

Startling Scenes
at Greyfriars . . .

Brutal Attack On Form Master . . . Assailant Escapes!

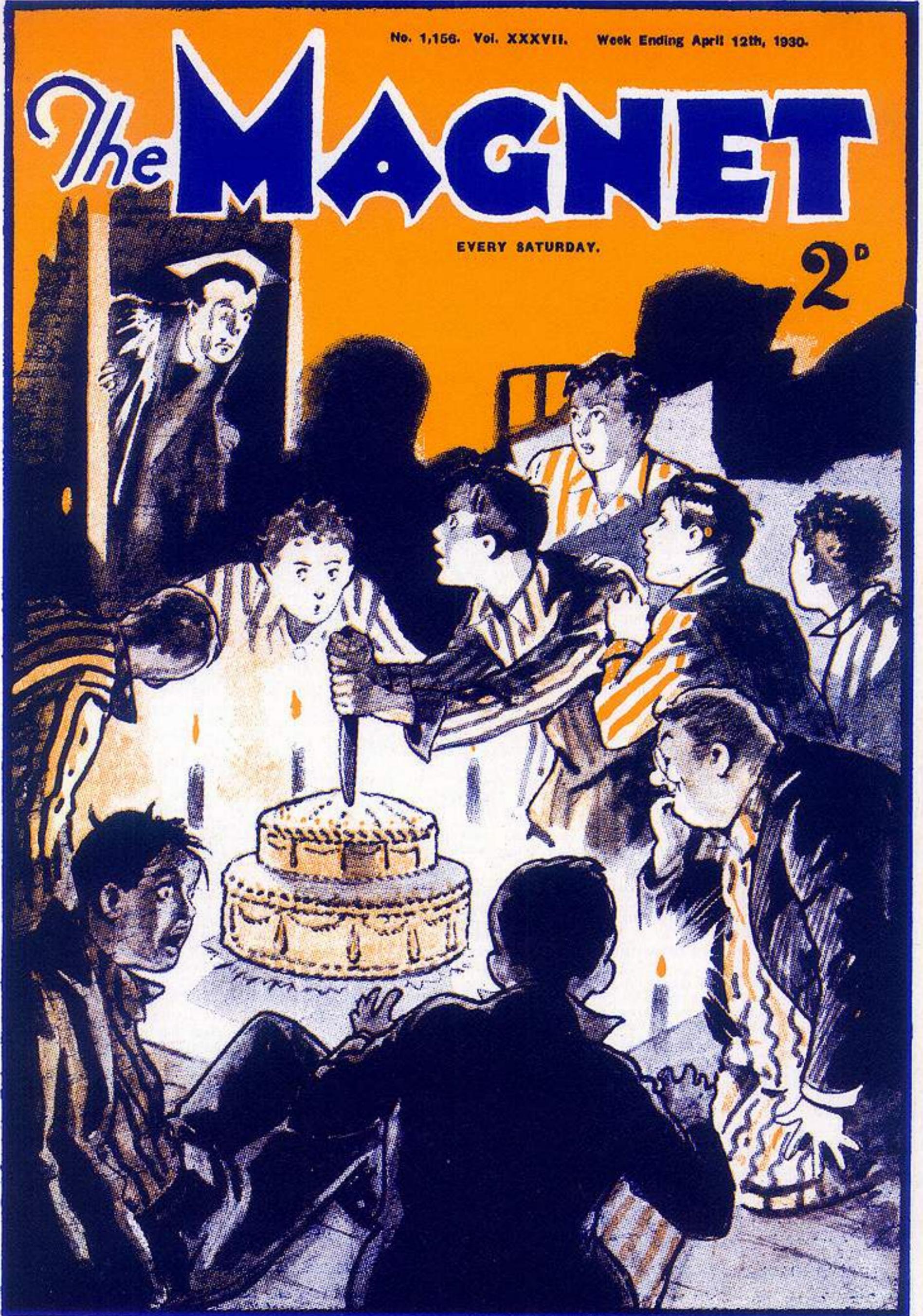
(Full Story Inside.)

No. 1,156. Vol. XXXVII. Week Ending April 12th, 1930.

The MAGNET

EVERY SATURDAY.

2^D



THE MIDNIGHT FEASTERS!

One of the many incidents from "Who Hacked Hacker?"—this week's powerful and dramatic story of Harry Wharton & Co.



Come Into the Office, Boys!

Always glad to hear from you, chums, so drop me a line to the following address: The Editor, The "Magnet" Library, The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

LADIES first, this week, you fellows! I've had a long and interesting letter from Marjorie L., of Blackpool, and I'm going to attend to it before doing anything else. Marjorie's been reading the MAGNET for nine years, and still finds our stories every bit as interesting as when she first began to take in the old paper. In fact, she says so many nice things about this little journal of ours that I must ask you to

'SCUSE MY BLUSHES!

She also has one or two suggestions to make, and I may inform her that I have made a note of them all. As you know, I am always pleased to receive suggestions from readers, for I cannot sufficiently stress the point that I want you all to consider the MAGNET as your very own paper. Marjorie has some questions to ask, too, so here goes.

I am sorry to tell her that many of the back numbers she requires to complete her set are "O. P.," which, in journalistic language, means "Out of print." Issues of the MAGNET and the "Schoolboys' Own Library" can generally be obtained as far as three months back by applying to our Back Number Dept., Bear Alley, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. The ordinary cost of the issues required should be sent, together with sufficient stamps to cover the postage.

In reply to her other queries: A Queen Anne shilling is worth about 2s. nowadays, if it is in good condition. A George IV shilling is just worth its face value—one shilling!

Don't hesitate to write to me again, Marjorie. I like hearing from all my readers.

THE next letter this week comes from J. L. Clifton, of London, W.1. He wants to know something about

THE MOST PROLIFIC FICTION WRITER

of a bygone era. This was Alexandre Dumas, who was something of a character in literature. In fact, no one knows how many books he wrote, because he had a habit of employing other writers to write his books for him, and then he had them published under his own name. The result was that there are so many books ascribed to him that I can't possibly give my reader the list for which he asks. It would take up all my chat—and then some!

But the first of the books dealing with "The Three Musketeers" is the volume of that name. Most editions of it give a list of the sequels to it, and therefore, if my chum wants to read Dumas, I suggest he starts off with that book first.

R. W. Whittaker, of Rishton, Lanes., asks me a question concerning

CURIOUS WORDS.

Unfortunately, he wants to know the derivation of certain words which I find it impossible to trace. They are not to be found in dictionaries—not even in slang dictionaries! I can only conclude that they are slang words of local circulation only, and are possibly contractions of others.

Before answering any more queries, let's have a chuckle at the following yarn which has been sent in by John Farnan, of 1, Dryden Terrace, Ballinlough Road, Cork, Ireland. He's been awarded one of this week's penknives for it.



Teacher: "What is a cannibal, Tommy?"

Tommy: "Don't know, teacher."

Teacher: "Well, if you were to eat your mother

and father what would you be?"

Tommy: "An orphan, miss."



I expect most of my readers have heard of the

MUTINY OF THE BOUNTY.

It's interesting because it took place 141 years ago this Monday. The Bounty was an armed ship, and the mutineers put their captain and nineteen men into an open boat, and these twenty men travelled nearly 4,000 miles before they reached land in June. Some of the mutineers were rounded up and tried, and three of them were executed. A number of them, however, vanished mysteriously, and it was not until twenty-five years later that

AN AMAZING SEQUEL

was brought to light. A ship nearing Pitcairn Island was hailed by a swarthy youth in the English language—and when investigations were made, it was discovered that some of the mutineers from the Bounty had settled there, married native wives, and established a well-conducted community under the rule of Adams, the principal mutineer.

The little community prospered, and after a while the island was too small for them. The British Government, therefore, took most of them to Norfolk Island, and stocked the island with sheep, cattle, horses, and stores. Some of the inhabitants remained on Pitcairn Island, and the result of the mutiny of the Bounty was to add two more inhabited islands to the British Empire.

THIS week is also an interesting one in English history, for on April 11th, 1713, Gibraltar was ceded to us by the treaty of Utrecht, and ever since we have guarded this important gate to the Mediterranean. April 12th is another glorious anniversary, for it was on that day, in the year 1782 that Admiral Rodney achieved his greatest victory against the French. He encountered the French Fleet off the West Indies, captured five ships of the line, and sent the French admiral back to England as a prisoner. He received a peerage for this splendid victory.

Goah! I must be getting long-winded in my old age! I've quite forgotten to let you have the usual prize-winning limerick this week. Well, here it is, and Eric C. Wright, of Gainsborough Lodge, Bishop's Hill, Ipswich, gets a pocket wallet for it.

The MAGNET gets sounder and sounder,
While Bunter gets rounder and rounder.
But the fellow I've found
Suits me down to the ground,
I'm bound to admit is the "Bounder."

I ran across a fellow the other day who would have interested my readers. He had

ESCAPED FROM THE FOREIGN LEGION

and had lots of things to tell me about life out in Algeria. What he told me bore out the truth of the statements made by George E. Rochester in our fine serial. The life was terrible, and the non-commissioned officers in many cases were brutal. He managed to give the impression that he was perfectly content with life in the Legion, however, and, after a considerable time he found himself drafted to Oran. He waited his chance—until a British ship entered the harbour, and then he cut for it.

He was pursued, and would have been captured, had it not been for a couple of Australians, who hid him on the ship. Then, when the vessel was safely out of French waters, he emerged, and worked his passage back to England. He says wild horses wouldn't drag him back to Algeria—which is not surprising, because, when a deserter from the Legion is recaptured—well, the fat's in the fire!

Space being rather short now, chums, I must make the acquaintance of the Black Book.

Let me tell you first and foremost that there's a treat in store for you next week. Frank Richards has turned out a yarn that you'll simply revel in. It's entitled:

"THE MYSTERY OF THE SILVER BOX!"

The Famous Five and their inimitable creator, Frank Richards, are at the top of their form.

"FOR THE GLORY OF FRANCE!"

will also hold you enthralled, while William Wibley's "Talkie" deals with

"COLLEGE JAYS!"

and, as usual, will make you wish it was twice as long.

Our usual short features by the Grey friars rhymester and "Old Ref" will complete this bumper programme.

YOUR EDITOR.

Send along your Joke or your Gregfriers Limerick—or both—and win our useful prizes of leather pocket wallets and Sheffield steel penknives. All efforts to be sent to: c/o "Magnet," 5, Carmelite Street, London, E.C.4 (Comp.).



Who Hacked Hacker?

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Bunter, Too!

"**H**E, he, he!" Harry Wharton & Co. jumped.

That unmusical cackination, suddenly heard in the silence and darkness of the Remove dormitory, was rather startling.

It was ten o'clock.

The Remove had been in bed half an hour; at half-past nine Wingate of the Sixth had seen the lights out, and left them to slumber. By ten the whole of the Lower Fourth should have been safe and sound in the arms of Morpheus.

But in the Greyfriars Remove things were not always as they should have been.

Most of the fellows were asleep. But five members of the Form had turned quietly out of bed and dressed themselves—partly—in the dark.

The Famous Five were very quiet—very quiet indeed. They slipped on their trousers over their pyjamas, they donned rubber shoes, they pulled on their jackets, almost without a sound. They did not want to wake the other fellows. Still less did they desire a sound to reach the ears of any wary prefect or master who might be making his rounds.

Least likely of all were they to wake Billy Bunter. Even rising-bell did not always wake Bunter. So they were startled and surprised to hear his fat chuckle in the darkness.

"Hallo hallo, hallo! Bunter's awake!" murmured Bob Cherry.

The five juniors peered in the gloom towards Bunter's bed.

Bunter was sitting up.

He jammed his big spectacles on his fat little nose, and blinked at the shadowy forms of the five.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"He, he, he!"

"What are you cackling about, you fat frog?" hissed Johnny Bull.

"You're breaking dorm bounds!" said Bunter. "Think I don't know? I haven't been asleep."

"Why haven't you, fathoad?" demanded Nugent.

"He, he, he!"

"Shall I bolster him, you men?" asked Bob Cherry.

"I'm coming!" exclaimed Bunter. "Hobson forgot to ask me, but I'm sure he'll be glad to see me along with you fellows. He said you could bring your friends, Wharton."

"How do you know what Hobson said, you podgy worm?"

"Ho, he, he!"

"Hobby forgot there was a keyhole to Study No. 1 when he asked us to his spread," remarked Nugent.

"Oh, really, Nugent! If you think I'd listen at a keyhole—"

"Get back to bed, you fat chump!" said Harry Wharton. "You're not in this picture. Come on, you men!"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Scat!"

There was a sound of the dormitory door opening softly. A few moments and it closed again as softly.

"I say, you fellows!" squeaked Bunter.

But answer there came none! The Famous Five were gone.

"Beasts!" hooted Bunter.

A sleepy voice came from Peter Todd's bed:

"What's that thumping row? Shut up, Bunter!"

"Oh, really, Toddy—"

"Shut up, you ass, and let a fellow sleep!" said Toddy.

Several of the Remove fellows had awakened now, and they peered round in the gloom.

"Who's that up?" asked Vernon-Smith.

"I guess it's Bunter!" grunted Fisher T. Fish. "Can't some guy chuck a pillow at him?"

"I say, you fellows—"

"What's this game?" asked Skinner.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,156.

Somebody has HACKED HACKER'S SHIN

brutally—horribly—dreadfully—and vanished without leaving a clue. Fisher T. Fish says he's not the culprit, and Bunter swears he knows nothing about it.

WHO DID IT, THEN?

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Shut up, you fat chump! You'll wake the whole Form!" said Harry Wharton. "What the thump did you stay awake for?"

"I'm coming!"

"Go to sleep, ass!"

"Wait a minute while I find my trucks!" Bunter rolled out of bed.

"Look here, you fat ass!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "Get back to bed, and don't be a silly ass!"

"I won't keep you a minute," answered Bunter, unheeding, groping in the gloom for his clothes.

"You won't keep us at all, you fat villain!" growled Johnny Bull.

"I say, you fellows, wait for me.

sitting up. "What are you waking the dorm for, you dummy?"

"I say, there's a spread in the Shell dorm," said Bunter. "Hobson asked Wharton and his friends and they've gone. Hobson's got a cake—one of those big cakes from Chunkley's. The beasts wouldn't wait for me. I'll take you with me, if you like, Skinner."

"Did Hobson ask you?" grinned Skinner.

"He forgot—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But it's all right," said Bunter. "Of course, he'll be glad to see me. Besides, they can't kick up a row; it might bring Hacker to the dorm. I'm going. Come with me, Toddy?"

"Fathead!"

"Well, I don't want to go along that dark passage alone," said Bunter. "Not that I'm nervous, of course; but—"

"Shut up!"

"Like to come, Smithy?"

"I'd like to go to sleep," answered the Bounder, "and if you don't shut up I'll shy a pillow at you!"

"Oh, really, Smithy—"

Whiz!

"Whhhhhooooop!" howled Bunter, as the Bounder suited the action to the word.

Smithy's aim was quite good, in spite of the gloom. The pillow caught Bunter on his fat features, and hurled him across his bed. There was a bump and a howl as he landed there.

"Ow! Yooop! Oh, you beast!" roared Bunter.

"You fat chump!" exclaimed Squiff. "You'll have Quelch or a prefect up here if you kick up that row."

"Yow-ow-ow!"

Bunter rolled off the bed.

"Give me that pillow back!" grinned the Bounder.

"I'm jolly well going to!" exclaimed the fat junior vengefully. And he grasped the pillow in both hands, and hurled it.

Bunter's aim was not quite so good as Smithy's in the gloom. The pillow missed the Bounder by a yard.

But every bullet has its billet, and the same rule applies to pillows. The missile swept on its way, and encountered the sharp features of Fisher T. Fish, who was sitting up in bed. The shock took the Transatlantic junior quite by surprise. There was a fiendish howl from Fisher Tarleton Fish as he rolled over the side of his bed.

"Yarooop! Wake snakes! Jerusalem crickets, what's that? Why, I—I—I guess I'll slaughter you! I'll sure make potato-scrappings of you! I—I—I'll—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Fisher T. Fish scrambled up. He grabbed the pillow, and started to look for Bunter. Bunter started for the door.

This time the Remove dormitory door did not open softly or close softly. It opened noisily, and closed with a slam.

Bunter was gone.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Toddy. "If there's any Beak about, he will have heard that!"

"Jumping snakes! I guess I'll spifficate that slab-sided guy when he comes back!" growled Fisher T. Fish.

"Cave!" murmured Mark Linley.

There was a footstep in the corridor without.

Fisher T. Fish bolted back into bed. Every other fellow settled down and closed his eyes. If it was Mr. Quelch, their respected Form master, the Remove did not want to be found awake.

"My hat!" murmured the Bounder.

"If it's Quelch, there'll be trouble— Six fellows out of the dorm—"

"Quiet!"

The Remove listened breathlessly.

The footsteps passed the dormitory door. Evidently they did not belong to Mr. Quelch, or he would have opened the door and investigated. A prefect, probably, would have done the same. Apparently it was the master of some other Form. The footsteps died away.

"All serene!" murmured Skinner.

"My hat! If it's Hacker—" murmured Vernon-Smith.

"Phew!"

The Remove fellows did not settle down to sleep now. They sat up and listened for what was to follow.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

No Feast!

"TROT in, old beans!" said James Hobson.

He spoke in a soft whisper as the door of the Shell dormitory opened, and Harry Wharton & Co. appeared.

The Famous Five entered quickly, and Bob Cherry closed the door.

There was a glimmer of candlelight in the Shell dormitory. All the Shell were out of bed.

A feast was toward. On Hobson's bed was a large, cardboard box, and in the large box reposed a large cake.

It was not only a large cake, it was a luscious cake, a really attractive cake. It was a cake that was worth turning out of bed for.

Evidently the Shell thought so, for they were all out of bed. And the Famous Five thought so, as they had taken the risk of breaking dorm bounds to come to the nocturnal feast.

They were not always on such friendly terms with the Shell. But Hobby, in the hospitality of his heart, had invited them, and they had come. Dormitory spreads were not frequent at Greyfriars; they were rather a survival of an ancient custom, chiefly attractive because they were forbidden. It was considered rather daring and a tremendous lark to hold a feast after lights out. It was a case of lines all round, and perhaps lickings, if they were discovered. The risk added to the enjoyment.

"Here we are, old bean," said Bob Cherry cheerfully.

"The herefulness is terrific, my esteemed and absurd Hobson," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Hobson grinned.

"All serene!" he said. "We're ready. Anybody got a pocket-knife?"

"Here you are!" said Hoskins of the Shell.

"Good!" said Hobson. "Spread a blanket out, chaps, and gather round!"

The improvised tablecloth was hastily supplied, and the cake placed in the centre of it.

"My hat! That's some cake!" said Johnny Bull admiringly.

"Not bad—what?" said Hobson proudly. "That cake hasn't been seen, you know. I fancy Hacker wouldn't have passed it. We smuggled it in. No end of trouble. But it was worth it."

"What-ho!" said Frank Nugent.

"The worthfulness was preposterous," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

James Hobson opened the pocket-knife. He was about to cut the cake, when he gave a sudden jump.

The door of the Shell dormitory opened again. Every eye turned on it in alarm. Mr. Hacker, the master of the Shell, was well known to be a wary

bird. That, of course, added to the glory of the exploit in bringing off a dormitory spread without discovery. If it was Hacker—

"I say, you fellows—"

Hobson gasped with relief.

It was not Hacker, the master of the Shell. It was William George Bunter of the Remove.

"You fat frog!" gasped Hobson.

"You made me jump."

"Get out, Bunter!" growled Stewart of the Shell.

Bunter did not get out. He got in.

"I thought I'd come, old beans," he said. "I knew you'd be glad to see me, Hobby, old chap."

"What on earth put that idea into your head?" asked Hobson.

"Oh, really, old fellow—"

"You fat villain—" began Bob Cherry wrathfully.

"I say, Cherry, don't yell!" said Bunter. "You'll bring a master or a prefect here. Remember you've got a voice like a foghorn."

Bob Cherry breathed hard.

"Look here, get out, Bunter!" said Hobson.

"Shan't!"

"What?" ejaculated the captain of the Shell.

"Shan't!" repeated Bunter.

"Why, I'll jolly well scrag you!" exclaimed Hobson, in astonishment and wrath.

Defiance from Billy Bunter was both unexpected and exasperating.

In ordinary circumstances the Owl of the Remove certainly would not have ventured to provoke the wrath of James Hobson. But the circumstances were not ordinary. Bunter held the trump card.

"Scrag away!" said Bunter undauntedly. "I don't mind mopping up the dorm with you, Hobson."

"Why, you—you—you—I—I—I'll—" gasped the astonished Hobson, making a stride towards the Owl of the Remove.

"Hold on!" ejaculated Hoskins hurriedly. "Don't make a row, Hobby. If there's a row—"

"We don't want Hacker here," said Carr. "That fat villain knows that."

"He, he, he!"

Hobson paused. He was disposed to strew William George Bunter in small pieces all over the dormitory. But it was evident that the process could not have been carried out without considerable noise from Bunter, which would have disastrous effects.

"Well, get on with it," grinned Bunter.

"My hat! I—I—I—" stuttered Hobson.

"Look here, Bunter, you fat rotter—" began Johnny Bull sulphurously.

"Shut up, Bull!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"Shut up! You talk too much."

"Why I—I—I—" gasped Johnny Bull.

"My esteemed and idiotic Bunter, I—"

"You shut up, too, Inky! I don't want any cheek 'rom a nigger," said Bunter. "Look here, Hobson, I've come here in a friendly way. If you don't want to be friendly—"

"Look here, Bunter—" began Wharton.

"Shut up, Wharton!"

"What did you silly asses let Bunter know about it for?" demanded Hobson. "We didn't. The fat villain listened at the keyhole—"

"Oh, cally, Wharton! I happened to stop near Study No. 1—to pick up a pin, and I happened to hear—"

"Never mind what you happened to hear, you fat toad!" said Wharton.



Bob Cherry came round the corner of Masters' passage like a racing-car and almost bumped into Loder. "What's up?" demanded the angry Sixth-Former. "I—I—" "Take fifty lines, Cherry!"

"Now you're here I suppose we shall have to put up with you. Another word, mind, and I'll—"

"Yes, dry up, Bunter," said Hoskins. "You'll rouse the whole House before we've had a chance to cut the cake."

Satisfied at being allowed to take part in the feast, the Owl of the Remove did not say another word.

Hobson was about to cut the cake when he was interrupted for the second time.

"Hark!" ejaculated Hoskins suddenly.

It was a footstep.

"Oh crikey!" groaned Hobson. "That's Hacker! I know his beetle-crushers! We're done!"

"Oh, my hat!"

The heavy tread came up the corridor to the dormitory door. Some of the Shell leaped back to their beds. But there was little time for that. The door opened.

All eyes turned to the doorway. This time there was ground for alarm. The frowning face of Mr. Hacker, the master of the Shell, was revealed by the glimmer of candle-ends.

Hobson, standing frozen, blinked at his Form master. The other fellows stared at him, dumb. There was a moment of awful silence.

Mr. Hacker switched on the light. Sudden illumination flooded the dormitory. It revealed the cake half the Shell out of bed, and six members of the Remove, to the stern eyes of Horace Hacker.

He stepped in.

"What does this mean, Hobson?" he asked.

It was an utterly superfluous question. Mr. Hacker could not possibly fail to be aware what it meant.

"Oh dear!" mumbled Billy Bunter.

Mr. Hacker's severe eyes fixed on the Removees.

"What are you boys doing out of your dormitory?" he inquired.

"H'm!"

"I shall not deal with you, as you do not belong to my Form" said the master of the Shell. "I shall send you back to your dormitory, and report your conduct to Mr. Quelch in the morning."

"Ow!" groaned Billy Bunter.

"As for you, Hobson—"

"Oh dear!" mumbled Hobson dispiritedly.

"You were about, I presume, to indulge in a forbidden, a gluttonous, and nocturnal feast!" said Mr. Hacker.

"H'm!"

"To whom does that cake belong?"

"Me, sir!" mumbled Hobson.

"Very well. You will come to my study after prayers in the morning, Hobson, and I shall administer punishment!"

"Oh crikey!"

"What? What did you say, Hobson?"

"I—I mean — yes, sir!" gasped Hobson.

"Every other boy here," said Mr. Hacker, "will take a hundred lines of Virgil. The cake will be confiscated."

"Oh!"

That was the unkindest cut of all. Lines and lickings the Shell fellows could have tolerated more easily than that. Mr. Hacker was a severe gentleman, and had a tart temper, and his Form were not unused to lines and lickings. But that gorgeous cake, once gone, was gone for ever.

With dispirited eyes, the Shell watched Mr. Hacker close the card-board box and lift it from Hobson's bed.

Their gaze followed it mournfully as he carried it to the door. At the door he stopped.

"You Remove boys will go back to your dormitory!" he said.

Harry Wharton & Co., with glum faces, filed out, under the glinting eye of Horaco Hacker. Billy Bunter rolled dismally after them.

The Shell fellows turned in gloomily. Mr. Hacker extinguished the light and closed the door—leaving his Form to such repose as they felt in a mood for. Then he departed—with the cake!

Harry Wharton & Co. trailed home to their dormitory. A dozen voices greeted them as they came in.

"Spotted?"

"Caught?"

"Was it Hacker?"

"It was Hacker, and we're spotted and caught!" said Harry Wharton dismally. "Blessed if I know why he butted in! I suppose he heard something—"

"I fancy he heard Bunter!" grinned Vernon-Smith. "Bunter was making row enough to wake the House!"

"Oh, really, Smithy—"

"That fat villain, of course!" hissed Johnny Bull. "We're all up for a licking in the morning!"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Scrag him!" said Bob Cherry.

"I say, you fellows, I'm jolly well not going to be licked for this," said Bunter. "It was all your fault! I expect you to own up to Quelch that it was all your fault! You're bound to tell Quelch that you led me into this, and—"

"Wait till I get a bolster!" breathed Bob Cherry.

"Eh? What do you want a bolster for?"

"You'll see in a minute."

"I say, if you're going to be a beast, Cherry— Yooop! Yarooop! Help! Fire! Yoooooop!"

Five fellows had grabbed bolsters or

pillows. With those weapons they proceeded to deal faithfully with the Owl of the Remove. They swiped him right, and they swiped him left, and they swiped him all over. A breathless Bunter rolled and gasped and gurgled on the floor of the Remove dormitory. Not till they were breathless themselves did the exasperated juniors cease.

Then they went to bed, feeling a little comforted.

But Bunter was not feeling comforted. For quite a long time he sprawled and gurgled and gasped, and when he crawled into bed at last, he was still gasping and gurgling. For the first time in his fat career, William George Bunter repented him that he had butted in at a spread.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Bunter Asks for It!

"PLEASE, sir!" gasped Billy Bunter.

Bunter was in a hurry to speak.

Six juniors stood in a row in Mr. Quelch's study, with the Remove master's stern eyes fixed on them.

It was morning. Not a happy morning for some of the Shell and the Remove at Greyfriars. How Hobson was getting on with Mr. Hacker, the Famous Five did not know. They were not really bothering about that. They were chiefly concerned about how they were to get on with Quelch. Quelch's look was not promising.

He was annoyed. No master liked to receive complaints of his Form from another master. And Hacker, in all probability, had put it rather unpleasantly. Hacker was a tart gentleman. He had a sharp eye, a sharp nose,

and a sharp temper. He was sharp all over. Probably, he had irritated Quelch. Quelch looked irritated. He looked, indeed, as if he were under-studying Roderick Dhu on the occasion when dark lightnings flashed from Roderick's eye.

"Please sir—" gasped Bunter.

"Silence, Bunter!"

"Oh! Yes, sir! I was going to say that—"

"Silence!"

Bunter restrained his eloquence. There was a cane on Mr. Quelch's table, and Bunter did not like the look in Quelch's eye. He was in a hurry to exculpate himself. It was important for Quelch to be made to understand that Bunter was not to blame in any way before he started in with the cane. But Bunter had to wait.

"Wharton!"

"Yes, sir!" said Harry resignedly.

"Mr. Hacker informs me that you six boys were in the Shell dormitory after lights out last night. It appears that you went there to share in a surreptitious feast."

"H'm! Yes, sir."

"Have you any excuse to offer for this serious infraction of the rules of the House, Wharton?"

"No, sir!"

It was futile to explain to Mr. Quelch that a dormitory feed was rather fun. He would not have regarded that as an excuse.

But Hurreo Jamset Ram Singh ventured to speak.

"Perhapsfully, sir, it was due to the absurd thoughtlessness of youth," the Nabob of Bhanipur suggested. "There is an esteemed proverb, sir, that the boyfulness will be boyfulness."

"The rules of the House must be observed," said Mr. Quelch. "As you have no excuse to offer—"

"Please, sir—"

"If you have any excuse, Bunter, you may speak. But be brief!"

"The—the fact is, sir," gasped Bunter. "I'm perfectly innocent, sir! I—I only wanted to explain that I'm perfectly innocent, sir. That's all."

"You were there, Bunter!" snapped Mr. Quelch. "Mr. Hacker has given me the names of all the Remove boys he found in the Shell dormitory."

"But—but the fact is, sir—Wharton will bear me out, sir—won't you old chap?—I wasn't asked to the feed, sir."

"You were present!" boomed Mr. Quelch.

"I—I went after those fellows, sir, to—to remonstrate with them," explained Bunter. "I was going to point out the—the error of their ways. I—I begged them, with tears in my eyes, sir, not to break the rules of the House. Didn't I, you chaps?"

"No, you didn't!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull—"

"Is that all, Bunter?" asked Mr. Quelch, glaring.

"Nunno, sir! The fact is, sir, I didn't know there was a feed on in the Shell dorm, sir! I never heard Hobby ask Wharton, and I never stayed awake to go along with them. I—I was quite surprised when I saw the cake there. Of course, I shouldn't have touched it! N-n-nothing would induce me to join in a surreptitious feast, sir! I—I—I'm too respectful. If Hobson had offered me that cake, sir, I should have refused it with—with scorn!"

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"You need say no more, Bunter!" said Mr. Quelch.



"The Greyfriars Hypnotist"

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"Thank you, sir! M-m-may I go now?"

"You may not!"

"Oh!"

"Wharton, Nugent, Bull, Cherry, and Hurree Singh, you will take two hundred lines each, for leaving your dormitory after lights out," said the Remove master. "You will take two hundred lines, Bunter—but I shall cane you in addition!"

"Oh crikey!"

"Do not utter ridiculous ejaculations in my study, Bunter. You may go," said Mr. Quelch, with a wave of the hand to the Famous Five. "You, Bunter, will bend over that chair."

Mr. Quelch picked up the cane.

Bunter blinked at him in great dismay.

"B-b-but, sir," he stammered, "wh-a-at am I going to be caned for, sir, when I'm perfectly innocent?"

"You are going to be caned for telling untruths, Bunter."

"Oh!"

"Bend over that chair, Bunter!"

"But—but, I say, sir—" gasped Bunter.

Mr. Quelch swished the cane.

"BEND OVER!"

Mr. Quelch uttered the command in a voice resembling that of the Great Huge Bear.

Bunter jumped.

"But—but you ain't caning the other fellows, sir!" gasped Bunter.

"They did not tell untruths, Bunter. I am waiting!" rumbled Mr. Quelch.

"Oh dear!"

Billy Bunter bent over the chair. The Famous Five grinned as they filed out of the study. They had expected a licking all round; but Bunter, happily, had drawn upon himself the keen edge of the Form master's wrath.

Whack, whack, whack!

"Yow-ow-ow!"

The sounds of whacking and the sounds of woe followed the chums of the Remove from the Form master's study.

Whack, whack, whack!

"Whoooooop!"

"You may go, Bunter!"

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!"

Billy Bunter rolled dismally out of the study. Five grinning faces met him in the passage.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Enjoying life?" asked Bob Cherry cheerily.

"Ow, ow!"

Evidently William George Bunter was not enjoying life. He was finding it a burden just then.

"Here's Hobby!" murmured Nugent.

James Hobson came down the passage from Mr. Hacker's study, wriggling. He seemed to be getting into practice as a contortionist.

"Had it bad?" asked Wharton sympathetically.

"Bad?" repeated Hobson in a hollow voice. "Oh crumbs! Oh scissors! I never knew Hacker had so much muscle! Ow!"

"Hard cheese!" said Nugent.

"I—I'm not having any more dormitory feeds!" moaned Hobson. "It ain't good enough! Ow! Wow!"

"The sympathise is terrific, my esteemed Hobson."

Hobby wriggled painfully.

"And he's got the cake!" he said. "Just as if he wanted to tantalize a fellow, you know! There it was in the box on his table!"

"I dare say he's going to scoff it himself!" groaned Bunter. "I say, you fellows, what about getting hold of that cake after Hacker's gone out?"

"Not me!" said Hobson. "I've had enough! I've had too much! Ow! You can bag it if you like!"

"I was thinking that one of these fellows might—"

"It's rather a shame to lose the cake," said Bob. "If Hacker leaves it in his study—"

"Too jolly risky!" said Nugent.

Hobson grinned dismally.

"I'll give that cake to any fellow that can bag it," he said. "I'd like somebody to bag it. Not me, though! Hacker's too ferocious!"

And Hobson of the Shell wriggled on his dismal way.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Go and eat coke!"

"Beast! I say, after getting me into a row like this and getting me a licking, I think it's up to you fellows," said Bunter. "Look here, Hacker will go out soon, and then you can nip into the study and bag the cake. I'll keep cave in the passage. I say, you fellows, don't walk away while a fellow's talking to you. I say—Beasts!"

Billy Bunter was left to waste his sweetness—or otherwise—on the desert air.

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which has been sent in by John K. Laughlin, of 35, Colliery Street, Chorley, Lancs, and which well deserves the pocket wallet which has been sent on to him:

There's a writer we all know
by name,
We hope he will always have
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He writes of Greyfriars.
"Frank Richards' his name,"
you'll exclaim.

Don't wait for others to step in
and win these useful prizes. Com-
pile a limerick YOURSELF and
send it in!

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

No Luck!

HORACE HACKER frowned.

He was coming out of his study, after class that afternoon, when he sighted the fat face and glimmering spectacles of Billy Bunter in Masters' passage.

The sight of Bunter's fascinating features seemed to irritate the master of the Shell.

As a rule, he did not see much of Bunter—naturally, as the fat junior was not in his Form. But that day he had seen much of him.

In morning break Hacker had gone to his study and found Bunter just outside the door. Bunter had faded away rapidly as he approached.

That was the first meeting. But shortly after third school Hacker had again found the Owl of the Remove haunting the neighbourhood of his study. Again Bunter had vanished at the sight of him, like a ghost at cock-crow.

Yet again after dinner he had happened on Bunter there, and yet once more the Owl of the Remove had promptly disappeared.

Now, for the fourth time, as Hacker came out of his study to go along to Masters' Common-room to tea, he found Bunter in the passage.

Possibly Mr. Hacker was able to put two and two together, and connected the fascination his study seemed to

have for Bunter with the confiscated cake that was still on his table.

He called to the fat junior sharply:

"Bunter!"

Bunter heard, but he heeded not. He vanished round the nearest corner.

Mr. Hacker grunted.

The master of the Shell was a stern disciplinarian. He could hardly believe that any junior would have the unexampled impudence to attempt to annex a cake that had been confiscated. But Billy Bunter's proceedings were undoubtedly suspicious.

He walked down the passage. At the end he glanced back.

A fat face and a large pair of spectacles glimmered round the corner where Bunter had disappeared.

Then Mr. Hacker felt quite certain.

He walked on towards Common-room; but he walked slowly. He allowed a few minutes to elapse, and then he turned and walked quietly but swiftly back to his study.

The door of that study was now open. Mr. Hacker had left it shut.

He pushed it wider open.

As he fully expected, Billy Bunter was in the study. Obviously he had been watching to see the master of the Shell safe off to tea. Now he fancied that the coast was clear, and, like the eagle, he had made his swoop.

His fat hands were on the big cardboard box containing Hobson's cake. He was in the act of lifting it from the table as Mr. Hacker looked in at the doorway.

"Bunter!"

Crash!

The box dropped from Bunter's startled hands. He spun round towards the door in utter dismay. His little round eyes almost bulged through his big round spectacles at the sight of the sharp-featured face of the master of the Shell.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

"What are you doing here, Bunter?" asked Hacker grimly.

"N-n-nothing, sir."

"You were, I think, about to abstract that cake!"

"Oh, no, sir!" gasped Bunter. "Not at all, sir! I—I wouldn't!"

"Then what are you doing in my study?"

"I—I—I—"

"Well?" rumbled Hacker.

"I—I—I—" stuttered Bunter.

For once, the Owl of the Remove was hopelessly at a loss. Generally, a fabrication was ready to leap to Bunter's lips. He was seldom—very seldom—at a loss for one. But now his inventive powers failed him. He simply could not think of a whopper with any probability about it. He could only blink in dismay at the master of the Shell and stutter.

"Come with me!" said Hacker grimly.

He dropped his hand on Bunter's fat shoulder.

"I—I—I—" stuttered Bunter.

"Come!"

Mr. Hacker walked Bunter out of the room and along the passage to Mr. Quelch's study. The Remove master was just coming out, heading for the Common-room. He looked in surprise at Bunter and the master of the Shell.

"What—" began Mr. Quelch.

"I caught this Remove boy, sir, in the act of attempting to purloin a confiscated cake from my study, sir," said Hacker, in a deep voice. "I have brought him to you, sir, to be dealt with. I leave him in your hands, sir."

Hacker released Bunter's fat shoulder and departed.

Mr. Quelch frowned portentously.

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This was the second complaint he had received from Hacker in one day, and he disliked complaints from Hacker.

"Bunter! Step into my study."

"I—I—I—"

"Step into my study."

Mr. Quelch followed the hapless Owl of the Remove into the room. He picked up his cane.

Bunter had been through it once that morning. Now history repeated itself, and the last state of William George Bunter was worse than his first.

"Let that be a warning to you, Bunter!" said the Remove master, laying down his cane.

"Ow! Ow! Wow!"

"If you should make any further attempt, Bunter, of the same kind, I shall report you to your headmaster for a flogging."

"Ow! wow! wow!"

"Go!"

Bunter went.

Mr. Quelch went to tea in the Common-room feeling that he had done his duty. Billy Bunter rolled away feeling that he had overdone it. He met Fisher T. Fish at the corner of the passage. The American junior stared at him as he came groaning round the corner. It did not occur to Bunter to wonder what Fishy was doing there. His fat mind was too much occupied with his own sufferings.

"Say, bo, you look as if you've had a high old time," remarked Fisher T. Fish. "What's the rumpus?"

"Ow! That beast Quelch—" groaned Bunter. "Ow! That beast Hacker! Ow! The beast made out that I was after Hobson's cake, and the other beast walloped me! Ow! ow!"

"Ohr! Is Hacker on the watch?" asked Fisher T. Fish.

"The beast pretended he was gone, and came back quietly!" groaned Bunter. "Dirty trick, you know! Ow!" Fisher T. Fish grinned.

"Say, you were some gink, to be caught like that!" he remarked.

"Ow! wow!"

Bunter groaned on his way.

Fisher T. Fish looked round the corner and surveyed the Masters' passage with his keen eyes. The passage was deserted.

But Fishy shook his sage head. Fishy had designs on the confiscated cake, but Bunter's fate discouraged him. Hacker might come back quietly a second time, he reflected, and he decided that it was not good enough. Slowly and reluctantly, Fisher T. Fish departed from the spot.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

The Famous Five Take a Hand!

"W E'D ask Hobby!" said Bob Cherry.

"H'm!"

"And it's a ripping cake!"

"And Hacker's a beast!"

"Hear, hear!"

"And we had a measly tea, and we want some supper! It's a topping cake."

"Um!"

The Famous Five were gathered in Study No. 1. Funds were low in that study, and the same financial state obtained in Bob's study and in Johnny Bull's study. The Famous Five had tea'd in Hall that afternoon, the last resource of the hard up. There was no doubt that a study supper would have been grateful and comforting. There was no doubt that Hobby's cake would have come in extremely useful. But—

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There had been much discussion on the subject of that luscious cake.

Hobson of the Shell, no longer its happy possessor, had generously offered it to any fellow that could bag it. It was, so to speak, going begging.

Probably Mr Hacker intended to send it to the house dame to be disposed of, but he had not done so as yet. Shell fellows who had been to the study during the day to see Hacker announced that it was still there on Hacker's table. Some of them declared that Hacker was purposely keeping it on view there, just to tantalize them. But it was more probable that a busy Form master had not yet had time to deal with so trivial a matter. Trivial! as it was to Hacker, it was not trivial to the juniors. Hacker had long passed the age when a luscious cake had a strong appeal. The juniors hadn't.

That gorgeous cake was still there, a free gift from Hobson to any fellow who could get hold of it. Bunter had made an attempt, and failed ignominiously. Fisher T. Fish was turning the matter over in his cute, spry mind, but he had not yet made the plunge. Other fellows, probably were considering what might be done. Bob Cherry's idea, was that the Famous Five should be first in the field.

But four members of the Co. felt dubious.

"Hacker's such a downy bird," said Frank Nugent, shaking his head. "Look how he nabbed Bunter—"

"But he can't sit on that cake permanently, like a jolly old hen hatching chicks," said Bob argumentatively. "And isn't it a shame to waste that lovely cake?"

"That's so," agreed Harry Wharton. "But—"

"The butfulness is terrific," murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"We'd better ask Hobby," said Bob. "There's not one man in the Shell dares to bag that cake from Hacker. It will be one up for the Remove if we bag it, and ask Hobby to supper on his own cake."

"Yes, but—"

"It would be taking a rise out of Hacker, and Hacker's a beast!"

"Yes, but—"

"Look here, it's up to us!" said Bob. "Let's chance it."

"Um!"

The Co. were keen enough on the cake. There was no doubt about that. It was their cake, if they could bag it. But—

"Of course, we should have to be careful," said Bob. "Two of us could go—no need for a crowd. You'd better keep out of it, Wharton, as you're the head of the Form—"

"Rot!" said Wharton promptly. "If anybody goes, I go."

"Well, two of us," said Bob, "and we'll take out the lamp from the electric light so that if Hacker comes in suddenly, he won't be able to turn on the light."

"Good egg!"

"We'll get away by the window," pursued Bob, evidently greatly taken with his idea. "You stand under the window, Wharton, and I'll pass the cake out to you, and then nip after it."

"That's all right!" agreed the captain of the Remove.

"We'll get in again by the Remove box-room. I tell you, it's all right. There's a Masters' meeting in Common-room this evening, and Hacker will be wagging his chin. He won't be thinking about that cake. Why should he?"

The Co. exchanged glances. Bob

Cherry's confidence was producing its effect on his comrades.

"Well, it sounds all right!" admitted Johnny Bull. "But—"

"It's all right!" said Bob. "Nobody will be about—all the fellows at prep, the beaks jawing in Common-room! It will be as easy as falling off a form."

"It's a go!" said Wharton, at last.

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

"Then let's strike the jolly iron while it's hot!" said Bob.

"Let's!"

There was still some lingering dubiety among the Co. But they had agreed that it was a "go," and they did not hesitate. The chums of the Remove left Study No. 1.

Bob Cherry went down the Remove staircase. The other fellows went along in the opposite direction, to the Remove box-room. Wharton slipped out of the window on the leads, and the other three waited there for his return.

Harry Wharton dropped from the leads to the ground, and scudded very cautiously round the school buildings. Not a window in the masters' studies was lighted; all the members of the staff who were not otherwise engaged, were at the Masters' meeting in Common-room. Certainly the moment had been well chosen for the raid.

The captain of the Remove reached the window of Mr. Hacker's study. It was quite dark, like the rest; and he waited under the sill for the window to open, and for Bob Cherry to hand out the plunder. All, so far as Wharton was concerned, had gone well.

Meanwhile, Bob Cherry, within the House, had arrived in Masters' passage. That passage was deserted. Swiftly he traversed it as far as the door of Hacker's study. He opened the door quickly and whipped inside, closing the door after him.

In the darkness of the study, Bob chuckled softly.

It was, as he had said, as easy as falling off a form. At least, it seemed so, as yet.

It was very dark in the study, the curtains being drawn across the window. Bob groped for a chair, mounted on it, and detached the bulb from the electric light suspended from the ceiling. He laid the bulb very carefully on the table. If, by any unfortunate chance, Hacker looked in now, he would not be able to turn on a light, and the raider would escape detection. Hacker had very sharp eyes; but he could not see, like a cat, in the dark.

Having taken that precaution, Bob Cherry groped over the table for the box containing the cake. "Lo very soon found it.

Lifting it from the table, he carried it across to the window, and laid it on a chair there, while he took hold of the curtains to draw them aside.

His hand was on the curtain, when he stopped suddenly, his heart thumping.

The study door opened.

Bob stood quite still.

The door had opened softly; and a footstep was heard in the doorway. Someone, unseen in the darkness, entered the study.

Bob stood like a statue. From the bottom of his heart, he was thankful that he had disconnected the electric light. He was not thinking of opening the window now, and getting away with the cake. He was thinking of getting away himself, somehow. Suppressing his breathing—and rather wishing that he had not, after all, chosen that seemingly propitious

moment for recapturing Hobby's cake, Bob stood in the darkness, wondering what was going to happen.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Two in the Dark!

FISHER T. FISH guessed that it was O.K.

He calculated that it was just pie.

He reckoned that he was sure going to get by with it.

Really, it looked as if Fishy was not out, in his guesses, calculations, and reckonings.

Fisher T. Fish had thought the matter out very carefully. Hobson of the Shell had freely offered that cake to any guy who could annex it from Hacker's study. The cake had cost Hobson fifteen shillings. Fisher T. Fish was not the man to run risks, as a rule. But fifteen shillings was nearly four dollars, in what Fishy called real money. If there was anything in the wide universe for which Fishy would have been prepared to take risks, it was, of course, dollars. Honour and glory could have been offered to Fishy in generous measure without stirring him to action. But dollars were dollars; the beginning and end of all things.

Fishy had no intention of devouring that cake, if he captured it. Still less did he intend whacking it out in a spread with other fellows. Fishy would have "smiled some" at such an idea as that.

Fishy regarded that cake purely from its cash value point of view. There was a ready sale for such commodities in the Remove, at a small reduction below shop price. Three dollars, at least, Fishy calculated that he could get for that cake, once it was safe in his Transatlantic hands. Or by dividing it into sections, and disposing of it piecemeal, he might cinch even four dollars; perhaps a little more. Anyhow, whatever he got for it was sheer profit; and profit was a word that made Fishy thrill.

Like Bob Cherry, he had chosen his moment well—though just a little later.

The fellows at prep; the masters chewing the rag, as Fishy expressed it; nothing to stop Fishy from whipping into the study and annexing the cake, and getting away with it. Fisher T. Fish guessed that it was O.K.

He arrived at the door of Hacker's study, in a deserted passage, entered the study quickly, and closed the door.

All was dark within.

Obviously, it was O.K.

Fisher T. Fish knew that Hacker was in Common-room. There was a chance, but not a probability, that he would come back to his study. Anyhow, Fishy was not going to be there long. Half a minute to get hold of the cake—another half-minute to get away with it—that was all that Fisher T. Fish required.

Certainly it did not occur to him that anyone was in the study. Only Mr. Hacker had a right to be there; and he certainly was not there. That a



Instead of dropping to the ground as he expected, Fisher T. Fish came into contact with a fellow who was standing under the window. "Ow! You clumsy ass, Bob—" It was Wharton's voice!

Remove fellow was standing pressed against the dark curtains at the window, hardly venturing to breathe, was quite unknown to Fishy.

It was equally unknown to Bob Cherry that the newcomer was a Remove junior.

Bob naturally supposed that Hacker had come back.

He was not surprised that the light was not turned on. The light could not be turned on.

He stood quite still, and listened, trying not to breathe.

He could see nothing in the dense darkness; but he could hear a sound of groping.

Fisher T. Fish was groping over the study table in the dark.

The cake was there—six or seven fellows had seen it there, during the day; Fisher T. Fish knew where to find it. Only—it wasn't there!

Fishy breathed hard.

That guik Hacker had moved it he guessed. It was not on the table. Fishy had knocked over several books and an inkpot in the dark. There was a dripping sound of ink. That could not be helped; Fishy did not bother about that! It did not matter. What mattered was, that he could not find the cake.

It was an unexpected obstacle.

It was irritating and disturbing. Fisher T. Fish was in a hurry to go. Every minute that he lingered in the study added to his danger.

Where was that pesky cake?

Fishy dared not think of turning on the light. He thought of striking a match; but he did not venture. A glimmer of light under the door would betray him, if any beak came along the passage. Where the thunder was that pesky cake? It had been moved off the table—but where? In the dense

darkness it was hopeless to think of finding it. Fishy moved across towards the window, to draw the curtains back. There was a clear spring starlight in the quad, and he calculated that that would be enough for his purpose.

Bob Cherry felt a thrill.

He had been trying to visualise the unseen form that groped about the study, considering whether it would be feasible to make a dash for the door and bolt. But it did not seem feasible; and he waited. His impression was that Hacker had found that he couldn't turn on the light, and was groping about for a matchbox. He hoped fervently that he wouldn't find one.

Apparently he didn't; for Bob heard him coming across towards the window.

Either he was going to draw the curtains back to let in the starlight, or else he knew that Bob was there and was going to collar him.

In either case, it was all up with Bob; unless he acted promptly.

Bob acted promptly.

An outstretched hand, reaching to the curtains, touched him; and at the same moment, Bob made a break.

He bounded across towards the door.

Crash!

Bump!

Bob had no intention of running into the unseen Hacker. But in the dark, it couldn't be helped.

He crashed right into the unseen form, and that unseen form went sprawling.

It bumped on the floor, and there was another crash as a chair went flying.

Bob heard a startled gasp.

Even in that thrilling and horrifying moment, Bob was struck by the surprising ease with which Hacker had gone over.

Hacker was a fairly heavy man; and even a sudden rush in the dark should not have up-ended him like that.

But Bob, of course, had no time to think about that surprising circumstance. Hacker—he still supposed that it was Hacker—was up-ended, and sprawling on the floor in company with an overturned chair. A flash of light was hardly quicker in its movements than Bob as he bounded to the door, whipped it open, shut it after him, and tore away down Masters' passage.

He had reason for haste. The attempt to bag a confiscated cake was serious enough. But the up-ending of a Form master was much more terribly serious.

He fairly raced away. He came round the corner of Masters' passage like a racing-car.

"Cherry!"

"Oh!" gasped Bob.

He had almost run into Loder of the Sixth.

"What are you racing about like that for?" demanded Loder.

"I—I—" gasped Bob. "I—I—"

"I suppose you know that juniors are not allowed to race about the House?" asked the prefect.

"Yee-es, Loder! You—you see—"

"Take fifty lines!" said Loder.

"Oh! Yes."

Bob Cherry continued on his way at a more leisurely pace.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Desperate Measures!

"OOOOOOOOH!"

Fisher T. Fish sat up in the darkness of Mr. Hacker's study, and gasped and spluttered. He was bumped, he was breathless, he was decidedly jumpy. Never

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had Fishy been so surprised in his life as he was by that sudden up-ending in Hacker's study.

Something, or somebody—Fishy could hardly guess what—had rushed him over in the darkness, and scudded out of the study, leaving him sprawling.

Somebody, evidently, had been there!

It wasn't Hacker—Hacker couldn't have been hiding in his own study, and assuredly Hacker would not have bumped Fishy over and bolted.

"Ooooooh!" gasped Fishy.

He picked himself up painfully. He had had a shock. He was feeling extremely upset. His head had come into contact with the floor; his elbow with a chair. And he was feeling wet—as if he had sprawled in a puddle.

Certainly there was no puddle in Mr. Hacker's study, but Fishy remembered the inkpot he had upset over the table. He had rolled over in a pool of ink.

"Oh, Jerusalem crickets!" groaned Fisher T. Fish.

He felt very shaken. Who it was that had rushed him over and vanished he had not the faintest idea.

"Great snakes!" muttered Fishy breathlessly. "It was some other guy after the cake—that's the pesky how of it, I guess!"

He realised that it could have been nothing else. And, breathless and damaged as he was, Fisher T. Fish grinned. He realised that the other fellow must have taken him for Hacker in the dark.

Some galoot had got ahead of Fishy, and had been taken by surprise by Fishy's arrival. That was the "how" of it, as Fisher T. Fish expressed it.

Anyhow, whoever he was he was gone now.

Fisher T. Fish pulled himself together. He had had a lot of delay; and delays were dangerous.

The Masters' meeting might break up any time; and if Hacker came back while he was still there—and he realised that he had been a good ten minutes in the study, instead of the single minute he had calculated on.

He reached out to the curtains to pull them aside, to let in the starlight. His hand came in contact with a large cardboard box standing on a chair close to the window.

"I swow!" ejaculated Fisher T. Fish.

It was the box of which he was in search.

There was no doubt of it; as he bent over it a luscious aroma of the cake within tickled his nostrils. There was no need to pull back the curtains now. The prize was in his hands! Probably the guy whom he had surprised in the study had placed it there, perhaps intending to scoot by the window.

Anyhow, Fisher T. Fish had it now.

His grasp closed on the box. He made a step towards the door. Then he suddenly stopped, his heart thumping.

There was a footstep without, and the door handle turned.

Fisher T. Fish stood frozen to the floor.

The door opened.

If it was Hacker—

There was a light in the passage at a distance. Only a dim glimmer came in at the opened doorway.

For an instant Fishy hoped that it might be only another fellow after the cake.

The next instant he knew that it wasn't.

Click!

A hand had pressed the electric switch just within the doorway.

Fishy shuddered with apprehension

of a sudden flood of light that would have revealed him standing there with the cake in his hands.

To his amazement, the light did not come on.

He was sure he heard the switch click, but there was no response from the electric light overhead.

Darkness still reigned.

There was an ejaculation of annoyance.

"Pish!"

It was Hacker's voice.

The electric switch clicked again, more loudly, twice. Still the light did not come on. That surprised both Fishy and Mr. Hacker; but it really was not surprising, as the bulb had been removed and was lying on the table. Still, Fishy and Hacker were unaware of that.

"Pish!" repeated Hacker.

His voice did not sound good-tempered.

As a matter of fact, Mr. Hacker was not good-tempered. He had left the Masters' meeting in Common-room earlier than he had intended, owing to the fact that Prout, the master of the Fifth, had taken the bit between his teeth, so to speak, and insisted upon doing all the talking.

Hacker had had several thoughtful and well-considered observations to make, but Prout did not give him a chance to get a single one of them off. Prout was, so to speak, first in and not out. Hacker, fed-up with the prosy Prout, retired indignantly from the meeting.

So he was not in the best of tempers when he got back to his study. And his irritation was not soothed by the unaccountable failure of his light to come and go as it should have done.

"Pish!" said Hacker, for the third time.

Fisher T. Fish was still standing frozen. He was deeply thankful for the failure of the light. But what was he going to do? Why this guy couldn't have gone on chewing the rag with the other galoots was an exasperating mystery to Fisher T. Fish. It got Fishy's goat. If Hacker would go along the passage to borrow a match or—

Hacker did not go along the passage. He stepped right into the study in the dark.

Perhaps he had heard a sound of Fishy's suppressed breathing. Perhaps he guessed that some trick had been played with his light, and suspected that the trickster was still there. Perhaps he was anxious for a victim upon whom to wreak his irritation. Anyhow, he came groping into the study, and Fisher T. Fish backed away hurriedly towards the window. Then Mr. Hacker unmistakably heard him.

"Ha!" It was a sharp ejaculation from Hacker. "Who is there? Speak!"

Fisher T. Fish was not likely to speak.

"I am aware," went on Mr. Hacker's cold, cutting tones, "that someone is in this study. Speak!"

Fishy suppressed a groan.

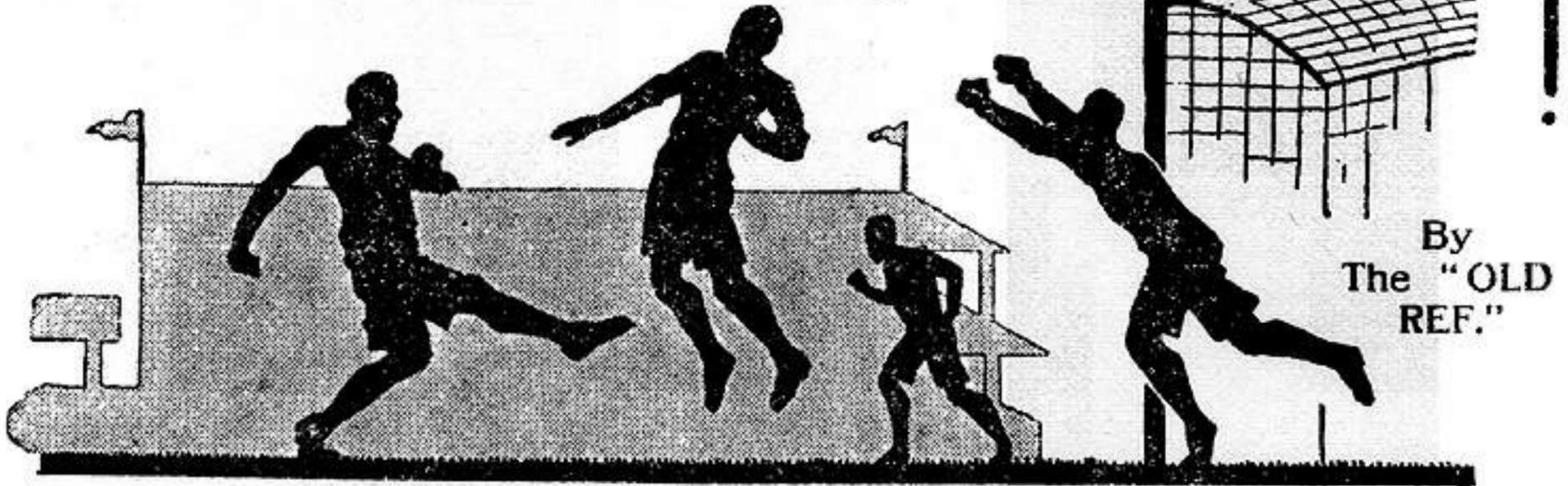
There was a sound of rustling and fumbling. He guessed that Hacker was feeling for a match-box in his pockets.

Fisher T. Fish's heart almost died within him. It was impossible to rush past the master to the door. Hacker would have grabbed him at once. Fishy turned desperately to the window.

He dragged aside the curtain, grabbed the lower sash, and wrenched

(Continued on page 12.)

INSIDE INFORMATION!



By
The "OLD
REF."

Are there any ways and means by which the game of Soccer can be improved? "Old Ref" seems to think there are. Read what he's got to say on the matter, chums.

A WEEK or two ago we spent most of the time of our weekly chat talking about the rules of football which are broken quite a lot. As we are now getting near the end of the season, it may be of advantage if we have a look round to discover if there are not certain ways and means by which the game could be improved.

There has been much chatter during the season as to how the duties of the referee could be lightened. Some people would have a reform which would provide a referee for each half of the field. Others would introduce goal judges to help the referee to come to correct conclusions when it is a matter of inches whether or not a goal has been scored.

There are plenty of objections which can be raised to both these proposed reforms, and in my opinion we could ease the work of the referees a bit in one or two directions without being at all revolutionary. Let us take, for instance, the matter of timekeeping. We have talked about this during the season, and of course it is important that the time should be kept properly.

But why should we ask the referee to do this? Couldn't it be done by somebody else?

Mr. Robert Morrison, who is a Member of Parliament, and a man I have often seen at the Tottenham ground, has an idea that the time should be kept by somebody sitting up in the stand, who would keep a good watch handy and sound a gong at the interval, and also at the finish of the match.

The germ of Mr. Morrison's idea is a good one, but he has overlooked one or two important details. In the first place it would be a waste of money to pay somebody specially to attend a match with the sole purpose of keeping the time. And it would be very necessary to have a neutral timekeeper, otherwise, by way of example, if one of the home directors kept the time he might whistle a second or two in advance of the full ninety minutes if his own side, in possession of the lead, was being hard pressed.

The other objection to having a timekeeper up aloft is that the referee would have to signal to him to knock off time for certain stoppages—injuries and that sort of thing. My idea is that the

timekeeping should be left to the linesmen who officiate at each big match, because the referee often has quite enough to do without looking at his watch during closing moments when the play may be at a very exciting stage

Imagine, by way of example, that the last few seconds have been entered upon. There is a fierce attack being waged at one end of the field, touch and go as to whether a goal will be scored. The referee must keep looking at his watch, and he can't do that and watch the whole of the play at the same time. When he takes his eyes off the game to look at his watch he might miss a foul for which the proper punishment would be a penalty kick.

THEN there is a reform which I have suggested before, and which I shall continue to suggest until it is adopted, because I feel that watchers of football in general would welcome the change. This is the numbering of the players. Big football is a public entertainment; the big clubs all issue programmes which contain the names of the players

under certain numbers. But the players themselves don't carry those numbers, and consequently the programme loses some of its value.

It can be said—and this is certainly true—that the players of the home team are known to the vast majority of the spectators. But

it certainly cannot be said that the visiting players are known, individually, to the majority of the spectators,

and I refuse to believe that watchers at any match are only interested in what is done by their own favourite men. They want to know and to recognise the best players of the opposing side.

I know one set of people who would be very pleased if the idea of numbering the football players—as is done in most Rugby games—were put into effect. They are the people whose job it is to write about football matches—the reporters. In spite of the fact that these worthy gentlemen are continually attending football matches they often get mixed up concerning the identity of this or that player.

Well do I recall in this connection a Cup Final at Wembley some years back between Newcastle United and Aston Villa. In the course of the game a Newcastle man scored, but it is literally true to say that not a single member of the hundred or so pressmen present was quite certain as to which player had scored. Some thought one player responsible, others gave the credit to another player, and the only way to make certain was to wait for the end of the game and then ask.

THERE is one argument against the numbering of football players which I have heard put forward, and it sounds all right from the realistic standpoint. It is to the effect that football is a team game anyway, and that consequently it doesn't matter who does the good work in a match, or who gets the credit for doing that good work. But I don't think there is much in this argument. It cuts both ways.

Many a player has been held responsible, by the crowd and even by the referee, for some unworthy action which has been committed by a different player altogether.

I have heard a player booed for a big portion of a match because the people thought he had been responsible for a bad foul.

Consider the confusion which sometimes arises. A player of a side gets hurt, possibly has to leave the field, or at any rate change from his original position. Such an affair may mean several players changing their positions, and the spectators, who don't know the players well, get all mixed up as to which is which. This numbering of the players is one of those little reforms which would be appreciated, in my opinion, and which could not do any harm.

In reply to "Interested," the referee was wrong if the true facts are as stated.

A player who has been receiving attention for injuries beyond the goal-line cannot suddenly rush on the field and score a goal.

The rules say that he must not return without notifying the referee.

WHO HACKED HACKER?*(Continued from page 10.)*

it up. He acted swiftly, but not swiftly enough.

"Oooh!" he gasped, as a hand fell on his collar behind.

He was in Hacker's grasp.

He whirled round.

A second more and he would have jumped out. That second was not granted him.

"Now—" said Hacker in a grinding voice.

Perhaps it was not surprising that Fisher Tarleton Fish completely lost his head at that fearful moment.

He kicked.

At that terrifying moment Fisher T. Fish was capable of anything to get his collar out of that grasp, and to escape from the study undetected.

He kicked suddenly and wildly and frantically.

There was a howl—a howl of anguish—from Hacker. Fishy had kicked wildly in the dark, and his kick landed on Hacker's shin.

It landed like the kick of a mule.

The grasp on Fishy's collar relaxed. He was free. Hacker, groaning, staggered back in the darkness. Possibly, in the days of his youth, Horace Hacker might have had his shin hacked on the football field. If so, he had forgotten what it was like. The reminder was excruciating.

Hacker, fairly doubled up with pain, groaned horribly. For the moment he had no attention to give the fellow who had hacked him.

Neither had Fishy any attention to waste on Hacker. The moment he was free, he swung headlong out of the study window.

But a further startling surprise was in store for Fisher T. Fish. Instead of dropping to the ground as he expected, he came into contact with a fellow who was standing under the study window.

What on earth a fellow was doing there, after lock-up, in the dark, Fisher T. Fish had not the remotest idea.

But there he was, and Fisher T. Fish crashed on him, sending him spinning. He heard a fall and a startled exclamation:

"Ow! You clumsy ass, Bob!"

It was Wharton's voice, and his words implied that he had been expecting Bob to descend from the window, though not precisely in that manner!

But Fishy did not stay to listen.

He had rolled over. He picked himself up and fled into the darkness of the quad, leaving Wharton sprawling.

On the floor in Mr. Hacker's study lay the famous cake, unheeded, where Fisher T. Fish had dropped it. Near it sat Hacker, clasp his damaged shin with both hands, rocking himself to and fro and groaning. And the groans of Horace Hacker were both loud and deep.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.**Fishy in Luck!**

BILLY BUNTER jumped.

Tap!

Bunter was naturally startled.

The fat junior was in the Rag. That apartment, after prep, would be crowded with fellows; but it was still the hour of prep, and Bunter was alone there.

Bunter, of course, ought to have been at prep, too. But the Owl of the Remove was in no mood for prep. He was still feeling the effects of Mr.

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Quelch's cane, and had a strong disinclination to sit down. And his fat thoughts were running on Hobson's cake. He had come down to the Rag, debating in his mind whether he should venture to Hacker's study, while the Masters' meeting was on.

Had the effects of his licking worn off, Bunter would probably have made the venture, and would have been mixed up in the strange and startling happenings in Hacker's study that evening. But the licking was still painful, and Bunter hesitated. He had been turning the matter over in his mind for half an hour!

The thought of the cake drew him like a magnet. But the thought of Hacker and Quelch drove him back. He was in a state of unhappy uncertainty when the tap at the window of the Rag drew his attention in that direction.

He blinked in astonishment at the window.

It was long past lock-up, and the fellows were all in the House—or, at least, were supposed to be in the House.

A face was flattened against a window-pane. Bunter recognised the sharp features of Fisher T. Fish.

He rolled over to the window, grinning. Fishy, evidently, was out of the House after lock-up, and desired to get in surreptitiously. Bunter blinked at him through the glass.

Fisher T. Fish dared not call out. He made Bunter frantic signs to open the window.

In plunging headlong out of Hacker's study window, Fisher T. Fish had thought only of immediate escape. That had been the pressing matter, at the moment.

He had escaped, but he was faced with the problem of getting back into the House undetected. The fellow who had jumped from Hacker's window was certain to be searched for, and if Fishy was found out of the House, the game was up.

He knew now that Harry Wharton was out of the House also—he had left him sprawling and gasping under Hacker's window. Wharton must have left a door or window unfastened for his return. But which—of the innumerable doors and windows?

The sight of the lighted window of the Rag solved the problem for Fishy. He could see Bunter there, and he saw that the fat junior was alone.

It was a godsend to Fishy. He cut across breathlessly to the Rag, clambered on the sill, and tapped.

He signed wildly to the startled Owl of the Remove to let him in. Bunter did not seem to be in a hurry. His fat brain did not work swiftly. Fishy made wild gestures. He dared not call out, neither dared he linger where he was. He was in full view against the lighted window if anybody came along.

Crouching on the broad sill, Fisher T. Fish gesticulated frantically. This was a stroke of luck for Fishy. Bunter, of course, ought to have been in his study in the Remove, at prep. But there he was, alone in the Rag, and for the first time since he had been at Greyfriars, Fishy was glad to see William George Bunter.

The fat junior, with maddening slowness, unfastened the window, and raised the lower sash.

Fisher T. Fish grabbed it, jerked it up, and bundled headlong into the room.

He landed in a heap, spluttering.

"He, he, he!" cackinated Bunter.

"Ow! Shut the window, you gink!"

gasped Fisher T. Fish. "Shut it quick, you pie-faced mugwump."

"Oh, really, Fishy—"

"Shut it, you peaky clam!" hissed Fisher T. Fish.

Bunter closed the window. He grinned at the gasping Fishy, as he sat on the floor pumping in breath.

"He, he, he! You've been out after lock-up, Fishy! What have you been up to?" asked Bunter inquisitively.

"Oh, great snakes!" gasped Fisher T. Fish, mopping his perspiring brow.

"Oh, Jerusalem crickets! Ow!"

"You're all smothered with ink!" chuckled Bunter. "I say, Fishy, where have you mopped up all that ink?"

Fishy was only too well aware that he was inky. Ink daubed his face and hands, and his jacket was soaked in it, from rolling in the poo! in Hacker's study.

He struggled to his feet. If he was seen in that inky state, it would not take long for the powers to guess who had been in Hacker's study. Fishy had no time to lose.

"I say, Bunter! Keep this dark!" he gasped. "Don't you let on to anybody that I was out of the House! Oh crikey!"

"He, he, he!"

"Keep it dark!" gasped Fishy. "It means a licking! Keep it dark, Bunter. You'll get into a row for letting me in, if it comes out."

"Eh?"

"Not a word you know!"

Fisher T. Fish hurried across to the door of the Rag. Billy Bunter blinked after him through his big spectacles.

"I say Fishy—" he ejaculated.

But Fisher T. Fish did not heed. He had no time to waste on Bunter. He tore out of the Rag.

From the direction of Masters' passage he could hear the sound of many voices. He could guess that Hacker was making a shindy. Fortunately, attention seemed to be concentrated in that direction, and Fisher T. Fish found the coast clear.

In about ten seconds Fisher T. Fish was in a bath-room washing off the ink.

In a newly-swept and garnished state, he made his way to the Remove dormitory. It was against the rules for fellows to go up to the dormitory without leave before bed-time. But Fisher T. Fish had no time to think of rules. He had to get rid of that inky jacket.

The jacket was shoved out of sight at the bottom of Fishy's box, and he donned another in its place.

Then he descended from the dormitory, breathing more freely.

It was all serene now—at least, Fisher T. Fish hoped that it was. There was nothing visible to connect him with the happenings in Hacker's study.

It gave Fishy a cold chill to remember what he had done to effect his escape. Hacking a Form master's shin was an awful offence. It meant a flogging, at least, if he was discovered. It might mean the sack. Still, so long as he was not discovered it was all right. Indeed, so long as he was safe, there was some satisfaction in reflecting that he had made Horace Hacker sit up for giving him such a fright.

He lounged into the Remove passage with quite a careless air. Some sort of a row was going on downstairs, but Fishy did not feel inclined to go down and join the gathering crowd there. Fishy was not, as a rule, a modest or retiring youth; but just at present he less he appeared in the public eye, the better he was pleased. It was Fishy's cue to understudy Brer Rabbit, and to lie low and say nuffin'.



Glaring through the window of the Rag, Fisher T. Fish signed wildly to William George Bunter to let him in. But the Owl of the Remove did not seem to be in a hurry.

**THE NINTH CHAPTER.
Some Person Unknown!**

GROAN!
That horrid sound, oft repeated, echoed in the darkness of Hacker's study.

Groan!
Fishy, in desperate recklessness, had kicked not wisely, but too well. Certainly he had not meant to hurt Hacker—he had not meant to lame that gentleman, or to cripple him. He had only meant to make the pesky gink let go so that he could absquatulate.

He had done it—in fact, he had overdone it. Horace Hacker was fairly doubled up. The shin is a tender place to receive a kick like the kick of a mule. Hacker had forgotten everything but the pain in his injured shin. He rocked himself and groaned.

For whole minutes he did nothing but groan, forgetful of time and space. Then he staggered up; but the movement gave him such a fearful twinge that he howled aloud.

"My dear fellow, what is the matter?"

Mr. Quelch peered into the shadowy interior of Hacker's study.

The Remove master had also had enough of Mr. Prout's eloquence in Common-room, and he was on his way back to his study when he heard the sounds of woe and lamentation proceeding from the doorway of Hacker's study.

He was quite alarmed.
"My dear Hacker! Is that you, Hacker?"
Groan!

"My dear fellow, what— Why are you in the dark? Has there been an accident?"

Mr. Quelch groped for the switch, and switched it, but the electric light did not respond. He blinked into the darkness of the study.

Groan!
"Hacker, what—"

"I have been attacked!" gasped Hacker. "I have been assaulted! I am hurt—injured! I have been kicked—hacked! Ow, ow, wow!"

"Is it possible? What is the matter with the light?"

"Some trick has been played with it! Someone was here in the darkness! I have been kicked! Ow, ow!"

"Upon my word!"

Mr. Quelch groped for a matchbox, and struck a match. The flickering light glimmered on Hacker's pale and suffering countenance. He was leaning on the back of a chair, groaning, and clasping his damaged shin.

"This—is—is—is unheard of!" ejaculated Mr. Quelch. "Ah, here is your lamp; it has been removed from the holder!"

He spotted the bulb on the table, by the light of the match, and reached up and replaced it, and turned on the electric light. Hacker blinked in the sudden illumination like an owl.

"You are hurt, my dear fellow!" exclaimed Quelch, in great concern.

Hacker groaned dismally.

Quelch stared round the study. A chair was overturned; an upset ink-pot lay on the table, the ink swamping over papers and books, and forming a pool on the floor. The window was

wide open, the curtains fluttering in the breeze from the quad. Evidently something had been happening in Hacker's study. On the floor lay the big cardboard box, with the cake half out of it.

"Hacker, who—what—"
"Someone—I did not see him in the dark—was here. He kicked me, brutally, horribly, dreadfully, and jumped from the window. I think he jumped from the window—I am not sure. I was so—so occupied with my injury I—"

"Goodness gracious!"
Hacker turned back his trouser-leg, and displayed a big, blue bruise. Quelch gazed at it in horror.

"You—you had better bathe it immediately, Hacker—the sooner the better. Some Elliman's, bless my soul! If the wretch, the dastard, the—the ruffian, is out of the House, his detection will be easy. You are sure you did not recognise him?"

"I did not even see him. It was a junior—I am sure of that. But I have no idea—"

Quelch's eyes dwelt for a moment on the cake.

"Ah! Some boy in your Form, Hacker, who came here to make an attempt to remove that—that comestible from—"

"I think not. No boy in my Form would commit such a dastardly action. A Remove boy, perhaps—"

"What?"

"This afternoon a Remove boy attempted to purloin the cake from this



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study, as you know. He may have made another attempt—"

Quelch's face froze.

"I am absolutely assured that no Remove boy would commit such an act as assaulting a master, Hacker. I am surprised at the suggestion."

"Really, Quelch—"

"Really, Hacker—"

Groan!

"We are wasting time," said Quelch. "If the boy, as you suppose, jumped from the window, he must be out of the House. Search shall be made at once for any boy out of the House. I will see to it."

He hurried from the study.

Quelch was a man of action. He did not waste time, and the alarm was quickly spread. Swiftly the prefects were apprised of the startling and alarming state of affairs. The news spread; it reached the Masters' meeting in Common-room, and afforded an excuse for the staff to break up and escape the eloquence of Mr. Prout.

The junior Forms were at prep in Form-rooms or studies, but there was soon a gathering in Masters' passage of seniors and masters. Hacker had quite a reception in his study. Members of the staff gazed with horrified eyes at his bruise, and offered suggestions, condolences, and indignant ejaculations. Mr. Prout inquired of space—what was Greyfriars coming to? Monsieur Charpentier ejaculated, again and again: "Le pauvre Hacker! Le pauvre Hacker!" as his contribution. Capper, the master of the Fourth, rather more practically fetched a bottle of embrocation, which was more useful, in the painful circumstances, than either sympathy or indignation.

Meanwhile, excitement was spreading wildly.

Fifth Form men left their prep, and came along to see what was up. Some of the juniors ventured to follow their example, the thrilling circumstances offering an excuse for disregard of the rules. Shell fellows and Fourth-Formers and some Removites ventured to peer into Hacker's study till they were sternly shooed off by Prout.

"Somebody's hacked Hacker!"

That was the astonishing news that spread through the House.

The prefects were busy. Quelch issued orders for every man to assemble in his Form-room, and the Sixth Form prefects saw those orders carried out. The Second and Third were already in their Form-rooms, as those inconsiderable Forms did prep with their Form masters. But the Remove, the Fourth, and the Shell were called on to assemble. This measure was intended to ascertain whether any man was out of the House.

Hacker's open window, and his impression that the culprit had jumped therefrom, indicated the guilty party—if any fellow was found to be out of the House. That was taken as a certainty.

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Fellows who had already come down were herded into the Form-rooms. Prefects hurried off to call the others.

Some fellow—some "person" unknown had hacked Hacker! The Greyfriars men debated breathlessly who it was, and what was going to happen to him when found.

Meanwhile, Hacker tenderly and gently caressed his big blue bruise. Even the discovery of the culprit was a secondary matter, with Hacker, for the present. His attention was concentrated upon his damages, while up and down Greyfriars the question was breathlessly asked:

"Who hacked Hacker?"

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

A Mystery!

BOB CHERRY opened the door of the Remove box-room at the end of the passage, and three startled faces turned on him. Nugent, Johnny Bull, and Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh were waiting there, expecting Wharton and Bob at the window—with the famous cake. They spun round as the door opened.

"Who—" ejaculated Nugent.

"What—" exclaimed Johnny Bull.

"Only me!" said Bob.

"The esteemed and ridiculous Bob!" exclaimed Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh, in astonishment.

"What the dickens—" began Johnny Bull.

"Game's up!" said Bob. "No good Wharton waiting under Hacker's window any longer—"

"What's happened?" asked Nugent.

"Hacker!" answered Bob.

"Spotted?"

"Yes."

"Oh, my hat!"

"It's all right, I think," said Bob, reassuringly. "Hacker came back to the study while I was there—"

"Phow!"

"But he didn't see me in the dark. I pushed him over and bunked."

"Oh crikey! You pushed Hacker over?"

"Well, I didn't mean to—but he went over like a ninepin," said Bob. "I seem to have butted into him in the dark, and he seemed to want to spread himself over the floor. He didn't see me, luckily."

"You didn't bag the cake?"

Bob chuckled.

"I wasn't worrying about the cake when Hacker was grabbing at me. Blow the cake."

"There'll be a row!" said Nugent.

"That's no news," said Bob cheerfully. "You can't push a Form-master over, even by accident, without a row. But he doesn't know who it was, and I'm not going to mention it."

"Sure he didn't see you?" asked Bull.

"Quite! I didn't see him. It was as dark in his study as the inside of a hat."

"Well, it's a rotten frost," remarked Nugent. "As a matter of fact, it was a rotten idea—"

"It would have been all right if it had come off" said Bob. "Hacker oughtn't to have come back—I thought he was safe wagging his chin with the other beaks. Hacker always was rather a beast."

"Well, it's done now," said Johnny Bull. "If he didn't see you, it's all right. We can't leave Wharton waiting under his window, though. One of us had better cut out and tell him."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, that's somebody coming up the passage—"

"The fellows are all at prep—"

"Hacker after Bob, perhaps," said Johnny Bull.

Bob Cherry reopened the box-room door. A short flight of stairs led down to the Remove passage. The passage was lighted, and Bob could see most of it.

"All serene—only Fishy!" he said.

Fisher T. Fish came along the Remove passage, and went into Study No. 14. There was nothing about Fisher T. Fish to give a hint of his recent wild adventures.

Bob gave him a careless glance, and turned back to his friends.

"Only Fish," he said. "It's all right—Hacker's not after me. He can't have the faintest idea who butted him over in his study. But we'd better let Wharton know; we can't leave him waiting under Hacker's window."

"Hallo, here he is!"

A figure darkened the starlight on the window of the box-room. The four juniors turned quickly towards it.

"That you, Harry?" breathed Nugent.

"Yes—has Bob got in?"

"Here he is—"

Wharton clambered in at the window.

"You here, Bob—"

"Here I am—"

"You clumsy fathead!"

"Eh?"

"You benighted idiot—"

"Wha—a—at?"

"You footling ass!"

"What on earth—" gasped Bob.

"I got a crick in the neck when you walloped on to me," hissed the captain of the Remove. "You jolly nearly broke my neck, you burbling jabber-wock! You silly fathead—"

Wharton seemed rather excited. Bob Cherry peered at him, in the gloom, in utter amazement.

"What the dickens do you mean?" he demanded. "Who walloped on you?"

"You did, you chump."

"I did!" stuttered Bob.

"Yes, you, you gabbling ass! I've got a crick in the neck! I banged my head on the ground—you fathead! If you hadn't cleared off so quick I'd jolly well have punched your silly head! What the thump did you do it for?"

"My only hat! What did I do?" gasped Bob. "Have you gone off your rocker, or what?"

"You crashed on me from Hacker's window, you benighted burbler! You nearly smashed me, and then cleared off and left me sprawling there. What the thump did you do it for?"

"I—I didn't—"

"Don't be a silly ass! Do you think I fancied it, and that I'm imagining the this crick in my neck?" booted the captain of the Remove.

"But—I—I—I didn't! I—I never got out of the window."

"Who did then?"

"Blessed if I know, if anybody did! I jolly well didn't!"

"It wasn't Bob," said Frank, in amazement. "Bob came back here by the passage—he never got in at the window—"

"He didn't get in at this window?" repeated Wharton, blankly.

"No fear!" said Bob. "I tell you I floored Hacker and bolted out of his study—"

Wharton stared at him in the gloom. "I thought it was you who jumped on me! Somebody walloped on me from Hacker's window and sent me sprawling—"

"My only hat!"

"I was knocked breathless. If it wasn't you, who was it? There wasn't another fellow with you in Hacker's study?"

"No! Blessed if I can make it out," said Bob. "It's a jolly mystery."

"The mysteryfulness is terrific." "Well, if it wasn't you, old chap, all right," said Harry. "Of course, I thought it was you, though I couldn't understand you clearing off like that after knocking me over. But who was it?"

"Goodness knows." "I thought it was you, and that you'd got in, so I came in," said Harry. "But if it wasn't you—"

"Well, it wasn't!" said Bob. "I can't make it out, unless there was another fellow in Hacker's study after the cake. Blow that cake! Look here, as you're in, let's get back to prep—if there's going to be a row, we'd better be found in our studies."

"Yes, rather!" said Johnny Bull. The mystery was a very perplexing one; but that was evidently not the time to solve it. The Famous Five, having closed and fastened the window, left the box-room, and went to their studies. The raid on Hobson's cake had been a ghastly failure, there was no doubt about that. It was quite probable that there would be trouble to follow.

The chums of the Remove dispersed to their studies and started on prep. It dawned on them that they would have been wiser, in point of fact, to have devoted their attention that evening to prep, instead of to Hobson's cake. But that reflection came rather too late to be of any use.

They started prep, but they were not destined to progress very far with it. Only a few minutes later, the voice of Wingate of the Sixth was heard in the Remove passage, calling the Lower Fourth to assemble in their Form-room.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

What Loder Knew!

HENRY SAMUEL QUELCH looked over his Form in the room with a nod of satisfaction. There was no need for him to call the roll; no absentees would have escaped the gimlet eye of Mr. Quelch. Every man in the Remove was there, as the Form-master had confidently expected.

Hacker's suggestion that his assailant might have been a Remove man, on the grounds that a Remove man had attempted to raid the unfortunate cake in the afternoon, had appeared utterly ridiculous to Mr. Quelch. He was quite, quite sure that no man in his Form would have hacked the shin of a master—he was quite sure that no Remove man was capable of such an action, and least of all, Bunter, the baffled raider of the afternoon. Hacker's suggestion had annoyed Quelch, and he was glad to see, from the gathering of his whole Form without a single exception, that there were grounds for it.

No doubt it had been some member of the Shell; probably Hobson, to whom the cake belonged. Or perhaps a Fourth Form fellow. Mr. Quelch was not satisfied with the discipline of the Fourth, under Caper. Hacker's suggestion of a Removite was really offensive.

To make assurance doubly sure, however, Mr. Quelch questioned Bunter. He had to remember that he had, himself, caned Bunter that afternoon for a felonious attempt on the confiscated cake.

"Bunter!" "Oh, no, sir! I wasn't!" ejaculated Bunter. "I—I didn't, sir!" "What! What!" snapped Mr. Quelch. "It wasn't me, sir."

There was a grin along the ranks of the Remove. Bunter, as usual, was in a hurry to assert his innocence.

GREYFRIARS CELEBRITIES.

This week our clever rhymester has had a shot at Mr. Prout. But before doing so he had to lock himself up in the top attic in case the pompous master of the Fifth got in his shot first.



WITH booming voice and heavy tread,
That echoes long and loud,

Who's this, with firm, uplifted head,
That stalks along so proudly?
It's Mr. Prout, the master who
Conducts the Fifth Form fellows,
And tells them what they've got to do,
With pompous roars and bellows.

The sound that's music to his ear,
A flow of tones majestic,
His own sweet voice he loves to hear,
Though others get—dyspeptic!
He loves to hear his lordly notes
Flow on, a rhythmic river—
Upon their endless stream he gloats,
While others groan and quiver.

But let me quickly haste to state,
In some things Prout is wondrous—
In fairness, I must say he's "great";
In fact, he's really pond'rous!
But mighty voice, and mightier frame,
Are not his only features—
He's won his just amount of fame
Among the lesser teachers.

It is his wont to make display
Of exploits, truly thrilling.
"In eighteen eighty," oft he'll say,
"I did a lot of killing
Not fellow-men, of course," he'll add,
"But grizzlies, wild and mighty!"
His list'ners think they're just as bad—
They hear that tale twice nightly!

He used to be a deadly shot,
He says, with sporting rifle—
The masters do not care a jot
To hear this thrilling trifle.
He starts to show them how, with gun;
But they don't like the notion,
And leave him to it, one by one,
For fear of an explosion.

But, still, there's lots of good in Prout,
There's none that can deny it.
He thinks his plan's the brightest out,
And counsels all to try it.
Though chaps can spoof him left and right,
He's not a bad old party.
So let us raise, with all our might,
A cheer that's long and hearty!

"Kindly listen to me, Bunter! Have you visited Mr. Hacker's study since I caned you for going there this afternoon?"

"No, sir! Haven't been near it!" "Are you sure, Bunter?" "Oh, yes, sir!" gasped Bunter. "I—I wouldn't, sir! I—I haven't got over that licking yet, sir!"

Mr. Quelch stared, and then smiled. He had no doubt that Bunter was telling the truth, for once. So long as the effect of the licking lasted, Bunter was unlikely to transgress; and the licking had been severe.

"You will remain in your places for the present, my boys," said Mr. Quelch. "It is necessary to ascertain whether any boy is out of the House. I am glad, very glad, that all the Remove are here."

The Remove, especially certain members of the Form, shared Mr. Quelch's gladness on that point. There was obviously going to be serious trouble for any man found out of the House.

Wharton exchanged an eloquent glance with his chums. It was clear that he had got back to the House only in time. Mr. Quelch, leaving his Form assembled, stepped out into the corridor.

There he met Mr. Capper. "My boys are all present," said Capper, with evident relief. "I am glad to say that the culprit cannot possibly be a member of my Form. I was, of course, certain of that."

Quelch had not been so certain of that as Capper. But he nodded.

"Some Shell boy—" he remarked. "Undoubtedly!" agreed Capper.

"That is, if the Remove—" "The Remove are all present!" said Mr. Quelch acidly.

"Then the culprit is undoubtedly one of the Shell," said Capper. "As a matter of fact, Quelch, I am not wholly surprised." He lowered his voice confidentially. "Between ourselves, the way Hacker manages his Form—"

"I agree!" said Quelch. "Between ourselves, of course—"

"Quite!" said Capper. "Perfectly so!" said Quelch.

And the two masters nodded. They did not wholly approve Hacker's management of the Shell any more than Hacker wholly approved their management of the Fourth and the Remove. Schoolmasters have these little ways!

Wingate, who had been counting heads in the Shell Form-room, came out and approached the two masters. Capper and Quelch regarded him inquiringly.

"Nobody missing in the Shell, sir!" said the Greyfriars captain.

Capper and Quelch started. "The Shell are all present?" exclaimed Capper.

"Quite, sir."

"You are sure, Wingate?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

"I've called the Form roll, sir, and they all answered."

"Upon my word!" said Capper.

"This is very strange!" remarked Quelch. There was a pause.

"It appears, then, that no junior is out of the House at all!" said the Remove master, at last.

"Surely it could not have been one of the Fifth!" murmured Mr. Capper.

"What? What?" Prout's booming voice came in as the portly master of the Fifth rolled up. "What? An extraordinary suggestion, sir! A most extraordinary and ungrounded suggestion, sir!"

Capper coloured. THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,156.

"I did not mean to suggest, Mr. Prout—"

"I trust not, sir!" boomed Mr. Prout. "I trust not! I trust not, indeed! The suggestion that a Fifth Form boy could possibly—"

"We may exclude that hypothesis," said Mr. Quelch coldly. "Hacker is certain that it was a junior in his study. Although he did not see the person, he took hold of him, and he could not, in consequence, be mistaken. It was not a senior boy—Hacker is assured of that."

"It goes without saying, sir!" boomed Prout. "A senior boy! Upon my word! The suggestion is unparalleled in—"

"Hacker may be mistaken in supposing that the boy jumped from his window," said mild Mr. Capper. "It was quite dark in his study, and he was in a—a disturbed state, owing to the kick he had received."

"It is possible," agreed the Remove master. "I fail to see how any boy who jumped from the window can have re-entered the House undetected. But if he left Hacker's study by the door, he may have been seen. Let us speak to Hacker."

The three masters repaired to Mr. Hacker's study. That gentleman was seated in his armchair now, with his damaged leg resting on another chair.

The damage was still very painful. But the agony had abated, to borrow the expression of youthful Macauley. Mr. Hacker was still suffering, but more in his temper than in his leg. His countenance exhibited signs of woe, but more signs of fury—suppressed, but deadly.

He looked up eagerly as his colleagues presented themselves.

"You have found the young rascal?" he asked.

"Not yet!" said Quelch.

"Surely you have ascertained which boy was out of the House—"

"No junior is out of the House."

"Oh!" said Hacker.

"Are you assured, sir, that the boy in question left this study by the window?" asked Capper.

Hacker reflected.

"I had that impression," he said slowly. "I had taken him by the collar, after he had thrown open the window, evidently intending to escape that way, when he unexpectedly kicked me. I quite inadvertently let him go when I received the kick. I am not at all clear as to what followed. The pain was intense. I may say, excruciating. A large bruise—"

"You did not see him leave by the window?" asked Quelch.

"I am not a cat, sir!" said Hacker. His temper evidently seemed very sour. "I cannot see in the dark!"

Quelch compressed his lips. He sympathised with Hacker, and he was anxious to see justice done. But Hacker's manner was really hard for his colleagues to bear patiently.

"If no junior is out of the House, it is obvious that he did not leave by the window!" boomed Prout. "It was dark—Hacker was disabled—no doubt the young rascal dodged out of the study by the door—"

"It is possible," said Hacker. "I cannot say one way or the other. The boy must be found!"

"If he left by the door it is very probable that he was seen," said Prout. "Let us inquire, gentlemen; let us inquire!"

Hacker was left to himself and his damaged leg once more. Prout, Quelch, and Capper proceeded on the

new line of inquiry. Information was speedily forthcoming from Loder of the Sixth. Loder of the Sixth had seen a junior racing, in fact, tearing, from the direction of Masters' passage a short time—a very short time—before the news reached him that Hacker had been hacked.

"A Remove boy?" asked Capper.

"A Fourth Form boy?" asked Quelch.

"A Remove boy, sir," said Loder.

Mr. Quelch shut his lips hard. Capper and Prout exchanged a glance, implying that they weren't surprised.

"His name?" snapped Quelch.

"Cherry, sir!" said Loder.

"You are sure of this, Loder?"

"He almost ran into me, sir, and I gave him fifty lines for racing about the passages. I did not know then, of course, that—"

"That makes it clear!" said Prout.

"Quite clear!" said Capper. "I am sorry, Quelch, that it proves to have been a boy of your Form—"

"I am obliged to you, sir," said Quelch acidly. "But I do not in the least take it as proved that a boy in my Form assaulted Hacker. I have very little doubt—I may say, no doubt at all—that Cherry had been nowhere near Hacker's study."

"H'm!" said Capper.

"H'm!" said Prout.

And they exchanged another glance.

"Loder, kindly go to the Remove-room and bring Cherry to my study," said the Remove master.

"Certainly, sir."

Mr. Quelch whisked away to his study, very much disturbed. Capper and Prout walked away together.

"It is unfortunate for Quelch!" murmured Capper. "In point of fact, Prout, I had no doubt that it would prove to be a Remove boy—"

"An unruly Form, sir!" said Prout.

"Very!" said Capper. "Very! I respect Quelch very highly; but his methods—" And Prout shook his head.

And the two gentlemen repaired to Hacker's study, with the comforting news that the culprit had been discovered.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

For It!

"CHERRY!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! I mean, yes, Loder."

"You're wanted," said Loder. "Follow me."

"Right-ho!"

Loder looked rather curiously at Bob. He did not like that cheery and exuberant youth, having had a lot of trouble at various times with the Famous Five. But he was rather surprised that it had turned out to be Bob who had hacked Hacker's shin. Such an act was not in keeping with Bob's character. But Loder had no doubt about it; it seemed certain enough to him.

"Well, come on!" he said; and Bob followed him from the Remove-room. Bob's face was serious enough.

As he had come direct from his study to the assembly in the Form-room, Bob had not yet heard of the "hacking" of Hacker. He was still under the impression that it was Hacker whom he had pushed over in the study; and that was a serious enough matter, if he was found out. And it looked as if he was.

So his usually cheery and sunny face

was rather clouded as he followed Loder to his Form master's study. The expression on Mr. Quelch's face, when he arrived there, did not raise his spirits. Never had Mr. Quelch looked so much like a gargoyle.

"Here is Cherry, sir—"

"Thank you, Loder! Cherry!"

"Yes, sir!" said Bob, with a sinking heart.

"It appears that Loder met you, some short time ago, racing about the passages, as he described it, and gave you an imposition."

"Yes, sir."

"Loder has the impression that you were coming from Masters' passage—this passage."

"Ye-e-es, sir."

"Had you been to Mr. Hacker's study?"

Bob was silent.

It was not much use denying it, even had Bob been disposed to deny the truth; which he was not. That unlucky encounter with Loder of the Sixth had given him away, and the game was up.

"Speak freely, my boy," said Mr. Quelch, his face relaxing, and his tone kindly. "I am assured that you will tell me the exact truth, and I only desire to know where you had been when Loder met you."

Had Bob thought of prevaricating that would have settled it.

"I'm sorry, sir—" he faltered.

Mr. Quelch's face hardened at once.

"What—what do you mean, Cherry?"

"I'd been to Mr. Hacker's study," confessed Bob.

"Upon my word!" ejaculated the Remove master.

Bob stood crimson and dismayed.

"Then it was you—" breathed Mr. Quelch.

"I—I'm sorry—"

"You went to Mr. Hacker's study, I presume, to abstract the cake that had been confiscated in the Shell?"

"Yes, sir."

"And, being caught in the act, you had the audacity, the wickedness, the ruffianism, to assault a Form master?" gasped Mr. Quelch.

"Oh, sir! I—I—"

"Do you deny it?" snapped Mr. Quelch. "Upon my word! I am ashamed of my Form! I would never have believed that any Remove boy was capable of so ruffianly, so brutal, an action! I am appalled!"

"It—it was an accident, sir!" stammered the dismayed Bob. "I never meant to push him over, sir."

"Push him over?" repeated Mr. Quelch.

"I just bolted in the dark, sir," said Bob eagerly. "I assure you, sir, that I wouldn't have butted into Mr. Hacker if I could have helped it. But I couldn't see him in the dark, and he—he fell over, sir—"

Mr. Quelch gazed at him.

"Cherry! Had you accidentally collided with Mr. Hacker, and pushed him over, while engaged upon a nefarious errand in his study, the matter would be serious enough. But it would have been a trifle, in comparison with your act of ruffianism—of brutality—or hooliganism—"

Bob almost staggered.

"Wha-a-at have I done, sir?" he gasped. "I—I'm sorry—awfully sorry—that I pushed Mr. Hacker over. But he can't have been much hurt, sir."

"Wretched boy! You kicked Mr. Hacker on the shin—"

"Wha-a-at?" stammered Bob.



The flickering light from the match glimmered on Hacker's pale and suffering countenance. "Someone was here—he kicked me—brutally—horribly—dreadfully—and jumped from the window!" he groaned dismally.

"Causing him great pain and a large bruise—a severe injury—"

"I didn't!"

"What?" Mr. Quelch almost roared.

"I didn't!" shouted Bob. "If Hacker says I kicked his shins, he's not telling the truth! I didn't."

"Boy, how dare you?" gasped the Remove master.

"I didn't do it! I wouldn't do such a rotten thing!" exclaimed Bob, his eyes flashing. "I'd rather he'd caught me and licked me than hacked his shins. I never did anything of the sort. It's not true."

Mr. Quelch stared at Bob, as if his breath were taken away. He was quite at a loss for words.

"It's not true, sir," said Bob more calmly. "I never touched his shins. I'm not the fellow to hack a man's shins! I bumped into him, and he fell over. That's all."

"Boy!" articulated Mr. Quelch. "If I'd hacked his shins, there would be a mark," said Bob. "Well, then, let Mr. Hacker show the mark."

"Are you in your senses?" gasped Mr. Quelch. "Mr. Hacker is now resting in his study, almost crippled by his injury, and with a large and dreadful bruise on his left shin."

Bob stared blankly.

"Oh! If—if you've seen it, sir—"

"I have seen it."

"I—I can't understand it! He—he must have knocked his shin in falling down, then!" said Bob, in bewilderment. "But—but I thought he fell on his back when I bumped into him—"

"Mr. Hacker distinctly states that when he took you by the collar you turned on him and kicked his shins—"

"What?"

"He just touched me in the dark, and I ran for it," said Bob. "He certainly never took me by the collar. And I never kicked him."

"Do you dare to impugn Mr. Hacker's veracity, Cherry?" asked Mr. Quelch in an awful voice.

"I suppose he's mistaken, sir! Though I can't understand how—"

"Enough!" The glance of scorn and indignation that the Remove master bestowed on the unfortunate junior made Bob wince. "Do not add prevarication—futile prevarication—to your other offences, Cherry! I have always regarded you as a truthful boy—as an honourable boy. I have been terribly mistaken in you. Such a wicked, cruel assault—"

"I—I never did—"

"Silence! I shall take you to your headmaster; this matter must be placed in the hands of Dr. Locke. If he should decide to expel you from the school I cannot raise any objection. Follow me!"

Bob Cherry, overwhelmed with dismay, and in almost a dazed frame of mind, followed the Form master. And in a very few minutes the news was all over the House that it was Bob who had "hacked Hacker," and that he had been taken to the Head to be sacked.

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the Fourth. "That blessed cake's caused a lot of trouble. I was thinking of having a go for it myself. Jolly glad now I didn't!"

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

"If Hacker had left that cake alone and—"

"That's all very well," said James Hobson. "But it was rotten to hack his shins; and I jolly well think that Cherry's a beastly cad, and ought to be sacked!"

Hobson of the Shell delivered that opinion in the Rag, where most of the juniors had gathered after being dismissed from their Form-rooms. He had scarcely delivered it when four members of the Remove collared him, as if moved by the same spring, and he smote the floor of the Rag with a bump and a roar.

"You cheeky ass!" snorted Johnny Bull.

"You burbling idiot!" said Nugent.

"You esteemed and ludicrous jack-ass!" hooted Hurreo Jamset Ram Singh.

"You silly fathcad!" said Harry Wharton. "Get up and have some more!"

Hobson, sprawling on the floor, blinked at them.

"Why, you cheeky fags!" he gasped. "I'll skin you! I'll smash you! I say Cherry was a cad to hack Hacker—"

"He never did, you dummy!" snapped Wharton.

"Why, his own Form master's taken him to the Beak for it!" exclaimed Hoskins. "He did it all right! Yaroooooh!" added Claude Hoskins involuntarily, as he joined Hobson suddenly on the floor.

Hobson was rising as Hoskins joined him with a crash. Hobby sprawled again and yelled.

"Bless that cake!" remarked Fry of

"Bless that cake!" remarked Fry of

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Opinions Differ!

"ROTTER!" said Hobson of the Shell.

"Frightful outsider!" said Hoskins.

"Quite the limit!" remarked Temple of the Fourth.

"Look here——" exclaimed half a dozen Shell fellows at once.

"Go and eat coke!" exclaimed Wharton, his eyes flashing. "I tell you Bob never hacked Hacker! He told us he pushed him over, and that's good enough for us! We know he wouldn't!"

"Gammon!"

"Rot!"

"Mop 'em up!" roared Hobson, struggling to his feet. "Smash 'em! That rotter Cherry did hack Hacker, and——"

Wharton made a jump at the captain of the Shell as he repeated his statement. Bob Cherry was in the Head's study, in disgrace; but his chums, at least, were ready to stand up for him.

There was a wild melee in the Rag. Wharton and Hobson whirled round, punching one another vigorously, and Hobby's friends rushed to the rescue, and Wharton's friends promptly joined in. In a few minutes nearly all the Shell and the Remove were going strong amid a terrific trampling and gasping and yelling and hooting. Only the night before the Famous Five had been Hobson's guests at that unfortunate nocturnal feast in the Shell dormitory, and all had been calm and bright. But that was forgotten now.

There was, as a matter of fact, no great love lost between James Hobson and his Form master. But Hacker was his Form master, after all; and hacking a man's shins was considered by all Greyfriars men as quite outside. It was the kind of thing that wasn't done. So Hobby was indignant, and his indignation was shared by other Shell men. They were aware, too, that Hacker with a gammy leg would be a sharper-tempered Hacker than ever, which was likely to have painful results in the Shell. And by all but Bob's own friends the matter was taken as proved and concluded now that he had been marched off to the Head. Even the Removites mostly shared that opinion, though they rallied willingly to back up their captain against the Shell.

Tramp, tramp, tramp!

It was a terrific shindy—a record even for the Rag, where shindies were not uncommon.

In the midst of it the door was hurled open, and Wingate of the Sixth strode in, with a cane in his hand and a frown on his face.

"Stop that!" roared Wingate.

But the combatants were too excited to heed. Wharton had Hobson's head in chancery and was reducing his features to a deplorable state, and the rest were all hotly engaged.

"You hear me?" roared the Greyfriars captain.

They heard him, but they heeded not.

George Wingate wasted no more time in words. He sailed into the combat vigorously, whacking right and left with his ashplant.

The whacks fell impartially on all the fellows within reach, and they fell with force.

By that drastic means the riot was stopped. The juniors separated and scattered right and left.

"Now, what's all this about?" demanded Wingate, when the combat ceased, the late enemies glaring at one another breathlessly.

"Only a silly fool said that Bob hacked Hacker!" said Wharton, gasping.

"You young ass! Cherry did hack Hacker!"

"He did not!" roared Wharton.

"You'd better punch Wingate, hadn't you?" jeered Carr of the Shell.

"Shut up, Carr!" said Wingate.

"Now, then, Wharton, what do you

mean? If you know anything about this affair, cough it up!"

"I know that Bob never hacked Hacker!" said Harry stubbornly. "He was cornered in his study, and he told us he pushed him over and bunked—that was all. He's not the man to hack a man's shins."

"Who did, then?"

"I don't know. There was somebody else in the study," said Harry. "And I'm jolly well going to tell the Head so! So there!"

"You can tell me so, and if there's anything in it I'll take you to the Head," said the prefect. "Keep cool, you young ass! How do you know there was somebody else in Hacker's study?"

"Because he got out of the window and fell on my head when I was waiting under the window," retorted Wharton.

Wingate jumped.

"You've been out of the House since lock-up?"

"Yes."

"You young sweep! You must have got back before the Remove were called to the Form-room."

"About five minutes before," answered

A QUESTION OF TIME!



A READY RETORT.

Irritable Traveller: "What is the use of your time-tables if your trains are always late?"
Stationmaster: "Well, sir, what would be the use of our waiting-rooms if our trains were always early?"

S. Shaw, of 35, St. Asaph Road, Brockley, S.E.4, who sent in the above clever effort, is now the happy recipient of one of our useful pocket knives. Who's next, please?

Wharton coolly. "I was waiting under Hacker's window for Bob to hand out that putrid cake!"

"Oh!" ejaculated Wingate. "That was the game, was it?"

"Yes, it was! And I'm ready to be licked for breaking House bounds; I don't care a straw about that! Somebody jumped out of Hacker's window and walloped right on my head. I thought it was Bob till I found that he'd left Hacker's study by the door. Somebody was in the study after Bob."

Wingate gave the captain of the Remove a very searching look. The other fellows listened intently. Hobson, rubbing his damaged features in anguish, ejaculated "Rot!" But that ejaculation was probably the outcome, not of Hobby's considered opinion, but of the fearful pain in his nose.

"You're not making this up to get your pal out of a row, Wharton?" asked the Greyfriars captain slowly.

Wharton flushed crimson.

"I'm not the fellow to tell lies to get a pal out of a row. Three fellows here know I was out of the House; they were waiting in the Remove box-room for me to come in."

"That's so!" said Johnny Bull.

"That's true!" said Frank Nugent.

"The truthfulness is terrific," declared Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"All four of you come with me," said Wingate. "The Head had better hear this."

"We're ready!" said Wharton.

The four juniors followed Wingate from the Rag. They left the crowd in excited discussion behind them. One fellow, who was not taking part in the discussion, had a worried look on his thin sharp face.

"Jerusalem crickets!" murmured Fisher T. Fish, in dismay. "If only that fat clam Bunter hadn't seen me come in——"

Fisher T. Fish left the Rag to look for Bunter. It was very important—to Fishy—that William George Bunter should not let in any light on this mysterious affair.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Wisdom of the Beak!

Dr. Locke had a stern, and, at the same time, a troubled look. He was angry; and he was deeply perturbed.

Bob Cherry stood before him, pale and worried and harassed, but resolute. Mr. Quelch had a grim face. Mr. Hacker, who had limped to the study, was still in a painful state and though his respect for the headmaster kept his temper in check, his eyes were glinting under his knitted brows.

Those glinting eyes fixed on Bob very unpleasantly. To Hacker, the case was proved beyond the shadow of a doubt, and Bob's denials only moved his scorn and wrath.

But the Head, angry and perturbed as he was, preserved his cool judgment. Fellows who departed from the strait and narrow path of veracity, when they were up before the Beak, seldom "got away" with it. The Head had a way of detecting the most plausible prevarication, and on the other hand, his ear was keen to the ring of truth even in an improbable statement. And he had a strong impression that Bob had told him the truth, unlikely as it seemed.

He had listened to Quelch, he had listened to Hacker, and he had listened to Bob. Now there was silence, while the puzzled headmaster considered the matter.

Tap!

The door opened to admit Wingate. "Excuse me, sir," said the Greyfriars captain. "I have brought some juniors who state that they know something about the matter. If you wish to hear them, sir——"

"Thank you, Wingate! Admit them at once."

Wingate turned to the four juniors behind him.

"Trot in!" he said.

Harry Wharton & Co. entered. Wingate closed the door on them and departed.

Bob glanced at his chums. Dr. Locke fixed an inquiring gaze upon them.

"Wharton! You know something of this matter?"

"Yes, sir!"

"State what you know briefly!"

Mr. Quelch looked interested; Mr. Hacker looked impatient. But neither of them made a remark.

Harry Wharton succinctly stated what he had to say. He described what had happened at Hacker's window. His comrades were there to witness that he had

been out of the House. The Head, resting his chin in his hand, his brow very thoughtful, listened without interrupting.

"Thank you, Wharton! I will not now refer to your offence in breaking House bounds after lock-up. I thank you for coming here to tell me this. I think it may help us to ascertain the facts."

Hacker could control his impatience no longer.

"Are not the facts ascertained already, sir?" he asked.

"I fear not," said the Head gently.

"I have been assaulted—injured—most painfully—"

"You may be assured, sir, that the most condign punishment will be meted out to the offender," said Dr. Locke. "But we must leave no stone unturned to ascertain the identity of the offender."

Hacker breathed hard. He had not the slightest doubt of the identity of the offender and his private opinion was, that the Head was maundering. That, however, was not an opinion he could express in that majestic presence.

"There was only one person in your study when you arrived there, Mr. Hacker?"

"Only one, sir, the boy Cherry."

"I understand that it was quite dark, and that you did not see him?"

"I saw nothing, sir! But the boy has admitted—"

"Let us proceed step by step," said the Head, with a calm that was intensely exasperating to the hacked and injured Hacker. "There was only one boy in your study, whom you did not see, and cannot identify?"

"That is correct; but—"

"Your impression was that he jumped from the study window after assaulting you—"

"That was my impression at the moment, but I was in excruciating pain, and not heeding, and since then Cherry has admitted—"

"Let us leave Cherry's admissions for the moment," said the Head, with the same exasperating calm. "It appears that more than one boy is known to have had designs upon the—h'm—comestible that had been confiscated after a surreptitious feast in the Shell dormitory last night. That is the case, Quelch?"

"Certainly there was one other boy—who was cared for making such an attempt this afternoon," said the Remove master.

"There may have been others," said the Head.

"It is possible, sir."

"If Wharton's statement is taken as correct, there must have been at least one person besides Cherry in the study."

"I cannot take Wharton's statement as correct, sir," said Hacker. "There was only one person in the study."

"At the moment you arrived, there, certainly, sir," said the Head with a nod. "You found some person in the dark whom you took by the collar when he had thrown open the window to escape?"

"Yes; Cherry—"

"Cherry denies that he was taken by the collar."

"A meaningless untruth—"

"One moment!" said the Head. "Cherry has a powerful motive for denying the assault, but no motive for denying that he was taken by the collar, which is an immaterial detail."

"He has told other untruths," said Hacker bitterly. "He has stated that he pushed me over—a ridiculous statement. I am not a man to be pushed over easily by a Lower Fourth boy!"

"But I did, sir—"

"Do not speak now, Cherry!" said the Head.

Bob was silent.

The Head gave up the next minute or two to reflection. Hacker, in a seething state inwardly, compressed his lips to keep back what he was longing to say. Quelch, however, regarded the Head with growing interest and attention. He was far from suspecting his august chief of "maundering." The juniors waited breathlessly for the outcome of the Head's majestic cogitations.

"Wharton!"

"Yes, sir!" said Harry, jumping to attention.

"You do not know who it was fell on you from Mr. Hacker's window?"

"No, sir. Only it must have been a junior," said Harry, "I could tell that much by the weight."

"You have no knowledge of his identity?"

"None, sir! He was gone in a flash."

"You supposed at the time, that it was Cherry?"

"Yes, sir, though I couldn't understand his bunking—I mean, his running off, as he d.d., after knocking me over."

"When did you learn that it was not Cherry?"

"When I got back to the box-room, sir and found Cherry there, and he told me how he had left Mr. Hacker's study."

The Head cogitated again. All eyes were fastened on him. It was evident that something was working in that august brain.

"Cherry!"

"Yes, sir!" murmured Bob.

"You were in complete darkness in Mr. Hacker's study. Someone entered, and you supposed that it was Mr. Hacker!"

Bob started.

"It was Mr. Hacker, sir! At least, I suppose—"

"You did not see him?"

"I couldn't see anything at all, sir."

"This unseen person touched you, and

(Continued on next page.)

MY RACE!

BY THE "BOAT."

I shall be one of the most important things on the whole stretch of the River Thames on Saturday the 12th. There'll be another, that you might take to be my twin. But as he's my deadly rival the less said about him the better

I AM the boat, in which nine men are going to win the Oxford and Cambridge Boat Race. Oh dear! The prospect of being shot through the water for four and a quarter horrid miles, fills me with dread. Already I know what it feels like to have eight hefty giants aboard me, each turning the scales at 12 st., with the light-weight cox fiddling about at the end of me with two short bits of rope.

Hardly had I got over my growing pains—some clever people named Sims made me specially for this great event next Saturday—before they had me out on the river, filling me with young giants who had to be taught how to balance me, how to sit in their seats, how to work the long oars without filling me with water, how to— But my head's in a whirl with all the excitement and rough-and-tumble of what has been and what is coming.

Wouldn't you call it a downright grievance if you had nine pairs of feet planked down into you, and the owners of eight of those pairs started like mad trying to pull you apart rib by rib? The lot of them together weigh far more than I do—six times as much, in fact. It's a wonder I stand up to it!

I'M not the cart-horse breed, by any means. You might almost call me long and skinny. So far as I have been able to calculate it I am something over 62 ft. long, but only just wide enough for my masters to tuck their great bodies into. And I'm always afraid I am going to turn over, for from top to bottom I am not more than 13½ ins. And as for my skin—there's very little more than one-eighth of an inch between my inside and my outside!

They tell me I cost £120 to build. I can well believe it, the fuss they are making of me now. I know I shall tremble dreadfully on Saturday when I hear the yells and shouts of thousands and thousands of people, packed like herrings on the Thames bank, all the way from Putney and Mortlake. Sheer nervousness, of course. But then I told you I am very thin-skinned.

I dread to think of the condition I shall be in when I have been hurled as far as Mortlake, 4½ miles away! They say they are going to drive me there in something under twenty minutes. I can feel my ribs straining now. O-o-oo! All sorts of nasty little jealous currents, slapping little waves, and vicious, treacherous eddies will be trying to push and drag me all sideways—and that cox-man all the time will be tugging this way and that at my strings to keep me straight.

THERE will be some very awkward bends for me to negotiate, too. The course is more like a horse-shoe in shape than a sensible stretch of river has any right to be, and the cox will be so afraid of losing an inch of headway rounding the bends that I shall nearly break my back skimming around. Think of those oars all tugging at me—they weigh about nine pounds apiece. Heaven knows what I shall do if any one of them manages to catch a crab!

Oh! Another dreadful pain shot right through me just then. I could feel those sliding seats all rasping my insides. I wonder if I shall wobble much on Saturday? I might ship a lot of rough water, perhaps—might even sink! Oh, horrors! I know one of my predecessors did that once—that was in 1909—and the crew had to be rescued from a watery grave by a launch. He, he!

THERE'LL be lots of folk thinking about the panting men aboard me, striving every single muscle and nerve to break all world's rowing records. But who'll think about my panting and straining ribs? I hope you will, for one!

Well, I know many other boats have done all this before me, but that doesn't make my ordeal any the easier. I'm wondering just now how it will end. Perhaps the umpires will declare me to be the fastest boat of my kind in all the world. However that may be, I know this will be my first and last University Boat Race.

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you rushed to escape, collided with him, and knocked him over?"

"Yes, sir."

"Were you not surprised at an athletic and somewhat powerful gentleman like Mr. Hacker, falling over under your rush?"

"I was, sir. I thought it very queer," said Bob. "In fact, I wondered how it happened. But—"

"Let us suppose," said the Head tranquilly, "that another boy had come to the same study, with surreptitious designs upon the—the comestible. You might very well have taken him for Mr. Hacker in the dark."

Bob Cherry jumped.

"Why I—I—of course!" he gasped. "Of course, that was it, sir! It—it wasn't Mr. Hacker I charged over at all—it was a kid—I mean—" Bob fairly gasped.

Mr. Quelch's grim face brightened. Possibly, after all, it was not a member of his Form who had hacked Hacker!

"Following this hypothesis," resumed Dr. Locke, "we will suppose that Cherry was gone, leaving in the study the boy whom he had—had overturned, in the belief that it was Mr. Hacker."

There was a faint grunt from Mr. Hacker. But Mr. Quelch was all attention, and the juniors were breathless with expectation.

"This boy in the study," went on the Head serenely, "had no doubt gone there for the—the comestible. Left there by Cherry's departure, no doubt he proceeded to carry out his design of abstracting the confiscated comestible, but was interrupted by the return of Mr. Hacker to the study."

"Ah!" said Mr. Quelch.

"Admitting the correctness of this hypothesis," said the Head, "we must take it that this unknown boy kicked Mr. Hacker when he was taken by the collar, and escaped by the window, as Mr. Hacker, at the time, supposed that he had done. This is in accordance with the statement made by Wharton, that a junior fell on him from Mr. Hacker's window, who, undoubtedly, in the circumstances, could not have been Robert Cherry."

"Quite, sir!" said Quelch.

Another grunt from Hacker. But the Shell master's expression showed that he was yielding to the calm reasoning of the Head. The hypothesis propounded by that learned gentleman, in fact, was the only one that covered all the strange happenings in Hacker's study.

"Unless we accept this view," resumed the Head, "we must conclude that Cherry is speaking untruthfully, and that Wharton has come here with a made-up story unfounded in fact. That is not your judgment of these boys of your Form, my dear Quelch?"

"Not in the least, sir," said Mr. Quelch promptly. "On the other hand, I have always regarded them both as scrupulously honourable."

"We may be driven to such a conclusion," said the Head, "but certainly not till every means of inquiry has been exhausted. If it should transpire that some other junior was out of the House at the time, Wharton's statement will be corroborated."

The Remove master's face fell a little.

"No junior was missing, sir, when the Forms were assembled," he said.

"Quite so. Yet it proved that Wharton had been out of House bounds a few minutes before; so it may very well prove that some other junior was also out of House bounds. Some junior certainly must have been, if we are to believe Wharton's statement."

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"That is so, sir."

"Wharton, it appears, re-entered by way of a box-room window. You three boys were waiting for him there?"

"Yes, sir!" said the three.

"No other person entered by that window?"

"No, sir!"

"But after you had left the box-room—"

"We shut and fastened the window before we left, sir," said Nugent.

The Head pondered.

"The boy in question may have gained admittance by some other means. Certainly we must follow up this line of inquiry. You have mentioned, Quelch, that another boy was caned this afternoon for making an attempt to purloin the confiscated comestible from Mr. Hacker's study."

"That is the case, sir."

"It is possible, at least, that he may have repeated the attempt after dark," said the Head. "We will question the boy. His name?"

"Bunter."

"Very well. I will send for Bunter."

And there was a pause in the proceedings while Mr. Quelch departed to fetch that valuable member of his Form.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Fierce for Fishy!

FISHER T. FISH put a thin, sharp, anxious face into Study No. 7 in the Remove. He was looking for Bunter, and Bunter had not been in the crowd of fellows in the Rag—which was not like Bunter, for he was not the fellow, as a rule, to miss a commotion. Prep, in the exciting circumstances, seemed to be forgotten; but it was extremely unlikely that Bunter had remembered prep when other fellows forgot it.

Why Bunter was missing the excitement was rather a mystery, which was, however, solved when Fisher T. Fish stared into Study No. 7. Billy Bunter was there—and Billy Bunter was busy! He was seated at the study table, and on the table before him was a huge cake—or, rather, the remains of a huge cake. Bunter's mouth was full of cake, and his fat countenance was full of satisfaction. While the rest of Greyfriars was in a perturbed and generally upset state, the Owl of the Remove was having the time of his life.

He jumped, as Fisher T. Fish looked in, and nearly choked, as a chunk of cake went down the wrong way.

"Great snakes!" ejaculated Fishy. "You've cinched the cake, after all, you fat clam!"

"Grooooooogh!"

Fisher T. Fish came in and closed the door.

"Gug-gug-gug!" Bunter struggled for breath. "You beast, you made me jump! Oooooookkkk! This isn't Hobson's cake, you know!"

"Isn't it?" grinned Fisher T. Fish.

"Nothing of the kind! Groooooogh! If you think I watched old Hacker limping away to the Head's study, and nipped in and bagged the cake, you're jolly well mistaken. I haven't been near Hacker's study."

Fisher T. Fish chuckled.

Evidently the astute Owl had taken advantage of the general commotion to bag the famous cake. Bunter was the fellow to keep a matter of such importance in mind, while other fellows were discussing such trifles as the hacking of Hacker, and the probable punishment of the fellow who had done it. Nobody, of course, had given a thought to the

cake—except Bunter. Bunter had given it his very special attention.

"I say, Fishy, have a slice!" said Bunter anxiously. "You needn't mention that you've seen a cake here. Fellows are so suspicious, you know. They might fancy this was Hobson's cake."

"I guess they might!" said Fishy, helping himself liberally.

"Don't take the lot!" grunted Bunter. "Of course, I'm entitled to Hobby's cake—he said any chap might have it who could bag it from Hacker's study. You know that."

"Yep!"

"Still, this isn't that cake!" added Bunter cautiously. "Hacker will make a row when he finds the cake gone, and I don't want it jawed about that I've had a cake here—it would look suspicious. As a matter of fact I had this cake to-day from Bunter Court. Specially made by our French chef, you know."

"I guess I know!" agreed Fishy.

"Don't wolf the lot. I said a slice. I'm going to leave some for Hobson. I think he ought to have a whack in it. Not that this is Hobby's cake, you know."

"I guess I'll keep it dark that you've cinched the cake," said Fisher T. Fish amicably. "One good turn deserves another, I guess. You've got to keep it dark about letting me in at the window of the Rag. I—I guess I don't want it to come out that I was out of the House after lock-up."

"I'm not the fellow to give a man away," said Bunter, with his mouth full. "I say, I said a slice; don't scoff the lot, Fishy! I say what were you up to out of the House?" Bunter blinked curiously at the American junior.

"I—I guess I jest went out for a walk in the quad," said Fisher T. Fish. "Jest that! But—but mind you don't say anything, Bunter. It might get me into a fearful row."

"What rot! It's only lines for going out after lock-up!"

Fisher T. Fish breathed hard.

He desired to impress upon Billy Bunter the importance of keeping it dark. At the same time he was disinclined to confide the facts to Bunter. Billy Bunter was not, perhaps, a particular youth; but even Bunter was likely to "jib" at the idea of Bob Cherry getting the flogging that was due to Fisher T. Fish.

"Look here, you keep it dark. Bunter!" urged Fishy.

"All right! I'm not the fellow to tattle, as you know," said Bunter. "You know how I'm to be trusted to hold my tongue."

Unfortunately, Fishy did. That was what made him so uneasy.

"I—I say, Bunter"—Fishy made an effort—"I—I say, you wanted to borrow five bob from me yesterday—"

"Not exactly borrow," said Bunter, blinking at him. "I told you I was expecting a postal-order, and asked you to cash it in advance."

"Same thing, I guess."

"Oh, really, Fishy—"

"Well, look here, you keep this dark, and I'll lend you the five bob to-morrow," said Fisher T. Fish.

Fishy almost turned pale as he made that offer. It was worth it to keep the secret, to save him from a flogging. Fishy was going to get his money's worth. But he hated handing out money for money's worth, or anything else. Parting with five shillings to Fishy was like parting with five teeth.

"Done!" said Bunter. "Of course, I'll let you have the postal-order immediately it comes, Fishy."



In the midst of the melee Wingate entered the Rag, with a cane in his hand and a frown on his face. "Stop!" he roared. "Do you hear me?"

Fisher T. Fish grunted.

"Oh, can it?" he said. "I—I—I mean all right. It's a go, Bunter."

"I say, Fishy, don't bag the whole blessed cake!" exclaimed Bunter, as Fishy helped himself to a large chunk. "I want to keep a bit for Hobson."

"Mind you keep it dark about letting me into the House, that's all," said Fisher T. Fish, turning to the door with the chunk of cake in his hand. "If you let it out, you don't get the five bob."

"Oh, really, Fishy—"

"That's a cinch," said Fisher T. Fish. "Five bob if you keep it dark, and nixes if you jaw."

"I hope I'm not the fellow to jaw," said Bunter, with dignity. "You can rely on me, of course. I say, Fishy, how did you get all that ink on you, if you'd only been walking in the quad?"

"I—I guess I—I upset my fountain-pen," muttered Fishy.

"Oh crumbs!" said Bunter. "Must be a ripping fountain-pen to smother you like that. Made in America, I suppose?"

"You fat jay—" began Fisher T. Fish wrathfully.

Then he checked himself. It was no time to tell Bunter what he thought of him. He quitted the study, leaving the Owl of the Remove busy with the cake.

Fisher T. Fish went along to Study No. 14, his own study, feeling easier in his mind.

Nobody, so far, had the slightest suspicion that he was connected in any way with the outrage in Hacker's study. Nobody could possibly suspect, so long as it was not known that he had been out of the House. And he

had taken the most effectual means of stilling Billy Bunter's tongue. Bunter was the only fellow who knew, and he would be silent, in anticipation of a loan. Nobody was likely, so far as Fishy could see, to fancy that Bunter knew anything, or to question him. And if Bunter held his tongue for twenty-four hours, all would be well.

Once a fellow had been flogged or sacked for hacking Hacker, the matter would be at an end.

Fishy could not help reflecting now fortunate it was that Loder of the Sixth had caught Bob Cherry scooting away from Hacker's study.

That settled the matter, so long as it remained unknown that any other fellow had been out after lock-up.

Fishy, perhaps, felt a slight twinge of compunction on Bob's account. He really would have saved Bob from an unjust punishment, could he have done so without any risk to himself.

But the idea of taking Bob's place as culprit, did not even occur to Fisher Tarleton Fish. Had it occurred to him, it would have made him smile.

There were fellows who, in such a position, would have owned up, regardless of consequences. But Fisher T. Fish was not one of those fellows. Fisher T. Fish was accustomed to thinking of Fisher T. Fish and nobody else. He guessed that a galoot had to look after number one. And he felt as much contempt as compassion for a guy who came out at the little end of the horn.

"I guess it's O.K.," said Fisher T. Fish to himself, in his study. "I sure allow it's O.K. That fat clam will keep his head shut. The whole thing will be forgotten, when a fellow's been flogged or sacked for it. I guess it is

all right for me. Only I guess it's fierce—it's sure fierce."

He groaned, feeling a twinge much more sharp than the twinge of conscience at the thought of the five shillings.

But that could not be helped, and Fisher T. Fish mustered all his fortitude to bear the thought of it, "fierce" as it was.

Meanwhile, Billy Bunter, in a very pleasant frame of mind, was going strong with Hobson's cake.

Why Fishy was so anxious for his secret to be kept, Bunter had no idea. His fat brain was not equal to the simple arithmetic of putting two and two together. Fishy was going to cash that celebrated postal-order which Bunter had been expecting for a long, long time, and which had not yet arrived. That was a source of satisfaction in the near future; and Hobson's cake was a source of satisfaction in the present. So Bunter had reason to feel satisfied.

The cake, large as it had been, was growing smaller by degrees and beautifully less.

Bunter felt that it was only fair to save some for Hobson, whose cake it had been. And he meant to save some for Toddy, his study-mate. Two large chunks were set aside for this generous purpose. But when the rest was gone Bunter eyed those chunks, and almost unconsciously he started on Toddy's share. It vanished, and then he eyed the sole remaining section.

"After all, Hobson's a beast!" murmured Bunter. "He never asked me to the feed in the dorm; and he showed rotten bad manners when I turned up. Blow Hobson!"

And the last segment of the cake followed the rest.

A few crumbs remained, and these Bunter carefully finished; then he sat breathing rather hard. It had been a nice cake, a lovely cake, a luscious cake—in fact, a scrumptious cake. But Bunter had a feeling that he had overdone it, and he almost wished that he had left some of it outside.

However, it was too late to think of that now, and he sat and rested after his exertions.

Tap!—the door opened.

"I say, Toddy— Oh—" Bunter jumped to his feet as he recognised Mr. Quelch in the doorway. "Bunter—" began the Remove master.

"Yes, sir—I mean no, sir!" gasped Bunter. "It wasn't me, sir."

"Follow me, Bunter."

"Oh lor'!"

Billy Bunter followed his Form master. He followed him with trepidation. If that beast, Hacker, had missed the cake, how could the other beast, Quelch, have guessed that Bunter had had it? Certainly he had seen no sign of it in Bunter's study. X-rays would have been required to detect that cake now. Bunter drew some consolation from that reflection. But he followed his Form master with trepidation, and his trepidation intensified as Mr. Quelch led him to the Head's study.

In that study Bunter blinked round uneasily at Quelch, Hacker, the Head, and the Famous Five. Finally, his little, round eyes, and his big, round spectacles, fastened on the headmaster's grave face, with a gaze like that of a scared owl.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

Catching Fish!

"BUNTER!" said the Head's deep voice.

"I—I didn't, sir."

"What?"

"I—I mean, I wasn't!" gasped Bunter. "I wouldn't, sir. It wasn't me."

"What? What was not you, Bunter?"

"Oh, I—I mean—anything, sir!" stammered Bunter.

"I desire to question you, Bunter. Calm yourself, my boy," said the Head kindly. "You have nothing to fear, if you were not guilty of the outrage in Mr. Hacker's study."

"Oh!" gasped Bunter, in bewilderment and relief. "Is that it, sir? I—I never hacked Hacker, sir."

"I understand," said the Head, "that you were punished this afternoon by your Form master, for having made a surreptitious attempt to purloin a— a comestible from Mr. Hacker's study?"

Bunter wriggled, doubtless in remembrance of the punishment referred to.

"Yes, sir!" he mumbled. "Not that I—I really went there for the cake, sir! I—I don't care for cake. I—I rather dislike it."

"You must tell me the truth, Bunter," said the Head severely. "I require to know whether you revisited Mr. Hacker's study with the same intention later."

"Ow! No, sir! My belief is, that the cake's still in Hacker's study, sir! I—I feel sure of it! I—I assure you, sir, that I never ate it in my study, and never gave Fish any. Fishy will tell you, sir, if you ask him. He was there, in my study, at the time."

"At the time you ate the cake?" gasped the Head.

"Nunno, sir! At the time I didn't eat it, sir!" gasped Bunter.

"Upon my word!" said Mr. Quelch. "It is clear that Bunter has recently purloined the cake, sir! That, however, is not the subject of the present inquiry."

"Quite so!" said the Head. "That matter I leave in your hands, Mr. Quelch. "Bunter, was it you whom Mr. Hacker found in his study, and took by the collar?"

"Oh, no, sir."

"Did you escape by jumping from Mr. Hacker's window?"

"No fear! I—I mean, no, sir!"

"The truth!" said the Head, in a terrifying voice.

"Oh crumbs! I—I swear, sir!" gasped Bunter.

"I am afraid it is impossible to place the slightest reliance on any statement made by this untruthful boy," said the Head. "I shall require you, Bunter, to produce evidence that you were not in Mr. Hacker's study at that time."

"Oh lor'!"

"Bunter should have been in his study at preparation, sir," said Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, sir! I—I was at prep, sir!" gasped Bunter. "Being time for prep, sir, I—I was hard at work. I'm always very careful about my prep, sir, as—as my Form master will tell you, sir!"

"I can tell your headmaster nothing of the kind, Bunter," said Mr. Quelch severely. "But if Bunter was at preparation, sir, as he should have been, the two boys who share his study will be aware—"

"Quite so!" said the Head.

"Oh crumbs! I—I mean, I—I wasn't at prep, sir!" groaned Bunter. "Now I come to think of it, sir—"

"You were not in your study?" boomed the Head.

"Oh dear! No, sir! I—I had been—been working so hard, sir, I—I went down to the Rag, sir, for a—a—rest! I—I wasn't thinking of getting along to Mr. Hacker's study, sir! No such thought ever entered my head, sir!"

"Are you referring to the Recreation Room?" The majestic Head could not possibly speak of the "Rag." "You were in that room, then, while the rest of your Form were in their studies?"

"Yes, sir!"

"Was anyone else there at the time?"

"Nunno, sir!"

"Then you can produce no witnesses to your whereabouts at the time of the outrage in Mr. Hacker's study?" demanded the Head.

He was frowning blackly now, and Mr. Quelch's face was grim. Hacker's glinting eyes now glinted at Bunter instead of Bob Cherry. It looked as if the culprit had been discovered at last; and the Famous Five had that opinion as well as the three masters. Only Harry Wharton had a doubt. It did not seem to him that the fellow who had tumbled on him from Hacker's window was nearly so weighty as William George Bunter.

Bunter's fat knees knocked together.

His eyes nearly bulged through his spectacles. The evidence against him was overwhelming. His attempt on the cake in the afternoon—his recent exploit in bagging it while the inquiry was going on—his absence from his study at the time of the outrage—all combined to fix the guilt on his devoted head.

Then, like a flash of illumination, there came into Bunter's fat brain the remembrance of Fisher T. Fish. Fish was a witness—the witness he wanted! "Fish!" he gasped.

"What? What do you mean by fish?" exclaimed the Head.

"Fish, sir—"

"Is the boy out of his senses? I am not speaking to you about fish, Bunter. What do you mean by fish?"

"There is a boy of that name in my Form, sir!" murmured Mr. Quelch.

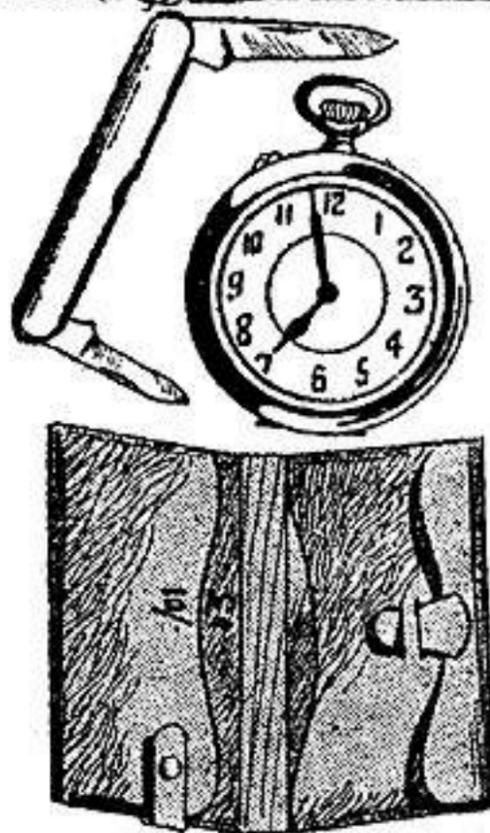
"Oh, yes! Quite so—quite!"

"Fish knows, sir!" gasped Bunter. "Fishy will tell you, sir! He knows I was in the Rag when the row started."

"You have already stated that no one was in that apartment, Bunter."

"No, sir—yes, sir! He wasn't there, but he came in," gasped Bunter. "You see, sir, he had been out for a walk in the quad—"

"What?"



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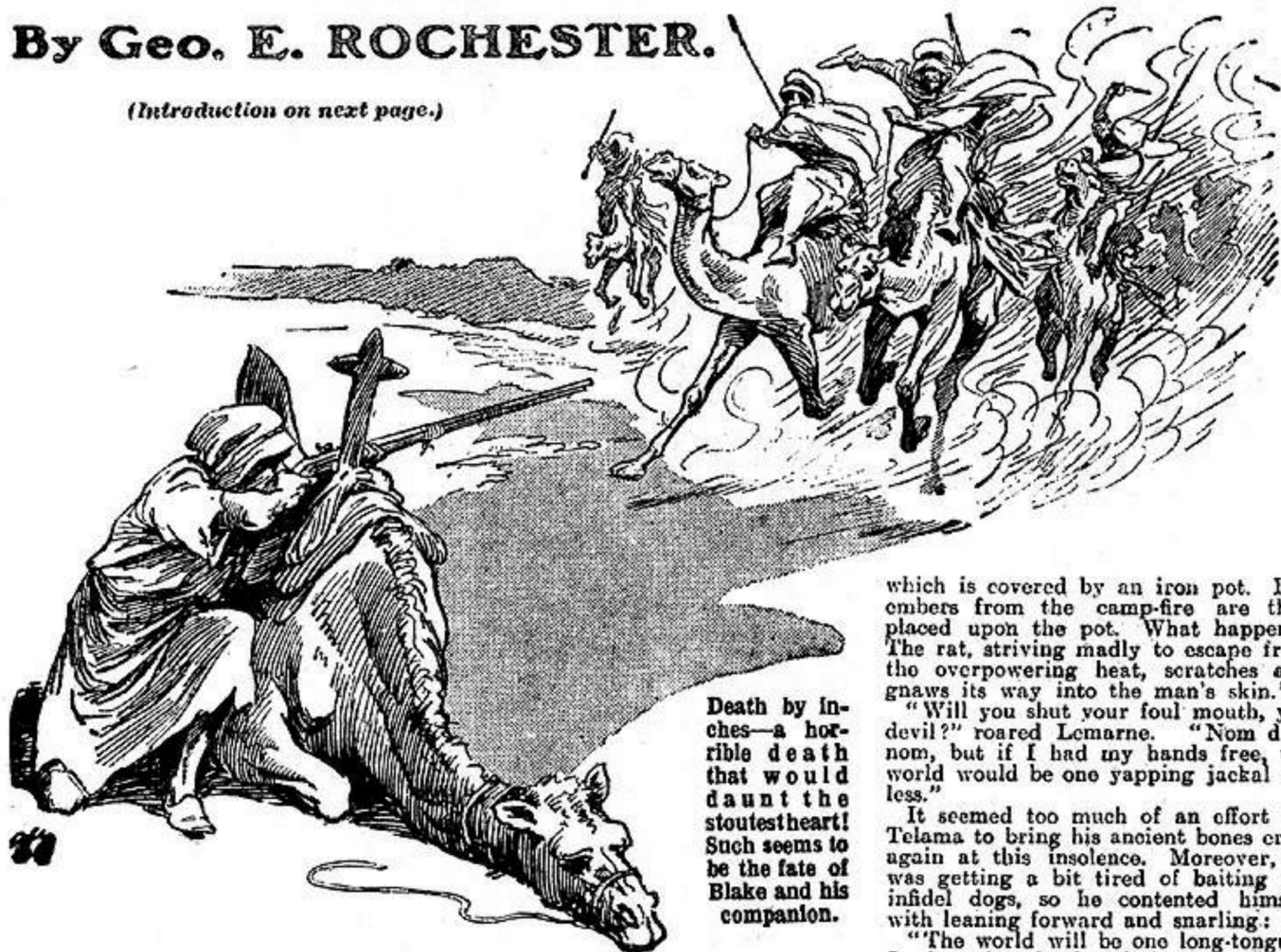
The Popular Story Paper

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FOR THE GLORY OF FRANCE!

By Geo. E. ROCHESTER.

(Introduction on next page.)



Death by inches—a horrible death that would daunt the stoutest heart! Such seems to be the fate of Blake and his companion.

Telama Gloats!

RESEATING himself in squatting posture, Telama, the Touareg chief, went on:

"Dost know how Ali bu Sadi hates all infidel dogs?" he said gratingly. "Hast heard the tales which are told of him?"

"Lies—all lies!" declared Lemarne stoutly; then, turning to Paul, cried: "These are lies, mon enfant!"

But they were not lies—those tales of Ali bu Sadi of which Telama was speaking. And Lemarne knew it. It was to reassure Paul Blake, to close his ears to what might come that he had so emphatically dubbed them as lies.

"Hast heard what he did to Sergeant Mauser of the Fifth Company of the First Regiment of the Legion?" purred Telama. "He remembered that dog of a sergeant who once had lodged him in the bazaar prison of Sidi-bel-Abbes. Well, dost know what his vengeance was when that accursed fool of a sergeant fell into his hands?"

"No," lied Lemarne. "Nor do I wish to hear of it."

But Lemarne knew—there were few who did not—what had been the sickening and revolting fate of Sergeant Mauser.

"Ali bu Sadi relieved him of his nose," went on Telama gloatingly. "Yea, he cut off his nose. And what then?"

"Hold your lying tongue, you vulture!" blazed Lemarne.

"He fried it," continued Telama, rubbing his skinny hands with glee. "Yea, fried his nose, and made the miserable dog of a sergeant eat it!"

"He tried to, you mean," said Lemarne hoarsely.

"Yes," assented Telama. "And stabbed him dead when he refused. And then there was Corporal Schaumvorge—"

"Have you brought s here to tell us this?" shouted Lemarne.

"I have," replied the other. "It is so that thou shalt know what lies in store for thee and thy companion when thou art delivered safely into the camp of the Chosen One. It was the ears of Corporal Schaumvorge which were first sliced off. He was then buried in sand up to his neck. Eight hours of burning sun poured down on his festering wounds and unprotected head. But the Chosen One was merciful. His hearing was offended by the groans of the unhappy wretch, and before the sun had set he allowed him to find the oblivion which lies in death."

"Merciful?" sneered Lemarne. "You are happy in your choice of words."

Telama ignored the interruption. Undoubtedly he found a fiendish satisfaction in gloatingly recounting the unspeakable atrocities of which Ali bu Sadi had been guilty.

"A hundred mounted horsemen swept down on Corporal Schaumvorge," he continued. "And when they had passed, the miserable one's head had been beaten into pulp by the thundering hoofs of their mounts. Who dares say that it was not a swift and merciful death?"

Paul, sick with horror, could only stare at the skinny, malevolent figure of the speaker, squatting in the yellow, flickering illumination of the oil lamp.

"Maybe the rat will be used to kill thee," cackled Telama. "Thou knowest the procedure, dost thou not? On the belly of a man is placed a rat

which is covered by an iron pot. Hot embers from the camp-fire are then placed upon the pot. What happens? The rat, striving madly to escape from the overpowering heat, scratches and gnaws its way into the man's skin."

"Will you shut your foul mouth, you devil?" roared Lemarne. "Nom d'un nom, but if I had my hands free, the world would be one yapping jackal the less."

It seemed too much of an effort for Telama to bring his ancient bones erect again at this insolence. Moreover, he was getting a bit tired of baiting the infidel dogs, so he contented himself with leaning forward and snarling:

"The world will be one long-tongued Legionnaire the less before the dawn, if thou dost not curb thy speech."

Then, turning to the guard, he cried: "To their tent with them! And if they escape ye will answer for it with thy lives!"

Escape!

SLOWLY the night hours passed for Paul. He could not sleep. The agony of tight-drawn bonds cutting into wrists and ankles was sufficient to keep him awake, if the recollection of what he had heard that night was not.

By his side, still and motionless, lay Lemarne. Whether or not his companion slept Paul did not know. But it seemed he did, for Lemarne was an old campaigner; a splendid typo of adventurer, and hardened in the ways of men.

Silhouetted against the grey background of desert and the star-spangled sky squatted the two Arab guards at the open flap of the tent. They were conversing in low tones with an occasional over-the-shoulder glance at the prisoners.

"Boy!" The word, scarce breathed, came to Paul's ears.

"Yes?" he whispered softly. There was silence for a few long, tense moments. Then again came the hushed, low voice of Lemarne:

"Roll over on your side—your back to me."

Stealthily, and with the utmost caution, Paul obeyed. Silence again, broken suddenly by a faint rustling as Lemarne shifted his position.

Then Paul tensed, for he could feel THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,156.

the strong teeth of Lemarne tugging at the bonds which bound his wrists.

Wild hope surged madly in Paul's heart in that moment. He realised to the full, then, what he had subconsciously known all along, and that was that Lemarne would never say die until death had come.

One of the guards rose suddenly to his feet, and, entering the tent, bent down to peer at the captives. It was not the first time he and his companion had taken this precaution during their hours on duty.

As before he saw nothing now to rouse his suspicions, for Lemarne, stretched out full length in his bonds, appeared to be lost in slumber.

Satisfied that nothing was amiss, the guard straightened up, and, retracing his steps, rejoined his comrade. Long, precious minutes had passed before Paul felt the tugging at his bonds recommence.

Then came torturing doubt. The dawn could not be long in breaking. Would his hands be freed before then? And if they were, could he and Lemarne ever hope to escape? It seemed impossible, for at the first false step the lightly-sleeping camp would be aroused.

There came a sudden easing of the thongs about his wrists, and the scarce audible voice of Lemarne:

"Work the stiffness out of your fingers—then free your ankles!"

It was risky work, plucking at the thongs which bound his ankles, but Paul managed it without discovery by the murmuring guards. Then softly he informed Lemarne that he was free.

"Now release me!" breathed the Legionnaire.

Scarce daring to move, tensing with bated breath at every rustle, Paul turned over. His fingers groped for, and found, the bound wrists of Lemarne.

"Hurry, boy!" warned Lemarne. "We have such little time!"

Yes, soon now it would be the dawn. But it had been very necessary to delay in order to lull the guards into a sense of security as far as the safe keeping of their prisoners was concerned.

Lemarne's wrists were freed. Softly rubbing chafed skin to ease the agony of renewed circulation, he cautiously loosened the bonds about his ankles.

"Are you ready?" he whispered.

"Yes," breathed Paul, athrill with this new chance of life.

"Then listen! We will overpower the guard and make for the camel enclosure. Follow me—and our lives depend on our swiftness of action!"

Slowly, inch by inch, he and Paul rose to a crouching attitude. One step forward they took, and then another, towards the dimly seen figures of the two guards seated at the tent entrance.

"Now!" breathed Lemarne, and with the word he hurled himself forward with the agility and deadly precision of a panther.

His hands closed round the neck of one of the guards; his savage fingers pressing vice-like on the fellow's windpipe.

Simultaneously, Paul hurled against the other guard, sending him gasping and asprawl face foremost to the sand.

The man's musket fell from his hand; and before he could recover either his wind or his senses sufficiently to let out a bellow of alarm. Paul had pounced on the weapon and brought it down with a sickening thud on the Arab's skull.

The man grunted once, relaxed, and

went limp. His companion, in the remorseless grip of Lemarne, was not being dealt with so mercifully. For, sprawling on his back on the sand with the softly cursing Legionnaire atop of him, he was being strangled to death.

Frantically, desperately, he writhed and squirmed, his terror-stricken eyes abulge. But tighter and tighter pressed those awful choking fingers, relentlessly queezing his windpipe so that not one breath of air could he draw to bring ease to tortured lungs and pounding, bursting heart.

Weaker grew his struggles, till at last a ghastly rattle in his throat, and he went limp and quiescent. Another second Lemarne pressed, then releasing his grip, staggered to his feet.

"Dead as a doornail!" he muttered, wiping his hands. "Allons—the camel enclosure—quickly!"

Remember, you who would moralise, that Lemarne had a code which was entirely his own. Deliberately, and with his naked hands, he had killed that Arab; killed him when he needed only to have choked him into unconsciousness.

But if you had demanded of him why he had gone so far, he would, astounded by your stupidity, have answered brusquely that the dog deserved it. For only too well did Lemarne know that the tales of torture and mutilation which had been told that night in the tent of Telama were true in every hideous detail.

Stooping, he retrieved the fallen musket of the dead Arab. Then, straightening up, he wrapped closer about himself the Arab robe which he was wearing.

"A bold front, mon vieux," he said softly. "There will be a guard—leave him to me—"

He set off, striding towards the camel enclosure with Paul by his side. As they approached the rickety enclosure the white-robed guard loomed up before them.

"What seek ye—" he began casually. That was as far as he got before the vicious fist of Lemarne, clenched and as hard as teak, took him full on the point of the jaw.

Every atom of Lemarne's strength was behind the blow, and the man went down as though poleaxed.

INTRODUCTION.

To save his rascally cousin, Guy Warren from expulsion on a charge of theft, Paul Blake, Fifth-Former of Greystones, takes the blame on his own shoulders by running away from school. Fired by its promise of adventure, Paul joins the Foreign Legion of France and is sent to the desert station of Sidi-bel-Abbes, in North Africa. There he forms friendships with Lemarne, a hard-bitten Legionnaire, Esterharn, a former officer in the French Army, and Desmond, once captain of Greystones. When, a few weeks later, a strong force of the Legion is sent into the desert to quell an Arab rising, these four go with it. After a terrible hand-to-hand fight with the fanatical tribesmen, the company capture the desolate fort of Zukra, and from one of the Arab prisoners Sergeant-Major Bolke learns startling news. It is that a party of English tourists, including Guy Warren, who has now succeeded to the title and fortune of his father, and his sister June, have fallen into the hands of Ali bu Sadi, the leader of the great revolt. Nothing can be done to help them, however, until the depleted force of the Legion has been reinforced, and Bolke sends Lemarne and Paul Blake on a perilous journey to the garrison at Kesh-el-Kabar, two hundred miles away. But Fate is against them, for scarcely are the two daring Legionnaires out of sight of Zukra than they are captured by a band of Touaregs. Telama, the chief, tells his prisoners to prepare for a horrible death, for they are to be handed over to Ali bu Sadi, the merciless.

(Now read on.)

"Take possession of his rifle, boy," counselled Lemarne coolly. "He will give no trouble for a while!"

Paul picked up the musket whilst Lemarne swiftly removed a portion of the enclosure fencing.

"This is a gamble," grunted Paul's companion. "this choosing of a camel. Take the nearer and pray that le bon Dieu will guide you to a swift one!"

Three minutes later both were mounted and, with prodigious grunts and heavings, the brutes they had selected rose to their feet from kneeling postures.

"Taisez vous!" cursed Lemarne beneath his breath. "Nom d'un nom, must you tell the world of our going?"

On their softly-padding camels, he and Paul moved quietly out of the enclosure and headed away out into the darkness of the desert.

"Keep close to me, boy!" said Lemarne.

"Yes," answered Paul jubilantly.

How simple it had all been; how absurdly easy with Lemarne to lead. Yes, therein lay the whole secret of their success; in the cool and calculating leadership of the grim-faced Legionnaire.

Never for an instant had Lemarne hesitated as to his course of action; never for an instant had he been flurried. By sheer cold nerve he had triumphed in what, from the very outset, had been but a forlorn hope.

Once clear of the encampment, he and Paul goaded their mounts into a swift trot, taking their course by the stars and making towards the north-east.

But scarce had they covered half a kilometre than from the encampment there came to their ears the distant sounds of hubbub and commotion interposed by the sharp, whip-like crack of a rifle.

"That's the alarm!" commented Lemarne. "Mordieu, but how pleased that vulture, Telama, will be to learn the news that we have gone!"

The Sandstorm!

THAT pursuit would follow hard on the heels of the discovery of their flight, both Paul and Lemarne knew full well.

"Keep that brute of yours going," commented Lemarne, urging his camel to further effort, "even if you break its heart!"

They must be well away by dawn, out of sight of their pursuers, even if it meant dismounting then to rest their half-starved camels. Better that, than to be in view when the brightness of dawn came flooding across the desert.

So, pressing their mounts to the utmost, they rode on towards the north-east, Lemarne turning every now and again to peer back into the darkness behind.

"The dawn is long in coming," he grunted once, "and the wind is rising!"

Everything had been deathly still when they had left the robber camp; but now Paul was conscious of a chill, gusty wind, which, rising intermittently, brought with it stinging particles of whirling sand.

Then it was that he beheld a sight strange to western eyes. For with a sudden lightening of the sky which seemed to herald a desert dawn, the sun swung up above the distant horizon like some great dull ball of copper.

It gave no flashing rays, but flooded the desert with a sickly yellow illumination through which, one could not see beyond a kilometre. And with the rising of the sun, the wind grew steadily in intensity.

"There is a sandstorm coming," said Lemarne. "Any moment it will be on us, but keep going until it swoops!"

The camels obviously knew what lay ahead, for they grew more fidgety and uneasy. The first sickly illumination of the weird dawn was now passing, and the sky was steadily darkening again. Then, without warning, Paul's mount whirled and went down on bended fore-knees with a violence which almost shot the boy over its head.

Lemarne's mount followed suit, cutting short his yell of:

"It comes!"

A roar like that of distant incessant thunder was accompanied by a sudden blackening out of the now blood-red sun. Next instant the roar had risen to a deafening crescendo of sound, and the darkened world resolved itself into a chaos of whirling, blinding, driving sand.

Crouched in the lee of their camels with heads covered, Paul and Lemarne waited for the raging fury of the storm to pass. Every moment breathing became more difficult, and Paul felt as though a thousand red-hot needles were pricking throat and lungs.

For twenty minutes the shrieking, sand-laden hurricane held the desert in thrall, erasing dunes, levelling ridges, and altering the whole topography of that vast ocean of swirling turbulent sand.

Suddenly the storm passed; passing as swiftly as it had come. Half suffocated, Paul and Lemarne staggered to their feet. The wind was dying away in fitful gusts, and the sun had come into its own again, shining brilliantly in a cloudless sky.

"We must push on!" said Lemarne grimly, urging his camel to its feet.

Then came tragedy, swift and sudden. For Paul's camel, on lurching unwillingly to its feet, was found to be dead lame.

"Nom d'un chien!" swore Lemarne, in dismay. "I knew they would not carry us far, but I had hoped that it would be farther than this—"

He broke off, peering out across the desert the way they had come.

"And here is Telama!" he said harshly. "Sangdicu, but the vulture has lost no time!"

Topping a rise some distance away, and heading towards them, was a body of hard-riding Arabs.

Lemarne gripped Paul by the arm.

"Boy," he said sternly, "this is the parting of the ways for us. Take my camel and make Kesh-el-Kabar at any cost!"

"No," answered Paul, determinedly. "It is you who must go, Lemarne. You know the desert far better than me, and you will win through where I would fail!"

Lemarne hesitated. He knew the truth which lay in the boy's words, and there were the lives of those at Zukra to think of.

"I hate leaving you," he muttered. "It is certain death for you—the enemy will never let you out of their clutches again—"

"Don't you worry about me!" responded Paul.

He held out his hand.

"Good-bye, Lemarne," he said huskily, "and good luck!"

Lemarne took the boy's hand in his own firm, brown fingers.

"Willingly would I stay—you know

that," he muttered jerkily. "Le bon Dieu keep you, boy. Adieu!"

Next minute he was gone, riding hard towards the north-east, and Kesh-el-Kabar.

Paul, crouched behind his kneeling camel, slid the long barrel of the old-fashioned musket across the animal's quarters.

With butt cuddled into his cheek, he waited tensely for the arrival of the Arabs who were sweeping down on him with Telama in the lead.

It was when they were within twenty metres of him that, sighting with coolness and precision, he shot Telama right between the eyes with the one cartridge the musket took.

At the Camp of the Chosen One!

It was obviously the intention of the Arabs to take Paul alive. Whilst the majority swept on in pursuit of Lemarne, some half-a-dozen swung themselves from their camels and made a concerted rush at the boy.

Paul strove desperately with clubbed musket to keep them at bay. But the end was inevitable. A huge Arab, with eyes blazing, and curved sword whirling aloft, leapt in. The flat of the blade crashed sickeningly against Paul's skull, and he pitched face foremost to the sand, engulfed in the blackness of unconsciousness.

He came round to find that the party in pursuit of Lemarne had given up the chase as hopeless, and returned. Azbar, brother of the dead Telama, was now leader. At his harsh command the boy's arms were pinioned, and he was mounted on the back of a halter-led baggage camel.

A few moments later the rest of the party had mounted, and the cavalcade moved off, heading westwards, and making for the camp of Ali bu Sadi.

There followed for Paul two long weary aching days of utter wretchedness. It was not that he suffered any actual brutality from his captors. As a matter of fact, in his heart of hearts, the gaunt Azbar was not ungrateful to the boy. For had not he, Azbar, profited by that shot which had taken his brother full between the eyes, and left the robber band in need of a new leader?

Azbar had liked his brother. But he liked better the role of chieftain which was now his, even if those whom he commanded were only a miserable pack of cut-throat desert robbers. It was far better to lead even a rabble than be led.

So he did not deliberately go out of his way to make

things unpleasant for the boy. There was no need. The chafing of his bonds, the throbbing agony of his wounded head the pitiless scorching of the blazing sun, made those two days a hideous and ever-to-be-forgotten nightmare for Paul.

It was when evening of the second day had come, with the sun sinking, a flaming ball of fire beyond the desert rim, that the cavalcade reached the oasis where Ali bu Sadi was encamped.

Halting his band some little distance from the oasis, Azbar rode forward alone to seek audience with Ali bu Sadi, the Chosen One of Allah.

Whilst he was gone naked children, staring, chattering women, and fierco-visaged men, clustered round Paul and his captors. It wanted but one harsh, explanatory word from one of the latter and they might have pulled Paul from his camel and killed him there and then.

But Azbar returned before their hate had overridden their discretion. Which was just as well for them, for Ali bu Sadi would not lightly have tolerated any such interference with one whom he had already ordered to be brought immediately to his presence.

Azbar was accompanied by six stalwart, mounted Arabs of fine physique. Taking charge of Paul, and followed by the swarm of men, women, and children they escorted the boy through a medley of tents to the great, gaudily-coloured one of Ali bu Sadi.

At the entrance to the tent, four of the guard turned to disperse the crowd. The other two, swinging themselves from their horses, pulled Paul from his camel and hustled him into the tent.

(There are scores of thrills in next week's fine instalment, and the wise reader will not miss one of them—he'll order his MAGNET well IN ADVANCE!)

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WHEN ANSWERING ADVERTISEMENTS PLEASE
MENTION THIS PAPER.

WHO HACKED HACKER?

(Continued from page 24.)

"And I let him in at the window, sir."

The Famous Five jumped as if moved by the same spring. Mr. Quelch started. Mr. Hacker drew a quick breath. The Head compressed his lips. Billy Bunter had not dreamed of the sensation that statement would make.

"I—I didn't mean to give Fishy away, sir," mumbled Bunter. "He told me he had only been out for a walk in the quad, sir, and I told him it was only lines for going out after lock-up. I let him in at the window, sir, just before the row started; it was a few minutes later that the fellows began shouting out that somebody had hacked Hacker. Fish will prove that I was in the Rag at the time, sir."

There was a deep silence.

"If this statement is correct, Mr. Quelch," said the Head at last, "it appears that the boy Fish was out of the House at the time."

"It appears so, sir."

"In that case he is undoubtedly the boy who jumped from Mr. Hacker's window, after assaulting Mr. Hacker."

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Bob Cherry.

Billy Bunter jumped.

"Oh, the beast!" he ejaculated. "He told me he'd only been out for a walk in the quad! Oh, the awful rotter! And I wondered how he got smothered with ink in the quad, and he said it was his fountain-pen," gasped Bunter; "and now I jolly well know—"

"An inkpot was upset in my study, sir," said Hacker. "If this boy Fish was out of the House, and entered surreptitiously in an inky state—"

"Fish must be questioned," said the Head. "I can place no reliance on Bunter's statements."

"Oh, really, sir—"

"Silence! Mr. Quelch, perhaps you will summon the boy Fish."

"Certainly, sir."

Mr. Quelch left the study on a second

expedition. While he was gone, the Head questioned the Owl of the Remove, and drew from him a full description of Fishy's state when he was let in at the window of the Rag. Then there was silence till the Remove master returned, followed by Fisher T. Fish.

Fisher T. Fish was lacking in his usual assurance as he entered the Head's study. His bony face was very unquiet and uneasy, and he caught his breath at the sight of Billy Bunter in the study. Fishy's heart sank almost into his boots as he realised that there was danger in the air. He could not help guessing that the game was up, and that it was he, Fisher Tarleton Fish, who was booked to come out at the little end of the horn.

"Fish!" said the Head, fixing his stern eyes on the pallid, bony countenance, "I require to know whether you were out of the House after lock-up?"

"Nope—I mean, no, sir!" said Fisher T. Fish desperately.

"Oh, really, Fishy—"

"Silence, Bunter! Had you been in Mr. Hacker's study?"

"Nope!"

"Did you jump from his window?"

"Nope!"

"Did you re-enter by a window in the recreation-room, with Bunter's assistance from within?"

"Nope!"

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Bunter, blinking at Fisher T. Fish through his spectacles in amazement. "Of all the blessed fibbers—"

"Silence, Bunter! Fish, have you changed your jacket this evening?"

Fisher T. Fish started.

"According to Bunter's statement, you came in with your jacket smothered with ink. If you have changed it, a search will doubtless discover the inky garment. Reflect before you answer me, Fish!"

Fisher T. Fish thought of the ink-soaked jacket crammed out of sight at the bottom of his box in the Remove dormitory. He trembled.

There was a terrible silence for some moments. Fisher T. Fish's face was ashen.

"Answer me!" said the Head at last.

An answer was scarcely necessary, for the culprit's ashy face told its own tale.

"I—I—I guess," Fisher T. Fish mumbled distantly—"I—I guess, sir, I never meant to kick Mr. Hacker's shins, sir! I—I was scared stiff, sir—just scared stiff, when he cinched me in his study, sir, and—and—and I jost did it, sir, without meaning to. Oh dear! I—I guess—"

Fisher T. Fish's miserable voice trailed away.

There was another silence.

"I think," said the Head, "that the matter is now cleared-up. It was Fish who assaulted you, Mr. Hacker."

"That is now clear, sir," said Mr. Hacker.

"You may go!" said the Head, with a glance at the juniors, "with the exception of Fish. Fish will remain."

Harry Wharton & Co. left the study, Billy Bunter rolling after them. Fisher T. Fish remained—for the execution.

The mystery was a mystery no longer. It was known to all Greyfriars who had "hacked Hacker," and the deep groans that proceeded from Fishy's study for the remainder of the evening told that the culprit was sorry for himself. Nobody else had any sorrow to waste on Fishy. All the fellows agreed that the hacking of Hacker was "outside," and that it was still more outside to keep mum when another fellow was up before the Beak for the offence. So there was a plentiful lack of sympathy for Fisher T. Fish, and he goaned unpitied.

THE END.

(Another fine story of Harry Wharton & Co. in next week's *MAGNET*, chums, entitled: "THE MYSTERY OF THE SILVER BOX!" This is one of Frank Richards' extra-specials, so—'nuff'said!

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MEDIAEVAL GREY FRIARS

MAKE way for the giddy Form Frater, ye wights, and ye'll see the Archery Team in half a jiffy!"

So saying, Thomas Malpense of the Remove at medieval Grey Friars, barged into the crowd round ye notice-board to clear the way for Launcelot de Broke, who had just entered the Hall carrying a strip of parchment in his hand.

Only a few days had passed since Launcelot had displaced the unpopular Walker Strongfellow as Prefect of the Remove, but in that short period the newcomer had made his presence felt in more ways than one.

Under Strongfellow, bullying had been rife; but all that had been changed since Launcelot de Broke's appearance; sundry clinked earpieces and blackened eyes gave a slight indication of ye means taken to accomplish this desirable end.

There was now great curiosity to see what sort of a show the new Form Prefect would make as Captain of Games. For some time past the Remove had been going to ye dogs at games. At archery one team after another had licked them to ye riddy frazzle. Launcelot de Broke had been heard to say that he was going to change all this, and the cheery youths of Grey Friars wondered how.

There was a volley of questions as the now Prefect edged through the crowd towards ye notice-board.

"Prithce tell me if my name is on ye list, de Broke!"

"Gadzooks, and there'll be trouble with a capital 'T' if thou leav'st me out!"

"Same here! In that case I'll smite thee on the boke, I ween!"

Launcelot de Broke only smiled at these salutes as he pinned up his list. Then he drew back to allow the Remove lads to read the selected teams.

"This is what they read:
"ARCHERY MATCH WITH YE BOYS OF ROOKE WOOD SCHOOL."
TEAMS:
"L. de Broke (Captain), Thom. Malpense, Fatty Bacon, Simon Wagstaffe."
"HERE FOLLOWETH YE SELECTED TEAM:"

"Ods bodkins! What about me?"

"Malapert! Where's my giddy name?"

Launcelot de Broke grinned right merrily at the chorus.

"Half a mo, ye numskulls!" he said. "As there are only four in the team ye can't all be chosen. So why not give this little lot a run for ye money and see how they fare?"

"Well spoken, Launcelot!" chorled the chosen members of the team.

Walker Strongfellow elbowed his way to the front, glaring.

"So I'm left out, am I, fellow?" he roared.

"Looks like it," smiled Launcelot. "Any complaints?"

"Rats, and many of same!" he retorted. "I'm going to turn out against Rooke Wood, anyway. You see!"

And with that dark threat the ex-prefect of the Remove buzzed off breathing fire and slaughter.

During the days that followed Launcelot de Broke and his team busied themselves at ye school archery butts and got themselves well into trim until the youthful archery captain was satisfied that they were hot stuff.

Nobody heeded Walker Strongfellow's dark threats. But unbeknown to most of the lads that scurry knave was hatching a deep plot against Launcelot and his team—a plot which was not revealed until the very time of the match.

"Ay! Where are the young varlets?"

echoed Dr Goodsmyle, the venerable headmaster of Grey Friars, who was referre: "Scout round, somebody, and see if they're gorging themselves on doughcakes in Ye Tuckshop!"

Fags, and even members of the senior Forms joined in the search, but naught rewarded their valiant efforts.

Dr. Goodsmyle's frown grew portentous.

"Gadzooks and by my halidom! This is the giddy limit!" he exclaimed at last.

"Here are our visitors from ye ancient foundation of Rooke Wood waiting for the match to begin, and our team is non est! They shall be whipped with many stripes when I lay hands on the wights. Meanwhile, another team of archers must be found to defend the honour of Grey Friars."

"Little me sir!" spoke up Strongfellow, who was standing by smiling evilly to himself. "I'm as fit as ye proverbial fiddle, and I've specially trained three of my fellows to shoot with me."

"It is well," said the Head, with a nod. "That is, of course, with ye proviso that Rooke Wood are willing?"

"More than willing, master!" laughed Will Doughty. "If I mistake me not, these are the very wights who licked to a frazzle last time. Carry on!"

And Will Doughty and the Rooke Wood fellows joined the crowd that moved off towards the Grey Friars archery butts.

II.
"AND now to get busy!" said the Head. "Lend me a groat, somebody, and ye rival captains will toss for choice of innings!"

One of the wealthier scholars produced a groat, and the coin was tossed, the winner being Strongfellow, who elected to shoot first.

Then there was a sudden howl from Dr. Goodsmyle, who was standing at the side of the butte.

"Whoop! Gadzooks and Ods fish! Yarroogh!"

"What ye merrie dickens!" gasped Will Doughty.

"My only doublet!" yelled Bailee of the Remove. "Ye arrow has smitten the Head on the nose!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Removees had spoken sooth. Strongfellow's carefully-aimed shaft had alighted on Dr. Goodsmyle's noble nose, causing damage that was both severe and painful.

The crowd roared right loudly over ye merrie jest, while the venerable headmaster jumped about like ye cat on hot bricks.

Strongfellow's face turned green as he saw what he had achieved.

"I—I crave your pardon, sir!" he stammered. "Of course, it was just ye little mistake—"

"Mistake be jiggered!" roared the Head. "By stripes! If I don't give thee what for after that, my name is not Goodsmyle! Come hither, varlet!"

But Strongfellow was deaf to the voice of ye charmer. One look at the Head's enraged expression was enough for him. He fled.

Dr. Goodsmyle raced after him, and the two disappeared round a corner with great speed.

The remainder of the two teams, and the spectators, all laughing right heartily, joined in the chase with a zest. Then followed a merrie old hunt round ye school.

Strongfellow was a lanky wight, and a good runner withal, and on this occasion fear lent him wings, enabling him to run like ye bunny rabbit.

But Dr. Goodsmyle was no mean sprinter, either, having been a champion on the cinder-track in his earlier days at another, Launcelot the new de Broke, the new Remove at the portal of the School House.

He drew level with the bully of the de Broke, and he managed to stick another, Launcelot the new de Broke, the new Remove at the portal of the School House.

"Ow—wow!" yelled Strongfellow, as he felt a grip of iron on his shoulder. "Lemme alone, master! It was a mistake, I tell thee!"

"Marry! Then there's going to be another mistake made, I ween!" said Dr. Goodsmyle, grimly. "Come hither, knave!"

"W—w—whither art going to take me?" stammered Strongfellow.

"To ye giddy dungeons!"

Strongfellow uttered a loud groan. "Oh crickey! Don't take me there, sir. Canst not put me in ye pillory instead?"

Dr. Goodsmyle paused in surprise. "In ye pillory?" he repeated, with a stare. "Mean to say thou preferest an uncomfortable pillory to a nice comfortable dungeon?"

"Ya, verily!"

"Why, thou must be potty! Anyway, I've no time to waste unlocking ye pillory, just now, so to ye dungeon thou shalt go. Kim on!"

And Dr. Goodsmyle fixed his thumb and forefinger on ye bully's carpiece, and led the way to the dungeons, followed by a wondering crowd.

Then, when the dungeons were reached at last, the reason for the wight's strange behaviour was revealed.

As the crowd followed Dr. Goodsmyle down the stone steps leading below Grey Friars, a chorus of shouts fell on their startled ears.

"Help! Help!"

"Release us, sir!"

"Gadzooks! This is passing strange!" exclaimed the Head, with a frown. "I knew not that prisoners were already here."

"They're not, sir!" gasped Strongfellow. "Mechinks it is just thy imagination."

"Mechinks th'art wandering in thy top storey!" retorted the Head, hurrying down the steps. Then, as he reached the bottom, a cry escaped him.

"Ye missing archery team!"

"Ods fish and by my halidom!" shouted one of the crowd. "It's Launcelot de Broke and his fellow archers!"

"Ye gods! And they're imprisoned in one of ye dungeons!"

Dr. Goodsmyle dived his hand into his poke and brought out a bunch of enormous keys, out of which he selected one and proceeded to open the door of ye dungeon.

As he did so, Strongfellow tugged at his sleeve.

"Look here, sir, if these knaves tell thee 'twas I who locked them up, thou'lt not believe it, wilt?" he asked.

The Head started.

"Marry! So that was ye giddy wheeze, was it?" he cried. "Stand back while I open ye portal, catfish. In two ticks thou'lt be a prisoner in this dungeon thyself."

"But I tell thee I didn't do it—"

With a harsh, metallic sound, the door of the dungeon swung back, and Launcelot de Broke and the three other members of the selected Remove Archery Team trothed out.

"Marry! This is a bit of luck and no mistake!" exclaimed Launcelot, acknowledging the greetings of the crowd with a cheery grin. "We're still in time for the match, if I mistake me not!"

"Verily, th'art only just in time, though!" remarked Dr. Goodsmyle. "Tell me how thou canst be locked in this dungeon?"

"Another of these quaint yarns will appear shortly in the MAGNET. Meanwhile, look out next week for another of William Wibley's 'Talks' dealing with 'College Jags!' Tell please you no end!"



"I'm!"

Launcelot de Broke and his merrie man heistred. These gallant young scholars had no wish to snook, even on such an errant knave as Strongfellow.

Dr. Goodsmyle pursed his lips and turned to Strongfellow.

"Thou art the culprit, art not?"

"Oh crickey! I meant no harm, sir!" growled the Remove bully. "I merely did it for ye lark—"

"Thou mean'st thou merely did it so as to be able to shoot in the archery match in place of the missing ones!" broke in Dr. Goodsmyle, sternly. "Hop into ye dungeon, varlet! Here shalt thou remain for a week and a day, on a diet of bread and water!"

"No wonder ye wight preferred ye pillory to ye dungeon!" remarked the Head, as the crowd ascended the steps again. "How did the blighter get you into ye dungeon, de Broke?"

Launcelot de Broke explained that Strongfellow had taken the teams exploring underground, and had locked them in ye dungeon with a duplicate key which he had borrowed from Gosling, ye ancient porter of Grey Friars.

"But thank goodness ye foul plot came to naught!" finished up Launcelot. "We are in time for ye great archery match after all, and if I mistake me not, we are going to give ye Rooke Wood fellows the licking of their lives."

Launcelot was right. He and his merrie man made mince-meat of Rooke Wood players, scoring "bull" after "bull" with amazing rapidity.

And when the Rooke Wood fellows galloped away on their horses, licked to ye giddy frazzle, everybody had to admit that no team had ever been more deserving of success than Ye Grey Friars Archers!

THE END.

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