

"THE BULLDOG BREED!"

Amazing story of the Great War by a British pilot who was taken prisoner—*Inside.*

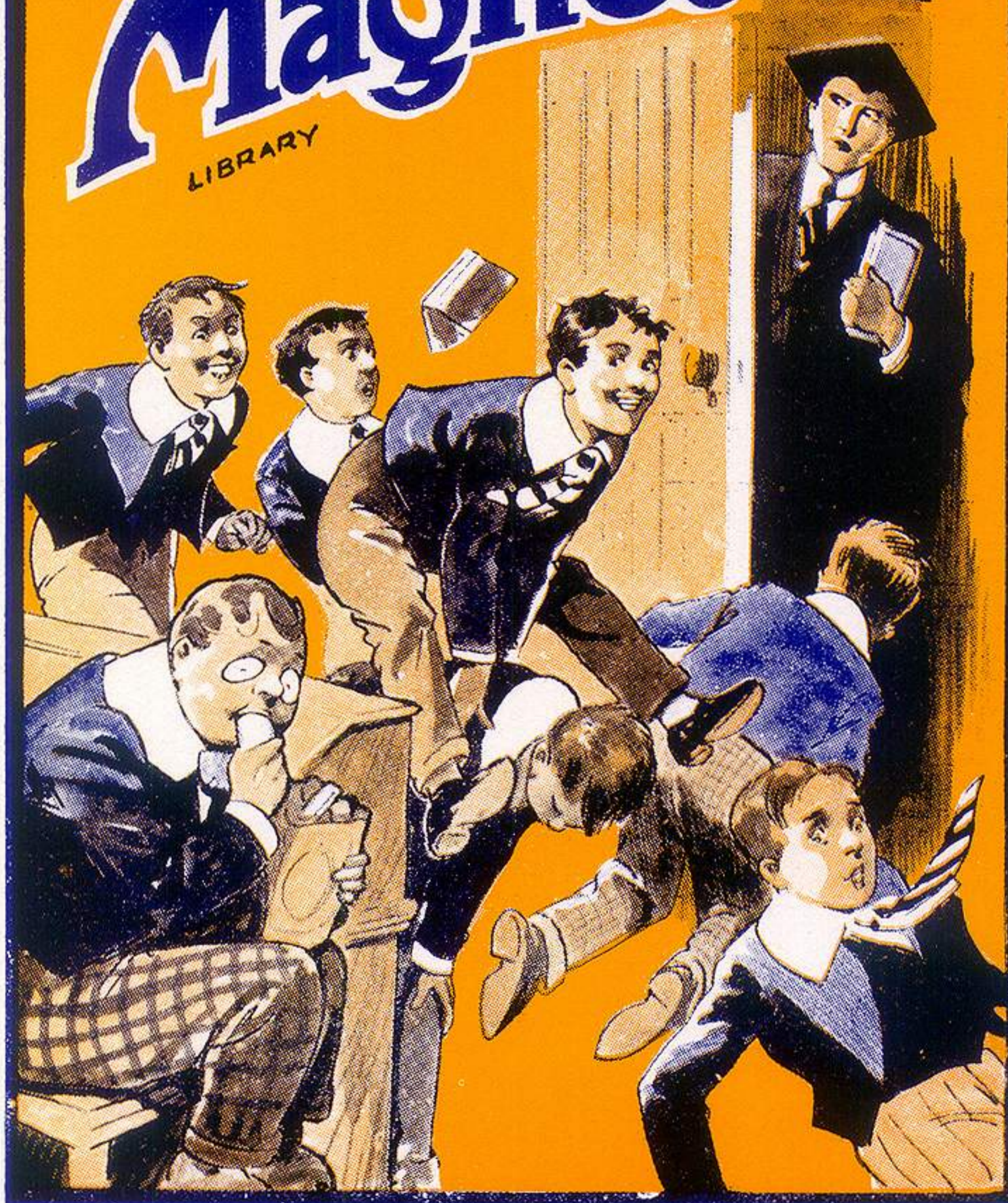
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The Magnet

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EVERY SATURDAY.



WHEN THE CAT'S AWAY—!

(A lively incident from this week's rousing school yarn of Greyfriars.)

WHO'LL WIN THE CUP, BOYS?

A heart to heart talk with "PAUL PRY," our Special Football Correspondent.

GATHER round, boys, while we talk about the Cup. You know the Cup I mean—the one which creates more interest than any other sporting event. We call it the English Cup, and that title will do for us in the course of our talk. But it isn't really the English Cup at all. It's the Football Association Challenge Cup. We got a reminder—a shock of a sort—that it wasn't the English Cup at all last season, when it was won by Cardiff City, a Welsh club. That was the first time in the whole history of the competition—which is over fifty years old—that the "pot" has ever gone to a club with its home outside England, though I might tell you that many years ago a Scottish team appeared in the Semi-Final.

"We're Going to One Day!"

Possibly many of you have never seen a Cup-tie, but that doesn't mean that you don't take an interest in the various rounds as they are played off. I know lots of fellows who have never seen a really big match. When I was at the offices of the Football Association in Russell Square, London, the other day, when the Cup draw was being made, there were at least a dozen youngsters—and one or two girls—standing just outside the door. I asked them what they were waiting for. "We want to know the draw," they said. And when I asked them if they had ever seen a Cup-tie they all shook their heads; but it was plain to see that they all agreed with a bright lad who added: "We're going to one day."

The Best Prize of All!

Yes, there's a fascination, a grip, about the Cup which is all its own. The struggle sends the supporters of the successful teams into the seventh heaven of delight; it sends the supporters of the losing teams into the depths of despair. And this fascination doesn't end with the people who watch, either. It "gets" the players. There is honour in winning the League Championship and in being chosen to play for one's country, but the prize of a footballer's career is a medal for winning the Cup. I know one great footballer who said that he would willingly have gone without three International caps for one Cupwinner's medal. Some players have the luck, others don't.

What Steve Bloomer Didn't Get!

There is one fellow still in football to-day whose watch-chain is a picture and the envy of every other footballer. He has three Cupwinner's medals on it. This is Clem Stephenson, the inside-left of Huddersfield Town. He has been in three Cup Finals, and his side has won every time.

Some of the greatest footballers the game has ever known have three less medals than Clem—that is, none at all. They have never been in a Cupwinning team. Among these are Steve Bloomer and Bob Crompton. During his football career Steve scored more goals than any footballer has ever done, but he wasn't ever in a Cupwinning team. Bob Crompton was capped for England twenty-odd times. Alas! he, too, had to retire from the game without a Cupwinner's medal.

The Lucky Bag!

Why is it that people go mad over the Cup fights? is a question you may be asking yourselves. There are several reasons. First of all, it provides a chance for every team—for the sides which are not doing too well in the League. That's one of the funny things about the Cup. The best team of the season very seldom wins it. The best team of the season is the one which wins the championship of the First Division, but the team which has won the championship of the First Division has not won the Cup in the same season during the last thirty years.

Second Division teams—second-class teams, if you like—have won it; teams which nobody really thought had a chance. That's one reason why we like it—because anything might happen.

The lesser lights win it because there is so much luck attached to winning—the luck of the draw and all that. We all like to dip into a lucky bag.

Dead Beat!

Then I like to see Cup-ties—and you would like them, too—because they are fights to a finish. The team which wins goes on; the team which loses goes out for that season. This life-and-death business means that the players just put every ounce of energy into the game. Never shall I forget the scene in the dressing-rooms at Stamford Bridge after the Cup Final of 1920. As no goal had been scored at the end of ninety minutes, the two teams—Aston Villa and Huddersfield Town—had to play an extra half-hour. They appealed to the referee not to compel them to do so, but he had to obey the rules. And when the match was all over the players were so dead tired—"done"—that several of them hadn't sufficient energy left to unlace their football boots. It's a fight, right enough, this Cup business—a fight in which only strong men, perfectly trained, stand any sort of chance.

A Departure from Style!

In the foregoing you have perhaps the biggest of the secrets of success in the Cup—fitness. That's why fellows who are in successful Cup teams are sent away to the seaside for weeks and weeks, only coming away to play their matches. But, of course, lots of teams do special training, and lots of teams are fit, so that can't be the only reason for success in the Cup.

There is a popular fad or fancy that it requires a particular style of football to win the Cup. This is all moonshine. Any side can win the Cup if it plays good enough football, and if it has the luck which goes hand-in-hand with Cupwinning. Teams which have played really high-class, scientific football have won the Cup often, though that is not considered a style which is best suited to the hustle and bustle of a knock-out competition. Equally, teams which have played hustle-and-bustle stuff have also won. So you can't tell.

What I can say is this—that there is no such thing as typical Cup football. I might also add that many teams have consistently failed to win because the players have imagined that there was such a thing. They have departed from their own general style and tried to play a game foreign to their accustomed ways. That way lies defeat.

Beaten Before the Match!

I believe that therein is one reason why some of the best clubs in the country have never yet won the Cup. Sunderland, for instance, have in the past had a side which was called the team of all the talents, but they never won the Cup with it. On the other hand, Aston Villa have always been famous as Cupfighters. They have won it more times than any other club—six. And it's worth something to have a reputation for being a good Cup team, because opponents get a bit scared. They are beaten before they go on the field when up against a side which has a Cup reputation. And that's a fatal attitude of mind.

The Secret of Success!

Little things tell. Here's an instance. Cardiff City have been twice in the Final tie since these games were played at Wembley, where the greyhounds now race round at night. I asked Fred Keenor, the captain of the side, why they won once and lost once. This was his story, which I tell you to show how little things count.

"When we first had to appear at Wembley we got to the ground some time before the match was due to start. We had to hang about. And while we were hanging about the coming match got on our nerves. Consequently, we didn't play our usual game, and we lost. When we got to Wembley for our Second Final there was only just time in which to dress quickly for the game. We hadn't time to think about the importance of it all, the excitement, and we played our natural game and won."

That's the real secret of success in the Cup, the way to win—play a natural game.

WANTED BY THE POLICE! Somewhere in Kent, Convict Nineteen is known to be hiding, waiting a favourable opportunity to flee the country. His amazing resemblance to a master of Greyfriars points the way of escape, and the hunted, desperate man is not slow to take it!



The Form-Master's Foe!

A Magnificent
New Long
Complete Story
of Harry Wharton
& Co., the chums
of Greyfriars.

By
**FRANK
RICHARDS.**

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Bunter, of course!

"BUNTER, of course!"

"Oh, of course!"

"That's a cert!"

There was only one opinion on the subject in the Greyfriars Remove.

Bunter had done it!

"Couldn't have been anybody else!" remarked Bob Cherry. "Who else would have thought of such a stunt?"

"Nobody!" agreed Harry Wharton.

"But what a nerve!" added Bob.

"What a neck!" said Johnny Bull.

"The neckfulness," remarked Hurree Janset Ram Singh, "was terrific. The lickfulness will be still morefully terrific."

"No doubt about that," said Peter Todd. "A Head's flogging, at least."

"Yes, rather!"

"Poor old Bunter! Well, he's asked for it."

"He has, and no mistake."

That Bunter had done it, nobody in the Remove doubted for a moment. That his delinquency would be discovered, and condignly punished, was not to be doubted, either. Bunter, in the opinion of the Remove, was "for" it!

It was early morning at Greyfriars; the rising-bell had not long ceased to clang. Outside Mrs. Mimble's little tuckshop, in the corner behind the elms, quite a crowd of fellows had gathered. The news of what had happened had greeted the juniors as soon as they came down from their dormitories, and they had crowded to the spot, deeply interested.

Fellows of other Forms were debating who might have done it! But there was no debate in the Remove. They knew—at least, they were certain that they knew. For they knew their Bunter! If any fellow at Greyfriars had sneaked down from his dormitory in the middle of the night, and purloined tuck from the school shop, that fellow was Bunter. The matter did not admit of argument.

It was Billy Bunter, and there was an end!

At that early hour, the school shop was not generally open. But it was open now—in fact, Mrs. Mimble had most unexpectedly found it open when she came down in the morning. The lock of the tuckshop door was an ancient one, and it was probably a decade or two since it had been in good condition. In the course of years, it had grown looser, and more rickety; indeed, for some years Mr. Mimble, the gardener, had intended to put it right. Like most jobs that are put off till to-morrow, instead of being done to-day, that little job had never got itself done. So the fellow who had plundered the school shop in the night had found his task quite easy. That ancient lock had yielded to the shove of a chisel—the pilferer had knocked, so to speak, and it had opened unto him.

Who could it have been but Billy Bunter? No other fellow at Greyfriars was keen enough on tuck to risk a Head's flogging for it—even Bunter minor of the Second Form would have drawn a line at that, like as he was to his major in the Remove. Certainly, it looked as if a fellow would require a lot of nerve for such an exploit; and Billy Bunter was not of the stuff of which heroes are made. But it is well known that fools rush in where angels fear to tread; and on the subject of Bunter's fatuousness there was no doubt. What he lacked in nerve he made up in obtuseness.

It was Bunter, of course. The Removites had no idea of stating that opinion outside their own ranks; it was not for them to give the raider away. But among themselves they had no doubt of it.

"Where is the fat duffer?" asked Harry Wharton, looking round.

"Not down yet," said Skinner, with a grin. "I dare say he needs a little extra sleep after going burgling in the night."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here he comes!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, as a

fat figure rolled into view from the direction of the House.

It was not uncommon for William George Bunter, of the Remove, to be last fellow down. Generally he contrived to snatch a little extra nap after rising-bell; and if pressed for time, he could always take it out of ablutions, which he sometimes cut down almost to vanishing point. His tardiness on this particular morning, however, was generally set down as the result of his nocturnal exploits. If Bunter had been abroad in the night, it was natural for him to want a little extra sleep in the morning.

Billy Bunter rolled up to the crowd outside the tuckshop, his little round eyes blinking inquisitively behind his big glasses.

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

"You don't know, of course," grinned Bob Cherry.

"Eh? No!"

"You'd better tell Quelchy that when he asks you," chuckled Skinner. "He may believe it!"

Bunter blinked round the crowd of grinning faces. Certainly he did not look as if he knew what had happened; and if he was playing a part, he was playing it well. But nobody, of course, expected Bunter to own up to what he had done.

"I say, you fellows! Has anything happened?"

"Oh, draw it mild, Bunter," said Frank Nugent. "We're not going to give you away; but, of course, we know you did it."

"The knowfulness is terrific, my esteemed fat Bunter," chuckled Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"What have you done with the tuck?" asked Squiff.

Bunter blinked at him.

"Tuck! What tuck?"

"The tuck you looted overnight."

"Oh, really, Squiff—"

"You can't have bolted it all, Bunter," said Peter Todd. "According to THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,041.

to what Mrs. Mimble was saying, there's a whole stack of grub gone. Even you couldn't hold the lot!"

"He's hidden it somewhere, like a dog burying a bone, you know," remarked Skinner. "He will dig it up when he's hungry again—which will be about ten minutes after brekker."

"Ha, ha, ha!" Billy Bunter's eyes grew wider and rounder behind his spectacles.

"I say, you fellows, has anything been pinched from the tuckshop?" he asked.

"Has it?" chuckled Johnny Bull. "Yes, old fat man, it has! And if we had an X-ray apparatus here, we could see where it's hidden—under his waistcoat."

"Oh, really, Bull——" "You must have been a frabjous ass, Bunter," said Harry Wharton. "You're bound to be found out. The Head will inquire into this."

"I haven't done anything, you ass!" hooted Bunter. "Think I've been here raiding the tuckshop?"

"Well, haven't you?" demanded Hazeldene.

"No, you chump!" "Keep it up," grinned Hazel. "Nobody will believe you; but, of course, you wouldn't expect that."

Bunter blinked at the juniors, and blinked at the open doorway of the tuckshop. Inside the shop, Mrs. Mimble could be seen—and the usually ruddy and kindly face of that good dame was now extremely disturbed and cross in expression. What had happened had naturally annoyed Mrs. Mimble very much indeed, and her temper had suffered in consequence. Mr. Mimble was there; and Mrs. Mimble was speaking to him. By the widest stretch of the imagination it could not have been supposed to be Mr. Mimble's fault that the tuckshop had been raided in the night; but to judge by the acerbity of Mrs. Mimble's voice, she seemed to think that Mr. Mimble was to blame somehow.

The culprit being as yet undiscovered, there was no one else upon whom the vials of wrath could be poured. Mr. Mimble was not to blame; but he was at hand! Mrs. Mimble, in the present disturbed state of her nerves and temper, simply had to snap at somebody. It was one of those occasions when, as the song says, it happens that a victim must be found.

So Mr. Mimble was getting the benefit of it. Like a good husband, he bore it patiently; only looking a little as if he wondered, rather late in life, whether marriage was, after all, a mistake.

"I say, you fellows, she's going it!" said Billy Bunter, with a grin. "I say, does anybody know who did it?"

"Everybody here knows," chuckled Tom Brown. "You did it, you fat spoofer!"

"Oh, really, Brown——" "You can own up to us, fathead!" said Vernon-Smith. "We're not going to give you away."

"Oh, really, Smithy——" "You must have been an ass, Bunter," said Tom Redwing. "The stuff will have to be paid for, and there will be a flogging into the bargain."

"Oh, really, Redwing——" "Shush!" said Bob Cherry. "Here comes the Head!"

"I say, you fellows, I never did it!" howled Bunter.

"Shut up, you ass! The Head will hear!" breathed Harry Wharton.

"I don't care if he does! I never did it!" yelled Bunter angrily. "How could I have done it when I was fast

asleep all night? I'm as innocent as—as a babe in arms!"

"Hush, ass!" "I tell you——" "Shut up!"

Bob Cherry clapped a hand over Bunter's capacious mouth, as Dr. Locke came rustling up, with a stern and frowning brow. Bunter gurgled into silence, and all the other fellows stood silent as the Head arrived on the spot.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Was it Bunter?

DR. LOCKE glanced at the juniors, and glanced particularly at Billy Bunter. Probably he had heard something as he came up. But he made no remark to the Greyfriars fellows. He passed into the little shop.

Mrs. Mimble's angry, acidulated voice ceased its tirade as she beheld the Head, and Mr. Mimble was given a much-needed rest. The good dame turned a flushed face on the headmaster of Greyfriars.

"My good Mrs. Mimble," said the Head, "Wingate of the Sixth has informed me that—that your shop has been entered and rifled overnight. Is this correct?"

"Yes, sir," said Mrs. Mimble, with emphasis, "and I've been making a list, sir, of the goods that have been took, sir, which the same I shall expect to be paid for, sir."

"Quite so—quite so, my good woman," said the Head soothingly. "If any Greyfriars boy has taken your goods, undoubtedly they shall be paid for to the last penny—undoubtedly. But I can scarcely believe that any boy belonging to this school would be guilty of such an act."

"Which there isn't any doubt about it, sir," said Mrs. Mimble. "The lock on the door has been forced open, sir, with a chisel or somethink, and the goods took. A large 'am——"

Dr. Locke gazed at the dilapidated lock. It showed plain signs where it had been forced open.

"A box of biscuits," said Mrs. Mimble—"lunch wafers, sir—and a box of fancy biscuits, has been took. Likewise several bottles of currant wine, sir—how many I do not undertake to say, without counting up my stock. Likewise a bag of heggs, sir."

"Bless my soul!" "Likewise a cake—a large cake, sir, and——"

"The details are not important for the moment, Mrs. Mimble. I desire to ascertain the facts," said the Head. "It would appear to be beyond doubt that the shop has been forcibly entered."

"Yes, sir, and a large 'am——" "But it does not appear clear that the act was done by a boy belonging to the school," suggested the Head. "Somehem!—vagrant may have gained admission to the school precincts during the night——"

"I don't think, sir," said Mrs. Mimble, with asperity. "Burglars, sir, don't burgle a 'an, and bottles of currant wine, and a cake, sir. Burglars would have took something more valuable, sir, such as money in the till, which was not touched."

"Oh, indeed!" "Several pounds, sir, which is still there," said Mrs. Mimble. "Whoever opened that door, sir, could have opened the till easily. But the till was not touched, sir, neither the money."

The Head looked very thoughtful. The crowd of fellows outside the tuckshop exchanged glances.

Certainly, it was possible that some vagrant had obtained entrance to the school precincts—perhaps by way of the Cloisters, and had robbed the school shop in the dark hours.

It was possible, but nobody supposed that it was probable. Thieves would hardly have helped themselves to tuck, and left money in the till. That was an unanswerable argument.

What had been taken was precisely what might have been taken by some fellow who was hungry, and who was not particular how he obtained a spread—Billy Bunter, for example. Bunter, of course, would not have touched money. A burglar most certainly would have done so.

Dr. Locke peered about the tuckshop for a few minutes, and then peered at the forced lock again. That lock had not needed the skill of a burglar to force it. Anyone could have forced it with a chisel, or perhaps a pocket-knife.

The Head looked very much disturbed. "Well, well, this matter will be carefully investigated, Mrs. Mimble," he said. "The delinquent, if he belongs to the school, will be severely punished. You may make out a list of your losses. I shall see that, in any case, you are compensated, my good woman."

"Thank you, sir," said Mrs. Mimble, rather more amiably.

The Head rustled out of the shop again. Again his glance fell significantly on Billy Bunter, as he passed the crowd of fellows, but he did not stop. His majestic figure disappeared through the morning mist in the direction of the House.

"The Head knows!" grinned Skinner. "You're for it, Bunter! Why didn't you keep your silly mouth shut? He heard you."

"Oh, really, Skinner——" "You've given yourself away now, Bunter, and no mistake!" remarked Squiff.

"I never did it!" yelled Bunter.

"Gammon!" "Look here, you beast——" "Who did, then?" demanded Hazeldene.

"I don't know! You, perhaps!" "What?" yelled Hazel.

"Or very likely some of the fags," said Bunter. "Tubb of the Third, very likely. He's a greedy little beast!"

"Why, you cheeky rotter!" roared Tubb of the Third, who was in the crowd. "We all know it was you! Look here! I'll punch your nose if you say it was me!"

And George Tubb pranced up to the Owl of the Remove in a very warlike way.

"I—I mean, some Second Form fag," said Bunter hastily. "That's what I really meant to say. Very likely it was your minor, Nugent! He's got cheek enough for anything."

"Cheek enough, but he's not ass enough," grinned Frank Nugent. "What's the good of lying, Bunter, when we all know you did it?"

"Of course, it might have been Bunter's minor," remarked Bob Cherry thoughtfully. "Was it you, Sammy?"

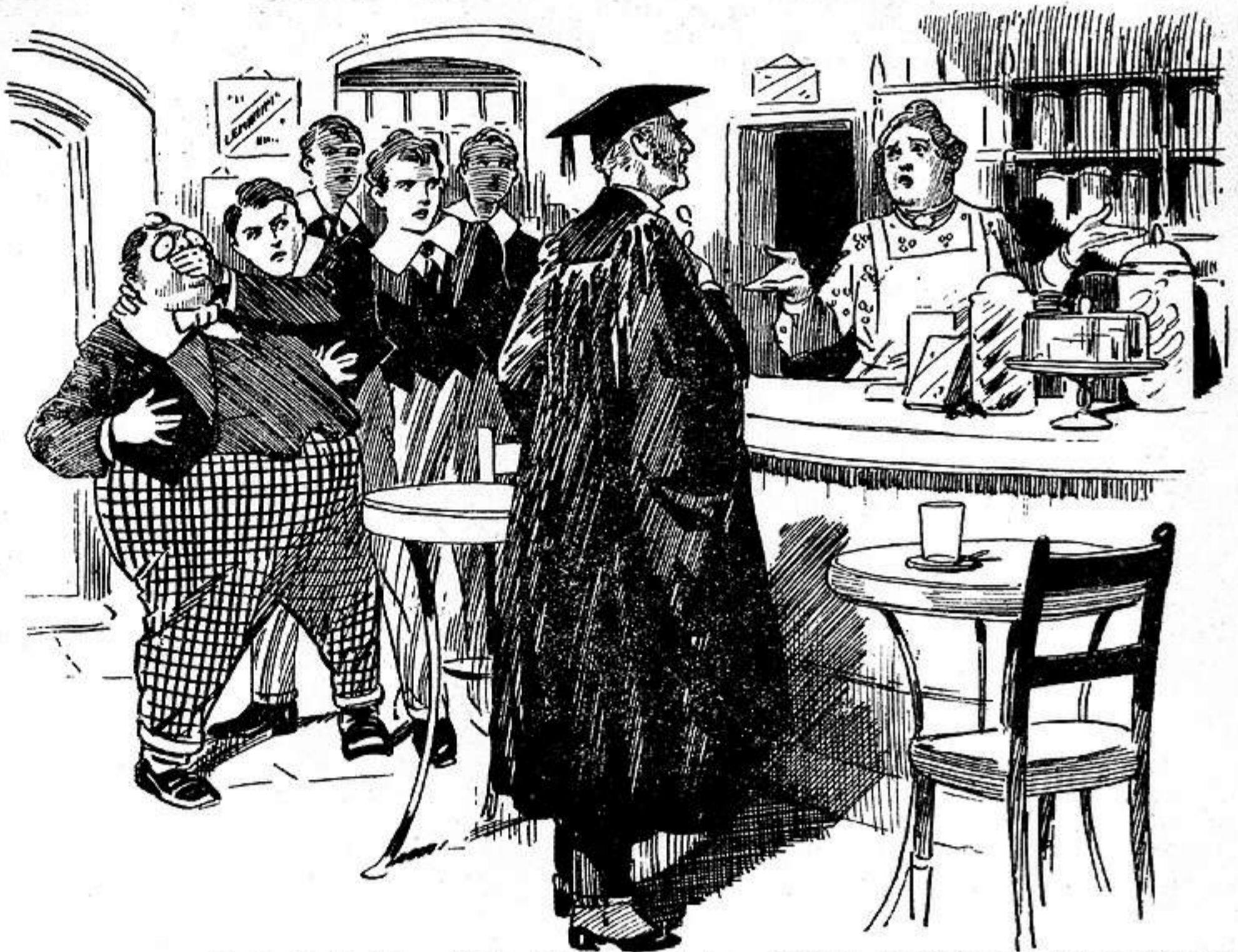
Sammy Bunter of the Second Form had rolled on the scene to see what was the matter. He gave Bob an indignant blink through his big spectacles.

"You cheeky ass!" he hooted. "It was my major, of course!"

"Why, you unbrotherly little beast!" gasped Billy Bunter. "Didn't you hear me say that I didn't do it?"

"Yes; that's what makes me sure that you did."

"Ha, ha, ha!" Billy Bunter gave his minor a glare that certainly was not brotherly.



"Shut up, you ass! The Head will hear!" breathed Harry Wharton. "I don't care if he does! I never did it!" yelled Bunter angrily. "Shut up!" Bob Cherry clapped a hand over Bunter's mouth, as Dr. Locke came rustling up with a stern and frowning brow. (See Chapter 1.)

"You fat little beast——"
"Fat!" jeered Sammy. "I like that!"

"I know it was you now!" howled Bunter. "You, of course! No need to look any further for the chap, you fellows! It was Sammy!"

"Chuck it!" chortled Sammy. "Everybody knows you did it, Billy. Look here, you haven't wolfed all the tuck yet. What have you done with the rest?"

"Might whack it out," grinned Gatty of the Second. "You get the flogging, anyhow, so it's no good handing it back to old Mimble."

"Yes, whack it out, Billy," urged Bunter minor.

"I say, you fellows, you don't believe that I did it, do you?" exclaimed Bunter, blinking round at the grinning Removites.

"Yes, rather," chuckled Bob Cherry. "The ratherfulness is terrific."

"We jolly well know you did it."

"I give you my word," howled the Owl of the Remove. "I give you my word as—as—as a Bunter."

"Oh, my hat! That does it," said Bob. "We know the exact value of the word of a Bunter!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beast! I tell you——"

"Hallo hallo, hallo! There's the bell! Brekker!" said Bob Cherry. "You won't want any brekker, Bunter, after that spread in the middle of the night."

"I never had any spread!" yelled Bunter. "I was fast asleep—sound asleep—I never woke up till rising bell—I—I—I——"

"Gammon!"
The crowd streamed off towards the House for breakfast.

Whether Billy Bunter had had a spread overnight or not, he had come down with a good appetite for breakfast. If he had really stowed away the cargo of tuck that had been pilfered from the school shop, it was amazing that he had any room left for more. But Bunter's tremendous powers as a trencherman were well known; and his ample breakfast did not convince anyone that he had not enjoyed a gigantic feast overnight.

William George Bunter was found guilty by all the Remove, much to his indignation and exasperation. But that, after all, was not a very serious aspect of the matter—what was really serious was, that he might be found guilty by the Head! That was awfully serious—it could mean no less than a flogging—and it might mean the "sack." Billy Bunter's fat face was darkly troubled during breakfast: though the worry on his mind fortunately had no effect whatever on his appetite, which was as healthy as ever.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Bunter Knows!

"WHARTON!"
"Yes, sir," said Harry, stopping as Mr. Gilmore, the master of the Second Form, addressed him.

The Famous Five were coming out into the quad after breakfast. Many fellows were heading for the

school shop to have another look at the scene of the mysterious pilfering; and the captain of the Remove and his friends were sauntering in that direction, when Mr. Gilmore called to Harry.

The chums of the Remove glanced rather curiously at Mr. Gilmore's handsome face.

The new master of the Second had been only for a few weeks at Greyfriars: but long enough to become popular with most Greyfriars men—excepting the Second Form. His own Form loathed him, for the simple reason that Mr. Gilmore had introduced a new regime of hard work in the Form-room, and the Second longed almost passionately for Mr. Twigg to recover from his influenza and return to the school, so that the temporary master of the Second might vanish for ever.

Harry Wharton & Co. had little to do with the master of the Second; but they heard a good deal about him from Frank Nugent's minor, Dicky, whose remarks on the subject were almost lurid.

Since Mr. Gilmore's advent, Dicky had fallen into the way of coming up to Study No. 1 in the Remove with his books, for help in Latin with his major: a proceeding that had never been necessary in Mr. Twigg's time.

Dicky Nugent's Latin, undoubtedly, was improving; but his temper was not. In fact, his temper was decidedly deteriorating. He loathed the "Beast," as Eric Gilmore was called in the Second Form. His major took rather

different view. Frank was accustomed to a Form master who made fellows work, and his belief was that Mr. Gilmore's coming was a good thing for the Second in general and Dicky in particular.

The Famous Five were also a little interested in Mr. Gilmore as a footballer. He turned out sometimes with the first eleven, and played a great game of Soccer; and he was immensely popular with the Sixth Form men who were great on games. When Eric Gilmore was playing football, the Famous Five always turned up on Big Side to watch, if other occupations did not prevent it. They both admired and liked Mr. Gilmore, and only smiled at the diatribes of Nugent minor.

At the present moment, as the Second Form master stopped Harry Wharton & Co. in the quad, he was looking very disturbed.

Generally he was very equable and good-tempered—even when he was taking the Second in prep, which was a test of a man's temper and nerves.

"Wharton! I have just heard some talk among the boys of my Form," said Mr. Gilmore hurriedly. "Is it a fact that the school shop was broken into in the night?"

"Yes, sir," answered Harry, in wonder.

All Greyfriars was commenting upon the occurrence: but Wharton could not see why the Second Form master should be especially disturbed about it.

"I presume that food was taken?" asked Mr. Gilmore.

"Yes, sir—a lot of tuck."

"Some Greyfriars boy?"

"I suppose so, sir," answered Harry.

"Oh! I—I suppose that the goods taken were pastries, tarts, and cakes and such things, such as a boy might be likely to take?"

"Well, no, not exactly," said Wharton.

"A large ham, I heard Mrs. Mimble say; and boxes of biscuits and things."

"Some chap got jolly hungry in the night, sir," remarked Bob Cherry, with a grin.

Mr. Gilmore glanced at Bob.

"It is supposed that a Greyfriars boy was guilty of what has been done?" he asked.

"Oh, yes, sir; not much doubt about that."

"He is not discovered yet?"

"Not by the Head, sir," said Harry.

Mr. Gilmore gave the juniors an abrupt nod, and walked away. His face was clouded and thoughtful as he went.

"Gilmore seems jolly interested," remarked Frank Nugent. "I wonder if he thinks it was a fellow in his Form."

"Might have been Sammy Bunter, of course," said Johnny Bull. "More likely Bunter major, in my opinion."

"Yes, rather."

"The fellow's Form master will be waxy, whoever he was," remarked Bob Cherry. "If it was Bunter, Mr. Quelch will be on the war-path like a giddy Red Indian. And it was Bunter, of course."

"Of course."

"Nothing for Gilmore to worry about," grinned Johnny Bull. "It wasn't a Second Form fag. Only one fellow at Greyfriars was idiot enough to do such a thing—and that fellow's in our Form."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Hallo hallo, hallo! Are you going to own up, Bunter?"

Billy Bunter blinked indignantly at the Famous Five.

"I've told you I never did it—"

"Presumptive evidence that you did!" chuckled Bob. "Your giddy statements

go by the rule of contraries, old fat bean."

"Beast! Look here you fellows, I know who did it," said Bunter.

"We' all know!" chuckled Nugent.

"But you ought to know best of all."

"I mean, it was Gilmore."

"What?" yelled the Famous Five, with one voice. If William George Bunter had stated that the raider of the tuckshop was the Head, they could hardly have been more astonished.

"You—you—you piffing potty bandersnatch!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Are you making out that it was a Form master bagged tuck from Mrs. Mimble's shop?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Just that!" said Bunter firmly.

"You fellows remember that I identified Gilmore as the escaped convict from Blackmoor Prison—"

"Fathead!"

"He's stuffed the Head, and stuffed Inspector Grimes—stuffed everybody in fact, excepting me," went on Bunter. "He can't stuff me, you know. I'm too wide."

"The widefulness of the esteemed Bunter is terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, with a grinning glance at Bunter's ample proportions. The Owl of the Remove was, as a matter of fact, nearly double-width, physically, at least.

"I don't mean that you silly ass," hooted Bunter. "I mean, I'm too wide to be stuffed by that man Gilmore. His real name is George Waring, and he's Convict No. 19 of Blackmoor Prison, as I've told you often enough already."

"Too often!" remarked Bob Cherry.

"Don't tell us any more. Make up a new funny story."

"I can't denounce him and get the reward," went on Bunter. "Quelch caned me for stating the facts."

"The facts! Oh, my hat!"

"I let Inspector Grimes know, and he came over here; but he never arrested Gilmore, for some reason."

"The reason, ass, is that it's all rot, fathead, and you're a piffing duffer to think such an idiotic thing!" explained Bob. "From the description published of Waring the convict, he seems to be rather like Mr. Gilmore to look at. So are a hundred other men, very likely."

"You see, he's the same man."

"Ass!"

"Being a convict, what is he doing here?" went on Bunter. "Don't you fellows think he's very likely after the Head's safe?"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The idea of the Second Form master being after the Head's safe took the Famous Five by storm. They roared.

"You can cackle!" snorted Bunter. "My belief is that he's here after the Head's safe; and he's burgled the tuckshop just to keep his hand in."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If we searched for that tuck that's missing, I bet we should find it in Mr. Gilmore's room, or in his study," said Bunter. "When something's stolen, it stands to reason that it was a convict did it, if there's a convict about."

"If!" chuckled Bob.

"Well, my belief is that it was Gilmore did it; as he's a convict really," said Bunter. "You know I met that escaped convict in the vacation, and I know his face all right. You could have knocked me down with a feather when I saw Gilmore here and recognised him as the man. What I can't understand is why the police don't collar him now I've told Grimes where to put his hand on him—"

"Bunter!"

"Oh, lor'!"

William George Bunter spun round at the sound of Mr. Quelch's voice. The Remove master fixed his eyes on Bunter with a glare that the fabled basilisk might have envied.

"Bunter! You young rascal! You were saying—"

"Oh, no, sir! I—I wasn't speaking—"

"What?" exclaimed the Remove master. "You were speaking to these juniors as I came up the path."

"I—I—I mean, I wasn't speaking about Mr. Gilmore, sir!" stammered Bunter. "I—I— was only saying that—that—"

"That what?" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"That—that it was a—a fine morning for—for the time of year, sir," gasped Bunter.

"Bless my soul! Bunter, I heard you distinctly. You were repeating the foolish and wicked slander you have already uttered concerning Mr. Gilmore. I warned you, Bunter, that you would be severely punished if you repeated that absurd story. Follow me to my study, Bunter!"

"I—I—I—" stuttered Bunter.

"Enough! Follow me!"

"Oh, dear!"

Mr. Quelch whisked away with a very angry face, and the Owl of the Remove rolled after him dismally.

"Poor old Bunter!" sighed Bob Cherry. "Always asking for it!"

And a few moments later the sound of loud yelling from the Remove master's study announced that William George Bunter was getting what he had asked for.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Called on the Carpet!

"NOW for the jolly old inquisition!" remarked Bob Cherry. There was a general movement towards Big Hall.

Instead of going into the Form-rooms at the usual hour that morning, the Greyfriars fellows had to assemble in Hall, where the word had gone forth that the Head was to speak to them.

All the fellows knew what that meant. It was upon the subject of the nocturnal raid on the school shop that the headmaster was to speak.

All the Forms gathered in Hall, from the great men of the Sixth to the fags of the Second. All the masters were in their places, and the prefects walked up and down enjoining silence.

In the ranks of the Remove many glances were turned on Bunter—a circumstance that the fat junior noted with glowering indignation.

That Bunter had done it was not a question in the Remove. That question was already answered to their satisfaction. The question was, whether he had yet been bowled out, or whether he was going to be bowled out. Peter Todd had advised him to own up, on the ground that owning up would probably make the punishment lighter, as it would save the Head some trouble. Bunter had rejected the advice with an angry snort. Harry Wharton had urged him earnestly not to tell the Head any lies if he was specially questioned, to which Bunter had replied indignantly that he was not a liar like some fellows. Certainly, guilty or not guilty, the fat junior had no intention of owning up.

There was a hush in the crowded Hall when Dr. Locke entered by the upper door. The Head's face was set and stern. Obviously he took a very serious view of what had happened in the night.

In a few words the headmaster told the assembled school what they already knew, of the pilfering of the tuckshop

during the previous night by some person or persons unknown. He finished by commanding the guilty person to stand forward.

Nobody stood forward.

As a matter of fact, the headmaster's look and tone did not encourage the culprit to stand forward if he was present. And the fact that Dr. Locke had brought his birch into Hall with him could not be regarded as encouraging to a delinquent.

"No takers!" murmured the Bunder. And there was a subdued chuckle in the ranks of the Remove.

Mr. Quelch glanced round with a portentous frown.

"Silence!"

The chuckle died away.

"Once more," came the Head's deep voice, "I command the culprit to stand forward and confess his wrongdoing!"

Deep silence.

Dr. Locke set his lips.

"As the person guilty of this miserable theft does not choose to confess, the matter will be strictly investigated," he said. "If the offender confesses at once, he will be punished with a flogging. If he is discovered by inquiry, he will be expelled from the school. I will wait one minute to give the delinquent one more chance."

Peter Todd nudged Bunter.

"Speak up, fatty!" he breathed.

"Beast!" hissed Bunter.

"It's your last chance, Bunter!" whispered Vernon-Smith.

"Yah!"

"You silly ass!" breathed Peter Todd. "Take your chance while you've got it! It means the sack if you don't!"

"Go and eat coke!"

"Silence, there!" rapped out Mr. Quelch. "How dare you whisper!"

The Head was waiting. He waited only the promised minute, but never had sixty seconds seemed so long to the school. But the sixtieth second ticked away at last.

"Very well," said the Head, in a deep voice of concentrated anger. "The matter will now be investigated, and the culprit will be expelled from Greyfriars as soon as discovered!"

There was another pause, and then the headmaster added:

"Bunter! Bunter of the Remove will step forward."

"Oh, lor!" gasped Bunter.

The fat junior did not move. His feet seemed glued to the floor. Mr. Quelch turned a basilisk eye on him.

"Bunter, do you hear? Obey your headmaster at once!"

"I—I didn't—I—I wasn't—"

"Stand forward!"

"Oh, lor!"

William George Bunter dragged himself unwillingly forward. A sea of eyes were turned on him. Bunter, as a rule, loved the limelight, and he was getting plenty of it now, but on this occasion he did not seem to be enjoying it. He limped up to the Head's dais and stood there quaking, his fat knees knocking together.

"Bunter!" said Dr. Locke.

"I didn't!" gasped Bunter.

"Do not interrupt me, Bunter!"

"Yes, sir—I mean no, sir! Oh, crikey!"

"From the words I heard you utter this morning, Bunter, I gathered that you probably knew something of this occurrence."

"Oh, no, sir. I never uttered any words, sir!" exclaimed Bunter hurriedly. "I—I never opened my mouth, sir."

"It appears that a number of your own Form suspect you of being guilty of this delinquency, Bunter."

"They're all beasts, sir!"

"What?"

"Beasts! Rotters, sir! Frightful rotters!"

"Bless my soul! Bunter, if you are not guilty you have no cause to be afraid."

"I—I'm not afraid, sir," gasped Bunter through his chattering teeth. "N-n-n-ot at all, sir. I never did it, sir. I wouldn't!"

"I am questioning you, Bunter, because it is clear to me that a number of your Form-fellows believe you guilty. Did you leave your dormitory after lights were put out last night?"

"Oh, dear! Yes, sir," gasped Bunter. "But I was last, sir. All the fellows will tell you that."

"What? Do you mean to say that the whole Lower Fourth left the dormitory?" exclaimed the Head, in amazement.

"Yes, sir; I was the very last."

"I can scarcely believe that so many boys were concerned in this outrageous occurrence. At what hour of the night, Bunter, did all these boys leave the dormitory?"

"Not in the night, sir. It was at rising-bell."

"What?" stuttered the Head.

"We—we have to turn out at rising-bell, sir," gasped Bunter. "If we didn't old Quelch—I mean Quelch—that is, Mr. Quelch, sir, would be after us with a cane, sir."

The Head gazed at William George Bunter. A chuckle ran round the Hall, in spite of the seriousness of the occasion. Obviously, there was a little misunderstanding.

"Is this boy really so stupid, Mr. Quelch, or is he prevaricating?" asked the Head at last.

"He is certainly the most obtuse boy in the Form, sir," said Mr. Quelch. "His absurd answers are, I think, dictated by his customary stupidity."

"Oh, really, sir—"

"When I asked you if you left your dormitory after lights out, Bunter, I was

not referring to your rising at the customary hour in the morning," snapped the Head.

"Oh, weren't you, sir?"

"Did you leave the dormitory during the night between lights out and rising-bell?" demanded the Head, categorically.

"Oh, no, sir. Not at all!"

"On various occasions, Bunter, you have been punished for pilfering comestibles from the pantry," said Dr. Locke. "On other occasions you have been punished for taking things from various studies. From such actions, Bunter—from pilfering in a Remove study to pilfering in the school shop is but a single step."

"Is it, sir?" gasped Bunter.

"Certainly it is! Cannot you see that for yourself?"

"Nunno, sir. It would be a jolly long step from the Remove studies to the tuckshop, sir. It can't be less than a hundred yards."

"Goodness gracious!" gasped the Head. "Is this boy utterly obtuse? I do not mean a single step in a physical sense, Bunter, but in a moral sense."

"Do you, sir?" stuttered Bunter.

"Do you understand me now, Bunter?"

"Oh, yes, sir! Quite, sir! C-c-can I go now, sir?"

"In a word, Bunter," said the Head, breathing hard, "were you guilty of the pilfering that took place in the school shop last night?"

"No, sir," gasped Bunter. "Certainly not! I never knew the lock could be opened so easily as that, sir."

"Upon my word! Do you mean to imply, Bunter, that you would have been guilty of this pilfering had you been aware that it could have been perpetrated with facility?"

"Oh, no, sir! I—I mean—"

"What do you mean, Bunter?"

"Nothing, sir!" gasped Bunter.

"Either this boy is incredibly obtuse

(Continued on the next page.)

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NOW ON SALE.

or he is prevaricating most unscrupulously," exclaimed the Head.

"Both!" murmured the Bunder, and there was a chuckle in the Remove, which drew another portentous frown from Mr. Quelch.

"C-c-can I go now, sir?" groaned Bunter.

"As you deny this charge, Bunter, you may go; and the matter remains for strict investigation," said the Head. "I repeat that the guilty person will be expelled from Greyfriars when discovered."

Bunter tottered away, thankful to escape.

The school was dismissed.

The fellows marched out, all Forms now of the opinion of the Remove, that the culprit was William George Bunter—an opinion that was obviously shared by the Head himself. What line the promised inquiry was to take no one knew, as yet; but no one doubted that it would lead to the conviction, and the subsequent expulsion, of Bunter of the Remove.

Only Bunter seemed unaware of that. He rolled into the Remove Form-room with a relieved expression on his fat face, apparently under the impression that the matter, so far as he was concerned, was at an end.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Findings Keepings!

"HERE comes the Beast!"

Gatty of the Second made that remark in a whisper.

The Second were in their Form-room, waiting for Mr. Gilmore. For once the young master, usually the soul of punctuality, was late.

Some of the Second had seen him walking in the Cloisters—a quiet and secluded spot, which was a favourite walk of Mr. Gilmore's. Apparently he had forgotten, for once, the hour of first lesson in the Second Form. And the fags hoped that he might remain in that forgetful mood for a long time. For ten minutes they had the Form-room to themselves, after Mr. Gilmore should have been with them.

Most of the fags were improving the shining hour by playing leap-frog among the desks. Sammy Bunter was the only fellow sitting at his desk—and he was feeding from a bag of fruit biscuits concealed under the desk. They were nice, fat biscuits, with sugar on them, and Sammy Bunter seemed to be enjoying himself, and too much engrossed by his enjoyment to think of asking any of the other fags to share in his feast.

As Mr. Gilmore's step was heard at the door, and Gatty gave his whispered warning, there was a rush of the fags to take their places. Something like a Rugby scrimmage seemed to be going on when Mr. Gilmore stepped into the doorway. Mr. Gilmore smiled slightly. He was aware that he was late, and he did not expect a Form like the Second to sit quietly and sedately while they waited for him.

"Groooooogh!"

From Sammy Bunter there came a sound of choking anguish.

Mr. Gilmore's eye turned on him.

Sammy had his mouth—quite a capacious one—full of sugary, fruity biscuits. At sight of his Form master—who was very strict on the subject of smuggling tuck into the Form-room—Sammy had made an heroic attempt to swallow that gargantuan mouthful—in vain! There was room in Sammy's expansive mouth for many biscuits, but the next lap of their journey, so to

speak, was naturally narrower, and it was simply impossible for the fat fag to take in that cargo in bulk.

"Groooooogh! Hoooooch! Ooooooch!"

Sammy spluttered, and coughed, and choked.

His fat face became crimson, the water ran from his eyes, and he coughed, and spluttered, and gurgled frantically.

"Bunter minor!" exclaimed Mr. Gilmore in alarm.

"Ooooooch!"

"What—"

"Grrrrroooooch!"

Mr. Gilmore ran to him hastily. He patted and thumped the fat fag on the back until Sammy regained his breath. But for the young master's promptness in rendering first aid, matters might have been quite serious for Samuel Bunter of the Second.

"You greedy, foolish boy!" exclaimed Mr. Gilmore. "How dare you bring food into the Form-room at all? I have punished you for this before."

"Groooooogh!"

"And how dare you bolt food in that greedy, disgusting manner, more like an animal than a human being?" demanded Mr. Gilmore.

"Ow! Oh dear!" gasped Sammy.

"Give me that bag of biscuits at once."

Sammy Bunter reluctantly handed over his provender. The other fags watched the scene with unsympathetic grins.

Mr. Gilmore was taking the bag of biscuits towards his own desk when he stopped, as if struck by a sudden thought. He turned to Sammy again, and fixed his eyes on the gasping fag.

"Bunter minor, where did you obtain these biscuits?"

"I—I—I—" gasped Sammy.

"I have received from Mrs. Mible a description of the goods taken from her shop last night," said Mr. Gilmore sternly. "Among them was a quantity of precisely such biscuits as these."

There was a general stare from the fags. Some of them had wondered where Sammy had obtained that supply of tuck, before the school shop was opened for the day. Mr. Gilmore, too, evidently had wondered, and had not stopped short at wondering.

"You must explain this, Bunter minor," said Mr. Gilmore quietly. "Tell me at once where you obtained these biscuits so early in the day. You certainly did not buy them at Mrs. Mible's shop."

"Nunno, sir," gasped Sammy.

"Then where—"

"I—I found them, sir," gasped Sammy.

"You found them?" repeated Mr. Gilmore, staring at him.

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Dicky Nugent. "It was Sammy, after all!"

"I knew it was Sammy or his major," murmured Myers.

"Silence in the Form! Bunter minor, it is clear that this bag of biscuits is a part of the plunder taken from the school shop last night by an unknown pilferer," said Mr. Gilmore. "It would appear that you are the person guilty of the pilfering, and not your brother."

"Oh, no, sir!" gasped Sammy. "I—I found them, sir. I—I—I did really, sir. I—I just found them."

"If that statement is correct, Bunter minor, where did you find them?"

"In—in the Cloisters, sir."

"You found this bag of biscuits in the Cloisters?" exclaimed Mr. Gilmore, with a start.

"Yes, sir."

"Gammon!" murmured Nugent minor. "He jolly well found them in the tuckshop last night, you men."

And the "men" nodded and grinned. Nobody in the Second had any doubt that the tuckshop raider had been discovered now. It was a Bunter. All the fellows knew that it was a Bunter, only it was a different Bunter—minor instead of major!

Sammy's statement, indeed, seemed absolutely incredible to the fags. The tuckshop raider might have dropped some of his extensive cargo after the raid; but in that case he would have dropped it on his way back to the House. He was not likely to have gone into the dark and solitary Cloisters at a late hour of the night.

But Mr. Gilmore, to the surprise of the Second, seemed to be impressed by Sammy Bunter's statement, improbable as it was.

"In what part of the Cloisters did you find this bag of biscuits, Bunter minor?" he asked.

"Near the ringed flagstone, sir."

"The ringed flagstone," repeated Mr. Gilmore. "I have never heard of it. But I am, of course, new here. You must have been well aware, Bunter minor, that these biscuits had been taken from the shop and dropped by the person who had taken them."

"I—I just found them, sir," murmured Sammy. "I—I never thought—I—I mean, findings keepings, sir!"

"That is a very bad maxim, Bunter minor. You will take a hundred lines for bringing food into the Form-room; and I shall cane you for keeping property which you found, and which did not belong to you. You will bend over that desk, Bunter minor."

"Oh dear!"

Mr. Gilmore put the bag of biscuits on his desk and picked up his cane. Sammy Bunter reluctantly bent over his desk.

Whack, whack, whack!

"Yow-ow-ow!" roared Bunter minor.

"Silence! You will remember, on another occasion, Bunter minor, that findings are not keepings," said Mr. Gilmore. "We shall now commence."

And the Second Form commenced, Sammy Bunter squirming painfully on his form, and the rest of the fags grinning.

All the Second were agreed that Eric Gilmore was a beast—indeed, a beast was a mild description of a Form master who made a hobby of work, and contrasted so very unfavourably with Mr. Twigg. But the Second had had no reason before to suppose that Eric Gilmore was an ass. Now they concluded unanimously that he was a priceless ass as well as a beast. Every man in the Second was assured that Sammy Bunter had "found" the biscuits in the school shop overnight—indeed, that was sun-clear to the Second. Yet Mr. Gilmore had accepted Sammy's explanation that he had found them in the Cloisters—about the unlikeliest place Sammy could possibly have named. Added to the loathing the Second already felt for their Form master was now a contempt for his intelligence.

Fortunately, Mr. Gilmore was unaware of the derision and contempt of his Form; or, perhaps, indifferent to it. Perhaps he had his own reasons for accepting Sammy's statement—reasons that would have made the Second Form open their eyes wide had they known of them.

The Second found Mr. Gilmore very thoughtful and preoccupied that morning. For once, fellows slacked in class without being reprimanded, and made mistakes without being corrected, and blotted and smudged their exercises without these faults being even observed by their Form master. It really seemed as if Mr. Gilmore had some harassing



"Bunter minor!" exclaimed Mr. Gilmore in alarm. "Oooooooch!" "What—" "Groooooooch!" gasped the fat fag. Mr. Gilmore ran to him hastily. He patted and thumped the fag on the back until Sammy Bunter regained his breath. "You greedy, foolish boy!" exclaimed the master of the Second. "How dare you bring food into the Form-room?" (See Chapter 5.)

thought upon his mind which took his attention, in spite of himself, away from the work in hand.

It was a surprise and a relief to the Second. For the first time since Eric Gilmore had come to Greyfriars they had a taste once more of the easy and genial rule of Mr. Twigg, their old Form master, whose system was generally to let the Second do as they liked so long as they did not make too much noise. Dicky Nugent & Co. even entertained a blissful hope that the stock of energy which Mr. Gilmore had brought with him to Greyfriars had now petered out, and that he was dropping into the easy and benign ways of Mr. Twigg. If that was indeed the case, life would be once more worth living in the Greyfriars Second.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

What Nugent Minor Knew!

"TROT in, kid!" Harry Wharton spoke with a smile as the cheeky face of Frank Nugent's younger brother looked in at the doorway of Study No. 1.

Dicky Nugent trotted in, with a book under his arm.

The captain of the Remove was not, perhaps, specially pleased and gratified by the frequent visits of Nugent minor to the study. But he was always very cheery and polite when Dicky came. Frank Nugent was very glad of the visits; not because he enjoyed swotting at Second Form Latin, of course; but he was glad to see his minor taking his

work a little seriously. Frank's assistance had saved the fag from a good deal of trouble with his new Form master.

It was a regular rule now, after tea, for Frank to give his minor a half an hour, or an hour, and he did it willingly. Dicky did not glow with gratitude for the service rendered; he openly regarded this brotherly assistance in the light of a necessary evil—necessary so long as Eric Gilmore remained at Greyfriars, and to be instantly "chucked" on the happy and glorious day when Mr. Twigg should return.

Frank cleared a space on the table, and Dicky drew up a chair. But he did not seem in a hurry to begin.

"How have you got on with Gilmore to-day, kid?" asked the captain of the Remove.

As Nugent's best chum, he took as much interest as he could in Nugent's minor.

"Rotten!" grunted Dicky. "It was all right this morning. Every man in the Second thought that the beast was getting better. But this afternoon—"

Richard Nugent of the Second grunted expressively.

"More work?" asked Harry, laughing.

"Worse than ever," grunted Dicky. "Can't imagine what was the matter with the brute this morning; he was as easy-going as old Twigg. Seemed to be thinking about something else all the time. He bucked up again in the afternoon, and fairly made us grind. I was thinking that I should chuck up coming here."

"Oh!" said Frank.

"But it's no go," said Nugent minor dismally. "It means work all the time

Gilmore's here. I wish old Twigg would get well. Awful old fathead to get laid up with flu. Did you fellows know that Gilmore was a fool?"

"Nunno! I should have thought him anything but a fool," said Harry.

"Well, he's a priceless idiot!" said Dicky. "We all know now who raided the tuckshop last night—but the Beast doesn't!"

"It was Bunter, of course."

"Bunter minor," said Dicky.

"Oh! And how do you know that?"

Dicky Nugent told of the episode of the biscuits.

"He stuffed Gilmore that he found them in the Cloisters," he added, with a derisive grin. "The Cloisters, you know! He might as well have said the Head's study, or the clock-tower! The fellow who raided the shop never went into the Cloisters to drop biscuits about. Why should he?"

"It sounds rather thin," remarked Nugent.

"Good enough for Gilmore," said Dicky contemptuously. "He swallowed it whole. He's been rooting about in the Cloisters since classes, too—perhaps he thinks he can find some more biscuits there. Priceless ass!"

"Well, if you fellows are going to swot, I'll get along to Bob's study," remarked Wharton.

"Oh, I'm not in a hurry," said Nugent minor. "I've been caned to-day, and I can jolly well tell you I'm fed-up with the Beast!"

"Undeserved, of course," smiled the captain of the Remove. "I know what innocent little angels you are in the Second."

"Well, it was Gilmore's fault," said Dicky. "What did he want to go easy all the morning for, if he wasn't going to keep it up? I think the brute's got eyes in the back of his head—I'd swear that his back was turned when I put the ink-ball down Sammy Bunter's back. But he spotted me."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Funny, ain't it?" snorted Nugent minor. "But it wasn't funny bending over and getting two wallops, I can tell you! I've punched Bunter minor's nose, anyhow!"

"Was that quite fair?" asked Frank, laughing.

"Well, I couldn't punch Gilmore's nose, could I?" demanded Dicky. Apparently Richard Nugent took it for granted that somebody's nose had to be punched, in the circumstances. "I can tell you, I'm not standing much more from Gilmore. He oughtn't to be here really."

"Because he makes you learn things?" asked Wharton.

"Not only that," answered Dicky. "If you fellows knew what I know about him, you'd think the same. I've never told anybody; but I can jolly well tell you that if Gilmore keeps on like this—" Nugent minor paused.

"What do you know about him, you young ass?" asked the captain of the Remove, staring at Nugent minor. "I suppose you're not duffer enough to believe Billy Bunter's idiotic yarn about his being the escaped convict."

"I know he isn't," said Dicky. "But he knows more about that giddy convict than you fellows might think."

"You young ass!" said Frank sharply. "How could he know anything about the escaped convict. Bunter, of our Form, has been licked for talking rot like that."

"It isn't rot!" said Dicky sulkily. "I know a jolly lot about that man Gilmore, I can tell you. I haven't told anybody, because it doesn't seem like playing the game. And I might get licked for having been in his study, if it came out. But—"

The two Removites looked very curiously at Dicky. More than once, in speaking of the "Beast," Dicky had hinted that he knew what he knew, so to speak. He seemed to be under the extraordinary impression that he was, somehow, doing Mr. Gilmore a very great favour; and that the Beast was ungrateful.

"What is it you've got in your silly head, Dicky?" asked Frank Nugent very quietly.

"Well, when a fellow's ragged and licked by a man who's got jolly shady connections—" said Dicky.

"Mr. Gilmore has nothing of the kind!"

"That's all you know!"

"And all you know, too!" said Frank sharply. "I'm surprised at you, Dicky! It's rotten to hint such things!"

Nugent minor flushed.

"I know he's got a brother a convict, and chance it!" he exclaimed hotly.

"You awful young ass!" exclaimed Frank, in dismay. "You'll get flogged if you're heard saying such a thing!"

"It's true, and Inspector Grimes, of Courtfield, knows it, and so does the Head!" retorted Dicky.

Frank Nugent hurriedly closed the door of Study No. 1. He did not want any chance passer-by to hear statements like these.

"Now, tell me what you've got in your silly noddle, Dicky," he said almost sternly. "Out with it!"

"I don't mind telling you, but you'd better keep it dark," said the fag. "I'm not going to spread tales about Gilmore, like Bunter. I suppose he can't help

his brother being a rascal, any more than I can help my brother being a silly ass!"

"That escaped convict is named Waring—George Waring," said Frank. "Your Form master's name is Gilmore. How could they be brothers?"

"Half-brothers," explained Dicky.

"What utter rot! You've got that nonsense into your head, because a blind owl like Bunter thinks Mr. Gilmore looks like the escaped convict he saw in the vacation."

"Old Grimes has got it into his head, too, then," jeered Dicky, "and so has the Beast, for that matter. I know that the convict Waring is his half-brother, because—"

"Because what?"

"Because I heard him say so."

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Man in the Cloisters!

HARRY WHARTON and Frank Nugent stared blankly at the fag, as they heard that unexpected reply. It fairly took their breath away.

All the Remove had grinned over Billy Bunter's story that Mr. Gilmore was in reality George Waring, Convict Number Nineteen, of Blackmoor. The published description of the escaped convict was very like Mr. Gilmore, it was true, except that the convict's hair was stated to be dark, and all Greyfriars knew that Mr. Gilmore's hair was flaxen. Billy Bunter accounted for that difference by the theory that the man had dyed his dark hair light—a theory that was worthy of Billy Bunter's fat intellect.

Bunter had even gone to the length of telephoning to Courtfield Police Station, warning Mr. Grimes that the escaped convict was to be found at Greyfriars—and had been duly and severely caned for his fatuous folly. That Eric Gilmore, Master of Arts, was not George Waring, Convict No. 19, was clear to everybody excepting Billy Bunter; though the resemblance doubtless existed.

Dicky Nugent's statement, however, was rather more startling than Billy Bunter's. Bunter's statement was impossible; Nugent minor's was at least possible—though incredible.

"You heard him say so?" repeated Harry Wharton at last, when he found his voice.

"Yes, I did," grunted the fag.

"But where—how—when—"

"The other day. I'd gone to his study to put gum in his slippers—"

"You young ass!"

"Well, the Beast had gone to Common-room to tea, and I thought the coast was clear. Only old Grimes had to butt in, and the Beast brought him to his study. I fancy he didn't want Grimey to talk before the other masters," added Dicky, with a grin.

"And you—"

"Well, I dived under the table to keep out of sight. Of course, I never thought anything about what they were going to chinwag about—I just wanted to keep out of sight," explained Nugent minor. "I couldn't help hearing what they said, then. Gilmore spoke about his half-brother, George Waring; and I made out that Grimey had actually taken him to be Waring, at first, just like Bunter."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Grimey chucked that idea, though, and he thought that Waring was coming about the school to get help from Gilmore, to escape across the sea. Greyfriars is just the place for that, being on the coast. And I can tell you that old Grimes jolly well believes that Gil-

more is helping the convict, being his brother—half-brother, at least. Gilmore swore that he knew nothing of the man, and would never think of helping him."

"That's certainly true, at least," said Wharton.

"Oh, I dare say—a man wouldn't want to get mixed up with a relation like that," grinned Dicky. "But it's a fact that Waring is his half-brother, and that's why they're so much alike."

Wharton and Nugent exchanged startled glances.

What Dicky Nugent knew, let in a flood of light on many perplexing circumstances. Billy Bunter's ridiculous belief was not wholly due to his owlish vision and general obtuseness. No doubt that Second Form master was very like Waring, if they were so closely related.

"You say that Mr. Grimes said something about the convict coming here to see Gilmore?" asked Harry.

"Yes; he seemed quite sure of it. He said the man had been seen several times in this county, and each time nearer Greyfriars."

"Oh!"

"Of course, I'm not going to talk about this," added Nugent minor hastily. "Gilmore's a beast; but I'm not going to hit a man below the belt, beast or not. Still, I think he ought to go."

"For goodness' sake, don't say a word about it, kid!" exclaimed Frank Nugent, aghast. "It would be frightfully rotten for Mr. Gilmore if it came out."

"He makes things rotten enough for us in the Second," said Dicky. "Still, I'm not going to say anything. It wouldn't be cricket!"

"Anyhow, Mr. Gilmore is only here till old Twigg comes back," said Harry. "He's a good chap, Dicky, whatever you may think of him in the Second."

"He's a beast!"

"Anyhow, you're going to keep this quiet."

"I've said so," grunted Dicky. "Only I jolly well think he ought to go easier with a chap if he know what I know."

"Well, he doesn't; and you'd better not let him," said the captain of the Remove. "You've no right to know anything about him; you ought not to have been in his study at all when he was talking to Mr. Grimes."

"Oh, rats!"

"Let's get going with the Latin," said Frank Nugent hastily; and Dicky grunted assent.

Harry Wharton left the study, a cloud of dark thought on his brow.

Dicky Nugent's tale had enlightened him to a greater extent than the fag dreamed.

The escaped convict, Waring, was Mr. Gilmore's half brother. Inspector Grimes believed that the hunted man was making for Greyfriars to seek help from his relative. A flood of light came into Wharton's mind now. For he knew, in a flash of illumination, that the Courtfield inspector's suspicion was well-founded. Back into his mind came the incident of Skinner and Snoop in the Cloisters a few days before—the two young rascals, smoking and card-playing, had been spotted, as they believed by Mr. Gilmore, and had been terrified almost out of their wits. Yet when Skinner had spoken to Mr. Gilmore on the subject, to beg him not to report them to Mr. Quelch, the Second Form master had disclaimed any knowledge of the matter, and even said that he had not been in the Cloisters at all.

All the Remove had heard of that incident, and wondered why the Form master had let Skinner off—and Skinner wondered most of all.

It seemed to Wharton that he knew the reason now.

He had wondered—but he wondered no longer. For the whole thing was explained, if it had not been Mr. Gilmore, but a man closely resembling Mr. Gilmore, who had fallen in with Skinner and Snoop in the Cloisters.

Wharton felt a conviction that that was the explanation. He had seen Mr. Gilmore in the Cloisters on that occasion, only a short time before the spotting of Skinner and Snoop. At least, he had believed so, and he had been simply amazed when Skinner told him of Mr. Gilmore's saying that he had not been there.

Now he knew who it was that he must have seen and taken for the Second Form master.

Wharton whistled softly.

The escaped convict, still at large after his escape from Blackmoor Prison, had reached Greyfriars, and hung about the place, in hiding, in the hope of seeing his half-brother.

No doubt he was gone again now; it was several days since that incident in the Cloisters. Had he seen Mr. Gilmore? Had Mr. Gilmore seen him? Wharton could not help wondering.

"Gilmore!"

Wharton started as he caught the name of the man of whom he was thinking as he came downstairs.

A number of fellows were gathered before the board where the school notices were posted. Wingate of the Sixth had lately placed there the list for the First Eleven match on the morrow—Greyfriars v. Redclyffe.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" called out Bob Cherry. "Gilmore's playing with the first eleven to-morrow, Harry. His name's down here."

"He's a good man," said Wharton.

"It will be worth watching," said Bob. "I'm going to turn up on Big Side to-morrow and see him give Redclyffe the kybosh."

"Same here."

"The samefulness is terrific," remarked Hurrec Janset Ram Singh.

"I say, you fellows," squeaked Billy Bunter. "It's rather thick, isn't it?"

"What is, ass?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Your head, do you mean?"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"The thickfulness of Bunter's esteemed and idiotic napper is terrific."

"I mean the man's a convict, you know—"

"Shut up, ass!" snapped Wharton.

"I jolly well know who raided the tuckshop last night!" grunted Bunter.

"When there's an escaped convict round the school—"

"I fancy there's an escaped lunatic," said Bob—"and his name's W. G. Bunter!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yah!" retorted Bunter. "I can tell you I jolly well think—"

"Bosh! You've got nothing to do it with."

"You silly chump! I tell you that man Gilmore—"

"Hush!" muttered Bob, as Mr. Gilmore came along the corridor.

"Shan't! I tell you that man Gilmore—"

"Well, what about that man Gilmore, Bunter?" asked the pleasant voice of the Second Form master.

Billy Bunter jumped and spun round.

"Oh! I—I didn't see you!" he gasped. "I—I mean I—I wasn't speaking of you, sir! Never thought of it! Never mentioned your name, sir!"

"I think I heard you mention my name, Bunter."

"Oh, no, sir! I—I—I was speaking of—of another man of the same name, sir!" gasped Bunter.

"I am afraid you are a very untruthful as well as a very foolish boy, Bunter," said Mr. Gilmore severely; and, to Bunter's great relief, he walked on without further comment.

"Cheek!" said Bunter, when he was gone. "I say, you fellows—"

"Don't!" said Bob. "You say too much, Bunter—much too much! In fact, the too-muchfulness is terrific! Stand clear, you fellows, while I see whether I can kick Bunter as far as the end of the corridor. Here, where are you going, Bunter?"

Bunter did not stop to say where he was going. He went!

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

The Ringed Stone!

THE following day most of the Greyfriars fellows were thinking of the First Eleven match that was to be played in the afternoon. Eric Gilmore, who was extremely hot stuff at the great game of Soccer, was to play for the school, and Wingate had been very glad to get him into the eleven.

Harry Wharton & Co. were not the only members of the Lower School who had decided to put aside other occupations and watch the senior match on Big Side. As a rule the heroes of the Remove were more interested in junior than in senior games, but the Redclyffe fixture was something very special. Even a crowd of the Second had determined to turn up and watch their Form master play for Greyfriars. "Beast" as he was in the Form-room, the Second were rather proud of him on the playing fields.

The young master had taken his Form in hand at games, as well as in class, and a considerable improvement had been seen in Second Form footer; but instruction of this kind was welcome to the fags, or most of them, and on the football ground they admitted that the new Form master was not a "beast."

Dicky Nugent & Co., deeply as they loathed Eric Gilmore in class, could not help feeling proud of possessing almost the only master at Greyfriars who was good at games. Indeed, they would have regarded Mr. Gilmore as almost a perfect character if only he would have allowed them to slack in class in the agreeable manner of the late lamented Twigg.

As a topic the first eleven match supplanted the raid on the tuckshop. The delinquent in that case had not yet been discovered, though it was known that inquiry was going on. Sixth Form prefects prowled about asking fellows sudden questions and looking into odd corners, possibly in search of remnants of the raided tuck. They discovered nothing, however; and fellows began to think that the delinquent never would be discovered—officially.

Unofficially, he was already discovered—in fact, two delinquents had been discovered, which was perhaps rather too much of a good thing.

All the Remove knew that it was Billy Bunter. All the Second Form knew that it was Sammy Bunter. Obviously, it was not both the Bunters, so somebody was mistaken.

That it was a Bunter all were agreed. Even Sammy was convinced that it was Billy. Billy, no doubt, would have been convinced that it was Sammy, but for his extraordinary idea that it was Mr. Gilmore. That idea, certainly, was worthy of William George Bunter's amazing intellectual powers.

If it was not a Bunter at all, the

affair was a mystery. But the juniors did not believe that it was a mystery. They believed that it was a Bunter. And they believed that the Head thought so, too, and that all of a sudden the chopper would come down when proof was found.

Only in Harry Wharton's mind a strange doubt was stirring.

After morning classes that Wednesday the captain of the Remove walked across to the Cloisters.

The old Cloisters were the most ancient part of Greyfriars, a pleasant, shady place in the summer, but not inviting in the winter, with the keen wind from the sea whistling among the old stone pillars and arches. Mr. Gilmore liked walking there, but there were few others who shared his taste on the cold, windy days.

Wharton's face was very thoughtful.

He was already convinced that the escaped convict, George Waring, had been at Greyfriars, as Inspector Grimes suspected. The man he had seen in the Cloisters—the man Skinner and Snoop had seen—was not the master of the Second, as they had supposed. Wharton was sure of that, but a man so like the Second Form master, as to be taken for him, could only be the convict who resembled him; who was, according to Dicky Nugent's story, the young master's half-brother.

The man had been there, Wharton was convinced, and the suspicion had come into his mind that the man might still be there, hiding in some nook or corner. For that would account for the mysterious pilfering in the tuckshop on Monday night. If the fugitive was hiding in some secluded recess, he must have been in bitter need of food, and it was food that had been taken from Mrs. Mimble's shop.

The idea seemed rather a wild one, and Wharton did not speak of it to his friends. But it was supported by Sammy Bunter's statement that he had picked up the bag of biscuits in the Cloisters.

No Greyfriars fellow, if he had raided the tuckshop, could have been supposed to wander into the dark and lonely Cloisters late at night. The bag of biscuits had been dropped by the pilferer in his hurry in the dark, and left where it had fallen. That seemed clear if Sammy's story was true. And like a flash it came into Wharton's mind that the same suspicion had occurred to Mr. Gilmore himself, and that that was why he had accepted Sammy Bunter's explanation—to the derision of the Second Form.

Wharton went into the Cloisters with the intention of looking round, to see whether there was any sign of any stranger lurking there. He gave a start as he heard a footstep. The next moment he saw Mr. Gilmore.

Mr. Gilmore glanced at him.

A bitter wind was sweeping through the Cloisters, and perhaps the Second Form master wondered why the junior was there.

"An interesting old place this, Wharton," Mr. Gilmore remarked, in his pleasant manner.

"Oh, yes, sir!" answered Harry, rather disconcerted by the meeting. He could not help wondering whether Mr. Gilmore's errand there was the same as his own.

"A boy in my Form found a bag of biscuits here yesterday," remarked Mr. Gilmore. "It appears to have been a part of what was taken from Mrs. Mimble's shop."

"So I have heard, sir."

"Bunter minor told me that he

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picked up the bag near what he called the ringed flag-stone," said Mr. Gilmore. "You probably know where that is, Wharton?"

"Quite well, sir."

"I am new here," said the Form master, with a smile. "I have not yet seen all the sights of Greyfriars. I should like you to show me this ringed flag-stone, whatever it is."

"Certainly, sir! This way," answered Harry.

The Second Form master followed him almost to the end of the Cloisters. Under an old arch, deep in shadow, one of the ancient flagstones had a rusty iron ring sunk in a grooved circle on the surface. On one side of the iron ring it was clamped down to the stone, and evidently it had once been used for lifting the flag.

Mr. Gilmore gazed at it with keen interest.

"The ring in the stone must have been used in old days for lifting the flag," he remarked. "Have you ever seen it open, Wharton?"

"Yes, sir," answered Harry. "It's against the rules to open it, as there's a deep cell underneath, where a fellow might fall and break a leg. But I remember seeing it open once."

"A cell underneath?"

"Yes, sir; where monks used to be shut up, they say, when they broke the rules," said Wharton, with a smile. "That was long ago, of course, when Greyfriars was a monastery."

Mr. Gilmore nodded.

"I'll help you lift it, if you like, sir," added Wharton. "The rule about not opening it doesn't apply to masters, of course."

"Still, a rule is a rule," said Mr. Gilmore. "I will not trouble you, Wharton. No doubt you would like to rejoin your friends, too."

Mr. Gilmore turned away as he spoke. Wharton smiled faintly. He was well aware that Mr. Gilmore wanted to be left alone, and he walked back to the quadrangle, wondering whether Mr. Gilmore intended to explore the old punishment cell, and wondering, too, what the young master would have thought had he known what was in the junior's mind. It was, however, no business of the captain of the Remove, and he joined his chums in punting about a footer till dinner, and soon forgot about the matter.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Struck Down!

ERIC GILMORE waited till the junior's footsteps had died away. The Second Form master's face was a little pale, and tense in expression.

He looked to and fro and round about almost stealthily before he approached the ringed stone again.

He approached it at last, and, bending down, lifted the rusty iron ring from the groove cut in the stone where it lay flat.

His eyes gleamed.

On the thickly-rusted surface of the metal there were plain signs, now that he examined it closely, where the rust had been rubbed by a recent grasp.

Quite recently the stone had been raised from its place.

"The villain!" breathed Eric Gilmore. He set his teeth.

Since the night when George Waring, the escaped convict, had penetrated to his study the convict's half-brother had

seen nothing of him, and had believed that the man was gone. He had told the man plainly that if he did not go he would be handed over to the police; and Convict No. 19 had disappeared into the night—gone, as his half-brother believed, to seek a refuge elsewhere.

But a very different idea had come into Mr. Gilmore's mind after the robbery of the tuckshop. The bare idea that the desperate man might be lurking in some hidden recess of the ancient buildings of Greyfriars roused his deepest anger. So many circumstances pointed to it that he had little doubt that it was the case; and now he was sure. The grasp that had disturbed the thick rust on the ring was Waring's; the stolen food from the tuckshop had been taken by the hidden convict under the shadow of night, Eric Gilmore was sure of it now. That only food had been taken, and the money left in the till, seemed to indicate that the raider was some greedy schoolboy; but that, of course, was Waring's intention.

Mr. Gilmore felt sure now—or almost sure. And as he stood gazing at the ringed stone, with a moody brow, he was strongly tempted to walk back to his study, telephone to Inspector Grimes at Courtfield, and leave the discovery of the hidden rascal to be made by the police.

But he hesitated.

He naturally shrank from the disgrace that would have been incurred by the arrest of his half-brother within the school precincts—after which the relationship could scarcely have been kept a secret.

He knew that he could not have remained at Greyfriars afterwards—and his post at Greyfriars meant a great deal to the young man.

It was only a temporary post; he had taken Mr. Twigg's place till that gentleman should recover and return to his duties at the school. But he hoped to obtain from Dr. Locke a recommendation, which would help him to secure a post for which he had applied in Canada. He knew that Dr. Locke was satisfied with him; and a recommendation from the headmaster of Greyfriars might make all the difference to his prospects. But after such a disgrace as the arrest of his half-brother at the school, and the exposure of his connection with a convict, it was fairly certain that he would have to leave at once—indeed, had the Head desired him to remain longer, he knew that he could not look the school in the face in such circumstances.

But it was not only of himself that Eric Gilmore was thinking as he stood staring gloomily at the ringed stone.

Waring had never been his friend—there had never been any love lost between them. In their schooldays together there had been mutual dislike—there had been nothing in common between them. His half-brother, the reckless scapegrace and blackguard, had been expelled from Wodehouse, and had deserved worse punishment; their ways were as far as the poles asunder. Nevertheless, blood was thicker than water; the man was his mother's son, and he could not hand him over to a living death.

Help him to escape his just punishment, he could not and would not. But handing him over to the police was a different matter. He could not aid and abet an escaped convict; but he could not take an active part in his recapture.

For long minutes the young master thought it over, but he shook his head at last. He could not give up the wretched man hidden in the cell beneath his feet—not without giving him

one more chance to go. If Waring refused to go, then he no longer had any choice in the matter—the man must be given up. But he would not refuse, when he knew that refusal meant arrest.

Mr. Gilmore, after another uneasy glance up and down the deserted Cloisters, stooped and grasped the iron ring again.

Strong as he was, it required a good deal of exertion to lift the heavy flag-stone. But it rolled aside at last, revealing a square opening in the stone floor of the Cloisters.

Dimly Mr. Gilmore made out stone steps in the gloom below.

No sound came from the old cell.

The young master peered down into the opening, with a shiver. Surely a convict prison was better than such a hiding-place—lonely, desolate, dark, bitterly cold.

He bent over the opening.

"I know you are there!" he said in a low voice. "You may as well show yourself, George Waring."

There was no answer.

Something like hope came into Eric Gilmore's face. Was he, after all, mistaken—was the old stone cell untenanted?

Mr. Gilmore would have been very glad to find it so. It would have been an immense relief to him.

He stepped into the opening, and descended the narrow stone stair. Blackness lay before him as he reached the bottom.

From the shadowy archway over the opening little light came. The cell was like pitch.

But his nostrils detected the smell of oil, of a lamp recently extinguished. His brief hope died down. Someone was there, and it could only have been Convict No. 19.

"I know you are here, Waring," said Mr. Gilmore, in a low, steady voice. "You may relight your lamp."

He heard a hurried breath, and a match was struck. In its flickering light he saw his half-brother.

The man—strangely like Eric Gilmore in build and features, his very counterpart save that his hair was dark—put the match to the lamp. It was a little tin backed lamp, with a smoky glass, probably purloined from one of the out-buildings of the school.

The lamp burned and filled the cell with a dim light.

"So you've found me, Gilmore!"

The convict spoke in a husky, savage voice, his eyes gleaming at the master of the Second.

"As you see."

"Then it is known—about the food being taken—"

"Only to me. The school believes that some schoolboy took the things from the shop," answered Mr. Gilmore coldly.

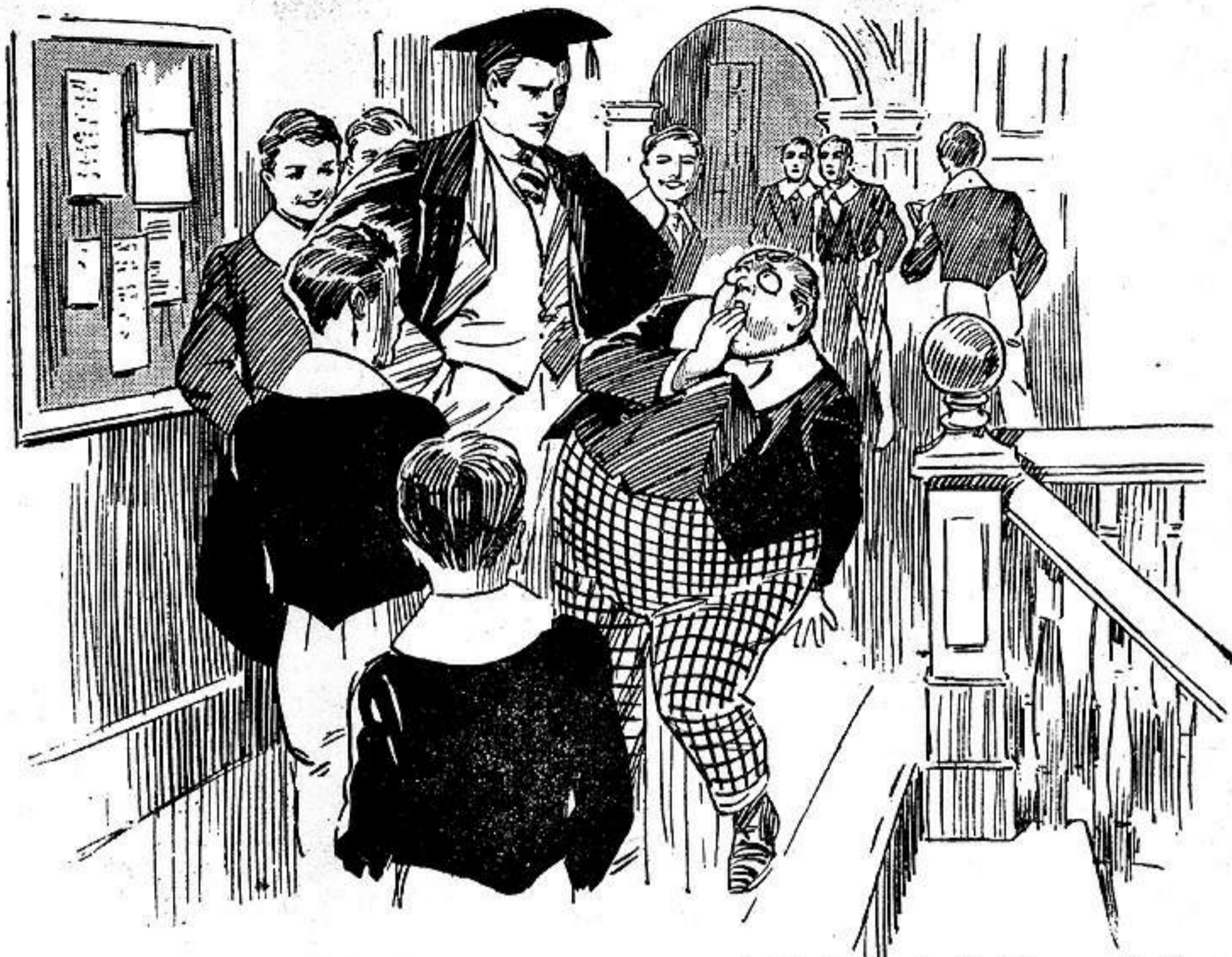
"Then no one knows that I am here?"

"Only myself."

"And you have found me out, and come to help me?" said the convict, in a bitterly gibing voice.

"I have found you out, but I have not come to help you, as you know quite well," answered Mr. Gilmore sternly. "I have come to give you a last chance to go, before you are taken by the police."

"Go?" repeated Convict No. 19. "Go—where? I told you that I had found my last and only refuge here—even here I could not have remained had I not discovered this cell, while hiding in the Cloisters, and looking for a safer hiding place. Go? I will go gladly, if you give me help. Your passport, a suit of your clothes, a little money, and



"You silly chump!" roared Billy Bunter. "I tell you that man Gilmore—" "Hush!" muttered Bob Cherry, as Mr. Gilmore came along the corridor. "Shan't!" howled Bunter. "I tell you that man Gilmore—" "Well, what about that man Gilmore, Bunter?" asked the pleasant voice of the master of the Second Form. Billy Bunter jumped, and spun round. (See Chapter 7.)

I will go, and take my chance of getting out of the country."

"I cannot break the law to help you," answered Mr. Gilmore icily. "I have told you so before, and we need not go into that again. Listen to me. It is my duty to hand you over to the police, and I am guilty of wrongdoing in holding my hand. You know it. But I will leave you here, and in one hour I will return. If you are gone, I shall say nothing. If you are still here, I shall telephone to Inspector Grimes, at Courtfield."

"And that is all you have to say?"

"That is all. I think you should count yourself lucky that I am going to do as much for you as that," said the master of the Second Form, "instead of doing my duty—of handing you over at once!"

The convict's eyes glittered at him.

"Go, then, and leave me," he muttered.

"I am going, and I warn you to escape while you may. I shall keep my word," said Mr. Gilmore.

And he turned to ascend the stone steps again.

As he turned his back the convict was upon him with a leap like a tiger. His right hand had been held behind him—it grasped a heavy stone. Mr. Gilmore half turned, and as he did so the stone crashed on the side of his head with fearful force.

One faint cry the master of the Second gave, and then he slipped down, inert, and lay stunned and senseless at the foot of Convict No. 19.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

A Change of Identity!

CONVICT No. 19 stood breathing in great gasps, shaking from head to foot. But the heavy stone was still gripped in his hand, raised to strike again, if it were needed. But it was not needed. Mr. Gilmore had sunk down completely unconscious. The man who was so like him stood, his fixed gaze on the still face and closed eyes. At last he dropped the stone, and stirred. He ascended the stone step, and cautiously put out his head and scanned the dim Cloisters. No one was in sight. With a great exertion of his strength, he drew the flagstone shut, grasping it by an iron ring on its under side. Then he descended the steps again, secure now from observation and discovery.

Mr. Gilmore still lay huddled where he had fallen. A thin streak of red ran from under his hair. He showed no sign of returning to his senses. The blow had been a heavy and cruel one.

The convict stared down at him in the light of the smoky lamp, with a savage grin.

"My turn now!" he muttered.

The next proceedings of the hidden man were peculiar. He stripped off the master's gown and removed his clothes; discarded his own attire, and dressed himself quickly in Mr. Gilmore's clothes. His own dusty, muddy garments he placed on the unconscious master.

Even to the cap and gown, he

adopted Mr. Gilmore's attire, and his resemblance to the Second Form master, which had before been striking, was now almost exact.

Save for the dark colour of his hair, no one at Greyfriars could have said that the man standing there was not Eric Gilmore.

And his hair was short—it had not yet outgrown the convict cropping—and it was hidden by the master's cap.

Once the dark hair was out of sight, the man was Mr. Gilmore to the life.

There was no glass in which he could see his reflection; but he knew the fact without that. What difference there was between the two faces existed only in the hard gauntness of the convict.

A faint moan came from Eric Gilmore.

The unconscious man was stirring; and Convict No. 19 dropped on his knees beside him, and, with strips torn from his own rags, bound his hands and feet securely.

Mr. Gilmore's eyes opened.

With dizzy eyes and throbbing head he stared up at the convict.

A cruel smile curved the lips of Convict No. 19 as he watched the young master and waited for him to speak.

"What—what has happened? What are—?" Mr. Gilmore muttered confusedly.

He tried to put his hand to his aching head, but his hands were not to

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Dr. Birchermall - Ventriloquist!

Here's another "ticklish tail" from the pen of Dicky Nugent of the Second Form at Greyfriars, boys!

"GRATE!"

Dr. Birchermall, the venerated headmaster of St. Sam's, let that word fall from his lips allowed. He had just finished reading the current number of the "Sweeny Todd" Library, and that same current number had succeeded in raising him to quite a pitch of enthousiasm. But as the old proverb remarks, you can't have your cake and eat it, too, Dr. Birchermall was now about to lay it on one side, redly to swap it for the "Weekly Pirate," which Burleigh of the Sixth was in the habit of buying.

Before abandoning it, however, Dr. Birchermall, who believed in getting value for money, decided to read threw the advertizments. And from that simple little fact some very surprising developments were destined to occur.

The old tag tells us that "Tall oaks from little akorns grow." Certainly this particular little akorn resulted in Dr. Birchermall branching out in an altogether new direckshun.

The very first advertizment that caught his eye read like this:

"Ventriloquism. Lern this fassinating art by post. Suksess guaranteed. Send p.o. 5/- to Professor Gargle (No. 99), Dartmoor."

As he read that announement a thoughtful eggspression came over the Head's dile. He stroaked his beard and read it again. Evvidently the advertizment had started a strane of thought in his mind.

"My hat!" he mermered. "If only I—"

Then he shook his head doubtfully. Confident as he was in his own abilities, he could hardly imagine himself as a ventriloquist. The venerated Head of St. Sam's was all right at chucking his weight about, but chucking his voice about was a different proposishun. His vocal powers were by no means remarkable. His voice, in fact, was inclined to grate on people's nerves. It was not a grate voice.

All the same, his crafty little eyes gleamed as he pondered over the advertizment.

"If only—" he mermered again.

Dr. Birchermall was well aware, from his study of modern school stories, that the ventriloquist had a big advantage over others who were not so gifted. With the aid of ventriloquism, there was no doubt that he would very often be able to keep his pressing creditors



at bay. He could hide under his study table and trick his persekewtors by making his voice come from out in the quad. He could perform all sorts of little rooses for getting rid of unwelcome visitors. Moreover—and his eyes twinkled merrily at the thought—he could indulge in japes galore.

"Grate pip!" he mermered, allowed. "I've a good mind to try it."

There was only one drawback to his trying it. He did not possess the necessary five bob. That disturbing fact made his chances of becoming a ventriloquist more remote than ever for a moment, and the Head's face fell. But he soon picked it up again. His cunning brain had quickly evolved a way of raising the required capital.

Whistling cheerfully, Dr. Birchermall rose and quitted his room. Then he made his way downstairs and out into the quad. With him, to think was to act, and he intended to put his unscrewpulous plan into execution without any delay.

Right outside the school steps Jack Jolly, the kaptin of the Fourth was playing leapfrog with his pals, Merry and Bright, all innoent of the fate which the crafty old Head had planned for them. The cheerful, care-free larfter of the chums of the Fourth rang across the quad. Any man with hewman feelings within him would have been touched to the hart at the site of their innoent fun, and would have refrayned from desining a plot against them.

Not so the Head, however. With a hypothetical smile on his thin lips he approached the innoent young heroes of the Fourth, who capped him respectively. And immejately he began to put his base desines into execution with that cunning of which only he was capable.

Any other headmaster would have

gone up to Jack Jolly in a strait-forward way and said: "I want to learn ventriloquism, Jack, but, unfortunately, I'm stony broak. Can you lend me five hob till my ship comes home?" Dr. Birchermall, however, went to work in a different manner. Assuming an air of jeniality and frendship, he called out:

"Having a good time, ladds?"

"Oh, not so sorry and sad, sir!" replied Jack Jolly cheerfully.

"Do you mind if I join in your little game?" asked Dr. Birchermall, with assumed cairlessness.

"Not at all, sir!" answered Jack Jolly, tho he certainly felt a little surprised at the rekwest. It was a very unusual thing for the Head to play leapfrog, except with the masters or the prefects on the Sixth Form green. For the stately and dignified Head to play leapfrog with jewniors was undoubtedly "in for a dig," to use the Latin phrase.

However, Jack Jolly & Co. cheerfully aloud Dr. Birchermall to join in their game, and he was soon jumping about in quite an eggspert manner.

"Tuck in your tuppenies, lads!" he yelled enthewsiastikally. "Over the top, Jolly! Attaboy!"

Rairly had the jewniors seen the echolarly old gentleman in such a grashus mood.

But, like a snake in the grass, he was only waiting for a faverable time to show the cloven hoof. If the jewniors had not been so pure and innoent they might have guest that the cunning old fox was not playing leapfrog for the bennefit of his helth.

At last the moment for which the Head had been waiting arrived. He had deliberately led the boys round towards the lodge of Fossil, the school

porter. Arriving there, he put his nefarious scheme into operation.

"I wonder who that is coming threw the gates?" he merniced, as Jack Jolly & Co. stood near the window of Fossil's lodge, having a rest after their eggserstions.

Little realising that the Head had meerly uttered that remark to take their attenshun away from him, Jack Jolly & Co. looked towards the gates.

Immejiately Dr. Birchmall seazed his opportewnity and carried out his fowl desine. With a triumphant grin on his dile, he savvidgely pushed Jack Jolly against Fossil's window.

Taken unawares, the kaptin of the Fourth reeled against the window and did eggactly what the Head had intended him to do—he smashed it!

The hole thing had happened in a moment. When Merry and Bright looked round they were farely staggered when they saw in the window, which had previously been hole, a grate whole.

"What the thump——" gasped Merry.
"What's happened, Jack?" asked Bright ankshusly, helping to stedy his chum again.

"Blest if I know!" confessed Jack Jolly, rewfully rubbing himself on his injured parts. "Something seemed to hit me, and the next thing I knew was that I'd gone threw the window."

"A likely yarn!" sneered the Head, whose eggsspression had suddenly become hard and sinnical again. "The fact of the matter is, I beleove that you've been drinking, and you can't hold yourself up straight."

"Oh, sir!" protested Jack Jolly, flushing deeply, while his face went white with anger.

"However, let's say nothing about that," said the Head, coming to the point which interested him most. "As you've broken the window, Jolly, you can jolly well pay for it now. Give me five bob, and we'll call it square!"

Jack Jolly & Co. looked at the Head with more understanding. The mention of money made them prick their ears up immejiately, and with paneful clearness, they saw that the entire thing was a frame-up.

"Oh, I see, now!" said Jack Jolly, with a hollow larf. "So you played with us to raise five bob, did you? The hole thing was a blind!"

"Don't talk silly!" said the Head sternly, but the jewniors judged, in spite of this retort, that the shot had gone home.

"Anyway, sir, Fossil repairs his own windows!" pointed out Jack Jolly. "He's got plenty of old glass to use, too, so I don't suppose it will cost you anything."

"Don't argew the toss!" snapped the Head angrily. "You broke the blessed window, and you're going to pay for it, if I have to birch you into paying!"

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Jack Jolly. "In that case, then, praps I'd better pay!"

He reluctantly drew forth two half-crowns, and handed them over to Dr. Birchmall, who grinned cheerfully again.

"That's better!" he remarked. "I will give the cash to Fossil for some new glass!"

Notwithstanding that promise he walked away from the lodge and strode off towards the School House, jingling Jack Jolly's two half-crowns in his trousers pocket. And Jack Jolly & Co., left to themselves, realised that once again the cunning old fox had dished, diddled, and done them!

II.

"MY giddy aunt!"
It was Mr. Justiss, the master of the Fifth, who made that remark.

Mr. Justiss had just looked in the Head's study, carrying his shove-ha'penny board under his arm. His intention had been to ask Dr. Birchmall for a quiet game. But when he saw the Head that intention quickly fled, and an eggsspression of alarm and dismay appeared on his dile.

"My giddy aunt!" he repeated. "What the merry dickens has happened, sir? Have you gone off your nut, or is it meerly an apologetic fit you're suffering from?"

Sertainly, any visitor might have been eggscused for concluding that one thing or the other had happened. The Head was seated in his chair, with his eyes bulging out of their sockits, beads of inspiration on his forehead, and a drawn, haggard eggsspression on his lean feetchers. As Mr. Justiss entered, a strangled gurgle came from the Head's lips—a gurgle that froze the blud in Mr. Justiss' vanes, and made him go hot all over.

"Grate pip!" he gasped. "Something must be done immejiately!"

He looked round wildly, and spotting a jug of water lying on the table, did what he thought was the best thing under the sercumstances—tipped it over the head of the Head.

Swoosh!
There was a terrific howl from his victim.

Dr. Birchmall, with water streaming down him in caskades, farely shrieked with rage.

"You silly cuckoo! You slab-sided, noek-need burbler!" he howled. "I'll pulverise you! I'll——"

Words failed the irate headmaster. He picked up a handy birch and made a rush at Mr. Justiss, and the gentleman jumped all round the room like a grasshopper to escape the fewrious blows that were aimed at him.

"Oh crumbs! Chuck it, sir!" he yelled, as he dodged. "I only did what I thought was my dooty, sir! I imajined you were in a fit!"

"Fit!" howled the Head slowing down a little, and glaring bailfully at his assistant. "Oh crumbs! Is that what I looked like?"

"You certainly did, sir!" said Mr. Justiss.

"Oh crikey! That won't do!" said the Head in dismay. "To tell you the trooth, Justiss, I was just practising——"



"As you've broken the window, Jack Jolly," said Dr. Birchmall, "you can pay for it. Give me five bob, and we'll call it square."

He stopped suddenly. The thought had occurred to him that praps it would not be advisable to let his assistant masters know that he was practising ventriloquism.

"Hem! What I mean is, I wasn't practising anything!" he said lamely. "I was just engaged in not practising, you know!"

Mr. Justiss looked surprised.

"Look here, Justiss!" said the Head, dropping his birch, and becoming a little more amiable. "When you came in the room just now did you here an airoplane buzzing about outside?"

"An airoplane?" repeated Mr. Justiss, staring. "Can't say I did! Why?"

"Oh, nothing!" said the Head non-kallantly, doing his best to conseel his shaggrin and disappointment. "Lissen, Justiss! Can you here a dog barking out in the quad?"

Mr. Justiss pricked up his ears to lissen, and as he did so, the Head screwed up his mouth and gave two terrific yelps and a growl.

"Bow-wow! Bow-wow! Gr-r-r-r!"

Mr. Justiss stared at the Head in surprise and consternation.

"Whatever are you barking for, sir?" he asked. "Have you caught hydrofobia?"

The Head glared, but he still continewed to bark doggedly. He fondly imagined that the barking would appear to come from the quad. Instead of which it obviussly eminated from his own thin lips.

"Gr-r-r-r! Yap-yap! Bow-wow!" he spluttered. "Doesn't it sound as if there's a dog in the quad now, Justiss?"

"Blowed if it does!" replied Mr. Justiss, beginning to look serious.

"Oh crumbs! Evidently I can't do it yet, then!" muttered the Head. "However, Professor Gargle's instructions say that the budding ventriloquist should Percy Vere. I'll try another stunt!"

He cleared his throat, looking rather like a crowing cockrell in the process, and had another try.

And this time, strange to relate, suksess rewarded his efforts.

A familiar voice seemed to come from the passage outside the Head's study—the familiar voice of Mr. Lickham, the master of the Fourth.

"Are you in there, Justiss?" the voice called. "Coming out for a game of hopscotch?"

"Shan't be long, matey!" yelled back Mr. Justiss, fully beleaving that the voice was really that of Mr. Lickham; and Dr. Birchmall gave a sigh of releef. His five bob—or, rather, Jack Jolly's five bob—had not been wasted. He had sukseeded in deseoving Mr. Justiss; he was a full-blown ventriloquist!

"Will you eggscuse me, sir?" asked Mr. Justiss, rather glad of an opportewnity to get away from the study.

"Certainly, Justiss!" said Dr. Birchmall grashusly. "Buzz off, by all means; or, as the vulgar would put it, you may go!"

Mr. Justiss hopped it, and the Head, left alone in the study, larfed till rows of tiers were running down his cheeks.

"My giddy aunt!" he mewsed, when he had composed himself again. "I can see some larks coming off at St. Sam's now. With my ventriloqual powers, I can have the time of my life, now! And if I don't take full advantage of the opportewnity, my name's not Alf Birchmall!"

THE END.

(Now look out for the next amusing yarn in this topping series, chums, entitled: "RUCTIONS AT ST. SAM'S!" You'll laugh no end when you read it.)



(Continued from page 13.)

be moved. The convict had bound him tightly.

"Well?" sneered Convict No. 19.

"What—what—"

"Wait till your brain clears, you poor fool!" said the convict contemptuously.

For some minutes Mr. Gilmore lay silent, dazed; but his mind was clearing now. He realised that he was dressed in the convict's rags, the old brown overcoat that the convict had worn wrapped round him. Even to the muddy, dilapidated boots, he was dressed as the convict had been. And he saw his own clothes on the convict.

"What does this mean? You scoundrel! You struck me down!"

"I did!"

"You have taken my clothes—"

"You might as well have given me the old suit I asked for!" sneered the convict.

"You villain!"

George Waring shrugged his shoulders.

"You scoundrel! Release me at once! I will shout, and bring all Greyfriars here!" muttered Eric Gilmore hoarsely.

"You will do nothing of the kind!" said the convict coolly. "No shout can be heard from this cell, with the stone closed above! And to make assurance doubly sure, I shall gag you before I leave you!"

"You will leave me here?"

"Exactly!"

"Oh, you villain!" groaned the master of the Second.

"You refused me help!" said the convict, his eyes glittering. "I came here for help, but I had a second plan in my mind if you refused it, Eric Gilmore. I hoped for a chance—I watched for a chance—and you have walked into my hands and given me a better chance than I could have dreamed of. I am going—not as Convict No. 19, not as George Waring—I am going as Eric Gilmore—in your clothes, with your money and your passport, which I shall find in your rooms—I have your keys, my fine fellow—and you will not be able to intervene! You will lie here helpless till you are found—if ever you are found alive!"

He gritted his teeth.

"You should have given me the help I asked! You brought this on yourself, fool that you are! You can thank yourself for what may happen to you in this den!"

"Whatever may happen, I am glad that I refused to help you," said Eric Gilmore steadily—"more glad now than ever! I do not believe that you will escape under my name! You will be detected!"

"I shall chance that. I have to take my only chance. When I am safe across the sea I will send word somehow where you may be found. I hope it will be in time to save your life, but I care little! I will risk the rope rather than go back to Blackmoor! A few hours will suffice for me to do all that I must do here,

and then I shall leave—not stealing away under cover of darkness, but openly, in the daylight, with no man to question me!"

"Help!"

It was a sudden shout from the bound man, but it was the only shout he had time to utter.

The next moment the convict was upon him, forcing a handkerchief into his mouth. The gag was tied securely in its place with another strip torn from the convict's rags.

Then for a few moments the convict listened intently. But he knew that the shout could not have been heard.

He extinguished the lamp.

"Remain there!" he said, between his teeth. "I have done with you, Eric Gilmore!"

He trod up the stone steps in the darkness.

In the old monk's cell Eric Gilmore lay bound and helpless, gagged and silent, a prey to despair.

The convict placed his shoulder to the ringed flag and lifted it.

He stepped out into the wintry wind.

He cast a quick, stealthy glance round him. No one was in sight. The dim, windy Cloisters were deserted.

Quietly the convict replaced the ringed stone.

Then he moved along the Cloisters slowly.

Desperate as he was, with the nerve of a desperate man, his heart was beating fast and painfully, and there was as much fear and determination in his breast.

His scheme had long been formed, waiting only for an opportunity to carry it out; and the opportunity had come unexpectedly.

But he shrank from the ordeal before him.

He was tempted to go now—to leave by the wall at the end of the Cloisters, to flee as he was. But he did not yield to that temptation. To leave the school in a master's cap and gown was easy, but it was certain to be fatal to his hopes. On the roads and in the streets he would have attracted less attention in his old brown overcoat, and the change of clothes would have been a change for the worse. He screwed up his nerve for what lay before him.

Dressed as he was, resembling his half-brother as he did, it needed only nerve to enter the school as the Second Form master. Once installed in Eric Gilmore's quarters, it was only a matter of time—a short time—before he rifled the Form master's desk and boxes, and obtained all he needed for his flight—money, clothes, papers, and, above all, the Form master's passport, with which he could cross the sea. On that passport the photograph of Eric Gilmore was a replica of his own, and the detailed description fitted him as well as it fitted Mr. Gilmore, with the exception of the colour of his hair, and that was an alteration it was easy for him to make; it was for forgery that he had been sent to Blackmoor.

The ordeal before him was terrible, yet he told himself that it required only nerve; and nerve he had never lacked from the days when he had been the scapegrace of Wodehouse, all through the downward career which had landed him finally in a convict prison.

He left the Cloisters at last, taking his courage in both hands, as it were. With beating heart, but with a calm face, he walked up to the House.

Wingate of the Sixth was in the doorway, and he spoke as the convict entered.

"Looks like a fine afternoon for the game, Mr. Gilmore."

The convict caught his breath for a moment. But his nerve was equal to the test. Even the fact that Wingate addressed him as Mr. Gilmore gave him confidence.

"Oh, quite!" he said.

Wingate looked at him rather more attentively.

He could not help noting that the man's face had a thin, drawn look; and, still more, he could not help noting that he was in need of a wash. His attentive glance made the convict tremble.

"You are fit to-day, Mr. Gilmore?" asked the Greyfriars captain.

"Fit?" muttered the convict.

He had no idea who Wingate was—no idea that he was the captain of the school; no idea that Mr. Gilmore was booked to play for the first eleven that afternoon. He wondered savagely who this fellow was and what he was driving at.

"Yes; we should miss you if you weren't able to play, sir," said the Greyfriars captain. "Redclyffe are playing a master, too, and we want to beat them."

"Oh!" breathed Convict No. 19, with a dawning comprehension.

"Excuse me, sir, but you do not look as well as usual," said the Sixth-Former. "I hope you are fit, sir?"

"Oh, quite—quite!" said Convict No. 19.

And he passed on into the House, leaving Wingate looking a little perplexed. Somehow or other, it seemed to Wingate that Mr. Gilmore was changed, oddly changed, from his usual self. But it did not occur to the Greyfriars captain how very completely changed Mr. Gilmore was.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Playing a Part!

"YOU!"

Involuntarily, taken utterly by surprise, Convict No. 19 uttered that startled ejaculation.

It was the sight of Billy Bunter that called it forth.

Within the House, the convict had to hesitate. He knew the window of Mr. Gilmore's study from the quad; but he could not, of course, enter the room by the window. Within the House he had but a vague idea where to look for the Second Form master's study, and he was hesitating, baffled for the moment by that difficulty, when William George Bunter of the Remove came rolling along.

The fat junior blinked at him and backed away across the passage.

Not that the Owl of the Remove saw any change in Mr. Gilmore. But Bunter was still in the belief that Eric Gilmore was the convict he had seen hiding in the woodcutter's hut near Wharton Lodge, in the holidays, and he was never able to conceal his uneasiness when he came near the Second Form master. There was always a suspicion in Bunter's fat, obtuse mind that Eric Gilmore might suddenly "chuck" playing Form master, and spring at him as the convict had done on that occasion.

The sight of Bunter astounded and alarmed the convict, and the sudden surprise caused his nerve to fail him completely for the moment.

He knew Bunter instantly. Bunter, with his podgy face, his big glasses, and his unusual circumference, was a fellow not easily forgotten. Convict No. 19 knew that this was the schoolboy whom

he had robbed of a coat and half-a-crown weeks before in the woodcutter's hut in Surrey. He had almost forgotten the incident, but it was recalled with terrifying clearness to his mind as he came face to face with Bunter at Greyfriars!

Bunter's involuntary backing away added to his terror. In his mind's eye the convict saw himself recognised—known—on the verge of being denounced! This fat schoolboy, whom he had never expected to see again, whose existence he had forgotten, was here—at Greyfriars—in the very House where he had taken refuge! The wretched man's brain whirled as he stared at Bunter.

"You!" he breathed huskily.

Into the desperate man's eyes came such a glare of rage and terror that Bunter fairly jumped back in fear. For once his uneasiness at the sight of the Second Form master was not without grounds.

"What are you doing here?" hissed the convict, for the moment purely the desperate convict again, forgetful that he was playing the part of a Form master of Greyfriars.

"I—I—I—" stuttered Bunter.

He jumped farther back, utterly scared by the look on the face that he supposed to be Mr. Gilmore's.

"I—I'm going to dinner, sir," he stuttered. "I—I— We're allowed to walk through this passage, sir."

Bunter supposed that the Second Form master was calling him to account for being in Masters' passage—a quarter through which juniors were allowed to walk, but in which they were forbidden to loiter.

The convict stared at him.

His nerve, for the moment, had been utterly lost; he had betrayed himself, had Bunter been less obtuse and could he possibly have suspected what had taken place in the Cloisters.

But Waring quickly regained his nerve. Bunter's answer showed him that the fat junior took him for the master of the Second Form.

With an effort, the convict composed his face and stilled the twitching of his hands, which itched to be at the throat of the schoolboy who knew Convict No. 19 by sight.

"Oh, yes! You—you startled me," he muttered. "You need not go, my boy—stay."

Bunter unwillingly stayed.

That glare of ferocity in the convict's face had utterly scared him and convinced him, if he had needed convincing, that his suspicion that Eric Gilmore was the escaped convict was well-founded. But the man's face was quite composed now, and even smiling. Only for a few seconds had the desperate man's nerve failed him at the unexpected encounter.

"I have forgotten your name, my boy," he said smoothly.

"Bunter, sir," mumbled the fat junior.

"Oh, yes, Bunter! Quite so."

"M-m-may I go now, sir?" gasped Bunter.

The pseudo Form master smiled.

"I need your assistance, my boy. I have slipped in the quadrangle and hurt my ankle. Please give me your arm to my study."

"Oh, yes, sir!" gasped Bunter nervously.

He was extremely unwilling to come within reach of Mr. Gilmore, master of the Second. But it was impossible to refuse.

The convict leaned on Bunter's shoulder, and the fat junior led him to Mr. Gilmore's study. The convict's hand rested on Bunter's fat shoulder, and almost unconsciously he gripped hard. The grip made Bunter shudder with apprehension. He had nothing to

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fear, but he gasped with relief when he reached the door of Mr. Gilmore's study and the grip released.

"Thank you, Bunter," said the convict.

"N-n-not at all, sir!" stuttered Bunter.

"You may go."

Bunter went—promptly.

The convict opened the door to which Bunter had led him. Once inside the study he recognised the room in which he had spoken to his half-brother late on a dark night.

He closed the door and sank into a chair, breathing hard with relief.

The first part of his task was over.

He was in Mr. Gilmore's room, and he had spoken with two Greyfriars fellows, one a senior, and the other a junior, and neither suspected that he was not the master of the Second Form.

He was not aware that it was a half-holiday at Greyfriars that day, and he supposed that Mr. Gilmore would be wanted for classes in the afternoon. But before that time he intended to be far from Greyfriars.

He rose from the chair after a few minutes, and looked into the glass.

He smiled grimly at his reflection.

The glass had often reflected Mr. Gilmore, and now it reflected his half-brother; but the image in the mirror was the same.

In the Monk's cell under the Cloisters, where he had hidden for days, the convict had suffered, and he had roughed it. So far as he had been able to wash at all, it had been in the fountain at night. But the relative who had supplied him with clothes, had supplied him with many necessities that could be carried in the pockets—among other things, a safety-razor and shaving necessaries. The handsome face—handsome in spite of its gauntness—was clean-shaven. But it was decidedly grubby, and his hands

were dirty. He realised now why the senior fellow had looked at him so attentively in the doorway.

Tap!

The convict spun round from the glass. In a moment he had dropped into the chair at Mr. Gilmore's table, his face turned from the light.

"Come in!" he said steadily.

Trotter, the page, opened the door.

George Waring had never seen Trotter before, but he could understand that he was the House page. He glanced at him carelessly.

"Well?" he said curtly.

"Dinner, sir," said Trotter.

The convict felt a beating at his heart. He realised that Mr. Gilmore took his lunch when the schoolboys took their dinner; that the meal was now ready, and that the page had come to remind him, thinking that he had forgotten. Not for worlds would the impostor have faced the sea of eyes in the dining-hall of Greyfriars.

"I shall not come in to dinner," he said. "I am feeling a little unwell, and shall require no dinner."

"Yessir," said Trotter indifferently.

"Mr. Quelch told me to call you, sir."

"Quite so," said Convict No. 19.

"Shut the door."

Trotter retired and shut the door.

He repaired to the dining-hall, where he reported to Mr. Quelch, at the head of the Remove table. The Remove master, under the impression that Mr. Gilmore had forgotten the meal-time, had sent the page to the Second Form master's study. He raised his eyebrows as Trotter gave him Mr. Gilmore's answer.

"Very well!" he said.

And Mr. Quelch requested a Sixth-form prefect to take Mr. Gilmore's
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place at the head of the Second Form table.

"Gilmore seedy!" murmured Bob Cherry, in surprise. "He looked as fit as a fiddle this morning."

"And he's down to play in the first eleven match!" said Frank Nugent. "Looks as if Wingate will lose him."

"I saw him hardly more than an hour ago, and he looked all right," said Harry Wharton, very much puzzled.

"I say, you fellows, he's hurt his ankle," said Billy Bunter. "He's crocked!"

"How do you know?"

"Because he told me so," said Bunter. "He made me help him to his study when he came in. Frightful temper he was in, too—glared at me like a tiger."

"Fathead!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"There is too much chattering at this table," said Mr. Quelch severely, and the Removites were silent and devoted themselves to their dinner.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Escape!

CONVICT NINETEEN opened the door of Mr. Gilmore's study.

That study, and all it contained, was at the mercy of the fugitive from Blackmoor. But apart from one or two articles hanging on pegs, there was nothing there in the way of the change of clothing that the convict required. He had to find Mr. Gilmore's room; and while the school were assembled at dinner was his opportunity.

His manner was quite casual as he passed up the staircase. That Mr. Gilmore's bed-room would be somewhere upstairs, he knew; but where to look for it, in the almost endless number of rooms in the great building, he did not know. While the school was at dinner, there was not likely to be any Greyfriars man about; but he knew that at every step he might run into some servants on household duties; and he was well aware of the surprise and comment that would be caused, if he was seen entering the wrong room. He had no choice but to take his chance, and he was as wary as a cat. Fortune favoured the desperate man. He opened door after door, taking the risk of the rooms being occupied; a slight risk at that hour of the day. And the sight of a travelling-bag, with the initials "E.G." in white letters on the brown leather, told him when he had reached the room he sought.

He shut the door after him, breathing quickly.

It was possible, for all he knew, that there might be some other master at Greyfriars with the same initials as Eric Gilmore; but a few minutes examination of the room placed the matter beyond doubt.

He was in Mr. Gilmore's room; and Mr. Gilmore's belongings were at his disposal.

He lost no time.

Having locked the door, his first proceeding was to take the wash he needed so badly, and which made him look even more exactly like the always cleanly and well-groomed Form-master.

The leather suit-case was locked; but Mr. Gilmore's bunch of keys was in his possession. He unlocked the bag, and selecting the articles that he wanted, packed it for a journey.

From Mr. Gilmore's wardrobe, he

picked a roomy travelling-coat, a muffler, and a loose-fitting travelling-cap and donned them.

He surveyed the result in a mirror, and nodded with satisfaction.

The cold, windy day was a sufficient reason for turning up the thick collar of the coat, and placing the muffler under it. With the coat-collar and the muffler, and the loose cap pulled well down, his dark hair was wholly concealed from view. That was the one point upon which he had to be extremely careful in his impersonation of the Second Form-master.

Any Greyfriars man who had seen him at that moment, could not have doubted that he was Eric Gilmore, dressed for a journey—though certainly any Greyfriars man would have been surprised at seeing him preparing for a journey at that particular time—Wingate most of all, as the Greyfriars captain was counting upon Mr. Gilmore for the first eleven match.

The convict's plans were fully thought out. In Mr. Gilmore's desk, in the study, a brief search had discovered the Form-master's passport, and other private papers, as well as a sum of money—not a large sum, but sufficient for immediate needs, at least.

All that the convict had now to do was to walk out of Greyfriars, and get to the railway station; and take the train for Dover.

He hoped to get clear while the school was still at dinner.

No doubt the sudden departure of Mr. Gilmore, without a word of warning even to the headmaster, would cause great surprise.

That he could not help.

Cool and resolute as he was, he shrank from an interview with the Head; but he had written a note—in an exact imitation of Mr. Gilmore's handwriting—to give to the porter as he left, for delivery to Dr. Locke.

That note explained to the Head that he had received a telephone call concerning a relative who was dangerously ill, and begged the Head to excuse him for his sudden departure.

True, the Head was not likely to excuse a Form-master who rushed away without apprising him of his intention, and asking leave. The Head would very naturally think that Mr. Gilmore might have found time, a few minutes at least, to speak to him before he departed from Greyfriars so very abruptly. But if the Head was incensed, it was at least impossible that he should even dream of the cause of the Second Form-master's strange action, and that was all the convict cared about.

He quitted the room at last, and went down the stairs with his bag in his hand.

Fortune was still his friend. Dinner was not yet over; he had not wasted a second. He met no one but Trotter on his way, and Trotter gave him a second glance. Trotter, no doubt, was surprised to see a master who was too unwell to come in to dinner, going out dressed evidently for a journey. Convict No. 19 caught his glance. He stopped.

"Kindly take my bag to the porter's lodge, my boy," he said.

"Yessir!"

Trotter took the suitcase.

He left the House with Convict No. 19, and in a few minutes they reached Gosling's lodge.

William Gosling blinked from his doorway at the man he supposed to be Mr. Gilmore, and touched his ancient hat.

Trotter put down the bag.

Convict No. 19 tipped the page half-a-crown that belonged to Mr. Gilmore, and Trotter went back to the House, utterly unsuspecting.

"I am called away very suddenly," said Convict No. 19. "A relative is dangerously ill, and I have to catch the first train. Please hand this note to the headmaster."

"Yessir!" said Gosling.

He eyed Convict No. 19 rather curiously. Waring's voice was very like his half-brother's but there was a slight difference. The difference struck Gosling, but nothing like the reason for it occurred to his mind.

"Please deliver the note as soon as you can," added Waring.

"Certainly, sir!"

The convict picked up the bag.

"Excuse me, sir?"

"Well!"

"If you're in a 'urry, sir, p'raps you'd like me to ring for a taxi, sir," suggested Gosling.

Convict No. 19 would have liked it, but he did not want to remain a moment longer within the precincts of Greyfriars than he could help.

"Thank you; I shall not need it," he said. "I have time to catch my train."

And he walked away, suitcase in hand.

Gosling stared after him.

A man who was in such a hurry to leave, that he wrote a note for the Head instead of expending a few minutes in seeing that gentleman, and yet who had time to walk to the station instead of taking a taxi, rather perplexed William Gosling.

Convict No. 19 was well aware that he left the school-porter perplexed. But it could not be helped. He dared not interview the Head; but had he left without a word at all, the sudden disappearance of the Second Form master would have caused alarm and inquiry; so the note had to be left. Perplexed or not, Gosling was certainly not likely to guess the cause of the Form-master's odd actions.

The escaping man stepped out of the old gateway, his eyes sparkling, his heart beating, as he breathed the air of freedom. The way was clear now; the way to Dover, and the Channel boat, and freedom in a foreign land.

To the hapless man, shut up, bound and gagged, in the cold stone cell under the Cloisters, he gave not a single thought.

Later, when all was safe, he would send word, somehow, that the prisoner of the monk's cell might be found while he yet lived, and that not so much for the young master's own sake as for his own neck's safety. But for the moment Convict No. 19 was thinking only of himself and his escape, and he had no remorse or pity to waste on the man whom he had left a helpless, freezing prisoner, and whose name and property he had taken. George Waring had never given much thought to others in his best days, and he had not learned better in the convict gang at Blackmoor.

Free!

He strode along the frosty road, breathing in the keen, wintry air, his eyes dancing. Free! For the first time since his escape from Blackmoor, for the first time during the weary weeks of dodging, hiding, and famishing, his heart beat high with hope. Had his half-brother consented to help a fugitive from justice to escape, the convict would have taken his chance of seizing a boat in Pegg Bay, and would have trusted himself to the winds and waves of the Channel. He was glad now that his half-brother had refused. He was going now, under better conditions—going as



Convict No. 19 stripped off Mr. Gilmore's clothes, discarded his own attire, and dressed himself quickly in the master's clothes. His own dusty and muddy garments he placed on the unconscious master. And when he had finished changing, the convict's resemblance to Mr. Gilmore was almost exact. (See Chapter 10.)

a well-dressed traveller, with a passport and money in his pocket, and private papers that would prove, if necessary, that he was a Form master at a well-known public school.

He could not have made the attempt under better auspices. He was glad that Eric Gilmore had refused to help him, since it had turned out that he had been able to help himself so much more effectively.

Fortune still favoured him. An empty taxi, returning from Friardale, passed him on the road. He hailed it and directed the chauffeur to drive him to Courtfield Junction.

Ten minutes later he was taking his ticket for Dover. The express was due in five minutes more.

Convict No. 19 walked on the platform.

A train had come in from Redclyffe and a crowd of fellows—senior schoolboys—had alighted from it. Convict No. 19 was unaware that they were the footballers from Redclyffe, who were to play Greyfriars First that afternoon—the match in which Eric Gilmore was to have figured. He glanced carelessly at the cheery crowd, bought a paper at a bookstall, and sat down, with the paper held up to screen his face while he waited for the express.

The train thundered in.

Carelessly the convict strolled across the platform and took his seat in a first-class carriage.

Doors slammed along the train, the engine screamed, the express rolled out of the station. Behind his newspaper, in a corner seat, Convict No. 19 smiled.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Mysterious Disappearance!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. came out cheerily into the frosty air of the quad. The chums of the Remove were in cheery spirits that afternoon. It was a half-holiday. They had nothing to worry about till evening prep, and they were going to see a first-class football match—which was the next best thing to playing footer themselves. Only, it was doubtful now whether they would see Mr. Gilmore playing for the First Eleven, as they had expected. If he was too unwell to appear at dinner he was not likely to be well enough to play football that afternoon. The same thought had evidently occurred to Wingate of the Sixth, for the juniors saw him in consultation with Gwynne and some other seniors, with a rather perturbed expression on his face.

The Greyfriars captain went into the House at last, from which it was easy to guess that he was going to ask Mr. Gilmore whether his name was to be taken off the list.

"Old Wingate's a bit worried," Bob Cherry remarked. "He's going to lose his best man for the match."

"Gilmore's name is still in the list," said Frank Nugent. "I looked. If he's not fit it's rather odd that he hasn't told Wingate to look for a new man. It's being left rather late."

"Well, he can't be fit if he's hurt his ankle, as Bunter said," remarked Harry Wharton, "and he certainly didn't come in to tiffin. Quelchy asked Wingate to take his place to watch the Second feed."

"He ought to have told Wingate before this," grunted Johnny Bull.

"The oughtfulness is terrific," observed Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh. "But perhaps the esteemed Gilmore is growing absent-minded, like the excellent and ridiculous Mr. Wiggins."

"I fancy he may be thinking about something else," said Wharton, in a low voice. "He was fit enough this morning when I saw him in the Cloisters, just before tiffin. Something may have happened—"

He broke off.

"What?" asked Bob, with a stare.

Wharton did not answer.

What Dicky Nugent had told in Study No. 1 had not been repeated by Wharton and Nugent, even to the Co. The fact that Mr. Gilmore's half-brother was a convict was no business of theirs, and they had said nothing. It was a topic upon which too little could not be said.

But it was in Wharton's mind that Mr. Gilmore had been in the Cloisters after classes that morning for the same reason that the captain of the Remove himself had gone there—with a suspicion that the raid on the tuckshop was the work of a desperate fugitive hiding in some nook of the old school.

Wharton had no doubt whatever that Mr. Gilmore had intended to explore the monk's cell under the ringed stone. He had felt quite certain on that point.

Had the Second Form master found the convict, his half-brother, hidden there, such a discovery might have had a very disturbing effect on him. And if he had, as Bunter stated, hurt his ankle, it was likely enough that he had

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received that hurt in exploring the recesses under the Cloisters.

Wharton could not help wondering whether Mr. Gilmore had, in fact, found the hunted man hiding in the precincts of Greyfriars, and what he had done if he had made such a discovery. Wingate of the Sixth came out of the House with a perplexed expression on his face, and called to the group of juniors.

"You kids seen Mr. Gilmore?"

"Not since tiffin, Wingate," answered the captain of the Remove. "He was in his study when Trotter went there."

"He's not there now," said Wingate. "It's jolly odd!"

"May have gone to his room, if he's not well," suggested Nugent.

"I've been to his room, and he's not there, either. Nobody seems to know where he is," grunted Wingate.

And he went back into the House, annoyed and perplexed.

"I say, you fellows——"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Where's Gilmore, Bunter?"

"Eh? How should I know where he is?" demanded Bunter, blinking at Bob Cherry.

"Don't you know everything that doesn't concern you?"

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, Dicky!" bawled Bob Cherry, as Nugent minor passed, with Gatty and Myers of the Second.

"Where's your Form master?"

Dicky Nugent stared round.

"Bother him!" he answered. "I don't know where he is, and care less. I only hope he's sacked!"

"You cheeky young ass!"

"Thank goodness we've done with him till prep this evening," said Gatty.

"What the thump do you fellows want him for?"

"Wingate wants him; and he seems to have done the vanishing trick," answered Bob.

"Let's hope he's vanished for good, then, like a giddy Boojum!" chuckled Nugent minor. And the fags grinned and went on their way.

"I say, you fellows——"

"Run away and play, Bunter!"

"I fancy I can tell you what's become of Gilmore," grinned Bunter.

"Cough it up, then."

Bunter gave a fat wink.

"Bolted!" he said.

"Bolted?" repeated Bob.

"Yes; that's my idea. He was bound to bolt sooner or later, you know, being an escaped convict——"

"You footling ass!" roared Bob Cherry.

"I can jolly well tell you that he looked fairly flabbergasted when he caught my eye on him, just before tiffin," said Bunter. "I gave him a look, you know."

"Well, if you gave him a look, that was enough to make him feel queer!" admitted Bob. "He hasn't been here long enough to get used to your features! They're an acquired taste!"

"You silly chump!" hooted Bunter.

"I tell you I met him face to face, and gave him a look, and——"

"And that did it!" chuckled Bob.

"Better not let Wingate know that you've crooked his best man!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You frabjous ass!" shrieked Bunter.

William George Bunter was willing to believe that he had scared Mr. Gilmore or anyone else with his commanding eye, but he was not willing to admit that his features had done it.

"Still, even Bunter's face, though it might make a man ill, couldn't make

him disappear into space!" said Bob.

"Where is he?"

"The wherefulness is terrific!"

"It's rotten, leaving Wingate hanging up like this!" said Johnny Bull. "Redclyffe will be here soon! A football skipper wants to know whether a man's going to play or not!"

"It's jolly queer!" said Nugent.

"Let's look for him, and find him before old Wingate begins to tear his hair!"

"I say, you fellows, he's bolted!"

"Fathead!"

"You should have seen the glare he gave me," said Bunter—"like a tiger! If you'd seen it, you'd have known that he was the convict! Absolutely murderous, you know!"

"You burbling ass, dry up!"

"Well, I know what I know!" declared the Owl of the Remove. "My belief is that Gilmore has taken the alarm and hooked it! You'll jolly well find that I'm right, you fellows!"

And it really began to look as if William George Bunter was right, for Eric Gilmore was not to be found. Fellows of all Forms, much puzzled by his failure to appear, were looking for him, and asking one another whether they had seen him. Nobody seemed to have given information, was below stairs, and no one, of course, thought of asking Trotter, or Gosling for that matter; for no one but Billy Bunter fancied for a moment that Mr. Gilmore had gone out of gates.

Wingate called at all the masters' studies, with the idea that Mr. Gilmore might have dropped in for a chat with a colleague and forgotten the football match. But Mr. Gilmore was not in any of the studies, and none of the masters had seen him.

The Greyfriars captain was utterly puzzled.

He went to the changing-room, where most of the eleven had gathered by that time to change for the match.

"Mr. Gilmore's not here?" he asked, as he came in.

"No," answered Loder of the Sixth.

"Can't you find him?" demanded Gwynne.

Wingate shook his head.

"No; can't imagine what's become of him. He can't have gone out and forgotten all about the match."

"Impossible!" said Walker.

"It's a giddy mystery!" said the Greyfriars captain. "I can't understand Mr. Gilmore acting in this fashion! I thought he was keen on the match."

"He was keen on it," said Gwynne. "If he's changed his mind, he ought jolly well to have said so!"

"It's not like him to leave us in the lurch like this!" said the worried captain of Greyfriars. "I can't make it out! Still, it seems to be clear that he's not fit, as he couldn't come in to tiffin. We shall have to play without him."

That was the only possible decision, as it was close on time for the game now. Blundell of the Fifth was put on in Mr. Gilmore's place—so there was one Greyfriars man, at least, who was not disappointed by the strange absence of Eric Gilmore. The Redclyffe men arrived, and the first eleven went down to the field; and even at the last moment Wingate cast a hopeful glance round in the hope of seeing the tall figure of Eric Gilmore. But he saw nothing of him, and the footballers went into the field.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

What Wharton Suspected!

HARRY WHARTON watched the ball kicked off, with a thoughtful frown on his brow. The captain of the Remove was thinking hard.

He was thinking of Mr. Gilmore.

The game was beginning now, and the Second Form master was not in the ranks of the first eleven. That Mr. Gilmore was keen on football, that he was glad to play for the Sixth, all Greyfriars knew. His absence, after arranging to play in the match, was mysterious and inexplicable, and all the more so because it was unexplained.

That he had forgotten the match and gone out was impossible; that he had gone without taking the trouble to tell Wingate not to count on him was extremely unlikely.

Most of the fellows, puzzled as they were, simply gave the matter up. No doubt Mr. Gilmore would have some explanation to give when he did turn up again; and that he would not turn up again at all was an idea not likely to cross any mind.

But Wharton was thinking—anxiously. His comrades, though disappointed so far as watching Mr. Gilmore's play was concerned, had settled down to see the match through; with or without Eric Gilmore, it was a game well worth watching. The problem of Eric Gilmore's inexplicable conduct they dismissed from their minds as an insoluble problem which, after all, did not concern them personally. But Harry Wharton could not dismiss it from his mind, knowing as he did more than the other fellows knew.

"You men keen on seeing this through?" the captain of the Remove asked abruptly.

"Yes, rather!" said Bob Cherry.

"It's a good game! Look at old Wingate making the fur fly!"

"I'd rather you chaps came with me," said Wharton.

"Eh—lost your interest in Soccer all of a sudden?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Why not see it out?"

"I'm thinking of something else. Look here, you fellows, come along!" said Harry. "It's about Gilmore!"

"Blow Gilmore!" said Johnny Bull, rather crossly. "I've always thought well of the man, but he's done a dirty trick in letting Wingate down like this!"

"He may not have been able to help it," said Wharton, in a low voice.

"What rot!"

Frank Nugent looked curiously at his chum.

"What have you got in your noddle now, Harry?" he asked.

"I'll tell you if you'll come out of the crowd."

"Right-ho!" said Frank at once.

"Blest if I can make you out, Wharton!" said Johnny Bull. "No good looking for Gilmore now; it's too late for him to play even if you found him! And he's not to be found!"

"He must be somewhere."

"Well, let him stay somewhere if he chooses! What does it matter to us? He could show up if he liked, I suppose!"

"Possibly not."

"Let's get out of this!" said Bob Cherry. "Wharton's got something in his little brain-box, though I'm blest if I know what! You don't think the man may have had an accident, Harry?"

"I think it's possible."

"Oh, my hat! Let's go!"

The Famous Five pushed a way out of the thick throng gathered round Big Side. Almost all Greyfriars had turned up there to see the Redclyffe match.

The quadrangle was almost deserted, and the Cloisters, whither the captain of the Remove led his chums, totally deserted. In blank wonder the Co. followed him there.

"Look here, what's this game?" demanded Johnny Bull. "You're jolly mysterious, Wharton, and I can't make head or tail of it!"

"The head or tailfulness is not terrific!" remarked Hurree Singh.

"I'm going to tell you fellows something I haven't mentioned so far," said Harry. "Nugent knows, but it was not our business to repeat it. It's a rather beastly thing about Mr. Gilmore."

"The mystery deepens!" grinned Bob Cherry. "Go it!"

Wharton quietly related, in a few words, the strange tale Dicky Nugent had told in Study No. 1. Johnny Bull and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh listened in amazement.

Bob Cherry gave an expressive whistle when the captain of the Remove had finished.

"This beats it!" he said. "I—I suppose that cheeky fag wasn't pulling your leg, was he?"

"I'm sure not," said Harry.

"Quite sure!" added Nugent, with emphasis.

"That would account for the likeness," said Bob. "We knew from the convict's description that there was a likeness, though I never believed it was so close as Bunter fancied. I put it down to the fat duffer being as blind as an owl."

"His half-brother!" said Johnny Bull. "A convict! Pretty rotten for a Greyfriars master."

"Of course, it's to be kept dark," said Wharton hastily. "Even Dicky has sense enough not to talk about it. He only told his brother and me."

"Mum's the word of course," said Bob. "I wouldn't like to say anything to hurt Mr. Gilmore; he's a decent sort, though he has let Wingate down today."

"I shouldn't have told even you fellows," went on Wharton, "only for a good reason. Mr. Grimes believes that the escaped convict headed for Greyfriars, to get help from Mr. Gilmore. I'm absolutely certain that the man has been here. As soon as I knew that he was Mr. Gilmore's half-brother, that was certain. It was not Mr. Gilmore that I saw in the Cloisters that time, when I was puzzled by his dodging away; that Skinner and Snoop saw. That's why Mr. Gilmore never reported them for gambling."

"Phew!"

"Then there's that raid on the tuckshop," went on Harry. "We took it for granted that it was Bunter—"

"It was Bunter!" said Johnny Bull.

"Or his minor," said Bob. "The Second all believe that it was Sammy Bunter. One of the two, anyhow."

"The convict has been here," said Harry. "If he is still hanging about, it may have been the convict. He would be badly in want of food."

"Great pip!"

"I came along here this morning to look round," went on Wharton. "I found Mr. Gilmore here. He asked me about the ringed stone. He made it plain that he wanted me to go, and I went—and I was quite sure that he meant to look into the old monk's cell after I was gone."

"Why on earth?" asked Bob.

"Because I think he suspected what I suspected—that Convict No. 19 was

HORACE COKER IN THE LIMELIGHT!

Coker falls foul of the prefects!

Coker falls foul of his Form-master!

Coker falls foul of the Fifth Form!

Coker falls foul of Harry Wharton & Co. of the Remove!

In short, the Duffer of the Fifth is up to his neck in trouble.

But Coker is undismayed.

You fellows will scream with laughter when you read:—

"THE FELLOW WHO WOULDN'T BE CANED!"

By Frank Richards,

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hiding somewhere about the school, and had raided the tuckshop on Monday night for food."

* Wharton's chums stared at him.

"You think that Gilmore suspected that?" ejaculated Johnny Bull.

"I do. I think that's the only reason why he believed Sammy Bunter's story that he picked up the biscuits in the Cloisters. All the Second thought him a fool for believing it."

"I rather agree with the Second."

"Well, I think he's no fool; but he had a reason the Second knew nothing of, and I've told you the reason."

"Hem! But if Gilmore went down into the monk's cell after you left him here, he got out again. He was in his study when he sent that message by Trotter."

"I know! But did he go down again after tiffin?" asked Harry. "That's what's been worrying me!"

"Why should he? If he found the place empty, he wouldn't want to go down again. If he found the convict there—it's not likely; but if he did—"

Bob Cherry paused. "The man's his half-brother," said Wharton. "According to Dicky, he told Inspector Grimes that he never would help a convict to escape. But—but, the man's his own blood—he may have changed his mind. He may have taken him food—or clothes—or—or simply gone to urge him to clear off."

"No bizney of ours," said Johnny Bull. "That's a matter for Gilmore to settle with his own conscience."

"Yes, yes; only he's not to be found!" said Harry impatiently. "Suppose something's happened to him—suppose that desperate villain may have turned on him—suppose—"

"You're doing a lot of supposing," said Johnny Bull dryly. "Mean to say

that you think Gilmore may be in that cell now, with the giddy convict standing guard over him?"

"That's what I fear."

"Oh, my hat! Not if he was helping the man, anyhow."

"But if he was ordering him to go—perhaps threatening to call in the police if he did not go—"

"Well, in that case, the Blackmoor johnny might give him beans, and sit on his head to keep him quiet. But I—"

"Well, what do you fellows think?" asked Harry. "I've brought you away from the football match to tell you this because I'm worried about what may have happened to Mr. Gilmore. If he went to the cell a second time the convict may have attacked him, or he may even have stumbled and hurt himself and been unable to get out. It's a dangerous place. It's put out of bounds for that reason—"

"Now you're getting a bit more probable," grinned Johnny Bull. "I think the convict is all piffle; but any man might break a leg rooting about that old den under the Cloisters. A fellow was hurt there once, falling down the steps, I remember."

"My esteemed thankfulness," remarked Hurree Singh, "is that the excellent and execrable Gilmore is probably in the library with a book, and has forgotten the football. But we may as well look into the cell as we are here, and as the ludicrous Wharton is anxious. Whyfully not?"

"That's so," said Bob. "It means a caning if it comes out that we lifted the ringed stone—the Head's frightfully severe about it since there was an accident there. But we've been caned

before and survived it. Besides, we're not likely to be spotted."

"If we're spotted, Wharton can tell his convict story to the Head," chuckled Johnny Bull. "The Beak may swallow it—perhaps! To my mind, it's better than Bunter's story on the same subject."

"Oh, cheese it!" said Frank, as a frown gathered on the brow of the captain of the Remove.

"Look here! I'm going to look into the monk's cell," said Wharton, compressing his lips. "Will you fellows help me lift the stone?"

"Of course!" said Bob Cherry hastily. "After all, you might be right. Let's jolly well peep into the place, anyhow."

"The peepfulness is the proper caper," agreed Hurree Singh.

And, that point being settled—though undoubtedly the Co. were in an extremely sceptical mood—the juniors prepared for the investigation of the ancient cell under the Cloisters.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Foiled at the Finish!

THE Famous Five lost no time.

Wharton was anxious to verify—or otherwise—his suspicion that some harm had befallen Mr. Gilmore in exploring the monk's cell, which, to his mind, was the only explanation of the Second Form master's strange disappearance. The other fellows were anxious to get back to the football match. So all the five were keen to get the matter over.

Lifting the stone was a heavy task for a strong man, and quite beyond the powers of the most hefty junior at Greyfriars. Two juniors, in fact, would have found it a hard task. But the five of them found it fairly easy. Bob Cherry fetched a rope from the woodshed, and it was knotted to the iron ring, and the chums of the Remove grasped it together and pulled. The broad flag rolled on its side.

"The darkfulness is terrific!" remarked Hurree Janset Ram Singh, staring into the black opening.

"And those old steps look a bit rocky," observed Nugent.

"No need to go down," said Johnny Bull. "If Mr. Gilmore's there he can say so." And Johnny shouted down into the opening: "Hallo! Anybody at home?"

The rumbling echo of his voice answered from the dark depths, but there was no other answer.

"Nobody at home!" grinned Johnny Bull.

"I'm going to see," said Harry quietly. "I've got a box of matches here. I'll go first. In fact, no need for more than one to go."

"Unless the jolly old convict's there," grinned Bob Cherry. "If he's there, and he's knocked a Form master on the head, he may not stand on ceremony about a Remove man's napper. We'll all come down."

"And if the convict's there, I'll eat him," remarked Johnny Bull.

Evidently Johnny Bull doubted whether Convict No. 19, of Blackmoor, had ever been anywhere near Greyfriars at all.

"Fathead!" answered Wharton. Harry Wharton stepped carefully into the opening. He struck a match, and peered before him as he went. The old stone steps—many centuries old—were far from safe; broken away in places, and decidedly uneasy to the tread. The captain of the Remove did not relish his task, but he did not hesitate.

Feeling his way cautiously, testing each step with his foot before he trusted his weight to it, he descended the ancient steps, striking matches as he went. The air below was heavy, after the keen wind of the Cloisters, but it was fairly fresh. The place was ventilated. Black darkness greeted Wharton's eyes, the matches flickering eerily in the dense gloom. He reached the stone floor of the cell at last, and behind him his comrades came down, one after another, treading softly and carefully. The five juniors gathered in the cell at last, staring about them in the gloom.

"Nobody at home," said Johnny Bull. "And I think— Oh, my hat! Wha-a-at's that?" Johnny Bull broke off with a startled exclamation, as he stumbled over something on the floor.

"Great Scott?"

"The convict— Great pip! It's Mr. Gilmore!"

Harry Wharton & Co. gathered round the figure on the floor. A man, bound hand and foot and gagged, lay there, his staring eyes looking up wildly at them in the flicker of the matches.

For a moment they had supposed it was the convict. Wharton recognised the thick brown overcoat he had seen on the man who resembled Mr. Gilmore, on the occasion when the fugitive had dodged him in the Cloisters. But the next moment he knew that it was the Second Form master. The man's head was bare, and his flaxen hair glimmered in the flickering light.

"Mr. Gilmore!" breathed Nugent.

Johnny Bull stared at the bound man in stupefaction. Not for a moment had the hard-headed Johnny believed that there was anything in Wharton's suspicion that Mr. Gilmore had fallen foul of the convict, hidden in that remote recess. He was quite staggered by the overwhelming proof that Wharton had hit on the exact truth.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "It's Mr. Gilmore, tied up! Oh, my hat! The—the convict must have been here, then."

"And may be here now!" ejaculated Nugent. "Look out!"

"Oh crumbs! Look out, you fellows!"

The possibility that the desperate man was lurking in the shadows about them, made the juniors draw together very quickly. But there was no sound or movement in the cell. Striking matches, they hurriedly explored the cell, and found that it was vacant, except for themselves and the bound man. The convict, if he had been there—as was certain now—was gone.

Bob Cherry opened his pocket-knife and cut Mr. Gilmore loose, while Wharton removed the gag from the young master's mouth.

They raised him to a sitting posture. He was almost blue with cold, and his teeth chattered.

"We've got to get him out of this," said Harry. "He's nearly frozen. Thank goodness we came!"

"Yes, rather," muttered Johnny Bull. "Thank goodness we did! You were right, after all, old chap." Johnny shivered. "Why he must have heard me shout, and couldn't answer with his mouth stuffed up."

"My boys!" stammered Mr. Gilmore through his numbed lips. "My boys! Heaven bless you for coming!"

"It was Wharton, sir," said Johnny Bull. "I thought it was all rot, but as it turns out—"

"Was it the convict, sir?" asked Nugent.

Mr. Gilmore nodded.

"I—I shall be able to move in a few

minutes," he said thickly. "Wait till then. Thank Heaven you came!"

He was breathing hard, and chafing his frozen hands, for some minutes, the juniors watching him in silence. The colour came back into his cheeks and the light into his eyes. He had been through a terrible ordeal. In the old stone cell, the lurking convict had been able to move, to keep himself warm; but the young master had laid bound, unable to stir, on the cold stone floor, and he was almost frozen. There was little doubt that the Famous Five had saved his life. It was not likely that he would have survived the terrible cold, had he remained for days in the stone cell.

"How did you know I was here, Wharton?" asked Mr. Gilmore, very quietly, at last.

Wharton coloured. He had not wished to let Eric Gilmore know, or suspect, that he and his friends knew anything of the young master's convict relative. But there was no help for it now.

He explained, without mentioning Dicky Nugent's name. Mr. Gilmore listened without interrupting him.

"I understand," he said. "I desired nothing to be known in the school of my connection with that miscreant; but I should be very ungrateful to complain of that now, as, owing to your knowledge, you have certainly saved my life."

"We shall say nothing, sir," exclaimed Wharton hastily. "Nugent and I have known for some time, and never mentioned it, and the fag I spoke of has said nothing. Nothing will be said, sir, if you do not wish it."

"Only that convict will have to be nailed," said Johnny Bull.

Mr. Gilmore breathed hard.

"The matter of the convict you may leave in my hands," he said. "I shall take care that he does not escape, after what he has done. For the rest, I hope you boys will say nothing."

"Not a word, sir."

"I think I can walk now," said Mr. Gilmore; and the juniors helped him to rise.

He leaned on the wall, panting.

"Have you seen anything of the man since he left me here, my boys?" asked the Second Form master. "As you see, he took my clothes, and his intention was to steal my passport and other things he needed, and to leave Greyfriars in my name—as me. I have been here since the time you saw me in the Cloisters after morning class, Wharton. Has the man—in my clothes and my name—been seen since?"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Wharton. "You've been here since before dinner, sir?"

"Yes, yes."

"Then it was that man in your study, who sent a message that he was unwell, and could not come to dinner?"

Mr. Gilmore gritted his teeth.

"No doubt it was he, taking advantage of his resemblance to me. Is he still in the school?"

"I think he must have cleared, sir. It was because you couldn't be found for the first eleven match that we looked for you. I suppose he must have cleared off while all the fellows were at dinner, as he hasn't been seen since, and can't be found."

"Fortunately, I know where he is gone, and a telephone message to the Dover police will stop him," said Mr. Gilmore grimly. "He will not find my passport so useful as he supposed. Any man attempting to cross the Channel in the name of Eric Gilmore will be stopped and arrested. There is ample time, thanks to you, my boys. He cannot have reached Dover yet."



Bob Cherry fetched a rope from the woodshed, and it was knotted to the iron ring. Then, the chums of the Remove grasped the rope, and pulled together. The broad flag rolled on its side. (See Chapter 15.)

Mr. Gilmore ascended the stone steps, and the juniors followed him out of the monks' cell. The Form-master hurried away at once to the House, while Harry Wharton & Co. closed the ringed stone.

"May as well see the finish of the match," said Bob Cherry.

The Famous Five walked out of the Cloisters, and headed for Big Side. Mr. Gilmore had already reached the House and gone in, and they had no doubt that he was taking prompt measures for dealing with Convict No. 19.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! old fat man!" "I say, I've settled it," grinned Billy Bunter. "You fellows fancied that Gilmore hadn't bolted! I told you he had."

"We did sort of fancy he hadn't," chuckled Bob Cherry. And the Co. laughed.

"Well, I've settled it now. He's gone."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I've asked Gosling!" announced Billy Bunter triumphantly. "Gosling knows! He says that Mr. Gilmore left just after dinner, with a suit-case and gave him a note for the Head. That proves it. Now who was right?"

The Famous Five chortled. They had no intention of informing William George Bunter of the strange happenings of that afternoon; which would have been equivalent to informing all Greyfriars.

"I don't think Mr. Gilmore's bolted, dear old porpoise," said Bob. "You see, he's in the House now."

"Eh?" "And we were speaking to him not ten minutes ago."

"I—I say, you fellows, if you're pulling my leg—"

"Not at all, old fat man; Gilmore's in the House, as large as life and twice as natural. And from information received, as the policemen say," con-

tinued Bob, with a grin, "we think that Convict No. 19 will be arrested this afternoon—while Mr. Gilmore is still here, old pippin! So you can put that in your pipe and smoke it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the Famous Five went on their way to the football ground, leaving Billy Bunter staring.

Meanwhile, a pale and untidy Form-master in a brown overcoat was interviewing an astonished headmaster in Dr. Locke's study. Gosling had recently delivered the note left with him; which added to Dr. Locke's amazement when the Second Form-master almost burst in upon him. But a few hurried words from Mr. Gilmore apprised the Head of what had happened, and the telephone was quickly at work—conveying information to Inspector Grimes, at Courtfield, which set him to work in hot haste.

While the first-eleven match was still being fought out on Big Side at Greyfriars, Inspector Grimes was having the busiest time of his life; telephoning, telegraphing, and finally tearing across country Doverwards in a fast car. And Billy Bunter had to admit that Mr. Gilmore had not, after all, bolted, when he saw the Second Form master walking to tea, with Mr. Quelch, in Masters' Common-room.

Harry Wharton & Co., and a crowd of other Greyfriars fellows, were cheering a Greyfriars victory on Big Side, in the very moments when a well-dressed traveller, waiting for the Channel boat at Dover, was being requested to show his passport. That traveller showed his passport with confidence—and was undoubtedly surprised when, having shown it, he was immediately collared, and found the handcuffs locked on his wrists. And a little later, still with the steel bracelets on, and fury in his face, Convict No. 19 had the pleasure—or otherwise—of finding himself in

the cheery company of Inspector Grimes, whose cheery company was bestowed upon him till the gates of Blackmoor closed on him once again.

Why Eric Gilmore had missed the first-eleven match, was never precisely known at Greyfriars, excepting to the headmaster, and certain members of the Remove.

He explained to Wingate that he had been unavoidably prevented from joining up, without going into details.

Neither was the mystery of the raid on the tuck-shop ever elucidated—in public. Most of the Remove remained convinced that it was Billy Bunter—all the Second were certain that it was Sammy. But all inquiry into the matter was suddenly dropped.

Last—but not least—Billy Bunter had to give up his weird belief that Mr. Gilmore, the master of the Second, was no other than the escaped convict from Blackmoor. Even Bunter could not, with all his wonderful intellectual powers, continue to believe so, when he saw the report in the "Daily Mail" of the apprehension of the escaped convict, in the attempt to cross the Channel with a stolen passport. Convict No. 19 being safe again at Blackmoor, it was clear, even to William George Bunter, that the master of the Greyfriars Second was not he—that young man being still at the school in charge of the Second Form—where he remained for several weeks longer, till, to the intense joy of Dicky Nugent & Co., Mr. Twigg recovered sufficiently to return to his duties, and Eric Gilmore departed to take up an appointment in a distant Dominion.

THE END.

(Don't miss next week's screamingly funny story of the chums of Greyfriars, entitled: "The Fellow Who Wouldn't Be Caned!")

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START THIS AMAZING STORY OF THE GREAT WAR TO-DAY, BOYS!

A BID FOR LIBERTY! It takes a bit of nerve and skill to break out of a German prison, but young Eric Milvain manages to do the trick. But just when he is congratulating himself on his escape, Fate hands him out a scummy blow!



Additional interest attaches to this story in that the author was a British pilot during the Great War, and was taken prisoner by the Germans.—Ed.

The Sentence!

ANOTHER hour dragged by, and evening merged into night. In spite of what Eric had learned as to the fate of Beverley, he was determined to risk all on an attempt at escape that night. He knew the buried plans were in an oiled silk package and would take no harm in the damp earth. But it was imperative that he completed Birchington's job at the earliest possible moment and got the plans to headquarters in France.

The room was in black darkness when he took one of the blankets from his bed and tore it carefully into long strips. He knotted these together, and the first half of his rope was made.

He was commencing on the second blanket when he suddenly stiffened. Heavy feet were approaching along the corridor outside the room. He whipped the torn blanket under the bed as the footsteps halted at his door, and he arranged the other blanket on the bed as neatly as he could in the darkness.

An electric light bulb, suspended from the ceiling near the doorway, flooded the room with light as a switch was pressed somewhere outside in the corridor. Then the door was unbolted and thrown open.

A German sergeant stalked into the room, followed by four soldiers with fixed bayonets and rifles. He was a brutal-looking fellow, with a thin-lipped mouth and little pig-like eyes. He was somewhat short of stature, but with a breadth of shoulder which suggested enormous strength. In the belt which he wore was thrust a short-handled whip with a leather thong, knotted throughout its four feet of length.

"Captain Eric Milvain!" he said harshly. "You will accompany me!"

At a sharp command the guards fell in around Eric, and he left the room in their midst. He had no idea where he was being taken, but, after traversing several brilliantly-lit corridors, the sergeant halted in front of a door and knocked. He was bidden to enter, and

led the way into a sparsely-furnished room, prisoner and escort at his heels.

Eric caught his breath sharply, for seated at a table was Dr. Kauterfauld. There was a gleam in the man's eyes which caused the boy to fear the worst. Behind the doctor's chair stood two German officers, rigidly at attention. Eric was marched forward to the table, and unwaveringly he met the blazing eyes of Kauterfauld.

"So," the latter's voice was shaking with passion, "you thought you had deceived me, you cursed hound!"

"What do you mean?" snapped Eric.

"I mean this," snarled Dr. Kauterfauld, and he picked up a sheaf of papers from the table in front of him. "We have discovered the identity of your peasant friend. These papers—his papers—are false. Their duplicates do not exist in any of our bureaus. That peasant was the cursed spy, and you know it. Now"—and he leaned forward across the table—"where are the plans?"

Eric remained silent. It was idle to deny Birchington's identity, idle to hedge any longer.

"Where are the plans, you dog?" repeated Kauterfauld.

"Where you'll never find them!" retorted Eric.

"I will give you one more chance to answer! If you answer you will live. I pledge you my word on that. If you refuse you die! The plans are in Germany, that we know. There is no one who could have got them across the frontier, except the spy, and he did not reach the frontier. No great harm will be done even if the plans are lost, provided they are lost in this country. But we want them, and in exchange for the information the spy gave you, we will give you your life!"

Eric stood silent, his head erect. Dr. Kauterfauld leapt to his feet and crashed his clenched fist on the table.

"Donner und blitzen, will you answer?" he shouted.

"No, I will not!" replied Eric doggedly.

The doctor's hands clenched and unclenched. He licked his bloodless lips

with the tip of his tongue, and there was murder in his eyes.

"You—you mean that?" he demanded thickly.

"Yes, I do."

"Then you will be shot at dawn! Shot for the cursed dog of a stubborn Englisher that you are! Sergeant Schloss, take this man to his room and parade a firing-party in the square behind the hotel fifteen minutes before dawn. You, Schullermann"—Dr. Kauterfauld wheeled on the officer on his right—"will take charge of the party! If the dog wishes to speak at the last, then bring him to me!"

The doctor made a gesture of dismissal, and the sergeant touched Eric on the arm. As the boy left the room with his guards he had a vision of Kauterfauld standing by the table, glaring after him, his face pale with passion, his thin lips twitching.

Back in his room, Eric knew that he had little time to waste. He had realised that the discovery of Birchington's identity had to come sooner or later, and Kauterfauld had worked rapidly. As the Secret Service chief said, the plans were tolerably safe from Allied eyes as long as they lay hidden in German. But even now, maybe, a search was being made in the clump of bushes, and, no matter what it cost, Eric was determined to get to the spot as soon as possible.

The light in his room had been switched off, for light shows through white-washed windows, and Karlsruhe was not free from the attentions of the British bombing machines. So far there had been no night raid, but—Anyway, the Verteidigungsausschuss, who were responsible for the defence of the city, were extremely zealous, and took no unnecessary risks.

Tearing up the remaining blanket, Eric knotted it into a makeshift rope, and tied it to the other which he had hidden beneath the bed. Then, inch by inch, he moved the bedstead towards the window. He got it jammed up against the wall without interruption, then went to work with feverish haste.

Tying the rope-end to the bedrail, he pulled on it with all his strength. The knots showed no signs of giving, but the material with which the blankets were made had given him little confidence that it would bear his weight. However, it was that or nothing.

The window-sill was a few feet from the floor, and nearly a foot in breadth. He clambered on to it, the slack of the improvised rope in his hands. He stood thus for a few moments, listening with straining ears.

From the street below came the whirl of an occasional passing car and the rumble of a heavy lorry. Subdued, maybe it came from the end of the street, sounded the faint clang of a tram-bell. But these sounds only impinged subconsciously on Eric's hearing. What he was acutely conscious of was the tramp, tramp, tramp! of heavily-booted feet on the pavement below the window.

The tramp, tramp, tramp! grew fainter. A halt, then the tramp, tramp, tramp! returned. It was the pacing of the armed sentry.

Eric waited till he had judged approximately the moment when the man was almost at his farthest distance from the window. Then, taking a deep breath, his hands gripping tightly on the rope, he threw his whole weight against the glass and crashed backwards through the window.

The Silent House!

SIMULTANEOUSLY with the breaking of the window there came a startled shout from the darkness below. Eric felt himself dropping; then, with a jerk which nearly wrenched his arms from their sockets, the rope took his weight.

He knew at most that he had only a few feet to drop now, and, releasing his hold, fell heavily full on the shoulders of one of the sentries. The fellow crashed to the pavement, with Eric sprawled on top of him. His rifle, with its long, saw-edged bayonet, clattered away into the darkness.

Running, heavily-booted feet were approaching. Someone shouted hoarsely, and a rifle cracked, then another, and another, all around the outside walls of the Gasthof.

It was the alarm signal.

The sentry upon whom Eric had fallen seemed bereft of wind and wits. He clutched spasmodically at the boy's tunic; but Eric wrenched himself free, and, as shadowy forms loomed up out of the darkness, he clambered to his feet and set off running up the unlighted street.

"Halt!" roared a voice.

But Eric kept on, running as he had never run before.

Crack! Crack!

Two shots rang out in rapid succession, and a bullet whined past Eric's head. A whistle trilled shrilly somewhere in front of him. He doubled across the road, conscious of the feet which pounded in pursuit. At that hour of the night the street was practically deserted. His eyes were growing accustomed to the darkness, but his breath was coming in great labouring gusts, and he knew that he was all but done.

The street in which the Gasthof stood was one of large residential houses. Eric had noted this as he was marched down it earlier in the day. The houses stood some little distance back from the road, and were fronted by small gardens and shrubberies.

At the gate of one of these stood two

men, their cigar-ends glowing in the darkness. Eric was upon them almost before he realised that they were there. One of them started forward, and the next instant Eric's fist took him full on the jaw, sending him reeling against the iron railings. His companion rapped out an oath of astonishment and rage, but it was no time for nice measures, and, dropping his head, Eric charged him full in the centre of his white evening-dress waistcoat.

The fellow doubled up, gasping, then Eric was past, running with all his energies summoned into one final spurt. The black shadow of an open garden gate loomed up alongside of him. He slipped into it, felt his feet on turf, then, dropping on all-fours, wormed his way into the thick of a shrubbery, where he lay holding his breath.

His pursuers pounded past outside the gates, their voices coming to him, guttural and distinct. He lay doggo and inert, and minutes passed before he allowed himself the luxury of muscular relaxation. Then suddenly he tensed again. A stealthy footstep had sounded by the gate. To his straining ears came the low whispering of voices.

"In one of these gardens, sergeant! I am sure of it!"

"I know he did not run far, for his footsteps seemed to stop abruptly."

Eric clenched his fists. It was those two fellows who had been standing smoking in evening-dress. He was sure of it, for even in the low, muffled tones there sounded a certain refinement. They seemed to have a sergeant with them, and no doubt one or two men.

"We will search all the gardens. I have men stationed at both ends of the street. He must not escape. He is wanted."

Eric made a shrewd guess as to the identity of the last speaker. It was Sergeant Schloss, of the Gasthof. Cautious footsteps and a rustle of bushes gave token that the men were advancing warily into the garden.

Simultaneously Eric commenced to crawl away. The prospect of escape seemed hopeless, but Eric was determined to evade capture if it was humanly possible.

Moving noiselessly, he came to the edge of the shrubbery. In front of him was the dark shadow of a house, its windows unlighted save for one on the ground floor. And this latter was heavily curtained, only chinks of light filtering through at the sides.

In a crouching posture, Eric crept round towards the back of the house.

THE STORY SO FAR.

Captain Eric Milcain, crack pilot of the 97th Bombing Squadron, receives orders to proceed on a perilous mission to Trier—behind the German firing lines. He is attacked by four enemy aeroplanes and, after a terrible fight, he is forced to descend in a stretch of desolate moorland, his observer dead and his machine useless. There he encounters Birchington, a British Secret Service agent disguised as a German peasant. Fatally wounded by enemy soldiers, Birchington hands over some valuable plans to the young airman, and with his last breath implores Eric Milcain to jure them until they can be recovered and got through to the British head quarters. This is barely done before Milcain is captured by the party of Germans. He is taken to the military barracks at Hagenot, where he comes face to face with Dr. Kauterfauld, chief of the German Secret Service, whom Eric Milcain had known under the name of Rosen before the outbreak of war. Kauterfauld had been unsuccessful in his attempts to obtain the secret of a new high explosive, the invention of Professor Milcain, Eric's father, and he determines to have his revenge on the young Englishman. Eric is taken to Karlsruhe en route to the prison camp at Landshut and locked in a room on the first floor of the Gasthof, an unfinished hotel used for the temporary housing of prisoners-of-war. His one thought now is of escape.

Behind him all was silent, but he knew that the front garden still held his pursuers. Groping, feeling his way forward, his hands touched the wooden sides of an outhouse. Investigation proved that it was about six feet in height, with a gentle, sloping roof which backed on to the wall adjoining the next garden.

Nothing could be better suited for Eric's purpose. He decided to lie doggo on the roof, and if the search became at all hot he could drop down into the next garden and thus gain a few precious minutes.

Quietly he hoisted himself up and sprawled full-length on the roof. Half an hour dragged its weary length, and nothing stirred. He presumed that the searchers must have withdrawn, but the risk was too great for him yet to make a move.

What he wondered at was why the search of the garden had been carried out so surreptitiously. Why had the inmates of the house not been warned that an escaped prisoner-of-war was probably lurking somewhere in the grounds? The search might have been carried on quietly in order that the fugitive should be taken unawares, but somehow the way in which it had been done seemed like carrying caution to the point of imbecility.

However, Eric had something more to think of than the mentality of the Boche. He was in a parlous plight even if he got away from the garden. His uniform was that of a British Air Force Officer, and would condemn him at once should he be seen when daylight came.

It was his intention to travel by night and lie up by day, but first he had to get out of the city. A change of clothing was essential. Lying on the roof of the outhouse, his eyes dwelt on the black bulk of the house a few yards away. In there, somewhere, would be clothing—German clothing of some kind. It did not seem a house overburdened with servants or inmates. Save for that lighted room on the front of the ground floor, the rest of the building was in darkness.

Desperate straits require desperate remedies, and Eric decided there and then to make his way into the house and endeavour to effect a change of garb.

Cautiously he slid from the roof, and, dropping to the ground, stood listening. All was silent. Quietly he crept towards the house, and, feeling his way along the wall, came to what seemed to be a small scullery window. To his delight, it was open a few inches from the bottom. Slowly, the fraction of an inch at a time, he raised the sash. Five minutes later he had clambered through and was standing on the bare stone floor of a small kitchen.

He had no matches, but if he had he dared not have shown a light. He found the door and groped his way along a corridor. It was the bed-rooms he wanted, for in the bed-rooms, if anywhere, would be the clothes which he so greatly needed.

He emerged into a large entrance-hall, dimly lit by a shaded electric bulb suspended from the high ceiling. A wide staircase led upwards. From under the door shone a chink of light, and Eric guessed that it was the door of the lighted room which he had seen from the shrubbery.

The silence was deathly, unearthly. Nothing stirred; not a sound came to break the stillness. Yet there was forced in on Eric the subconscious knowledge that he was not alone.

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Releasing his hold of the rope, Eric fell heavily on the shoulders of the sentry. The fellow crashed to the pavement, his rifle clattering away into the darkness. (See page 25.)



There was someone near at hand, someone watching him.

With an impatient shrug of his shoulders he attempted to throw off the feeling, but it persisted. Glancing cautiously round, he commenced to mount the staircase. Progress was easy here, for it was carpeted with heavy pile that deadened all sound.

He reached the first floor without mishap. The door of a bed-room stood ajar, flickering, dancing shadows being cast on the walls and ceilings by a fire which glowed and crackled in the grate. One glance inside the room assured Eric that it was deserted, and next instant he was across the threshold, the door being shut behind him.

A large wardrobe stood in one corner, and, investigating its contents, Eric found a good array of civilian and military clothes. Almost at random he selected a jacket, waistcoat, and trousers, and, divesting himself of his tunic, proceeded to don them.

He worked with feverish rapidity, for he wanted to get away, to get clear of this house of silence and mystery. His tunic and discarded clothing he rolled into a ball and thrust them under the bed. Had time permitted he would have burnt them.

He turned to survey himself as best he could in the mirror of the wardrobe, the sole illumination being the fire-light. The clothes he wore were roomy, but fitted tolerably well.

Ah, a hat! Yes, he must have a hat. He fished a grey Homburg out of the wardrobe and pulled it well down over his eyes. Then he started. He was certain he had heard a stair creak. No, a false alarm. He turned for a final survey of himself. He was, to all appearances, a somewhat shoddy civilian.

Well, he had got in all right and

found what he wanted. All that remained was to get out. A thought struck him, and he picked up the poker from the fender. It might be necessary to fight his way out of the house.

He moved to the door and cautiously opened it. The same unearthly stillness brooded over all. Softly he crossed the landing and commenced to descend the stairs. He was half-way down when there came the sharp click of an electric light switch. The entrance-hall and staircase was flooded with light from a cluster of electric bulbs.

Standing at the foot of the stairs, a drawn automatic in his hand, was the tall, spare figure of Dr. Kauterfauld.

"Stand quite still!" said the doctor harshly. "One move and you are a dead man!"

The Whip!

"YES, I also have you covered!"

A voice, sharp and metallic, spoke from the head of the staircase. The fellow, who over he was, must have been lurking there in the shadows when Eric passed.

Two men, obviously menservants, were standing in the hallway watching the scene uneasily.

"Drop that poker and put your hands up!" ordered Dr. Kauterfauld harshly.

"And if I refuse?"

Eric was playing for time, seeking some way out of the impasse.

"You will not refuse! I shall count three and then fire!"

There was a moment of intense silence. So still stood the three chief actors that the whole thing had some semblance of a dramatic tableau.

"One!"

The word fell harshly from the lips of Dr. Kauterfauld. Eric did not move,

but the fingers which were holding the poker tightened convulsively.

"Two!"

Eric tensed, throwing his whole weight on his toes.

"Thr— A-a-ah!"

The word ended in a scream of rage and pain, for, with it, Eric had whipped into action. The poker, hurled with unerring aim, took Dr. Kauterfauld full in the face. He reeled backwards, his automatic exploding as it fell from his hand. In two bounds Eric was down the stairs. The menservants rushed at him. A revolver barked at the top of the staircase and a voice shouted angrily:

"Back—back, you fools! Leave him to me!"

The men hesitated, undecided whether to obey that ringing voice or hurl themselves upon this intruder. Eric had a vision of a grey-clad German officer rushing down the stairs, then, hitting out right and left at the two menservants, he dashed along the corridor into the passageway which led to the small kitchen, where he had found an entry to the house.

He found the door, wrenched at the handle, then his heart sank, for the door was locked. He turned at bay to face the squat barrel of the German officer's revolver.

"Your hands, put them up, you schweinhund!" rapped the man.

Eric's hands crept slowly above his head. He was cornered, and knew that resistance would bring instant death. Had he been armed there might have been a different tale to tell.

At a word from the German officer the menservants grasped Eric, and, with a gun at his head, he was marched back along the corridor to the lighted room which he had first seen from the shrubbery.

It was a large room, well furnished.

In the centre of the floor stood a table littered with papers. By this table stood Doctor Kauterfauld, wiping his lips with a blood-stained handkerchief. Across his sallow face ran an ugly weal, where the poker had left its mark.

Stepping forward, he reached out a hand and tore the Homburg hat from Eric's head. For a moment he stood, staring in incredulous astonishment.

"You?" he snarled. "How do you come to be here?"

"You had better ask them at the Gasthof!" retorted Eric. "They'll tell you!"

Doctor Kauterfauld glared at him, his little deep-set eyes blazing with passion.

"The moment you entered this house by the rear window, we were aware of your presence!" he snarled. "But, verfluchen und blut, I did not think it was you!"

He wheeled to the telephone, and within a minute was speaking to the commandante of the Gasthof.

"The English prisoner—escaped an hour ago? Yes, I know he did. He is here. Why was I not informed? This will cost you your rank, Von Elm. You thought he would be recaptured before morning? Pah! You cursed fool, I will break you for this! Send Schloss with an escort—yes, at once!"

He put down the receiver and seated himself at the table. Eric understood now why Sergeant Schloss had conducted the search of this particular garden with such discretion. It was the last thing that the sergeant had wished Doctor Kauterfauld to hear, that the Englander had escaped. Eric knew that every effort would be made to capture him before the chief of the Secret Service was informed that he was missing. It would have been decidedly more convenient for Schloss to have recaptured Eric and conveyed him quietly back to the Gasthof, no one being much the wiser about the affair, Doctor Kauterfauld least of all.

Tentatively, the doctor fingered the weal on his face, his eyes fixed on Eric in a sombre gaze. For a long minute he did not speak, and when he did his voice was cold and emotionless.

"Why did you attempt to escape, Eric Milvain?" he asked.

Eric shrugged his shoulders.

"It was that or a firing party for me at dawn," he replied.

"And you feared that firing party—yes?"

Eric glanced at the man sharply. The question had been asked in an almost casual tone, but the very casualness of it aroused the boy's suspicions. He was certain that the doctor was sounding him, as to whether he had any other

motive for escaping. Such a motive as obtaining the plans, for instance.

"It is not pleasant to die!" he replied.

"And so you attempted to escape? It was ill luck for you that you entered this house."

"Yes," replied Eric bitterly, "when you were in it!"

Dr. Kauterfauld smiled mirthlessly.

"But I was not in it," he replied.

"Unfortunately for you, you were not aware that every house on this side of the street has been taken over by the military. I stay here whilst I am in Karlsrue, and for certain reasons—my personal safety is one—certain houses are connected to each other by underground passages which were built primarily for refuge from the bombs of your air squadrons. Hauptmann Von Radel—he indicated the German officer who was standing erect by the table—"sent word to me, three doors away, that a stranger was in this house. I came to investigate. You could never have escaped, for the house is surrounded!"

"But no one saw me come in," retorted Eric.

"We have alarms fixed, because—"

The speaker shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, that has nothing to do with you!"

"You're not in fear of assassination by one of your own countrymen, are you?" inquired Eric quietly.

With an oath, Dr. Kauterfauld leapt to his feet, his face livid.

"What do you mean, you dog?" he screamed. "I will have you flogged for such insolence, you impertinent whelp!"

He broke off, almost choking with passion, but Eric had read an affirmative to the question he had asked the man.

There came a heavy knock on the front door, and Von Radel spoke crisply:

"The escort, sir!"

"Then admit them!" snarled the other.

Von Radel saluted smartly and left the room. In a minute he was back, Sergeant Schloss and the escort at his heels.

"So, Schloss, you lost your prisoner, the Englander, and I have found him!"

There was a cutting note in Dr. Kauterfauld's voice.

Sergeant Schloss saluted, a flush on his heavy countenance, and something approaching fear in his eyes.

"The prisoner escaped, sir. We did not think it necessary to trouble you till it was certain that he had won clear from the city, sir," he replied.

"Did you not, Schloss? Did you not, now?" said the doctor softly; then in a

flash his mood changed. "Look, you devil, you careless pig!" he roared. "Look at my face and—"

He leant forward and, snatching the whip the sergeant carried in his belt, he brought the knotted thong whistling through the air.

Thwack!

It wrapped itself cruelly round the face of Schloss. Like magic a red weal sprang into being, but Schloss stood stiff as a ramrod, his attitude one of graven immobility. Ah, what discipline was there—discipline engendered of the rule of blood and iron!

"That will teach you, you dog!" snapped the doctor, and he turned slowly to Eric.

His lips curled into a smile so bleak, so utterly lacking in mirth, that it was but a grimace. Slowly, deliberately he ran the thong through his fingers.

"Eric Milvain," he said softly, "what you did to me I am about to do to you. But the mark I will leave you will carry to your grave years hence—were you to live. My score against you is a heavy one, and now some payment I will take!"

He leapt forward, the thong of the whip whistling through the air.

The two men holding Eric ducked to avoid the biting thong. It took Eric full across the neck and shoulders. The agony of the thing gave him a strength which was almost berserk. He wrenched himself from their grasp and, leaping forward, endeavoured to grapple with Dr. Kauterfauld.

But Schloss whipped into action. He thrust out a booted foot and, as Eric stumbled, swung a fist as hard as iron. Eric reeled, striving desperately to regain his balance. But Schloss was on him again. A savage smash on the temple sent Eric down, half-dazed and physically sick.

He was dimly aware of Dr. Kauterfauld rapping out an order, then rough hands seized him and he was dragged to his feet.

"Take him away!" ordered the doctor. "Schloss, bid your escort wait with the prisoner outside! I wish to speak to you!"

For a moment his eyes met Eric's, and there was a certain amusement in their depths. Half-dazed though Eric was, the look in the doctor's eyes puzzled him. An angry, swearing Kauterfauld he could have understood. Even an icy Kauterfauld. But the man seemed, in that moment, almost humanly genial, and Eric wondered why.

(Have you ever read a more thrilling yarn than this, chums? Why, of course you haven't. But it's only a taste of what's to come. Just watch out for next week's instalment.)

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