose to his feet, looking quite grim. His grip was hard on the cricket stump.

"So you're beginning, are you?" he asked. "Smithy's got shut up in the punishment-room for spinning that idiotic yarn about the Head's guest, and now you've taken it up."

"It's true!" roared Bunter.

"How can it be true, when it's you that's saying it?" inquired Peter. "The two things don't fit together."

"You silly chump—"

"Is the fat idiot potty?" asked Frank Nugent. "You know what the Bounder's got, Bunter. That ought to be a warning to you."

"Let a fellow speak!" hooted Bunter. "I tell you I know all about it now! I've found it all out! I'm going to show him up! I'm going to report it to Mr. Quelch! I'm telling you fellows first!"

"Trying it on the dog?" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Bend over that chair!" said Peter.

"Do you think you're a prefect, you ass?" howled Bunter. "Look here, you fellows, listen! I'll tell you what's happened. You know I cleared off from games practice to-day. Well, I went into the wood along Friardale Lane, when Wingate spotted me. I sat down to eat some toffee."

"We believe that much," said Bob Cherry solemnly. "It seems to have the ring of truth."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"While I was resting two men came along under the trees and stopped to talk quite near me. They came from different directions, and met quite near me, without seeing me in the bushes. I listened—"

"Right again!" said Bob. "We believe that! There seems to be a lot of truth in Bunter to-day."

"One of them was Captain Spencer," said Bunter. "I didn't see him, but I knew his voice, of course. The other was another man."

"Go hon!" said Bob. "Are you quite sure of that? Quite certain that the other wasn't the same man?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Will you listen to a chap?" hooted the exasperated Owl of the Remove. "The Spencer man owned up to robbing the bank at Lantham the other day, and—"

"Told you all about it, thinking you would be interested—what?" asked Bob, chuckling.

"He told the other man. They said a lot of things. They're companions in crime," said Bunter dramatically.

"Is that all?"

"Isn't that enough?" hooted Bunter.

"More than enough," agreed Peter Todd. "Lots more! I'm waiting for you to bend over that chair, Bunter."

"Don't you fellows believe me?" yelled Bunter.

There was a roar of laughter in Study No. 1.

"Believe you!" sobbed Bob Cherry. "Oh, my hat!"

"But it's true!" shrieked Bunter. "I tell you I heard them! I'm going to tell Mr. Quelch. I'm bound to."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Owl of the Remove blinked at the juniors in great exasperation. He had intended to thrill the study through and through with his dramatic announcement. Instead of which, he had set the study in a roar.

On most occasions Bunter did not expect to be believed very easily. On the rare occasions when he told the

ONE AGAINST THE SCHOOL!

truth, however, he found it very exasperating to be disbelieved. But his reputation was always against him. Even an ordinary statement from Bunter required confirmation from other sources before it could be credited. And such a startling statement as this would have required confirmation strong as proof of holy writ. Billy Bunter had only his word to give. And the roar of merriment in Study No. 1 showed how much value was placed upon his word.

"Why, you—you—beasts!" gasped Bunter. "I tell you I heard them. I'm going to show that villain up! I'm going to save the Head from an impostor. I'm going—"

"You're going to get a flogging if you play the goat like this!" said the captain of the Remove. "Chuck it, Bunter!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Look here, Bunter," said Harry Wharton seriously. "You're the biggest and fatheadedest fibber at Greyfriars, or anywhere else. You never know when to stop. You want to borrow some of Smithy's limelight by telling the same silly story, and you don't understand that it won't do. I advise you to chuck it. The Head's pretty fed with Smithy, but his hands are rather tied because Smithy's made an honest mistake, and really believes what he has said. You'll get flogged if you make up fatheaded yarns like this. If you must fib, stick to Bunter Court and your titled relations and your postal-order."

"Why, you beast—" gasped Bunter.

"But don't spin yarns about the Head's guest, like Smithy. You'll get into real trouble if you do," said the captain of the Remove.

"I heard them—"

"Chuck it!"

"I swear—" gasped Bunter.

"You won't swear here," said Nugent.

"Keep that for your own study, if Toddy allows bad language in No. 7."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I swear I heard them plotting—"

"How long are you going to keep that stump idle, Toddy?" asked Johnny Bull. "If you're too slack to use it, hand it to me."

"I—I say, you fellows, I swear—I mean, I give you my word—honest Injun!" gasped Bunter.

"Are you going to bend over, Bunter?"

"No!" yelled Bunter. "I'm going to Mr. Quelch to tell him. I'm bound to tell him what I know."

"That means telling him nothing," grinned Peter. "If you try to pull Quelch's leg, you'll hear something drop."

Billy Bunter glared at the grinning juniors with a glare that almost cracked his spectacles. Peter Todd swung up the stump, and Bunter dodged out of the study. He closed the door after him with a terrific slam.

"Well, this takes the cake, even for Bunter," said Bob Cherry. "If he must tell fancy tales, he might think of something new and not give us Smithy's yarns at second-hand. Blessed if he didn't look almost as if he believed it himself!"

"He may have gone to sleep and dreamed it, with Smithy's yarn running in his silly head," remarked Nugent.

"Yes, that may be it. Now, about the St. Jim's match—" And the talk in Study No. 1 ran on the even tenor of its way, and Billy Bunter and his remarkable story were dismissed together.

After tea, the Famous Five came down from the study, and then they

were reminded of the unimportant existence of William George Bunter. Deep groans reached their ears as they sauntered out of the House, and, looking up, they discerned a fat figure leaning against a buttress, wriggling painfully

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Cramp or jim-jams?" asked Bob Cherry cheerily.

"Ow! Wow! Wow!"

"What on earth's the matter with you, Bunter?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"The yow-wowfulness is terrific," remarked Hurree Jamet Ram Singh. "Is it a case of the lickfulness?"

Billy Bunter groaned dismally.

"That beast Quelch! Ow!"

"How many?" asked Bob.

"Ow! Six! Yow!"

"Well, I dare say you asked for them," said Bob consolingly. "You ask for more than you get, you know."

"Beast! Ow! Wow!"

"But what— Oh, my hat!" exclaimed Bob. "You don't mean to say that you've really spun that yarn to Mr. Quelch?"

"Yow-ow-ow! Of course I did! It's true! I was bound to tell him, wasn't I?" groaned Bunter. "And instead of thanking me—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He didn't even wait for me to finish. As soon as I told him I'd found out that Captain Spencer was the bank robber, he told me to bend over."

"What did you expect?"

"He said it was a result of Vernon-Smith spreading a wicked story in the school," groaned Bunter. "He said he would make an example of me, in case any other Remove fellow thought of doing the same. He gave me—ow!—six. Hard! Yow-ow!"

"Stick to the truth, old fat bean," said Bob.

"Yow-ow! It's the—ow-ow-ow!—truth."

"Chuck it!"

"Yow-ow-ow!"

Harry Wharton & Co. walked on, leaving Billy Bunter still owing and wowing and yowing, in a state of mingled anguish and indignation.

Remove again till they came up to the studies for prep. Then they found him in the Remove passage, surrounded by a crowd of juniors, who were roaring with laughter. Bunter, evidently, was telling his tale again, and receiving the amount of credence to which his reputation as a prevaricator entitled him.

It was useless for Bunter to insist that this time, at all events, he was telling the truth. If the fellows had not believed Vernon-Smith on that topic, they were not likely to believe Billy Bunter. Not a fellow doubted that the Owl of the Remove wanted to share some of the notoriety lately earned by the Bounder, and was setting about it in the most fatuous way.

"I say, you fellows," called out Bunter, as the Famous Five came up. "just listen to a chap! I tell you it's true—"

"Chuck it, Bunter!"

"You fellows know how truthful I am," said the Owl of the Remove, with almost tearful earnestness.

"We do!" chortled Bob Cherry. "We does! Just!"

And the juniors went into their studies laughing. Billy Bunter rolled dismally into Study No. 7. For once, if never before, the Owl of the Remove was telling the truth, and never before had he been so thoroughly disbelieved. Like the youth in the fable who cried "Wolf!" so often when there was no wolf, that he was unheeded when the wolf really came.

In the Remove dormitory that night, Bunter tried it on once more. But by that time the Removites considered that, as a joke, the thing was exhausted and they were fed up. There was a general chorus of:

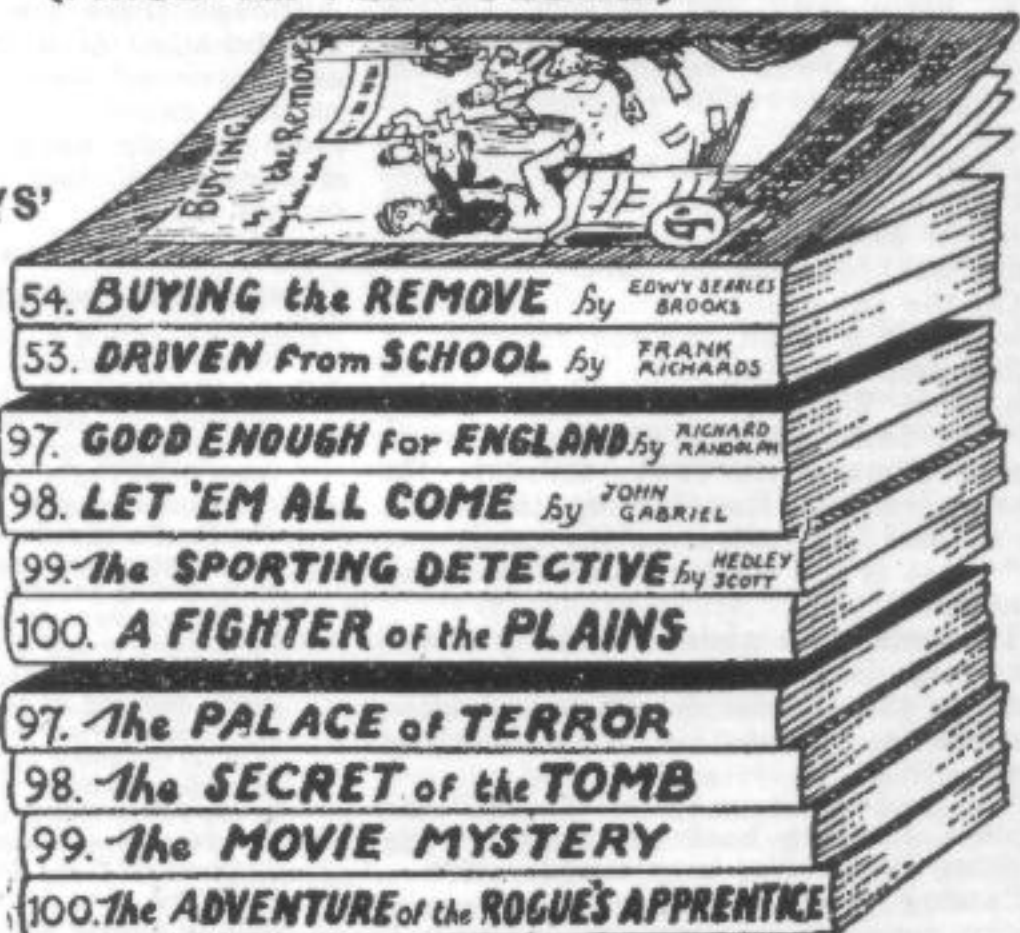
"Chuck it, Bunter!"

And as the injunction was backed up by two or three whizzing boots and a couple of pillows, the indignant Owl of the Remove did chuck it at last.

(Don't miss the final story in this splendid "Vernon-Smith" series: "HUNTED DOWN!" which will appear in next week's bumper issue of the MAGNET. It's absolutely the goods!)

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In the monastery at Salai dwells the all-powerful Kang Pu—the fanatic who, to satisfy his own monstrous ambitions, would set the world ablaze with war. Who this fiend incarnate really is no white man knows, but if peace between the yellow races and the white is to be preserved, Kang Pu must be identified and restrained. Two volunteers, a man and a boy, set out to discover this sinister Kang Pu, knowing full well that their task is fraught with great peril, and that they may never see their native country again. And these two hardy adventurers are FERRERS LOCKE, England's greatest detective, and JACK DRAKE, his clever boy assistant.—Editor.

In the Library!

FERRERS LOCKE rose to his feet and held out his hand. "Sometimes, Dr. Lamonte," he said, "a man's feelings are too deep to express in words. Rest assured, however, that every effort of mine will be concentrated on bringing to justice the monster who has treated you so!"

Refusing Dr. Lamonte's offer of refreshment, the Baker Street detective and Jack Drake left the house a few minutes later, arranging to return that night with Sir Hylton Davies. They drove to London in Lamonte's car. Dusk was falling as the car swung into the wide thoroughfare of Park Gardens, where Sir Hylton Davies' private residence was situated. As the car drew up near the kerb, Ferrers Locke opened the door and leapt out, followed by Jack.

On the pavement outside Sir Hylton's house was a small, gaping crowd. A policeman stood on duty at the top of the short flight of stone steps leading to the front door. Grimly Ferrers Locke elbowed his way through the staring crowd. Running up the steps, he showed the policeman his card.

"What is the matter here?" he asked sharply.

The policeman glanced stolidly at the card. He knew Ferrers Locke's name well, as the famous detective had often worked in conjunction with Scotland Yard.

"A bad business, Mr. Locke," he replied, handing back the card. "Sir Hylton Davies has been murdered!"

Passing the policeman, Ferrers Locke reached the entrance hall. A group of scared domestics, clustered

together, stared at him, with white faces. Death had descended suddenly on that household. Through an open door leading off the entrance-hall Ferrers Locke saw three men standing in a room, talking earnestly. One of them was Inspector Howard, of the C.I.D. Seeing Ferrers Locke, he left his companions and joined him.

"Strange affair, this!" he said, after a word of greeting.

"What exactly has happened?" demanded Ferrers Locke.

"Sir Hylton was found dead in his library about half an hour ago. Although there are no wounds on him, and no signs of a struggle, the doctors are convinced that death is not due to natural causes. Sir Hylton died by some outside agency. It looks like strangulation, but there are no marks on his throat."

THE FIRST INSTALMENT IN BRIEF.

FERRERS LOCKE, the famous Baker Street detective, receives an urgent summons from DR. LAMONTE, who is reckoned to be the only survivor of the expedition under Major Beverley, sent out to survey a possible trade route from India to China by way of Tibet.

Accompanied by his boy assistant, Jack Drake, Ferrers Locke visits Lamonte, and, to his horror and amazement, finds the doctor so mutilated and changed in appearance as to be almost unrecognisable. The doctor has a vivid story to tell of the horrors and tortures he and the rest of Major Beverley's ill-fated party endured at the hands of Kang Pu, a mysterious, cruel individual, whose ambition is to set the world ablaze with war. Lamonte beseeches Locke to warn Sir Hylton Davies, at the India Office, of the trouble brewing in the Tibetan monastery of Salai, the headquarters of Kang Pu. The detective agrees to do this, and he adds that Kang Pu will have to answer with his life if it is proved that the rest of Major Beverley's expedition have been tortured to death by his orders.

(Now read on.)

"I should like to see the body of Sir Hylton."

"Come with me. We have left everything in the library exactly as we found it. Measurements and photographs will have to be taken."

Inspector Howard and Ferrers Locke were on the best of terms. More than once they had worked together on a case. If the inspector felt any surprise at Ferrers Locke's appearance on the scene of this tragedy he showed no signs of it. He led the way along the hall to a door, outside of which a policeman stood on guard. Opening the door, he ushered Ferrers Locke into a small room furnished as a sort of combined smoking-room and library. A man was sifting papers at a writing bureau, and another was making a plan of the room and the position of the furnishings.

On the floor by the window lay the body of Sir Hylton Davies. It was lying face downwards, the fingers of the outstretched hands curled as though they had clawed at the heavy pile carpet. Bending down, Ferrers Locke turned the dead man till he could examine the tensed face. There was a bluish tint around the mouth, and every indication that Sir Hylton had been choked to death.

A heavy odour of cigar smoke hung in the room. Mingled with it, so faintly as to be scarcely perceptible, was a perfume like that of incense. Here and there on the carpet were traces of tobacco ash.

Rising to his feet, Ferrers Locke turned to the inspector.

"I see the window is open a few inches from the bottom," he said. "Has it been opened since the body was discovered?"

"No; nothing has been touched at all."

Ferrers Locke nodded.

"Obviously, Sir Hylton was smoking when he met his death or just preparatory to meeting his death!" he observed.

"Yes, a smouldering cigar was lying in an ash-tray on the desk. It is here."

"Who discovered Sir Hylton dead?"

"His secretary, when he came to remind Sir Hylton that it was time to dress for dinner. Sir Hylton was a man who, at times, paid little heed to such matters."

"Plenty of cigar ash lying about the carpet."

"Yes; when perturbed or thinking out some problem, Sir Hylton would stride up and down the room, flicking ash from his cigarette or cigar. He was not punctiliously tidy, according to his secretary."

Ferrers Locke nodded. For some minutes he examined the carpet closely, then, taking a plain piece of white paper from his pocket, he shovelled on to it a tiny heap of grey ash which lay between the dead man and the window. Then, on his knees, and, aided by his microscope, he examined the few square inches of carpet on which it had lain. Inspector Howard watched him curiously.

"Cigar ash?" he inquired, with as near an approach to a smile as he ever allowed himself.

"No; come here."

The inspector crossed to Ferrers Locke's side, and, at the request of the latter bent down and examined the carpet. It was singed very slightly.

"Dropped his cigar here," he remarked.

"I don't think so," said Ferrers Locke. "Smell it!"

The inspector glanced sharply at his companion, then did as he was bid.

"H'm!" he exclaimed. "Perfume! What do you make of it?"

"If you will permit me to take this ash I might tell you something definite when I have analysed it," replied Ferrers Locke.

"Certainly. I'm in charge here. Take it and let me have the result of your analysis as soon as possible."

"I will see you first thing in the morning," replied Ferrers Locke.

"Why not to-night?"

Ferrers Locke laid his hand on the other's shoulder.

"You and I understand each other, Howard," he said. "If I tell you that to-night I shall be busy, will you let it go at that and wait till you see me in the morning?"

The inspector looked at the Baker Street detective hard for a moment, then nodded.

"Yes, I will do that," he replied simply. "I know you will not fail me."

"No, I won't fail you. I would explain more fully now, but explanations must wait."

With that he withdrew, and, joining Jack and the chauffeur outside, said sharply to the latter:

"Take us to your master at once! There is not a moment to lose!"

The Second Victim!

ONCE clear of the city the car roared through the night towards Dr. Lamonte's house, near Epsom. In less than an hour from leaving Park Gardens it was purring up the drive, to come to a halt

on the gravel sweep in front of the house.

Ferrers Locke leapt from the car, and a quick exclamation sprang to his lips as he saw the massive front door was open, swinging creakingly in the slight wind.

"Follow me, Jack!" he snapped. "And you!"—to the chauffeur.

Pressing the button of his electric torch Ferrers Locke dashed into the wide hallway, almost stumbling over the gagged and bound form of the elderly Mrs. Humphries which was lying just inside the doorway. Rapping out an order to the chauffeur to attend to her he went up the broad stairway, two steps at a time, with Jack at his heels.

Reaching the door of Dr. Lamonte's room the sleuth threw it open. A draught of cold air swirled into his face from an open window opposite the door. The ray of light from his electric torch swept the room, then focused on the still form of Lamonte. The man was lying sprawled on the hearthrug in front of the fire, the hilt of a dagger protruding from his chest.

Ferrers Locke dropped on his knees by the man, whilst Jack hastily lit an oil-lamp which stood on a table in the centre of the room. The house was old, and had none of the modern conveniences of gas or electricity.

Gently Ferrers Locke withdrew the dagger, and as he did so Lamonte's eye flickered open. He stared at the detective uncomprehendingly for a moment, and then came recognition.

"They—they got—me!" he whispered jerkily. "I'm done!"

He struggled to rise, and, placing his arm round Lamonte's shoulders, the detective raised him up.

"Locke—promise—on your honour! Get Kang Pu! He—did this!"

Lamonte's head fell back, and for a moment the detective thought the lingering spark of life had fled. That nothing could be done for Lamonte was evident. The bloodless lips moved almost inaudibly. Ferrers Locke bent his head to catch the murmured words.

"I see a world running red with blood. I see Kang Pu riding at the head of the peoples of the East. I see the sun setting red over Lhasa, and the eyes of Kang Pu watching—watching watch—"

The voice trailed away. A moment of silence. Then Lamonte spoke again, stronger now.

"Locke—I'm going! Promise—promise—your word to a dying man!"

Lamonte groped with his right hand, and Ferrers Locke took it in a firm clasp.

"I promise, Dr. Lamonte," he said firmly. "I will not rest till Kang Pu is brought to justice!"

Lamonte nodded. His hand pressed feebly on Ferrers Locke's. Then a convulsive shudder racked his frame, and his head fell back limply. Dr. Lamonte was dead!

Ferrers Locke's Plans!

FERRERS LOCKE was closeted for many hours that night with officials at Scotland Yard.

After leaving Dr. Lamonte's house in charge of the Epsom police, and having also interrogated Mrs. Humphries, he had motored back to town.

Jack had gone on to the detective's flat, and it was in the early hours of the morning that Ferrers Locke joined him there. There were a lot of questions the boy wanted to ask, but he knew that Ferrers Locke would answer them in his own good time. And, after hot coffee

and sandwiches, Ferrers Locke drew his chair up to the fire. For a few moments he sat staring into the glowing coals, plunged in thought.

"Jack," he said suddenly, "to-day we leave London! We are going to Lhasa!"

Jack nodded in silence.

"When I heard Dr. Lamonte's story this morning," went on the detective, "I confess that at first I was inclined to the theory that he had fallen a victim of some fanatical priest. Men have suffered indescribable tortures in sinister monasteries of Tibet, tortures perpetrated by priests of the cult of Lamaism. But the murder of Sir Hylton Davies convinced me that this Kang Pu, of whom Lamonte told us, is more than a villainous priest seeking cheap glory amongst his followers!"

"Then you think Sir Hylton Davies was murdered by the agents of Kang Pu, gov'nor?"

"Yes! Let us assume that Lamonte's supposition is correct, and that Kang Pu is stirring up the Eastern peoples with a view to achieving world power for himself. The first man he would remove from his path would be Sir Hylton Davies. Sir Hylton understood the East probably better than any man in England to-day. He has been murdered by an Eastern method of murder, and we know that the agents of Kang Pu are in England. They killed Lamonte!"

"How was he murdered?"

"We reconstructed the crime at the Yard to-night, after I had analysed a certain ash in the laboratory there. That ash I found on the carpet in Sir Hylton's library where he was murdered. It is the ash of an incense which, when burning, gives off heavy, colourless fumes. One breath of those fumes will choke and clog the windpipe and vocal cords, stopping the heart within a minute. I once dealt with a case somewhat similar in India.

"It is obvious that Sir Hylton was walking up and down in his library. The window was open a few inches. The murderer would have no difficulty in creeping up to the window, as it faces on a small shrubbery at the rear of the house.

"What happens? He waits till Sir Hylton's back is turned, or till Sir Hylton is seated at his desk, ignites the incense, and throws it through the window on to the carpet. What would any average person do if they turned and saw something burning on the floor? Step up to it to investigate. Sir Hylton did that. The incense, which burns rapidly, would give off enough fumes to kill half a dozen men. He bent over it and inhaled the fumes in the ordinary course of breathing, then staggered and collapsed!"

"But wouldn't anyone going into the room later feel the effects of the fumes?"

"No. Within a few minutes the fumes would merge into the atmosphere and lose their potency."

"I see. And then the murderer—or murderers—left there and went to Lamonte?"

"Yes, undoubtedly. Mrs. Humphries heard a knock at the door. She went to open it. Two men, standing in the shadows of the porch, sprang at her, gagged and bound her. That happened shortly before we arrived. Although it was dark, Mrs. Humphries swears that the men were natives of some sort."

"We must have been close at their heels on the way from London."

"Yes. The Flying Squad are out, THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,008.



Ferrers Locke and Jack Drake crossed to the blaze and spread out their hands. Then, from beneath his hood, the detective took stock of the two cloaked and hooded monks at the table.
(See page 27.)

and the men may be taken. It was the knife in the wound which kept Lamonte alive. It stopped internal bleeding. The murderers escaped ten minutes before we arrived!"

Ferrers Locke rose to his feet.

"What sinister forces are at work? What devil's brew is simmering in that monastery of Salai?" he said tensely. "Where is Beverley and his men? Who is Kang Pu? There is but one way to answer those questions, Jack, and that is to penetrate into that stronghold of, this sinister murderer, Kang Pu!"

"I'm game!" said Jack grimly.

"We will be taking our lives in our hands! Once Kang Pu knows we are aware of his activities, then the fate of Sir Hylton Davies and of Dr. Lamonte may well be ours. We are handicapped in that we know little of our adversary or the forces at his disposal. I had meant to question Lamonte, but we were too late. Scotland Yard will look after matters in England. You and I will leave Plymouth this evening, and our destination is—"

"The monastery of Salai, near Lhasa!"

"Yes! Turn in now, Jack. There is much to be seen to before we sail!"

Across the Frontier!

FERRERS LOCKE and Jack were early astir. They caught the boat-train to Plymouth in the afternoon, and boarded the s.s. Andalusia, bound for Bombay. The subsequent voyage proved uneventful, and they spent many hours in discussing and perfecting their plan of campaign. It was decided to leave the boat at Bombay, cross India by train, and at Darjeeling don the garb and vestments

of travelling Lamas. From Darjeeling they would cross the frontier into Tibet. Jack felt a thrill as he thought of the perils and adventures which might fall to their lot in that country of mystery.

Ferrers Locke, an accomplished linguist, was confident that his knowledge of Eastern patois would carry them through without arousing suspicions.

Reaching Darjeeling, he had a long interview with the commissioner of police, and the next morning he and Jack set out on the last stage of their journey into Tibet.

One Parkin laboured long on them at police headquarters. Parkin was one of the finest disguise experts in the world. He transformed Ferrers Locke and Jack Drake from two healthy, athletic Englishmen into two shuffling, hooded, dark-skinned Lamas.

"It is three hundred and eighty miles from here to Lhasa, Jack," said Ferrers Locke, as he and Jack left Darjeeling. "and we've got to walk every foot of the way."

"Some hike!" grinned Jack.

"Yes; but we dare not appear other than two wandering Lamas, too poor to afford either mules or ponies."

Each wore beneath his robes an automatic and cartridge-belt. In the pack which each carried on his back was a supply of concentrated foods and a further supply of cartridges. They made steady progress, and on the evening of the seventh day after leaving Darjeeling they climbed to the summit of the Jelap La, where the road crosses the frontier into Tibet.

Jack was conscious of a tingling excitement as he stood and gazed over the rugged, mist-wreathed country which lay below them. This was Tibet, the mysterious, the forbidden! To the north-east, like a huge crystal spire, towered the peak of Chumulari. Far

below, as though hanging on the hill-side, was the Kanjut Lamasery, and beneath them was Chumbi and—the road to Lhasa.

"We'd best push on," said the detective, "and try to find some hut where we can sleep to-night. It will be dark soon."

They commenced the descent into the valley. Night was falling, and a chilling cold was in the air, when a turn in the road brought into view a small stone building standing a few yards back from the roadway.

"A rest-house, by the look of it!" said Ferrers Locke. "We'll stop here for to-night, Jack."

As they approached the hutment—for it was little better—a woman with a coarse, brick-red face appeared at the door. She had a thick, gaudily coloured blanket wrapped round her, and her feet were encased in high woollen boots with rope soles. She stared at Ferrers Locke and Jack, then spoke to someone inside the hut. A man came out—a squat, coarse-featured fellow.

"What want ye, brothers?" he growled.

"Food and lodging for the night," replied Ferrers Locke.

The man and woman exchanged glances, and the former growled:

"Whence come ye?"

"From Gnatong," replied the detective; then sharply: "But why these questions? Are two holy Lamas, two pilgrims to Lhasa, to be turned away to perish in the cold? Food and lodging we seek, and we will pay, though we can ill afford it."

"Ye are welcome to what shelter my unworthy house can give ye, brothers," replied the man sullenly.

Turning on his heel, he led the way into a small, smoky, stone-floored room.

A fire blazed on a low hearth. At a rough table sat two cloaked and hooded monks, drinking a soup-like concoction from steaming bowls in front of them. Ferrers Locke and Jack Drake crossed to the blaze and spread out their hands. From beneath his hood the detective took stock of the two men at the table. Both were tall, with austere, hatchet faces and deeply sunken eyes. Finishing their soup, they conversed together in low tones for a few moments, then, pushing back his chair, one of them crossed the floor to Ferrers Locke and his assistant.

"Greeting, brothers!" he said harshly.

"Greeting, brother!" replied Ferrers Locke.

"'Tis ill lodging, this," went on the other. "I'll lodging for a holy Lama. The Patong Lamasonry, whence we are bound, is but a short space from here. Ye'll find it better housing than this foul den, my brother, if ye will but accompany us."

The dark, inscrutable eyes stared sombrely into those of the detective's.

"I thank thee, brother," replied Ferrers Locke, "but my companion and I are weary with much travel. We will rest here."

"Ye prefer rough lodging, ye who travel to Lhasa?" said the monk, a hint of mockery in his voice.

"To Lhasa?" Ferrers Locke's voice was sharp. "Ye are well informed, brother!"

The Monk!

THE thin lips of the monk curved into a mirthless smile.

"Nay, not well informed," he said softly. "But do not all paths lead to Lhasa?"

"True words!" replied Ferrers Locke easily. "The paths to Lhasa are beaten flat by the feet of many pilgrims. But are there not other obscure paths which branch off into the hills and lead no man knows whither?"

"Then you journey to some distant monastery, brother?"

The deeply sunken eyes in the hooded, ascetic face stared coldly, questioning, into those of the detective.

"Enough of this!" said Ferrers Locke sternly. "Must holy Lamas render an account of their pilgrimage to any inquisitive priest of the Patong Lamasonry? We journey whither we journey. Let that suffice for you, my friend, and take heed that thy questioning tongue does not offend. Suffer my companion and I to eat in peace and to thaw the cold from out our very bones!"

He turned and spread his hands again to the blaze. The priest stood for a moment, an angry light in his eyes, then turned and stalked back to where his companion was seated.

The woman shuffled into the room and placed two bowls of thick, greasy stew on a table. Ferrers Locke and Jack seated themselves and fell to with gusto. The long day in the cold air had given them almost ravenous appetites.

The detective sat so that he could watch the two hooded figures at the neighbouring table.

"That fellow is suspicious, Jack," he said in a low voice. "If he discovers that we are other than we appear, then our lives will not be worth a moment's purchase."

"But why should he be suspicious, grey'nor?"

"This is the forbidden country of Tibet, Jack, and it has no more zealous guardians than the merciless priests who

people its monasteries and lamaseries. Every person who crosses the frontier is an object of suspicion till he has proved his bona fides."

He paused for a moment, then continued:

"You may wonder why I adopted an imperious note with him. A glib and plausible answering of all his questions would not have served to allay his suspicions. For what man, who has nothing to hide, is going to answer the questions put to him by the first stranger he meets?"

Jack nodded understandingly.

"What if he asks us again to spend the night at this lamasonry of Patong?" he asked.

"Then we will consent. We have let him understand that we have no particular desire to do so, but stubborn refusal would be most injudicious."

They finished their stew, and, the pangs of hunger appeased, turned their rough chairs to the fire and sat in silence. The tall monk, with a muttered word to his companion, rose to his feet and crossed the floor towards them.

"You have eaten, brothers," he said harshly, "and mayhap by now the cold has departed from your bones. We are ready to journey to the Patong Lamasonry, and offer you again our hospitality for the night."

"It is but the thought of sallying forth into the bitter cold which makes us hesitate," replied Ferrers Locke, with a shudder. "But," and he rose to his feet, "it savours of discourtesy to refuse. We will accompany you."

"It is well!" replied the monk. Then turning, he shouted: "Ho! A lantern, dog, to light our path!"

The surly-looking fellow who Ferrers Locke had seen standing outside the hut and who was obviously the owner of the place, appeared with an ill-smelling and smoky lantern.

Ferrers Locke and Jack gathered their robes closer about them and drew their hoods well forward over their heads. As they moved towards the door in the wake of the tall, gaunt figure of the monk, the detective threw a coin on to the table to settle the score of he and Jack. Hearing the metallic ring, the monk turned.

"What!" he cried. "Are holy Lamas then to pay these mis-begotten dogs for their foul viands?"

He stretched out a claw-like hand to grab the coin, but the detective's hand closed on his wrist.

"It is but a small coin," said Ferrers Locke quietly, "and the dogs must live."

"It is against the teachings of the great Buddha that his servants should pay for food."

"It is I who pay, not you, zealous one," replied Ferrers Locke, a hint of mockery in his voice. "Lead on, lest your long tongue keep us here all night."

He released his grip, and the monk turned away towards the door. But not before he had shot a glance at Ferrers Locke, which caused the detective to murmur to Jack:

"Walk warily and be on the alert!"

In Patong Lamasonry!

THE journey to the Patong Lamasonry was accomplished, however, without any untoward incident. The surly innkeeper shuffled in front with the smoky, swinging lantern. The others followed in single file along a rocky, uneven path. For nearly an hour they walked and stumbled, then there loomed up out of the darkness the shadowy bulk of a big wall.

The innkeeper, curtly dismissed by the monk, departed, and the latter knocked loudly on a wooden door, let into the wall. Footsteps approached from the other side, and a lantern glimmered through a crack between the rude hinges.

"Who knocks?" inquired a voice sonorously.

"It is I, Kala Dului!"

Bolts screeched, and the door swung creakingly open. A lantern was thrust into the faces of the four. Behind it was the shadowy outline of a hooded figure.

"You are not alone?"

"No. Two wandering Lamas seek lodgings for the night," replied Kala Dului. "Close the gate and lead the way."

Obediently the hooded figure with the lantern closed the gate, and then led the way across what appeared to be a large courtyard. He paused at a door before which hung a thick curtain of yak-hair. Pushing aside the curtain, he knocked and the door swung open.

Ferrers Locke and Jack passed into a long, stone corridor, dimly lit by flat, crudely-shaped oil lamps.

"Come!" said Kala Dului.

He led the way along the corridor to a large bare room, stone-walled and stone-floored, and void of any furnishings.

"Wait here and I will acquaint the Abbot of your presence," he said.

He withdrew, leaving the detective and Jack alone.

"Act as naturally as you can, Jack," muttered Ferrers Locke. "The very walls have eyes and ears here!"

He paced slowly up and down as though plunged in thought, albeit quite at his ease. Minutes passed and no one returned. All was silent. Silence, deathly and unearthly, enwrapped that lamasonry of Patong. Jack had a feeling that he was being watched, and, as the time dragged by, the feeling deepened into one of certainty.

Then suddenly the gaunt figure of Kala Dului appeared in the doorway.

"The Abbot desires speech with you," he said, his harsh voice echoing through the room.

(Continued overleaf.)



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Ferrers Locke and Jack Drake followed him along the corridor and up a wide flight of stone steps. He emerged suddenly into a large inner temple, high-roofed, and with arched pillars. He passed between two lines of silent, motionless monks, standing with bowed heads, and stalked up to the foot of a dais, where sat a small, wizened husk of a man clad in robes of scarlet. Behind this shrivelled specimen of humanity towered into the shadows the figure of a giant Buddha.

Kala Dului made a deep obeisance, then, stepping to one side, ushered forward Ferrers Locke and Jack.

For a long minute the Abbot studied them in silence, his eyes taking careful stock of them. When he spoke his voice was sharp and metallic.

"Whence come ye, ye who journey from beyond the frontiers of this land of ours?"

There was a note of suspicion and hostility in the voice, which was not lost upon the detective and Jack.

"And if we answer that we travel to Lhasa, or if we answer that we but seek the seclusion of our own monastery, what is that to you?" replied Ferrers Locke sharply. "Since when has interrogation of holy Lamas become the right of Abbots of small lamaseries such as this?"

There was a stir, a rustle of robes from the lines of silent monks. The wizened Abbot glared in speechless astonishment, then cackled shrilly. There was little of mirth in his eyes, however.

"Ye ask by what right?" he screamed. "Ye stand before me there and dare to question by what right?—Insolent curs of renegade priests, answer my question lest I have thy stubborn tongues torn out by the roots!"

"You talk easily of loosening tongues, you Abbot of Patong!" replied Ferrers Locke. "What know you of us that causes you, in your arrogant talk, to ignore the consequences that will occur to you should you molest us?"

Ferrers Locke was bluffing, bluffing all along the line. He knew that he and Jack were in deadly peril. It would have been easy to have said they were journeying to Lhasa, but such an admission would have brought from this suspicious Abbot such a string of leading, probing questions as would have been impossible for two Englishmen to answer without being unmasked. The questions of Kala Dului at the inn, and of the Abbot now, were not prompted by idle curiosity. There was something infinitely deeper than that behind it all.

The Abbot leaned forward in his chair, peering at the detective with a new interest.

"Ye are on a secret mission?" he inquired softly.

"Since when have holy Lamas traversed this rugged country for the good of their bodies?" replied Ferrers Locke.

Obviously taking this as an affirmative, the Abbot nodded, then clapped his bony hands sharply. The monks turned and moved noiselessly away until the temple was deserted save

for the detective, Jack, Kala Dului, and the Abbot.

Waiting until the last shuffling footstep had died away, the Abbot leaned forward in his chair.

"It is long now that we have guarded the frontiers," he said, "and none have slipped through this portion over which the Patong Lamaserie stands sentinel. Had ye been other than ye seem, then ye would have died in the chamber of torment which lies beneath this floor. But ye are on a secret mission, and that I can well believe, for none but his servants would have dared to have spoken as ye have done!"

"None but his servants would have dared to have spoken as ye have done," Jack caught his breath sharply at the words.

"Of your mission I will no further question you," went on the Abbot. "That, I doubt not, is for the ears of one alone. It but remains for ye to show me his token, and then seek thy couches for the night."

"You mean—"

Ferrers Locke's voice was questioning, but he knew the answer. "Who can I mean?" purred the Abbot. "There is but one who is the Chosen of Buddha, the scourge of the Western world. Give me the token—the token of Kang Pu!"

(Ferrers Locke and Jack Drake realise only too well that they are up against it, but come what may they are ready to face it without flinching! Don't miss next week's thrilling instalment, chums, whatever you do!)

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