

"WHO PUNCHED PROUT?"

Amazing mystery solved in this week's Sensational School Story.

The MAGNET²





FRANK RICHARDS' MOST SENSATIONAL SCHOOL STORY!

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Follow Your Leader!

HARRY WHARTON smiled. That smile did it! The smile was quite involuntary. It was there before Wharton knew that it was coming. He suppressed it instantly as he perceived that Mr. Prout's eye was upon him. But Prout had seen it, and the beans, so to speak, were spilled.

Of course, the junior ought not to have smiled. Mr. Prout, the master of the Fifth Form, had a black eye; but, properly speaking, there was nothing comic in a black eye. To the possessor thereof it was indeed far from comic. It verged on the tragic.

But a black eye was singularly out of place on the majestic countenance of Prout. It was not in keeping with the rest of Prout. Prout was portly, important, majestic, even a little pompous; in his Form the fellows generally alluded to him as "Old Pompous" or "Don Pomposo." Prout in his normal state had, like Hamlet's father, an eye like Mars, to threaten and command. Now he had an eye like an ill-used prize-fighter. No doubt it was the incongruousness of it that struck Wharton and caused that involuntary, but very unfortunate, smile to flit across his face.

But the smile did it. Ever since Prout had worn that black eye he had been frightfully sensitive on the subject. It seemed to Prout that the gaze of all Greyfriars was concentrated on that black eye, and it was true that it frequently attracted a second glance. Prout surmised—correctly—that it was the subject of infinite jesting.

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In class, Fifth Form men hardly dared to look at their Form master lest Prout should fancy they were staring at his discoloured eye. Prout's temper, previously genial, had been soured by that eye. He was suspicious, touchy, resentful, prone to take offence.

On this particular morning, as Prout walked in the quad, he had, of course, his black eye with him. The vision of that eye was slightly impaired, but the other was terribly sharp and watchful. The smile had scarcely dawned on Harry Wharton's face when Prout spotted it with his sound eye.

Prout's mood was already that of a slumbering volcano, ready to break out in eruption at any moment. He had kept the Fifth on thorns during first and second school. The Fifth had been awfully careful not to look at his eye, but their care had not saved them. Lines had fallen like leaves in Vallambrosa. Prout, in point of fact, was not safe so long as that eye lasted.

And now, walking under the elms, as retired as possible from the public gaze, Prout came face to face with a Remove junior—who smiled!

Prout crimsoned with wrath. It was bad enough to have a disfigured eye—the result of an accident, a sheer accident, an unfortunate and disastrous accident in a fog. But to be laughed at in open quad by impudent Lower boys—

"Wharton!" The captain of the Remove halted. Prout—portly, majestic, wrathful—rolled up to him with the stately motion of a Spanish galleon under full sail.

"Wharton!" rasped Prout. "Yes, sir!" said Harry.

He was grave enough now. Prout's black eye might, or might not, be droll, but the remainder of Prout's features were terrifying in their expression.

"You are pleased to laugh!" said Prout, his sound eye gleaming at Wharton, his tone savagely sarcastic. "May I share the subject of your merriment? May I hear the joke?"

"I—I didn't laugh, sir!" said Harry. A smile—a fleeting smile—could not justly be termed a laugh. Prout exaggerated.

Prout did not heed the denial. It was a case of the wolf and the lamb over again. Prout wanted a victim, and a tweeny-weeny smile was enough.

"You regard an accident—an unfortunate accident in the fog—to a Form master as a fit subject for merriment, Wharton?"

"Oh, no, sir!" "You consider a disfigurement caused by a collision in a thick fog a matter for jesting and hilarity?" boomed Prout.

"Not at all, sir!" gasped Wharton. "Were you in my Form, Wharton, I should cane you!"

Wharton was glad that he was not in Mr. Prout's Form.

"But were you in my Form, sir," continued Prout, "you would not be guilty of such disrespect and bad manners. I am not surprised at it in one of Mr. Quelch's boys—not in the least! Oh, no! In the Fifth Form the boys know how to behave like gentlemen!"

Prout had momentarily forgotten that he had handed out lines by the bushel that morning in the Fifth on the bare

suspicion that the victims were exchanging nods, smiles, or winks.

Wharton coloured.

"But I didn't laugh, sir!" he protested.

"You did!" roared Prout.

"I'm awfully sorry, sir, really, that you bunged your eye against something in the fog last Wednesday!"

"Indeed!" Prout was savagely sarcastic again. "And you express your sorrow by laughing in my face—in my very face—in the quadrangle! You are not in my Form, Wharton. I cannot therefore chastise you as you deserve. But do not think, sir, that you will escape punishment for this insolence! I shall take you to your Form master!"

"But, sir—" gasped Wharton.

"Silence! I shall take you to Mr. Quelch! We shall see whether your Form master will uphold this conduct! Follow me!"

"But—but, I—I say—"

"Follow me!" hooted Prout.

He turned away and steered for the House.

Slowly, reluctantly, Harry Wharton followed him. He was dismayed now and not in the least disposed to smile. He wished he had not taken that stroll under the elms in break, or, alternatively, as the lawyers say, that he hadn't smiled when he met Prout there. Yet surely that small, slight, almost imperceptible smile was excusable when all Greyfriars was laughing over Prout's black eye!

Prout marched majestically across the quad. At a little distance behind him, like a small boat towed by a tall, stately ship, went Wharton.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" Bob Cherry came up. He stared at Prout, and then at the captain of the Remove. "What's up?"

"Prout's dander!" answered Wharton dismally. "He thinks I looked at his jolly old eye!"

"Well, a cat may look at a king," said Bob.

"Kings aren't in it with Prout's eye! He's taking me to Quelch! Better clear off, old chap, before he thinks you're looking at his eye, too!"

"Oh, my hat!" said Bob.

The other members of the Co. came up—Frank Nugent, Johnny Bull, and Hurree Singh. Prout looked round and frowned portentously.

"Wharton!" he rapped.

"Yes, sir!"

"Do not stay talking! Follow me! I have ordered you to follow me! Follow me immediately!"

"I'm following you, sir."

"Kindly do not answer back, Wharton! You will not benefit by further insolence, I assure you! Follow me!"

Wharton, with a resigned look at his chums, followed Prout to the House. Many glances followed Prout as he stalked in, and many faces wore grinning looks, Prout's back being turned. Prout even heard, or thought he heard, a chuckle. His cheeks were crimson, his ears burning, his sound eye gleaming. He arrived at Mr. Quelch's door in Masters' Passage and banged rather than knocked upon it. He almost hurled the door open and marched in, the hapless Wharton at his heels. And Mr. Quelch, who was taking a rest in break in his study armchair, jumped to his feet in surprise at the sight of Prout and the Olympian wrath in his brow.

BETTER THAN EVER—

"THE HOLIDAY ANNUAL."

GOT YOURS YET?

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

High Words!

"WHAT—"

Mr. Quelch looked at Prout and looked at Wharton. His glance dwelt—for a fraction of a second, perhaps—on Prout's black eye. Prout felt it rather than observed it. He had long been aware that that eye was the centre of attraction for glances at Greyfriars. His other eye glinted at the Remove master.

"Mr. Quelch!" boomed Prout. "I report this boy to you! This boy Wharton! It is not by your desire, I presume, that the boys of your Form insult members of Dr. Locke's staff in the quadrangle?"

"My dear Prout—"

"I asked you a question, sir!" boomed Prout. "Is it, or is it not, by your desire, by your permission, that boys of your Form insult other masters, sir, in the quadrangle of Greyfriars?"

Mr. Quelch compressed his lips. He was a tactful gentleman; and he knew that Prout, in his present dark-eyed condition, required tactful treatment. But he was not to be hectored.

"An absurd question, sir!" he answered coldly. "If any boy in my Form has insulted you, you have only to lay the facts before me, and any such offender will be dealt with with unsparring severity."

Prout's finger, trembling with anger, pointed at Wharton.

"SOME" MASTER!

First he got a black eye,
Then he got a prize nose...
Now he's got TWO black eyes
AND a prize nose!!!

"This junior—this Remove boy—this Wharton—"

"What has he done, sir?"

"Laughed in my face, sir!" boomed Prout. "I am aware, sir, that a discoloured eye—the result of an unhappy collision in a fog—may be regarded as—as risible by persons with low, obtuse, unformed minds. But I decline, sir—I absolutely decline—to be laughed at, sir, by a boy in the most unruly and disorderly Form at Greyfriars, sir."

Mr. Quelch coloured with anger.

"You have no right, sir, to make such an observation in regard to my Form!" he snapped.

"This boy Wharton—"

"Whatever Wharton may have done, I presume that the rest of my Form were not concerned in it. Your remark, therefore, is utterly uncalled-for! I can make allowances, Mr. Prout, but—"

"This boy—" boomed Prout.

"Let us be brief, sir!" said Quelch. "Kindly state what Wharton has done, and without exaggeration, sir."

"Exaggeration!" gasped Prout.

"Yes, sir!" said Mr. Quelch acidly. "I certainly find it very hard to credit that any boy in my Form, and especially Wharton, was guilty of such bad manners as you describe."

Prout almost foamed.

"You do not take my word, sir? You refuse to take my word? You—"

"I beg you to be calm, sir!" said Mr. Quelch. "Let me speak to the boy! Wharton, if you laughed at Mr. Prout why—"

"Certainly not, sir!" said Harry.

"The boy dares to contradict me!" gasped Prout.

"Let the boy speak, sir! Wharton—"

"I'm awfully sorry, sir," said Harry. "I never meant to offend Mr. Prout. I certainly did not laugh. I—I may have smiled—just a little! I—I did it without thinking! I'm frightfully sorry."

"Why did you smile, Wharton?" asked Mr. Quelch, his lips twitching, as if he were on the point of smiling himself.

Wharton was crimson.

"I—I—I suddenly caught sight of Mr. Prout's eye, sir, and—and I think I may have smiled just a little, sir, before I thought—"

"Insolent young rascal!" boomed Prout.

Wharton turned to him.

"I'm really sorry, sir," he said. "I hope you will accept my apology, sir."

Prout was not in the mood to accept apologies. He was in a mood to demand something much more drastic.

"You hear him, sir? You hear him, Mr. Quelch? He admits it! Is a Form master, sir, to be made game of by an impudent Lower boy? Are members of Dr. Locke's staff to be held up to ridicule, sir? I demand the punishment of this impudent boy."

Mr. Quelch pursed his lips.

"Wharton, you have been very thoughtless," he said. "You will take a hundred lines of Virgil."

"Very well, sir."

"A hundred lines of Virgil!" repeated Prout, as if he could scarcely believe his ears. Apparently he had expected Wharton's sentence to be something lingering, with boiling oil in it. "Mr. Quelch! Do my ears deceive me?"

"Really, sir, I cannot say!" answered Mr. Quelch tartly. "Wharton, you may leave my study."

"Thank you, sir!"

Wharton left the study gladly enough. Mr. Prout made a movement towards him as he went, as if with the intention of taking the law into his own hands. The junior dodged quickly out of the study.

"Mr. Prout!" exclaimed the Remove master, scandalised.

Prout turned to him.

"Mr. Quelch, you have let that insolent boy go unpunished—practically unpunished! What am I to understand from this, sir? Am I to understand that you encourage—deliberately encourage—boys of your Form to be guilty of insolence towards a senior member of the staff?"

"You are to understand nothing of the kind, sir!" snapped Mr. Quelch. His own anger was rising. "And my advice to you, sir, is not to take notice of such an absurd trifle."

"What?"

"A black eye, sir," said Mr. Quelch, "is certain to attract attention in a gentleman holding the position of a Form master at a public school. You cannot fail to be aware, sir, that your—your discoloured eye has attracted the attention of the whole school. If every boy at Greyfriars who inadvertently smiles at the sight of a black eye is to be severely punished, incessant punishments will be the order of the day here. You would be well-advised, sir, to take no notice of such trifling things."

Prout gurgled.

"Trifling things, sir! Insolence—impudence—mockery!" he articulated. "You call these trifling things! I am

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to be subjected to public derision, sir, because of an unfortunate accident in a fog! The boy has himself admitted that he—he smiled—as if there were something comic, sir, in this discoloration of my—my optic, sir! I am thankful, sir," roared Prout, "that I am not the master of such a Form as the Remove! I am thankful, sir, that I am master of a Form in which the boys are gentlemen, sir, who would never dream of grinning, sir, or passing remarks on such a topic, sir! I do not envy you your Form, sir!"

Mr. Quelch bridled angrily. Like every Form master, he was sensitive on the subject of his Form. Prout, in his wrath, was going too far. Mr. Quelch had a temper of his own.

"Sir, I decline to listen to such animadversions on my Form!" he exclaimed. "I decline absolutely, sir."

"A mob of disrespectful young rascals, sir!" hooted Prout, who had now got the bit between his teeth, as it were.

"Mr. Prout!" Quelch was hooting now, as well as Prout. "You are perhaps unaware of the comments passed by boys of your own Form on the subject of your—your discoloured eye, sir. I myself, sir, with my own ears, have heard certain remarks."

"You have heard remarks, sir? Remarks uttered by Fifth Form boys? I demand to know what these remarks were, sir!" foamed Prout.

"I have no desire to repeat them!" said Mr. Quelch. "But—"

"I demand that you repeat them, sir, unless you desire me to believe that you are prevaricating, sir!" bawled Prout.

"Upon my word!" gasped Mr. Quelch. "I can make allowances, sir, but this is too much—too much! I will tell you, sir, what I inadvertently heard—uttered by boys in the Fifth Form, sir. I will mention no names, sir—I am not an informer—but I undoubtedly heard a Fifth Form boy declare that your explanation of that discoloration, sir, was inadmissible. His exact words, sir, were these: 'Prout's story is too thin; you don't bag black eyes barging about in a fog.' And the other Fifth Form boy, sir, answered in these words: 'Much better have used the punch-ball story; it wouldn't go down, but it's not so thin as a fog story.' These words, sir, I heard myself, with my own ears."

Prout seemed to be choking.

"The names of the boys, sir?" he gasped.

"I cannot give you their names; I have said that I am no informer. I heard the utterances by chance, and it would be quite unfair to give the names of the boys."

"Then, sir," roared Prout, "I refuse to believe a word of it, sir."

Quelch jumped.

"Sir!" he gurgled.

"Not one word, sir—not one syllable!" bawled Prout. "You are attributing your own baseless suspicions, sir, to boys of my Form."

"Suspicious, sir! I have no suspicions! Yet since you take that tone, sir, I will say that it was extraordinary—very extraordinary—that a collision in a fog should result in the blackening of an eye. Since you venture, sir, to cast doubt on my word, I will go so far as to say that your explanation of that black eye, sir, is regarded with doubt—indeed, with derision—in many quarters."

"Mr. Quelch!"

"Mr. Prout!"

"You—you dare—"

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"It is you, sir, who dare—"

The two masters, both in a goaded state, faced one another like two angry and excited turkey-cocks. What would have followed cannot be said; for at that moment a fat squeak—the squeak of Billy Bunter—was heard under the open study window.

"I say, you fellows! Quelch and Prout are having a row!"

That squeak recalled the two masters to a sense of their dignity, and of the fitness of things. Prout checked his wrath, spun on his heel, and marched out of the study. Quelch made one bound to the window.

"Bunter!"

"Oh lor'!"

"Take five hundred lines!"

"Oh crikey!"

Quelch slammed the window shut.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Bunter Talks Too Much!

"WARE beaks!" murmured Herbert Vernon-Smith.

That warning from the Bounder of Greyfriars was hardly needed. One glance at their Form master's face was enough to warn most of the Remove to be very careful in third school that morning.

Mr. Quelch had been quite genial in second school. During break, evidently, something had occurred to mar that geniality.

Most of the fellows knew what it was.

Prout had complained of a Remove man; and Quelch, of course, hated complaints made about his Form. So much the fellows knew from Wharton. But from Billy Bunter they knew much more.

There had been high words between the two Form masters. Bunter, under Quelch's window, had heard them. Bunter, of course, had reported them far and wide, with various additions and embroideries of his own. Bunter, landed with five hundred lines for listening under the window, was in a state of mingled dismay and indignation and towering wrath. He was, he told the fellows, jolly well inclined to tell Quelch what he jolly well thought of him. However, Bunter refrained—prudently—from taking that drastic step; and Quelch was left in happy ignorance of what William George Bunter thought of him.

When the bell rang, and the Remove gathered at their Form-room door, and saw Quelch coming up the passage, they exchanged glances. The Bounder's whispered warning was superfluous. The look on Quelch's face was more than enough.

Quelch's face was calm—very calm. But it was very set, and there was a glint in his gimlet eyes. His lips were compressed. Obviously, the Remove had to be on their best behaviour. There was thunder in the air.

"All very well!" muttered Skinner. "Quelch rags with Prout—and takes it out of us! Call that fair?"

"The fairness is not terrific, my esteemed Skinner," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "But what cannot be cured must go longest to the well, as the proverb remarks."

"Form masters shouldn't row with one another!" said Bolsover major. "Bad form you know."

"Not Quelch's fault," said Harry Wharton. "Prout's frightfully touchy. That blessed black eye—"

"Well, Prout shouldn't get chucked out of a pub, or whatever it was he did," said Skinner. "Disgraceful, I call it!"

"You silly ass, Prout never was chucked out of a pub!" said Bob Cherry. "He got that black eye in the fog last Wednesday, barging into something."

"So he said!" jeered Skinner.

"A man has to say something when he sports a black eye!" remarked Snoop. "But I must say that that's the thinnest story I've ever heard."

"I say, you fellows, my belief is that Prout got into a row with the potman at the Cross Keys!" said Bunter.

"Why didn't he say it was a punch-ball?" asked Skinner. "It's the usual thing in such a case. Prout had to be original, of course!"

"What utter rot!" said Mark Linley. "You can't seriously believe that Prout has been in a scrap with somebody, and got his eye blacked."

"I jolly well don't believe anything else," answered Skinner, "and I know they think so in the Fifth!"

"Prout was punched in the eye!" said Vernon-Smith. "In my opinion, there isn't the slightest doubt about that. Running into a tree or a building in a fog wouldn't, and couldn't, black a man's eye."

"It does sound queer!" admitted Nugent.

"It's queer!" said Johnny Bull. "I ran into a tree, hard, in that same fog, and got a swollen nose. But nothing happened to my eye. Only my boko."

"But—" said Redwing.

"It was gammon, of course," said the Bounder. "Prout didn't want to explain how he collected that black eye. He spun a yarn about the fog. It happened to be foggy that afternoon, and the fog came in handy. But Prout must think us a silly set of asses if he thinks we believe a word of it."

"I suppose it wasn't Quelch gave it him?" said Skinner reflectively.

"Quelch?" ejaculated a dozen voices.

"Well," said Skinner, "they rowed this afternoon, according to Bunter. They may have had a row last week."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Fathead!" said Harry Wharton.

Mr. Quelch, coming up the corridor, had stopped, being intercepted by Mr. Capper, the master of the Fourth. He was standing at a distance from his Form, who were waiting outside the Form-room door, and out of hearing; but they could see him quite plainly, and the expression on his face.

"Capper's heard something, and he's asking Quelch about it!" murmured Frank Nugent. "Quelch will bite his head off in a minute."

There was a soft chuckle among the Removites—very soft, for they did not want it to reach Quelch's ears.

Capper was looking very interested in his talk with Quelch; but the latter gentleman showed visible signs of impatience. The Fourth Form master wanted to know, and the Remove master pretty plainly did not want him to. That scene in the study was gall and wormwood to Quelch. The calm dignity which should clothe a Form master like a garment, had been outraged. Prout had insulted him; in reply, he had said things which he later on regretted. The whole thing was most unfortunate; and the less that was said about it the better.

Quelch writhed at the thought of the incident becoming the topic in Common-room. Still, he could not tell Capper to go and eat coke; he had to be civil to Capper.

His Form waited cheerfully. The longer Capper delayed their Form master, the shorter third school would be. Every minute lost was a minute gained, so to put it.

"It's pretty sickening," went on



"You consider a disfigurement, caused by a collision in a fog, a matter of jesting and hilarity?" boomed Mr. Prout. "Were you in my Form, Wharton, I should cane you!"

Skinner, with one eye on Mr. Quelch, lest he should suddenly break off from Capper and approach. "We're going to have a cheery time in Form. Quelch looks as if he would bite. And all because Prout gets his eye blacked at some pub, and gets touchy about it."

"All Wharton's fault, really," remarked Snoop.

Wharton looked round.

"How was it my fault, you silly owl?" he demanded.

"Well, if you hadn't grinned at Prout's eye in quad, he wouldn't have gone to Quelch's study and ragged him."

"Rot!" snapped the captain of the Remove. "Every man at Greyfriars has grinned at Prout's eye, and more than once."

"The grinfulness has been terrific," observed Hurrce Janset Ram Singh. "There has been continual smilefulness on this absurd subject."

"And I get five hundred lines!" exclaimed Billy Bunter indignantly. "Five hundred lines, you know! Jevver hear of such an impot? Just because I happened to be near Quelch's window when he rowed with Prout. He shouldn't row with Prout if he didn't want fellows to hear. I've a jolly good mind to appeal to the Head."

"What did Prout say to Quelch?" asked Russell.

"Well, he called Quelch a liar——"

"What?" gasped the juniors.

"And Quelch said he'd knock him down——"

"Wha-a-t?"

"Quelch said he knew jolly well it was all gammon about bagging that eye by accident," continued Bunter. "He said he knew that Prout had bagged it in a fight."

"Oh crumbs!"

"And he said that if Prout didn't hop it out of his study, he'd give him another to match!" added the Owl of the Remove.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Go it, Bunter!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "This jolly old yarn gets richer every time you tell it! Pile it on!"

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"You fat fibber!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "Quelch said nothing of the sort!"

"How do you know?" demanded Bunter. "You weren't there! I was! I heard every word that was said in the study. Quelch said that if a man chose to be drunk and disorderly he must expect to get his eye blacked."

"Great pip!"

"He said that, to his certain knowledge, Prout came in squiffy on Wednesday with his eye blacked——"

"Shut up!" gasped Bob Cherry hastily.

Quelch had suddenly left Capper, and was coming up the passage with rapid strides. Unfortunately, Bunter had his back to him and did not see any reason for shutting up.

"Shan't!" said Bunter. "I tell you I heard every word they said! You can make faces at me if you like, but I tell you I heard Quelch say that Prout got his black eye in a boozy row——"

"BUNTER!"

"Oh lor'!"

Bunter spun round like a fat humming-top.

The Remove stood frozen with horror. Bunter stood petrified.

Quelch did not speak after that one word. He grasped Bunter by the shoulder. His face spoke volumes. With a grip on Bunter's fat shoulder

that made the Owl of the Remove yelp, Quelch marched him into the Form-room. The rest of the Remove followed in horrified silence.

Quelch picked up his cane from his desk; then he spoke, as he pointed to a chair with the cane.

"Bend over that chair, Bunter!"

"Oh crikey!"

"Instantly!"

"Or lor'!"

Bunter groaned as he bent over the chair.

He groaned in anticipation—and his painfulest anticipations were rapidly realised. The cane swished through the air and fairly rang on Bunter's tight trousers.

Whack, whack, whack!

"Yow-ow-ow!"

Whack, whack, whack!

"Yarooogh! Whooooop!"

"You may go to your place, Bunter!" said Mr. Quelch in a voice that sounded like a file on a rusty saw.

"Yow-ow-ow-ow-ow!"

Bunter crawled to his place. Mr. Quelch's glittering eye swept over a silent and awe-stricken Remove. Nobody was anxious to catch that glittering eye.

"If any boy present places any credence in Bunter's false and foolish statements let him speak!" said Mr. Quelch in a grinding voice.

There was a deep silence. Any fellow who believed Bunter's statements was not likely to say so to Mr. Quelch. A pin might have been heard to drop in the Remove Form room.

Mr. Quelch waited for a reply. There was no reply. He laid down the cane at last.

Third school in the Remove-room
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proceeded—in an electric atmosphere. Prout's discoloured eye was producing as far-reaching effects at Greyfriars as if Prout had had the evil eye, instead of a common or garden black eye.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Mr. Capper Speaks as a Friend!

"**S**CANDALOUS!" hissed Mr. Prout.

Mr. Prout stood before the glass in his study, gazing at the reflection of a plump face adorned with a highly decorative eye.

Every hour of every day, often several times an hour, Prout regarded that eye in the glass, anxiously watching its progress.

His interest in that eye was positively painful.

It had been black—black as the ace of spades—but it was a misnomer to call it a black eye now. Rather it was a glorious purple. On its way to mending it changed hues almost like a chameleon. From its present appearance it might have been, like the Eastern emperors of old, born in the purple! Its aspect was, perhaps, a little more horrible now it was purple than it had been as an inky black.

It was no longer painful physically; in every other way it was very painful indeed.

Prout stared at it almost despairingly. He wondered whether that eye would ever go!

He stared at it, glared at it, scowled at it. It looked more horrible than ever when he scowled.

Leaving the mirror, Prout paced the study.

He had suspected—more than suspected—the rumours and surmises that were rife in the school on the subject

of that eye. Now that Quelch had spoken with such brutal frankness, he could not longer deceive himself. Greyfriars did not believe that he had acquired that eye by an accidental collision in the fog. Even his own Form mocked at such a story. Prout had seen, or thought that he had seen, dubiety even in the august countenance of the Head. In the faces of the other masters sympathy and friendly concern had scarcely hid irony.

Prout's indignation was deep. Yet, to be fair, he was conscious that if someone else had told the same story he would have doubted it.

He realised himself that it was odd. Groping in the dense, blinding fog that Wednesday afternoon last week, he had suddenly received a jolt in the eye—a terrific jolt. It had felt exactly as if somebody had punched him right on that unfortunate optic. He had seen nothing; the jolt had come suddenly out of the fog and floored him. What could he conclude, except that he had butted into a tree or into a building? Such a collision might have been expected rather to damage the nose or the brow than the eye; still, it was the eye that had been damaged. Prout knew how it had happened, if nobody else did.

Still, it was a strange story. It was unimaginable that anybody had hit him in the eye in the fog. Still, it was a very strange accident to have happened. Prout realised that.

His story was doubted. He knew that now. He knew that there were suppressed smiles in Common-room. He knew that there were whispers, nods, shrugs of the shoulders. He knew—beyond doubt now—that his own Form fellows commented on that eye with the unsparing brutality of thought-

less youth. He knew it was the jest of the Lower School. And there was no help for it.

There was a tap at the door, and Mr. Capper, the master of the Fourth, came in. Prout gave him a far from welcoming glare.

Capper coughed.

"My dear Prout—" he began.

"Well?" rumbled Prout.

Mr. Capper closed the door.

"I have come here, Prout, to speak as a friend," he said.

Prout grunted. When his colleague stated that he had come to speak as a friend, Prout knew, of course, that something unpleasant was coming.

"I understand," continued Capper, "that there was—h'm!—something in the nature of—h'm!—an argument between you and Quelch—"

"I do not desire to discuss it!" said Prout.

"Quite so, quite so!" said Capper soothingly. "But, speaking as a friend, Prout, may I—pray do not be offended—may I advise frankness?"

"Frankness?" repeated Prout.

"Precisely!" said Capper.

"I fail to follow your meaning, sir!" boomed Prout.

Mr. Capper coughed again.

"Between ourselves, Prout—and speaking as a friend—how did you get your eye discoloured?" he asked.

Prout gasped.

"I have explained—"

"Oh, quite, quite!" assented Capper. "Quite! But I mean, strictly between ourselves."

Prout glared, almost speechless. "An unfortunate incident like this," pursued Capper, "has to be explained somehow. Believe me, Prout, I do not suppose for one moment that you were—were disfigured in any discreditable way—"

"Thank you, sir!" gasped Prout, with crushing sarcasm. "I am very much obliged to you, Mr. Capper. Very much obliged indeed!"

"Please do not misinterpret me, Prout. I am convinced—I may say that all your colleagues are convinced—that you could give a perfectly adequate explanation of that disfigurement," said Capper. "What puzzles me—what puzzles the others—is why you do not choose to do so."

"I have said—"

Capper coughed for a third time.

Prout's sound eye gleamed.

"Am I to understand, Capper, that you have come here to tell me, to my face, that you doubt my word?"

"Certainly not. Nothing of the kind! If you persist in your explanation that—that your eye was blacked by a collision in the fog, I am bound to—h'm!—believe you. But if you made that explanation hastily, without giving the matter thought—H'm, h'm!" Mr. Capper had quite a fit of coughing. "Speaking as a friend, Prout, and purely in your own interests, I would point out that such an explanation does not hold water."

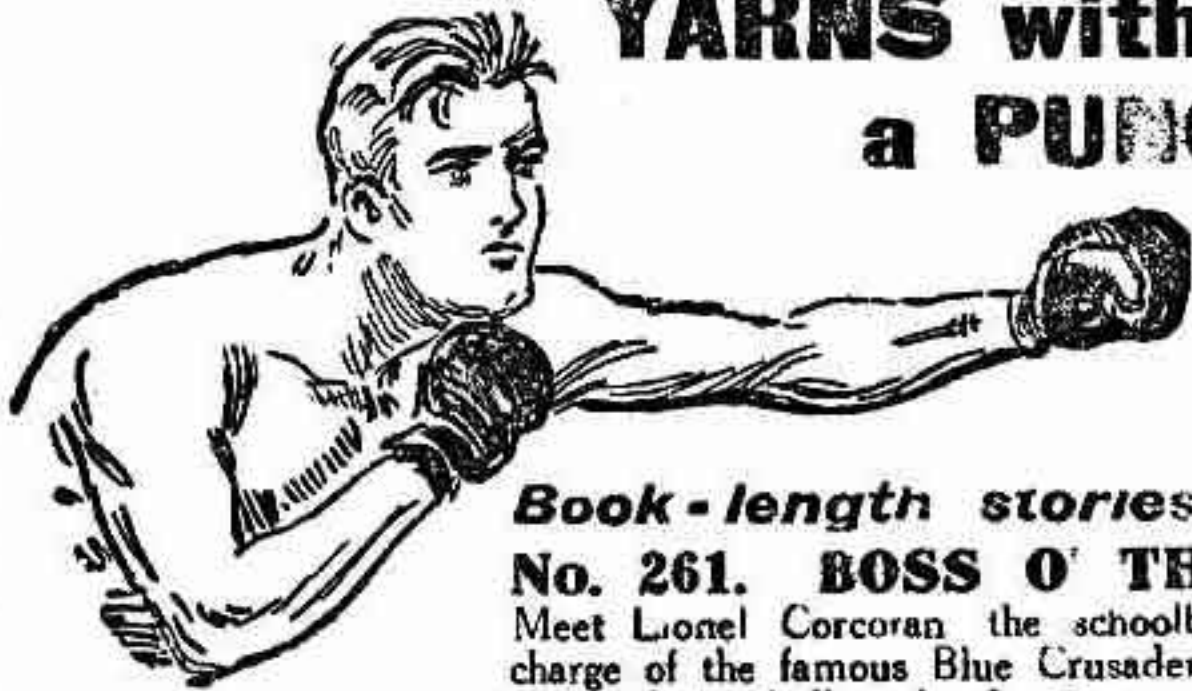
"What?"

"Hear me patiently, and remember that I am speaking as a friend," urged Capper. "Say you ran into a tree—into a stone buttress—into anything—in the fog last Wednesday. That would not have blacked your eye! What I desire to point out is this—that the thing is impossible, or very nearly so. My dear Prout, be patient—I am speaking wholly as a friend. For your own sake, I will be frank and tell you, Prout, candidly, that it is obvious that the state of your eye was caused by a blow."

"A—a—a blow?"

"A blow!" said Capper, nodding.

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"A blow in the eye! This is perfectly obvious to anyone, Prout, and I can only wonder at your—your ingenuousness, in supposing that anyone could possibly believe otherwise. Hear me out!"

"Sir!" roared Prout.

"Hear me out!" urged Capper. "For your own sake, Prout, I advise the withdrawal of the explanation you have given—at least, so far as your colleagues on the staff are concerned. Be frank! If the circumstances in which you received that injury were not discreditable, Prout, why not be frank?"

Prout gurgled.

"Your colleagues," continued Capper, "are surely entitled to your confidence. So far as the boys are concerned, doubtless, the fog story may be allowed to stand, though, for your own sake, I wish you had thought in time of attributing the injury to a punch-ball. But surely you must see yourself, Prout, that it would be judicious to set surmises at rest in the Common-room, by an adequate explanation—"

Prout seemed to be choking.

He made a stride towards Capper, and the Fourth Form master backed away a pace or two.

"My dear Prout, remember I am speaking as a friend—"

Prout threw the study door wide open.

"Kindly leave my study, Mr. Capper!"

"Prout!"

"Are you deaf, sir?"

"Mr. Prout!"

"If you do not immediately retire from this study, sir—"

Mr. Capper retired from the study, immediately and hastily. Prout was looking dangerous.

Slam!

"Upon my word!" gasped Capper, as the door closed after him. And, pink with indignation, Mr. Capper walked away to Common-room, to tell his colleagues what he thought of Prout.

Prout paced his study.

He knew the cackle that was going on in Common-room. Only too well he knew! Prout paced his study—almost like a caged tiger! To the hapless master of the Fifth the whole horizon was as black as his black eye!

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

The History of the Mystery!

"WHAT about Coker?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Coker!" repeated his comrades.

"Well," said Bob apologetically, "the old ass is laid up in sanny with a cold, and he's allowed to receive visits, but I haven't noticed any rush to get in before the crush!"

The chums of the Remove chuckled.

Horace Coker of the Fifth Form was probably feeling rather lonely. Having collected a bad cold in the head, Coker was segregated; but he was getting well, and any fellow at Greyfriars who wanted to take compassion on Coker's loneliness, was at liberty to see him by asking permission of the matron.

But, as Bob Cherry remarked, there had been no rush.

This probably surprised Coker, though it surprised nobody else. In Coker's study in the Fifth, his study-mates, Potter and Greene, found the change very restful.

No longer was that study dominated by the powerful voice and overpowering personality of Horace Coker. For whole days now Coker had not been

pointing out to his friends what asses they were, or telling them how to play football.

At tea-time, no doubt, they missed Coker—Horace generally stood the tea. At tea-time or supper-time, very likely Potter and Greene wished Coker a happy and speedy recovery. At other times they bore his absence with fortitude. And a constant pressure of other affairs prevented them from visiting Coker in sanny. Their time appeared to be absolutely filled up, leaving not a minute for Coker.

The Remove men, of course, had nothing to do with Coker, except in the way of ragging the great Horace and trying to make him understand that he was not the important person he thought he was.

So the Co. were rather surprised when Bob asked what about him. It was just like Bob, however, to think of poor old Coker, shut up in sanny, with nobody to talk to, and bursting with bottled-up conversation.

"What about giving him a look-in?" asked Bob.

"Um!" said Wharton.

"The umfulness is terrific!" murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

WANT A PRIZE? THEN— MAKE UP

GREYFRIARS LIMERICK! One of this week's useful POCKET WALLET

has been awarded to S. Daglen, of 35, Outwoods Street, Burton-on-Trent, who submitted the following winning effort:

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clam,
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jam!

Get busy on YOUR effort now!

"Well, old Coker will be feeling down, especially as the Fifth seem to have forgotten that there ever was any such person!" said Bob. "Let's be kind to Coker! A quarter of an hour won't hurt us. Besides, Coker's done a lot for us, in one way or another. He makes life brighter in a lot of ways. Let's go and brighten up Coker."

"Well, we're Scouts, so we're bound to weigh in with a good deed sometimes," said Harry Wharton.

"The goodfulness of the deed will be terrific!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "Let's!"

And, having decided on that good deed, the Famous Five proceeded to the sanatorium, and duly asked permission to call on Coker; and, permission being given, they were admitted to the presence of the great Horace.

They found him in bed. Much against his will Coker was kept in bed. It was entirely against his will that Coker was segregated at all. Cheerfully would Coker have spread his cold all over the Fifth and all over Greyfriars; and probably he would have considered that it was an honour for other fellows to catch a cold from him.

His look, as he stared at the visitors, was not expressive of gratitude for the good deed they were doing. Far from it,

"What do you fags want?" asked Coker.

"Just looked in to see how you're getting on, old bean," answered Bob Cherry cheerily.

"Don't call me old bean!" said Coker.

"Eh?"

"It's cheek, from a fag to a Fifth Form man!" explained Coker.

"Oh!"

"Getting on all right, Coker?" asked Harry, changing the topic.

Coker seemed more Cokerish, as it were, than ever, now he was laid up on his beam ends.

"Nothing the matter with me, or ever was!" snapped Coker. "A slight cold. But, of course, the doctor wants to make a case of it; and the matron wants something to do, and the Head is an ass, and—"

"Glad to see you looking so merry and bright!" said Nugent.

"I don't see that it matters to you," answered Coker, with a stare. "Don't be cheeky, Nugent!"

"Oh, my hat!" said Nugent.

The Famous Five smiled at one another. This was Coker all over; but they knew their Coker, and had not expected anything else.

"As you're here," said Coker, "you can take a message to Potter and Greene. Tell them I'm allowed to receive visits."

"Certainly," said Wharton, tactfully refraining from telling Coker that Potter and Greene were quite aware of that already.

"How's Prout?" asked Coker.

"Fine?" answered Bob. "His jolly old black eye is flourishing! It's a thing of beauty, and looks like being a joy for ever."

Coker grinned faintly.

"I suppose there's a lot of jaw about in the school!" he remarked.

"The jawfulness is terrific!"

"What are the fellows saying about it?" asked Coker.

He was evidently interested in Prout's celebrated eye.

The juniors chuckled. It would have taken a long time to tell Coker all that the fellows were saying about it.

"Well, there's all sorts of surmises," said Wharton. "Some fellows think that Prout got into a row with a bargee on the Sark, and the man hit him."

"Some think he had a row with another Form master, and he dotted him in the eye," said Johnny Bull.

"Some say that he was chucked out of the Cross Keys and objected, and the potman blacked his eye!" chuckled Nugent.

"Some fellows think he got into a fight with a tramp," remarked Bob Cherry. "In fact, there are all sorts of theories on the subject. There's only one explanation that nobody believes."

"What's that?" asked Coker.

"That he got it accidentally in the fog!" chuckled Bob.

"That's too thin, of course," said Johnny Bull. "I can't imagine how Prout got it, really, but, of course, it wasn't a collision with a tree in a fog. That won't wash."

"It's jolly odd that Prout ever thought it would wash!" remarked Nugent. "It's altogether too thin."

"And, of course, his spinning such a silly yarn about it makes the fellow's think there's something behind it all—something that Prout doesn't care to own up to!" remarked Johnny Bull.

"Is he pretty wild?" asked Coker.

"Wild as a jolly old Red Indian. The Fifth are having a gorgeous time with him. You're lucky to be out of it."

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"It's rather a shame," said Coker thoughtfully. "Prout's an old ass, but, after all, he's my Form master."

"From which fact he derives any importance he may happen to possess," murmured Bob Cherry.

"I don't like my Form master being the talk of the school in this way," said Coker, "and the whole thing was the fault of you young sweeps. You're to blame from start to finish."

The Famous Five eyed Coker in astonishment. They wondered whether the great Horace was wandering in his mind—such as it was! Certainly they had never dreamed that there was any connection between themselves and Prout's black eye.

"How the thump—" asked Bob Cherry.

"We had nothing to do with it," said Harry.

"You had everything to do with it," said Coker crossly. "But if I explained the matter Prout would blame me instead of you, so I don't see how I can say anything."

The chums of the Remove looked more and more astonished. Coker's words were riddles to them.

"But how—" ejaculated Wharton.

Coker snorted.

"Of course it was your fault. I suppose you remember that fog last Wednesday, when you were lost in the quad and I offered to guide you. You had the cheek to roll me over—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There's nothing to cackle at, you cheeky young villains. You rolled me over in the mud—"

"We jolly well bumped you for your cheek," said Bob. "But what's that got to do with Prout?"

"More than you think," snapped Coker. "Of course, I came after you to thrash you, as you deserved, but I lost you in the fog—"

"That was rather lucky for you."

"Shut up, Cherry! The awkward thing was that Prout was lost in the fog, and he barged along just as I was looking for you. I hit out—"

"Wha-a-t!"

"Thinking it was one of you in that beastly fog—"

"Oh crumbs!"

"And got him in the eye!" said Coker.

"Great pip!"

"Of course, I never dreamed it was Prout—never knew he was within miles of me, for that matter. I thought it was one of you young scoundrels!" snapped Coker. "It turned out to be Prout!"

"Oh jiminy!"

"He was floored, and as soon as I knew what I'd done you can bet I cleared, and he didn't see me, and never knew I'd hit him," said Coker. "He fancied he'd barged into a tree or something—the fog was as thick as pea-soup, and, of course, I got him quite suddenly!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Removites.

"It's not a laughing matter, you young idiots! I didn't know at the time that he was badly damaged, but, of course, when I saw his black eye I knew what had done it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors shrieked.

Among all the innumerable theories that had been formed to account for Prout's black eye, not one had ever approached anywhere near the truth. No man at Greyfriars had even dreamed that it was Coker of the Fifth who had—inadvertently—given his Form master that awful black eye.

Coker glared at the hilarious juniors.

"You young rascals! If you don't stop cackling, I'll get up and take the bolster to you! It's not funny."

"Oh dear!" gasped Bob Cherry, wiping his eyes. "So it was you all the time, Coker! Oh, my only summer bonnet!"

"You, you mean," snapped Coker, "I was after you, and it was a sheer beastly accident that I got Prout in the fog. I didn't know he was there, and I thought you young sweeps were there! The blame rests entirely on you. The question is, would Prout realise that if I explained the whole matter?"

"Oh crickey!" said Bob. "I fancy he wouldn't! Not quite!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker evidently had worked it out to his own satisfaction that the juniors were wholly to blame for that sad accident, and that he, Horace James Coker, was not in the least to blame. Still, he plainly had a misgiving that this view might not be taken by Prout, if Prout knew the facts. It was undoubtedly a well-founded misgiving.

"If Prout were a reasonable man," said Coker, "he would see that the thing was really unavoidable. But he's not reasonable. He would make out that I was to blame."

"He jolly well would, and he would be jolly right!" chortled Bob Cherry. "A fellow who goes punching about in the fog—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Shut up! I'd better say nothing about it, I suppose, though I'd certainly like to clear the thing up," said Coker. "It's rather a shame the fellows should be yarning about Prout when the whole thing was really an accident, just as he has said himself. But he might not see the thing from my point of view; he's an unreasonable man. He might take it out of me."

"You can bet your Sunday socks on that!" chuckled Bob.

"Well, I shan't say anything," said Coker, with a grunt. "Least said soonest mended. Of course, you kids won't repeat what I've said. I don't want Prout jumping on me."

"Not a word," said Harry. "You can rely on that, Coker, especially as you'd be either flogged or sacked if it came out."

Coker started. He was so satisfied in his own mind that he was perfectly blameless in the matter that he had not envisaged the possible results of the truth coming to light. He had realised that Prout would be waxy, and might take it out of him, blameless as he was. But the extent to which it might be "taken out" of him had not occurred to Coker's powerful brain.

"What rot!" he said uneasily.

"Well, anyhow we'll keep it dark," said Harry, laughing. "It's for you to own up if you feel inclined to clear Prout of suspicion of having been chucked out of the Cross Keys."

"Oh, rats!" said Coker. "Don't jaw, that's all! And you'd better clear off. Like your cheek to barge in, as a matter of fact. Don't forget to tell Potter and Greene that I'm allowed to receive visits."

The Famous Five took their leave and left the sanatorium. As they walked back to the House they looked at one another with smiling faces.

"So that was it!" murmured Wharton. "Coker! We always knew he was a born idiot—but who'd have guessed he was such an idiot as that?"

"If Prout knew—" murmured Nugent.

Bob Cherry whistled.

"It might be the sack for Coker! Head's flogging at least! Blacking a Form master's eye! Phew!"

"The howling ass!"

"Not a syllable about it," said Harry. "It's Coker's secret, not ours. Lucky for the silly ass that we know how to hold our tongues. Prout would slaughter him if he knew."

"The slaughterfulness would be terrific."

"And he thinks it was our fault, and that Prout ought to see it as a reasonable man!" chuckled Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Famous Five chortled. They knew now what had happened to Prout; that majestic gentleman's character was cleared in their eyes at least. But for Coker's sake they had to keep their knowledge to themselves, and the rest of Greyfriars had to be left to their own surmises and theories on the subject of Prout's empurpled eye.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Handling Mr. Harris!

THUD, thud, thud!
It was a sound of rapidly pounding footsteps.

Thud, thud, thud!

"I say, you fellows, Help!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

"That's Bunter—"

"What the thump—"

Harry Wharton & Co. were sauntering down Friardale Lane on Wednesday afternoon. It was exactly a week since the day of the great fog in which fellows had got lost in the Greyfriars quad, and Prout had captured a black eye. The weather was quite a contrast—a sunny, golden autumn day; just the day for a ramble in the lanes, thick with fallen leaves, and the brown woods.

Calm and peaceful looked the countryside, till Billy Bunter happened. He happened suddenly.

At top speed, his eyes gleaming wildly over his spectacles that had slid down his fat little nose, Bunter came pounding out of a narrow track into the lane, and immediately he sighted the Famous Five he howled for help.

The chums of the Remove halted. They were quite near the corner when Bunter came thudding round it.

"What's the game?" asked Harry. "Mad bull after you?"

"Ow!" gasped Bunter. He reached the juniors, and reeled against a tree, spluttering for breath. "Keep him off."

"Him! Who?"

"Ow! That tramp—"

"What tramp?"

"Grooogh!" He stopped me—ow!—asked me the time—wow!—grabbed at my watch—yow ow—and ran after me when I got away—grooogh!"

"Fathead!" said Bob. "You should have told him that you won the watch in a raffle, and that it's no good—"

"Beast! It's my thirty-guinea gold watch—" gasped Bunter.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, here comes the jolly old enemy!" exclaimed Bob. There was a thudding of boots on the narrow path shut in by edges, from which Bunter had emerged. Evidently the tramp who had coveted his watch was in pursuit of Bunter.

The juniors exchanged a grin. The man was close at hand, and might come tearing round the corner any instant. Obviously he did not know that Billy Bunter had found help.

"Shoulder to shoulder," chuckled

Bob "We'll jolly well collar him, and give him a lesson about bagging fellows' watches. What?"

"Yes, rather."

The Famous Five, leaving Bunter gasping, moved a little towards the corner, ready for the tramp to appear in sight, and to run into their arms.

A rather tattered figure came racing round the corner. And the chums of the Romove uttered a general exclamation as they beheld it. They knew that tattered figure. They knew the patched check trousers, the ragged coat, the battered hat. It was the man who called himself Herbert Harris—or to give his own rendering, Erbert 'Arris—the vagrant who had attempted to burgle Mr. Prout's study at Greyfriars on the afternoon of the fog. They had not seen him very clearly on that occasion; but they knew him again—especially the trousers.

"That sportsman!" said Bob Cherry. "He got away last time—bag him!"

Mr. Harris, in hot pursuit of Bunter, was running so hard, that he fairly rushed into the Famous Five before he saw them.

Mr. Harris found himself collared on all sides.

"Oh crimes!" ejaculated Mr. Harris. He put up a struggle. But five pairs of hands very quickly put "paid" to Mr. Harris, and his head was tapped against a tree as a warning to keep quiet. He gave a loud howl.

"Ow! Chuck it! Ow! Let a man go! Ow!"

"Glad to meet you, old bean," said Bob Cherry affably. "Haven't seen you for a week—not since the day of the fog."

"The gladfulness is terrific, my esteemed and disgusting scoundrel," said Hurree Singh.

Mr. Harris, wriggling in their grasp, blinked at them.

"I don't know you," he gasped. "I ain't seed you afore. I ain't doing any 'arm. You let a bloke go."

"You were burbling a study at our school last time we saw you," said Harry Wharton.

Mr. Harris started. "Oh crimes! Are you them blokes?" he exclaimed in dismay.

"We're those very blokes," said Bob Cherry gravely. "The very identical blokes who collared you in Prout's study, and that you got away from. This time you're not getting away."

"I ain't the man!" asseverated Mr. Harris. "On my davy, sir, you're making a mistake! I ain't been near any school. I jest walked from London this morning, looking for a job."

"Careful how you look for a job!" cautioned Bob. "You might find one, you know!"

"Shall we walk him to the police station, or duck him in the ditch?" asked Johnny Bull. "We might give him his choice. There's a lot of water in the ditch, and a wash 'ould do him good. Still, they'd give him a bath at the police station, and that would do him more good."

"Let a bloke go!" howled Mr. Harris. "Collaring a man like this 'ere, when he's taking a little run for hexercise—"

"You weren't running after the kid to noble his watch?"

"On my davy, I wasn't!" gasped Mr. Harris.

"Bunter!" roared Bob Cherry.

Billy Bunter, at a little distance, detached himself from the tree and rolled up, panting. Mr. Harris' jaw dropped as he appeared on the scene. Evidently he had believed, or hoped, that Bunter was gone.

"Is this the man, Bunter?" demanded Bob.

"Yes, rather! He grabbed my watch—and ran after me," gasped Bunter. "He was going to rob me—a thirty-guinea watch—"

"It was only a joke, sir!" pleaded Mr. Harris. "I wouldn't 'ave touched your watch, reely, sir, not if it had been 'ung with diamonds! I was just joking with you, sir."

"Well, now we're going to joke with you," said Bob. "Your sort of joke is grabbing a fellow's watch. Our sort is chucking a sneaking thief into a ditch. Ready?"

"He, ha, he! Chuck him in," said Bunter. "Duck him! It doesn't really matter if you drown the beast."

"Don't it?" gasped Mr. Harris, in great indignation.

"Chuck him in! I say, you fellows, that watch was a present from one of my titled relations, and cost thirty-five guineas to—"

but he did not like it; in fact, he hated it.

"Come on," said Bob. "This way to the wash! Dash it all, man, you haven't had one for donkey's years, and there's no charge for this."

"Ow! Leggo!"

"I say, you fellows, chuck him in."

"Heave ahead, my hearties!" chuckled Bob. "Now then, a long pull, a strong pull, and a pull altogether!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the Famous Five 'ragged and Mr. Harris, in spite of his strenuous resistance, was jerked towards the ditch.

"Oh crimes! Ow! Leggo!" he yelled desperately.

There was a heavy footstep in the lane, and a deep, fruity voice broke in suddenly:

"Boys, how dare you! Release that man instantly!"

It was the voice of Mr. Prout.



"I say, you fellows," said Bunter, "Quelch and Prout are having a row!" The next moment the window above opened and Mr. Quelch himself looked out. "Take five hundred lines, Bunter!" he cried angrily.

"Didn't you win it with a penny ticket in a raffle?" asked Bob.

"No, I didn't!" roared Bunter. "Look here—"

"Let a bloke go!" gasped Mr. Harris, as he was edged towards the ditch, deep-flowing with autumn rains. "I—I'm a delikit constitution—I suffer a lot from roomytiz—I say—"

"You suffer a lot from want of washing," said Bob. "But if you'd rather go to the police station, say the word."

"I don't want to go to any old police station! They got a bad opinion of me!" groaned Mr. Harris. "The peckers always have been down on me—a 'ard-working, honest man. Ow! Leggo!"

Mr. Harris resisted valiantly as he was moved towards the flowing water. It was not a warm day, and the water was undoubtedly cold. Whether Mr. Harris really suffered from rheumatism, or whether the prospect of a wash made him shudder, the idea of going into the ditch evidently horrified him. He preferred it, perhaps, to the police station,

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Prout Asks For It!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. stared round.

They ceased to urge Mr. Harris towards the ditch, of which he was now standing on the very brink, but they kept a tight grasp on that elusive gentleman.

"Prout!" murmured Nugent. "The Proutfulness is terrific!"

"All serene!" said Harry. "Prout's always barging in where he's not wanted, but when we tell him that this is the johnny who was burbling his study last week, even Prout will draw in his horns."

Mr. Prout was approaching from the direction of the school. He was taking his afternoon walk alone.

Generally Mr. Prout walked forth in company, but at present his relations were very strained with the other members of the Common-room. Moreover, it was probable that the other

masters had no desire to walk abroad in company with a black eye. Prout, of course, had no choice in that matter, as the black eye was indissolubly attached to him—a poor thing, but his own, as the poet has put it.

Prout, catching sight of the struggling group in the lane, and hearing Mr. Harris' doleful howl, hastened his footsteps, and shouted to the juniors while still at a distance.

His brow was dark with anger—almost as dark as his eye.

Prout, of course, did not know the rights and wrongs of the matter. He did not recognise Mr. Harris as the daylight burglar of the week before; he did not know that the rascal had just attempted to rob Bunter. To Prout's eye, these juniors were ragging a tramp and were about to duck him—a most outrageous and brutal proceeding. Prout certainly had no love for tramps, and Mr. Harris looked a rather unpleasant sort of tramp. But right was right, and justice was justice. Prout was exactly the man to make up his mind on the subject without hearing a word and let his indignation rip.

Moreover, one of these juniors was Wharton of the Remove, who had smiled at his black eye and had been most inadequately punished by his Form master.

Prout rolled up, full of indignant wrath.

"Stop this instantly!" he boomed.

"You see, sir—" began Harry.

"Silence, Wharton! I desire to hear none of your impudence!" boomed Prout.

"But, sir—"

"Silence!"

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Bob Cherry.

Mr. Harris eyed Prout. He guessed that he was a master at the school, and naturally expected to be taken to the police station as soon as the schoolboys explained the matter to the master. He would be saved from the ducking, but his last state would be worse than his first.

To his amazement, he found Prout taking his side. Unexpected hope dawned on Mr. Harris.

"Let a bloke go!" whined Mr. Harris. "Leggo, I tell you! 'Andling a man like this 'ere!"

Prout raised a commanding hand.

"Release that man immediately!" he ordered.

"But, sir—" gasped Bob Cherry.

"I desire no argument, no impudence, no insolence! I order you to release that man! Not a word!"

"Look here—"

"Silence! I am not surprised," said Prout bitterly, "at this hooliganism, this ruffianism in Remove boys! I should be surprised at finding them behaving themselves in an orderly manner! Such conduct may meet with the approval of Mr. Quelch! I certainly shall not allow it! As a Greyfriars master, I refuse to allow you to disgrace Greyfriars by such ruffianism! Release that man!"

The Removes exchanged hopeless glances. It was not of much use to argue with Prout. But they were very reluctant to allow Mr. Harris to escape the punishment of his sins.

"If you'd listen a minute, Mr. Prout—" Wharton tried again.

"You see, sir—" gasped Johnny Bull.

"I will listen to nothing!" boomed Prout. "I have no doubt that you have excuses to offer—you are never at a loss for them! I decline to listen to you!"

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I order you to release that man instantly and to cease this ruffianism—this brutal—conduct, which I assure you I shall report to your Form master or to the Head—"

"I say, sir," began Billy Bunter, "that beast tried—"

"Silence!"

"If you'd let a fellow speak, sir—" said Bob.

"Silence!"

"Oh dear!"

"For the last time," said Prout, "will you release that man whom you are ill-using—instantly?"

There was no help for it. Mr. Harris was released, and he grinned with satisfaction as he found himself free.

"Now," said Prout, "go! Go back to the school at once! You are not to be trusted to behave yourselves out of gates! You find amusement in persecuting unoffending strangers! Go back to the school!"

The Famous Five looked at him grimly. So far they had obeyed the orders of Prout. But this was going too far.

"We will go back to school, sir, when our Form master orders us to do so!" said Harry Wharton. "You are not our Form master, Mr. Prout!"

"What—what?"

"Come on, you men!" said Harry.

Raising their caps to Prout, the Famous Five walked on—not towards the school, but towards Friardale. Billy Bunter, grinning, rolled after them.

Prout spluttered.

He had exceeded his powers and authority in ordering Remove boys back to the school on a half-holiday. It was rather Prout's way to exceed his authority, and sometimes it led to awkward results, as in the present case.

"Very well!" gasped Prout, "Very well indeed! I shall report this to your headmaster! Very well indeed!"

The juniors walked on without replying and disappeared round a bend in the lane.

Mr. Harris eyed the Fifth Form master very curiously. Prout's arrival had been very fortunate for him. Mr. Harris was wondering now whether he could make it still more fortunate. Prout was a prosperous-looking gentleman, and the lane was lonely now that the juniors had passed out of sight. Mr. Harris regarded Prout with a calculating eye. This fat old codger—as he considered Prout—did not look as if he would be of much use in a scrap, and he was obviously a more valuable victim than Bunter.

Fortune, indeed, seemed to be smiling on the disreputable Mr. Harris that afternoon.

He approached a little nearer the plump gentleman.

"Thank you kindly, sir!" he said.

"Werry kind of you, sir, to interfere and protect a pore man from them young rips, sir!"

"Not at all," said Prout. "It was my duty. Good-afternoon!"

He would have walked on. He had championed Mr. Harris; but, on a closer inspection, he did not like his looks, and still less did he like the strong aroma of mingled tobacco and spirits that emanated from him.

But Mr. Harris was not to be denied. He placed himself in Prout's way, and Prout stopped again.

"Skuse me, sir!" said the tramp. "P'raps you could 'elp a pore man on his way, sir? I've walked miles and miles, sir, looking for a job!"

Prout looked at him in strong distaste. And now that he gave Mr. Harris closer attention, something familiar

about him dawned on the Form master. On that occasion in his study he had seen Mr. Harris very dimly and indistinctly; but the patched check trousers, at least, were very striking and not easily forgotten. Those trousers leaped to the eye, as it were. Recognition began to dawn in Prout's face.

"Have I seen you before, my man?" he demanded suspiciously.

"No, sir. I'm quite a stranger in these 'ere parts," answered Mr. Harris. "If you 'elp a cove with a 'arf-crown or so, sir—"

"You seem to have money to spend on drink!" said Mr. Prout. "I have nothing to give you! Please step aside!"

"You ain't 'el'ping a cove?" asked Mr. Harris.

"Certainly not. Stand aside."

Mr. Harris gave a swift glance round.

The juniors had vanished; and there was no one in sight in either direction. It was Mr. Harris' opportunity; and he was not the man to let it pass unimproved. He came closer to Prout. His eyes glistened, his grubby fists were clenched, and his jaw jutted 'out threateningly.

"You old himage!" said Mr. Harris. "And it over."

"Wha-a-at?"

"I ain't got no time to waste on yer," said the tramp. "And over that watch of yours and what rhino you've got about you and sharp; afore I give you another blooming black eye to match the one you've got, you silly old codger. Jump to it."

A knuckly fist was displayed under Prout's startled nose.

Prout stared at the man.

Gratitude, evidently, had been left out of Mr. Harris' composition. Prout saw him now as he was—a dishonest, bullying, ruffianly scoundrel, bent on robbery. Prout gasped.

"You—you—rascal—"

"Stow it!" snarled Mr. Harris.

"Ain't I telling you I got no time to waste? 'And over your rhino, you old fool you, afore I knock your silly nose through the back of your silly 'ead!"

Prout gurgled.

"You—you lawless scoundrel! Stand back, or I will—I will knock you down! Stand back, you rascally ruffian."

"You will 'ave it, then!" snarled Mr. Harris, and the knuckly fist came crashing.

Prout tried to guard. He tried in vain. There had been a time when Prout had been a great man with his hands—if fond memory did not deceive him. There had been a time when he could have handled Mr. Harris with ease and grace, if he remembered aright! But since that time, if it had ever been, much water had passed under the bridges. Prout, in the present stage of his career, simply did not have a look-in. His feeble guard was whisked aside and the tramp's knuckles crashed on his plump nose with a mighty crash. Up-ended by the drive, Prout landed on his back in the muddy lane.

"Oh!" gasped Prout. "Ow! Goodness gracious! Wow!"

Mr. Harris bent over him.

In another moment his thievish fingers would have been clearing the valuables out of Prout's pockets.

But fortune, which hitherto smiled on Mr. Harris, chose this moment to frown.

There was a honk of a motor; and a car came into view from the direction

(Continued on page 12.)

"Half-Time" Gossip!



Each week our soccer expert disposes of perplexing problems. Write to him and see if you can get him groggy.

THE referee of a football match need not necessarily give reasons, to all and sundry, for certain decisions. But if there is a complaint made to headquarters he may be called upon by them to explain a verdict he had given in a game.

In this connection there reaches me from Ireland a story of a referee of that country who gave what was surely the quaintest reason for a particular decision which could be imagined.

The complaint against him was that during a match in the Irish Alliance he awarded a goal when a goal had not been properly scored. The League authorities had him up before them, and I can well imagine that they were surprised when the referee openly and candidly confessed that he did give a goal when he should not have done. In answer to a further question as to why he gave that goal, the referee replied: "For my own safety."

In those simple words, the candour of which can certainly be admired more than the sentiment, the referee in question provided a clear-cut picture of the match of which he had charge. Evidently, things had been going against him—and also against the home team. So to save his skin he gave the home team a goal when he should not have done so. Of course the authorities didn't forgive him. Such weakness on the part of a referee cannot be tolerated; but, being a bit soft-hearted, he has my sympathy. I have often felt, when refereeing a match, that I would have liked to give the home team something to "save my skin."

I HAVE said that, except to the authorities, the referee does not need to give any explanation of his decisions, and this reminds me that a correspondent raises this particular question. He says that he was under the impression that referees should, if asked in a proper and polite manner, explain to the player concerned why a certain decision had been given against him. As a matter of fact, there was an instruction to referees to that effect last season, but it has now been wiped off the books.

It could scarcely have been kept on in view of the regulation which was emphasised for this season, and to which I have already referred, to the effect that for a player to show any sign, by word or action, that he dissented from a decision by the referee was ungentlemanly conduct.

But although, strictly speaking, the player cannot demand to know for what he has been penalised, it seems to me that referees will make a mistake if they accept their instructions on this head too literally. If a player asked me, in a proper way, why I had penalised him, I should tell him quite frankly, and I should expect him to be all the nicer to me because I had treated his request in that way. A bit of the give-and-take spirit in football helps considerably, and costs nothing.

Actually, there are occasions when players can only decide what steps to take if they know for what offence a free-kick, say, has been granted against them. Suppose a goalkeeper is carrying the ball with an opponent in close proximity. The whistle goes, and the referee awards a free kick against the goalkeeper. In such circumstances the defending side have a right to know what the offence was, because the nature of the offence affects the manner in which they prepare to combat the free kick. If the free kick is for carrying, then a goal cannot be scored direct from it; but if the offence is a foul, on the outside edge of the penalty area, for instance, then a goal can be scored directly from the free kick.

WRITING of offences near goal, I must also answer a reader from Huddersfield who raises an interesting point, and one which is not understood as clearly as it ought to be.

This reader was watching a game in Yorkshire in which two players got at loggerheads with each other. One was a full-back and the other the opposing centre-forward. During an attack the full-back kicked the ball well up the field, but after he had done so, he charged into the opposing centre-forward in an unfair manner.

As it happened, the referee saw the unfair charge, and he immediately awarded a penalty kick against the full-back. The watchers got very upset, and so did the players of the defending side, arguing that the referee could not award a penalty kick in view of the fact that at the time the offence was committed by the full-back, the ball was far up the field. The answer to my correspondent regarding this question is that the referee was quite right. He can—and should—give a penalty kick for an offence by a full-back in the penalty area regardless of the position of the ball at the time when the offence is committed, provided, of course, that the ball is in play.

A READER who lives at Plymouth raises a point as to what is meant by a phrase in the rule concerning the throw-in. The words in question are those: "When throwing in the ball the player throwing must stand facing the field of play." It is possible, obviously, to put different interpretations on such wording. It might be meant to lay down, for instance, that the player throwing the ball must stand directly facing the whole field—that is, with feet pointing across the field.

Generally speaking, however, this strict reading of the rule is not adhered to, nor do I think it was meant. So long as the thrower is facing some part of the field of play even looking across towards the corner-flag on his side of the field, he should not be penalised when throwing unless he breaks some other rule.

THE search for good footballers goes on with over-increasing intensity, and managers who go to watch particular players who have been recommended to them, are often extremely careful that their presence shall not be known.

Not long ago I saw two officials of a Northern club—the manager and one of his directors, paying their money at the turnstile like ordinary watchers when they went to a ground to look at a player of one of the teams engaged in the match. They didn't want it to be known that they were there, because if their intentions became public property other clubs would immediately go to look at the same player.

On another occasion recently I was sitting in the smoking-room of an hotel in the Newcastle district when I heard a voice which was familiar to me, speaking to other people in the room. I looked at the speaker, but for a long time I could not place the "face." After a bit recollection as to whom the voice belonged came to me—but it was no wonder that I did not recognise the face.

The man whose voice I knew was a popular manager, but he was wearing a false beard! He didn't want his presence in that particular town to be known!

These managers have to be up to all the tricks of the trade. So much so, that I have come to the conclusion that I should never make a good manager. I sleep too late in the mornings.

"OLD REF."

WHO PUNCHED PROUT?

(Continued from page 10.)

of Friardale. Mr. Harris glanced up in alarm.

"Oh crimes!" he ejaculated in utter disgust.

There were three men in the car and their eyes were on the highway thief. The car came rushing on and there was a jamming of brakes. Mr. Harris made one bound through the hedge and started across the field with all the speed that his legs were capable of.

Prout sat up.

His nose streamed crimson; and it was already swelling. Dazed and dizzy, Prout blinked about him wildly. Like a man in a dream, Prout accepted the attentions of the kindly motorists; and he was still in a dazed and dizzy state when the kindly motorists landed him at the gates of Greyfriars and drove on their way.

Mr. Harris, on his highest gear, was heading for the open spaces. But he had left Prout something to remember him by. Prout was adorned with a nose as remarkable as his eye. No doubt Prout had fairly asked for it; but, like so many persons in this weary world, he was horrified and dismayed at getting what he had asked for. Prout, as he lurched in at the school gates, felt like the Raven's unhappy master, whom unmerciful disaster followed fast and followed faster!

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Startling!

GOSLING was the first.

Gosling, as it happened, was close by the gates when Prout came in.

Prout dawned suddenly on him.

The ancient porter of Greyfriars gave a violent start. His gaze fixed, as if fascinated, on Prout's nose.

Prout had been holding a handkerchief to it in the car. The handkerchief was smeared and streaked with crimson. Prout thought, or hoped, that it had stopped bleeding now.

He was agitated, of course. He had thanked the motorists for their kindness in picking him up and giving him a lift to the school in a rather incoherent way. That was natural, in the circumstances, and the kindly gentleman in the car had understood. But Gosling, of course, did not understand.

He saw Prout coming in with a wild-eyed look about him, mud on his coat, blood on the handkerchief he held crumpled in his hand—and, above all, with a nose that was swollen to almost twice its usual size and that flamed like a peony. Gosling stared at that nose. His eyes were glued on it. It seemed to fascinate him—indeed, to hypnotise him. In his concentration on Prout's nose, Gosling even forgot to touch his hat. Gosling, indeed, could scarcely believe his ancient eyes.

Gosling had disapproved of Prout's black eye. He had confided to Mr. Mumble, the gardener, that a gent in Mr. Prout's position ought to be ashamed of himself for sporting a black eye. And Gosling had been very sarcastic about Prout's story of bagging that eye in the fog. Now, added to the black eye, he saw Prout with a beet-root nose. Prout could hardly say that it was the fog this time! Gosling wondered sardonically what he would say.

Prout, catching the porter's fascinated gaze on him, started and flushed hotly. Hitherto, he had been conscious

only of the discomfort of a decorated nose. Now it rushed on his mind that there were other consequences beyond mere discomfort. Half the fellows believed, or suspected, that Prout's black eye had been caused by Prout getting mixed up in some disreputable scrap. What were they going to think of his nose? Prout almost groaned.

"Ah! Gosling!" he tried to speak in his usual lofty, fruity voice, but he could not help gasping hoarsely.

"Gosling! I—I have had a—a most unpleasant experience! I—I have been attacked—attacked by a tramp—"

"Hindeed, sir?" said Gosling.

Gosling's tone was as dry as the Sahara.

"The villain attempted to rob me," said Prout.

"Hindeed, sir?"

Crimson mounted from Prout's plump cheeks to his forehead, his ears, and descended over his plump neck. Prout, all of him that was visible, was a study in crimson.

Gosling, obviously, did not believe a word of it. Last week Prout had told a fog story. Now he was telling a tramp story. Of course, he had to say something when he came in with a wrecked nose.

Prout breathed hard. He was incensed by Gosling's dryness; he was irritated with himself for having condescended to explain to the porter at all. He gave Gosling a look and marched on.

His handkerchief was to his nose again now. He was longing for the shelter and privacy of his own study. He hoped that, as he crossed the quad with the handkerchief to his nose, he would give the impression of having a cold, or something of that sort.

Gosling gazed after him.

"My heye!" said Gosling. "My word! Wot I says is this 'ere, it's disgraceful, that's what it is! All the years I been porter at this 'ero school I've never seen the like! A gent of his hage and his position going out rowing and fighting! Course, he's been drinking! But that ain't no hexcuse for him!"

Prout navigated across the quad. It was unfortunate that it was a half-holiday and the finest afternoon for weeks past. Rain or fog might have kept the fellows indoors. But in the autumn sunshine everybody seemed to be out of doors; and everybody, it seemed to Prout, was looking at him.

Plenty were, as a matter of fact. Prout was still breathless and excited. His coat was slopped with mud from his fall in the road. The handkerchief at his nose did not in the least give the impression of a cold—for it was more red than white by this time. Fifty fellows at least asked themselves the question, what had Prout been up to?

Mr. Capper hurried towards him. Capper had not spoken to Prout since the occasion when he had spoken to him as a friend. Now he came up quite concerned—and doubtless a little curious.

"My dear Prout!" he exclaimed. "Is anything the matter? Have you had an accident? What—"

"A—a trifle!" gasped Prout. "A slight injury—I have been attacked by a tramp—"

"Oh!"

Capper's "Oh!" was as expressive as Gosling's "Indeed!" Prout's sound eye glittered at him.

"I have been the victim of a brutal assault. Mr. Capper!"

"Oh!"

"May I ask, sir, what you intend to imply by that ejaculation, sir?" demanded Prout, his sound eye flashing fire.

Capper started back a little. Prout's wild-eyed excitement, his rising anger, his flushed and muddy state, could only give Capper one impression.

"My dear Prout! Take my arm!" breathed Capper. "For goodness' sake get into the House! Take my arm—"

"I am not in need of assistance, Capper!"

"But—but," stammered Capper, "the Head may look from his window, and—and the boys— My dear Prout, I understand, of course—of course! Be calm, my dear fellow! I fully understand, and—and sympathise! But—but for goodness' sake do not let yourself be seen in this state!"

"What state, sir?" gasped Prout.

"Take my arm—the arm of a friend!" urged Capper. "Walk as steadily as you can! Lean on me! My only desire is to be of use."

"Do you dare to imply, sir, that I have been drinking?" Prout's voice trembled with passion. "Do you dare—"

Capper stared. To his eyes, at least, it was obvious that Prout had been drinking. But he answered soothingly:

"No! No! Of—of course not! Nothing of the kind! But—but lean on my arm—pray let me assist you! Think of the sensation it would cause if you were to fall, or even to stumble! Think of the boys, sir—think of the Head!"

"I am not likely to fall, sir! I am not likely to stumble!" bawled Prout. "I do not need your assistance, sir! I repudiate your suggestion, sir—repudiate it with scorn! With utter contempt, sir!"

And having withered Capper with a glare of scorn and contempt, Prout marched past him and went into the House. Capper looked after him—and then met the gaze of Mr. Hacker, the master of the Shell.

"What can this mean, Capper?" breathed Hacker.

"He—he—he is dreadfully excited, and—and has an injured nose!" stammered Capper. "I—I cannot help thinking—"

"He seems to be walking fairly steadily!"

"I am thankful to see it! If—if he should stumble and—and fall in sight of the boys—"

"Dreadful!" said Hacker, with a shudder.

"He has evidently been fighting again!" said Capper, in an awed whisper. "He said something about a tramp!"

"He could scarcely say it was the fog to-day!"

"Scarcely! But what can have induced Prout to fight with a tramp, Hacker? If, indeed, it was a tramp! Even if it were foggy to-day he could scarcely tell the same story twice. But why—why has he done this, Hacker? What can be the cause of this strange, this inexplicable, outbreak on the part of a man of Prout's age and position?"

Hacker shook his head, as if he gave it up.

Prout reached the House. Glances on all sides seemed almost to burn him as he went. As he entered, he came on Potter and Greene, of his Form; and the two Fifth-Formers started convulsively at the sight of him. Prout's sound eye flashed at them.

"Potter! Greene!"

"Oh! Yes, sir!" stammered the two startled seniors.

"How dare you stare at me in that—"



"Let a bloke go!" whined Mr. Harris.
 "Leggo! I tell you! 'Andling a man
 like this 'ere—" "Release that man
 immediately!" ordered Mr. Prout, raising
 a commanding hand.

that uncouth manner? Take five hundred lines each!"

"Oh, sir!" gasped Potter and Greene. Prout strode on, leaving amazement and dismay behind him. Potter looked at Greene; Greene looked at Potter.

"It's his nose this time!" Potter said, in an awed whisper.

"Punched jolly hard, I fancy!" muttered Greene. "Whom does Prout go out scrapping with? The same man as last time, do you think?"

"Goodness knows!"

"I—I say, it's getting thick! The Head will be bound to take notice of it. Prout can't expect him to swallow another accident."

"Hardly!" Prout's door slammed in the distance.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Prout's Nose!

"I SAY, you fellows!" Billy Bunter burst into the Rag after tea that afternoon, his fat face full of excitement. Bunter was bursting with news.

"I—I—I say, you fellows!" he gasped.

"Well, what's the latest?" yawned Vernon-Smith.

"Prout!" gasped Bunter. "What about Prout?" asked several voices.

The fellows in the Rag seemed interested at once, Prout, indeed, was

taking up a lot of attention of late. The spotlight was fairly on him.

"Prout!" gurgled Bunter, breathless with excitement and news. "Prout, you know! Prout—"

"Give it a name!" said Peter Todd. "What's Prout done now?"

"He—he—he—he's got a nose!" gasped Bunter.

"A which?" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

"A—a—a nose!"

"Is that news?" asked Lord Mauleverer, staring at Bunter in surprise. "It would be rather surprisin' if he hadn't, I think, by Jove!"

"I mean, he's got a nose—a swollen nose—a prize nose—a nose like a beet-root—like a peony—like a—a—a save-loy! He's had his nose punched—busted—broken!" gurgled Bunter.

"What?"

"Prout!"

"Scrapping again?"

"Oh, my hat!"

"By gum, Prout's goin' it!" said the Bouncer, with a whistle. "Last Wednesday a black eye, this Wednesday a swollen nose—Prout's breakin' out badly in his old age!"

"He's allowing himself one scrap a week, at this rate!" remarked Skinner.

"Have you seen his nose, Bunter?"

"I haven't seen it—but Potter of the Fifth has! I heard him telling some Fifth Form men! He says Prout's nose looks as if a mule had kicked it. Swollenest nose he's ever seen!"

"Well, this takes the cake!" said

Toddy. "What does Prout do it for! He's a bit old for a strenuous life like this!"

"He says it was a tramp!" "A tramp?" repeated Harry Wharton.

"Yes, I heard that he told Capper it was a tramp! He never told him why he started fighting with a tramp, so far as I know. Fancy a Greyfriars Form master getting into a shindy with a tramp!"

"Pretty thick!" said Johnny Bull. "The thickfulness is terrific."

"Prout's goin' strong!" said the Bouncer. "He's headin' for the jump out of Greyfriars. The Head will never stand this."

"Dash it all, a man ought to draw a line somewhere," said Lord Mauleverer. "Man ought to keep up appearances."

"Man ought to learn how to tell a story, at least," said the Bouncer. "First a fog story—then a tramp story—and neither will wash."

"Hold on!" said Wharton. "The fog story is true."

"Rats!" replied the Bouncer.

"It's really true," said the captain of the Romove, anxious to say what he could for Prout. "Prout really did bag that eye in the fog."

"How do you know?" demanded half a dozen incredulous voices.

Wharton paused.

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(Continued from page 13.)

"Well, I do know," he said. "Gammon!" said Skinner. "You jolly well don't know anything about it. I know where Prout got that eye. He got it at the Cross Keys, and it was the potman gave it to him. Of course, he's been to the Cross Keys again to-day, and he's got into another shindy. It's pretty plain that he's making a habit of going on a bender once a week."

"Looks like it!" said Vernon-Smith. "But if Prout thinks he can get away with it, he's jolly well mistaken. The Head will never stand it."

"A Form master with a black eye and a swollen nose!" said Squiff. "It's altogether too thick. Not at all the thing!"

"I say, you fellows, Prout takes call-over this evening!" squeaked Billy Bunter. "We shall all be able to see his nose! He, he, he! He can't hide it at call-over! He, he, he!"

"Poor old Prout!"

"I wonder what he'll tell the Head this time!"

Call-over, as a rule, had no attractions for the Greyfriars fellows. On this particular occasion, however, Greyfriars rolled in to call-over, as eagerly as if they were going to a football match or a circus.

The news of Prout's prize nose, of course, had spread.

Every fellow, in every Form, had heard of it; except, perhaps, Coker of the Fifth, still secluded in sanny, and out of touch with current affairs.

Many fellows were amused, some hugely entertained. More serious fellows were shocked. They felt that Prout was overdoing it. There was, as Lord Mauleverer remarked, such a thing as keeping up appearances. A man who, at Prout's age and in Prout's position, got into continual scraps and shindies, and displayed in public the signs of fierce combats, really seemed to have forgotten what was due to the school. What could induce Prout to do it was a mystery.

"It's his jolly old fiery spirit breakin' out," the Bounder averred. "He was no end of a firebrand when he was young. Look at those guns and antlers and bear-skins and things he's got stacked in his study. He used to climb Alps and shoot bears and tigers and things—"

"So he says!" remarked Skinner.

"Well, he's got a lot of jolly old trophies in his study—"

"I fancy they were a job lot at an auction."

"Well, there's no doubt about the fiery spirit, anyhow," chuckled the Bounder. "It's breakin' out in old age. Prout goes out lookin' for trouble. I wonder what he'll be doin' next!"

Almost every man in the school was discussing Prout. Certainly every man

was looking forward to seeing him at call-over.

Prout's turn to call the roll fell that day, and as Big Hall was filled with Greyfriars fellows, there was a suppressed buzz of excitement.

All the Forms were in their places, and all had an eager look. Even those high and mighty men, the prefects of the Sixth Form, who were not bound to turn up for roll-call like ordinary mortals, were all in their places, interested in Prout's nose.

And there was a deep hum of disappointment when it was seen that Hacker, the master of the Shell, was going to call the names.

Prout, evidently, had asked the master of the Shell to take his place, and was keeping in coy retirement.

"Rotten!" said the Bounder.

"I say, you fellows, he's not going to let us see his prize nose!" said Billy Bunter. "I say, it must be a regular corker if he's afraid to let the fellows see it!"

There was general dissatisfaction. The crowd of fellows had looked forward to seeing Prout's prize nose, and Prout's prize nose was not on view. They felt as a theatre audience might feel at an announcement that there was to be no performance.

"Silence!" rapped out Mr. Hacker. And he proceeded to call the names.

Roll-call over, the fellows marched out of Hall. They departed excitedly discussing Prout and his nose. The wildest rumours were afloat as to the cause of Prout's latest disaster.

Curiosity to see him was at burning-point. Price of the Fifth, who fortunately had lines, dashed off his lines in a great hurry and took them to his Form master's study.

Near at hand a crowd of fellows waited to hear Price's report of the state of Prout's nose.

Price came back disappointed. Prout, it seemed, had stood looking out of the study window, and told Price, over his shoulder, to place his impot on the table and go. Price had ventured to ask whether he would not look at the lines, in the hope of making Prout turn round, and Prout had replied in the negative, in such a voice that Price had been rather glad to get out of the study quickly.

Some fellows cut out into the quad to look up at Prout's window. But Prout was already gone from the window, and the blind was drawn.

Prout, obviously, was going to lie doggo as long as he could. He had retired to his study, like Achilles to his tent, and was not to be seen. Not till the morrow, when Prout had to take his Form, was his nose likely to be seen. In the meantime, it was widely discussed. Public interest, which had previously been concentrated on Prout's eye, was now shifted to his nose. Some portion of Prout seemed destined to occupy the attention of Greyfriars.

And the question that was most keenly discussed in the studies, senior and junior, was—what would the Head say?

The Head had stood Prout's eye, apparently accepting his lame explanation of it. Would he stand Prout's nose? Could Prout possibly get away with it a second time?

If he did, would he break out again, and turn up at Greyfriars with another black eye, or a cauliflower ear, or a tooth missing? Would Prout have sense enough to keep out of shindies after this, or would he go on as he had started—now that he had, so to speak, tasted blood?

Prep was much neglected in many studies at Greyfriars that evening. Fellows talked instead of working; and, as a topic, Prout reigned supreme.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Painful for Prout!

DR. LOCKE raised his eyebrows. He said nothing. But that expressive lift of his eyebrows said a good deal.

Prout breathed hard. During prep, when the fellows had to be in their studies, Prout had ventured forth, fairly safe from observation as he made his way to the Head's study.

Prout, as a rule, was far from being a retiring gentleman. He liked to be in the public eye. But circumstances alter cases, and at present Prout would have been glad to understudy the flower that was born to blush unseen and waste its sweetness on the desert air.

On his way to the Head he encountered Trotter, the page, who gave him a surprised stare. Prout gave Trotter such a glare in return that Trotter fairly ran for it—bolting below stairs to tell cook and the rest that "old Prout" had a nose to match his eye, and had been scrapping again.

Frowning, Prout pursued his way, tapped at the Head's door, and entered. His nose had to be explained somehow, and it was better to take the bull by the horns, as it were. The Head was bound to see it sooner or later, and Prout wanted to get it over.

Dr. Locke gazed at him. Calm and gentle and unsuspecting, Dr. Locke had accepted the fog story, perhaps with a lingering, inward doubt. But the sight of Prout's nose gave him a shock, and cold disapproval darkened his kindly countenance.

"Pray excuse me for interrupting you, sir!" said Prout, in a gasping voice. "I—I feel that an explanation is due to you, sir."

"Indeed!" said the Head coldly. He made a gesture to a chair, and Prout sat down. The Head's gaze dwelt on his nose. Mr. Harris had hit hard. Prout's nose was scarlet, and it was swollen. It was such a nose as a prize-fighter might have collected in the ring. Added to his purple eye, it gave Prout's face a remarkably battered appearance; an appearance which Prout himself realised to be most unbecoming in a schoolmaster.

"Another accident?" asked the Head icily.

"You—you see, sir—"

"It was not foggy to-day, I think!" said the Head, in the same tone.

Prout flushed. This was as good as telling him that it was no use to spring an accidental collision on the Head.

"No, sir! It is very unfortunate," said Prout. "Very unfortunate indeed. I have been attacked by a tramp; the same bad character, I believe, who attempted to rob my study on that foggy day last week—"

"Indeed!"

"I was knocked down, sir, by this ruffian," said Mr. Prout. "I should have been robbed by him had not a motor-car fortunately passed at the moment. He left me and ran as the car came up."

"Indeed!"

"I have communicated with the police, sir, giving them a description of the man," said Prout. "I have every hope that he will be arrested. Inspector Grimes told me, on the telephone, that he will make every effort."

"Indeed!"
The Head's vocabulary seemed to be limited. But he contrived to put a lot of expression into a single word.

Prout's flush deepened.
"I am aware, sir," he said, "that it is very unfortunate. I am only too painfully aware that my appearance is—is—is somewhat shocking."
"That is certainly the case," said the Head.

"I am, of course, blameless in the matter," said Mr. Prout. "It might happen to any man to be attacked in a lonely lane by a brutal tramp."

"It might!" assented the Head.
"I hardly think," said Prout, his voice trembling a little, "that my word needs substantiation. But as it happens, a number of junior boys saw me in the presence of the tramp who afterwards attacked me."

"They saw him attack you?"
"N-n-no! They—they were out of sight when the ruffian actually attacked me, as—as it happened."

"Indeed!"
There was a long pause.
Prout sat in discomfort. He realised that he was putting the Head's credulity to a severe strain.

A black eye might be an accident. A beetroot nose might result from an encounter with a footpad. But the two taken together had, as it were, an accumulative effect.

Nobody else at Greyfriars had collected a black eye in the fog. Nobody else had been knocked down by a footpad. It was singular, to say the least, that these misfortunes seemed to happen only to Prout.

The Head broke a long silence.
"I will be frank, Mr. Prout! I am bound, of course, to accept your word. I should not dream of doubting it. But

there is a—a—a certain fitness of things that must be observed at a Public School. Your appearance with a—a discoloured eye was very startling—very shocking. You must yourself be aware that the fog accident you described was —was—" Dr. Locke paused for a word —"was to say the least, very singular. It is almost inconceivable to me that a man's eye could be blacked by a collision with a tree, in a fog, leaving all the other features undamaged. There are many who would say that it was impossible."

Prout was only too well aware that nearly all Greyfriars had already pronounced it impossible.

"Now," said the Head, "you appear with another disfigurement. As you say, any man might be attacked in a lonely lane by a tramp. But—"

The Head paused again, with considerable emphasis on the "but."

"I—I follow your meaning, sir!" said Prout, in a gasping voice. "It is—is unusual! I am only too painfully aware of it!"

"Precisely," said the Head.
"The—the corroborative evidence of the juniors I have mentioned, sir—" said Prout faintly.

The Head made a gesture dismissing the suggestion.

Prout rose to his feet.

"Sir! May I ask what—what—"

He stammered.
"I have said, Mr. Prout, that I will be frank," said the Head. "I am not unaware of the gossip, the tattle that has been spreading through the school on this subject. I am not unaware of the opinion of Common-room. Mr. Prout, let there be no more such accidents."

"Sir! You—you can hardly suppose that—that I have encountered such disastrous accidents intentionally?"

Dr. Locke raised his hand.
"Avoid them, Mr. Prout! Carefully avoid them! Should another such accident occur, it will be scarcely possible for you to continue in your present post. My own faith in you, of course, would remain unchanged; but I should have to consider the effect on the school—I should have to consider—in short, Mr. Prout, there must not be another such occurrence."

"It is not likely, sir—it is very unlikely—"

"No doubt," assented the Head. "In the event of the unlikely occurrence occurring, you will naturally place your resignation in my hands. But I agree with you that it is most unlikely."

The Head made a movement towards his papers; and Prout took his leave. He went heavily from the Head's study.

The Head had been courteous, though cold. He was giving Prout every chance. But it was clear that if a third disaster happened to Prout, Dr. Locke's credulity would be strained to breaking point. Prout frowned darkly as he went down the corridor. He was, as it were, let off while of good behaviour; that was what it amounted to—a most humiliating and galling position for a majestic gentleman like Prout.

At the corner of the passage he met Hacker, face to face. Hacker's eye fixed on Prout's nose

Prout breathed hard.
"A blow from a ruffianly footpad, Hacker!" he said.

"Ah!" said the master of the Shell.

"I have just seen the Head—"

Hacker looked surprised. It seemed to startle him to hear that Prout had taken that nose, in company with such an eye, into the Head's presence.

"Was that quite judicious, Prout?" he asked.

(Continued on next page.)

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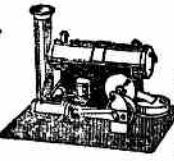
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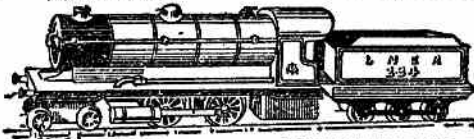
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"I think so," said Prout, "as I have nothing to conceal—"

"Ah!"

"What do you mean precisely by 'Ah,' Hacker?" asked Prout, with a dangerous gleam in his sound eye.

The master of the Shell stepped back hurriedly.

"Nothing, Prout! Nothing whatever! Pray calm yourself—"

"Calm myself! What do you mean?"

"Nothing, my dear sir! The fact is, I—I am somewhat pressed for time."

Hacker departed in haste.

Prout stared after him. He glared after him. Hacker's conduct was curious, and it surprised and annoyed Prout.

He marched on. He hoped to get back to his study without any further encounters. And he almost ran into Loder of the Sixth.

Instantly, of course, Loder's gaze fastened on Prout's nose. Prout almost snorted.

"A blow from a ruffianly footpad, Loder!" he said.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Loder.

"What do you mean, Loder?" Prout's temper had been sorely tried.

"What do you mean to imply by that ejaculation, Loder?"

He made a step towards the prefect.

Loder did not answer. He jumped back, and vanished round the nearest corner. He was almost running.

"Bless my soul!" gasped Prout.

Wrath mounted to his face. He understood now. He was getting a reputation at Greyfriars as a reckless, quarrelsome fighting man. Hacker had dodged him, fearing a scene—Loder was almost running away, as if in dread of a right-hander! Prout gurgled with rage.

Near his study door, when he arrived there, he came upon a fat junior, who blinked at him through a pair of big spectacles. Billy Bunter was neglecting prep, hanging about in the hope of catching sight of Prout's prize nose. Now he caught sight of it.

Eyes and spectacles fastened on the flaming nose. Bunter stood with his mouth wide open, staring.

It was too much!

"Bunter! What are you doing here? What—"

Prout strode at him.

"Yaroooh!"

Bunter took to his heels.

"Boy!" roared Prout.

"Owl! Keep off! Help!" yelled Bunter. And he fairly flew.

Prout made a stride in pursuit. Then he checked himself. He realised that he was getting an alarming reputation—that he was becoming an object of terror! Masters dodged him—prefects eluded him—small boys fled in terror at his approach! Prout went into his study and slammed the door.

The position was really intolerable.

In Common-room, Hacker was speaking to Capper.

"I thought, for the moment, that he was about to strike me—I really think that he was about to strike me! Such a state of affairs here, Capper—"

In the Sixth Form passage Loder was speaking to Walker of the Sixth.

"I cleared just in time—he was fairly jumping at me. I tell you, that man's getting dangerous."

In the Remove passage, where Billy Bunter arrived breathless, the voice of the fat junior was heard in the land.

"I say, you fellows! Prout's tipsy again—or gone mad! He sprang at me like a tiger! Like a tiger, you know! I—I ran for my life! Oh crickey!"

Matters were really getting serious.

Fifth Form men looked forward to the

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morrow, when they had to meet Prout in the Form-room, with dismay. They felt like a lot of Daniels with the lions' den in prospect. They even got to the length of discussing whether they should bolt from the Form-room, or hold Prout down by main force if he became violent.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

A Slight Mistake!

"H A, ha, ha!" roared the Famous Five.

It was in morning break, the following day.

Prout was walking on the path under the elms, taking the fresh air after a somewhat strained and nery time in the Fifth Form-room. At the sound of a burst of laughter, Prout, of course, looked round.

Laughter, to Prout's mind, was associated with his eye or his nose, or both. Prout was not only sensitive about these things; but he was positively becoming a bundle of nerves on the subject.

Harry Wharton & Co., as a matter of fact, did not see Prout, and did not know that he was there. They were not thinking of Prout, not looking at him, and had—for the time, at least—forgotten his existence and his highly decorative countenance.

They were looking at Billy Bunter.

Bunter had retired to a quiet spot to devour a bag of jam-tarts. A secluded spot was needed, for Bunter had annexed that bag of jam-tarts from Vernon-Smith's study. Bunter preferred seclusion until the tarts were disposed of.

But vengeance was on his track, in the shape of the Bounder. Bunter had enjoyed only one tart, when Smithy tracked him to his lair. He did not enjoy the rest.

Smithy, collaring Bunter with one hand and the tarts with the other, proceeded to plaster those sticky comestibles over the Owl of the Remove.

Squashy tarts mingled with Bunter's hair, squeezed into his collar, and plastered his face; and the fat pilferer wriggled and gasped and spluttered and gurgled wildly. Bunter loved jam-tarts taken internally; taken externally they were horrid.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Famous Five, greatly entertained by the sight.

They were at a little distance, but they had a good view, and the jammy aspect of Bunter struck them as highly comic.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was then that Prout bore down on them.

The five juniors, laughing heartily, did not see him till he descended on them like a thunderbolt.

His face was fairly scarlet with wrath.

"How dare you!" he gasped.

The chums of the Remove became grave at once. What Prout was butting in for they did not know, except that the Fifth Form master always was butting in. But his infuriated expression reduced them to seriousness.

Besides, his portly form barred off the view of the jammy Owl.

"You young rascals!" gasped Prout in a choking voice. "You—you impudent knaves!"

"What?" ejaculated Harry Wharton.

"How dare you!" roared Prout.

"What have we done, sir?" exclaimed Bob Cherry, bewildered.

Prout glared.

"What! Do you think I did not see you—did not hear your outburst of vulgar hilarity? What?"

"Well, why shouldn't we laugh?" asked Nugent, in amazement. "A fellow's allowed to laugh if he likes, sir."

"What! You dare to defend your conduct?" hooted Prout, almost foaming. "You venture to argue with me? Follow me! I will take you to your headmaster!"

"But, sir—" stuttered Johnny Bull.

"I shall not take you to your Form master! I have appealed to your Form master on a previous occasion—in vain." Prout's eye gleamed at Wharton. "A nominal punishment was the result. Dr. Locke shall deal with this! The headmaster shall decide whether a member of his staff is to be flouted in open quad. Come!"

"B-b-but, sir—" gasped Wharton.

"Follow me!" roared Prout. "If you do not immediately follow me to the House I will take you by force!"

"We—we'll follow you if you like, sir!" stuttered Bob Cherry. "But I don't see—"

"Come!" boomed Prout.

"Oh, certainly, sir!"

Prout strode off towards the House. The Famous Five followed in his wake in a state of complete bewilderment. Prout evidently was frightfully offended—why, they did not know.

"What's up, you men?" asked Peter Todd, meeting the procession half-way to the House.

"Goodness knows!" said Harry. "Prout's asked us to go to the Head with him; he hasn't said why."

"We're following in father's footsteps—we're following the dear old dad!" chanted Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Prout glared round.

"What, what! Silence! Follow me!"

"We're following you, sir."

The procession arrived at the House. In the doorway Mr. Quelch met them. He had observed them from his study window and come out to inquire.

"What is all this, Mr. Prout?" he asked very quietly. "Are you taking these boys to my study?"

"I am not, sir!" boomed Prout.

"I am taking these boys to their headmaster, sir! I am taking them to Dr. Locke, sir, who will deal with them adequately for their insolence, sir!"

"But what—"

"I decline to place the matter in your hands, sir, after my previous experience of your lenity—your indefensible lenity—in dealing with an impudent and insulting Remove boy!"

Mr. Quelch coloured with anger.

"Mr. Prout! If these boys have offended, I am the proper person before whom to lay a complaint, as their Form master—"

"I admit nothing of the kind, sir! I insist upon taking these disorderly boys to their headmaster!"

"Wharton, what have you done? What—"

"Nothing, sir!" said Harry.

"The nothingfulness is terrific, sir."

"Follow me!" roared Prout. "Mr. Quelch, I insist upon your standing aside and allowing me, sir, to pass! I insist upon taking these unruly boys to Dr. Locke! I will take no denial, sir!"

Henry Samuel Quelch breathed hard.

"Very well, Mr. Prout! I will accompany you, as these boys are in my Form! I shall certainly be present!"

"You may please yourself about that, sir! It is quite immaterial to me, sir! Follow me!" hooted Prout to the juniors, and he stalked on to the Head's study.

The Famous Five followed on. Mr.

Mr. Prout's feeble guard was whisked aside, and the tramp's knuckles crashed on his plump nose with a mighty crash. "Oh!" gasped Prout, staggering back.



Quelch brought up the rear, with a frowning brow. Prout was greatly excited, and evidently not amenable to argument. He stalked on ahead—portly, pompous, and wrathful. He knocked quite emphatically at the Head's door.

"Come in!" said the calm voice of Dr. Locke.

Prout stalked in. The Removites and the Remove master followed. Dr. Locke rose to his feet, eyeing his numerous visitors in surprise.

"My dear Quelch! What—" "I have no idea, sir," said Mr. Quelch, with a slight shrug of the shoulders. "Mr. Prout has insisted upon reporting these Remove boys to you for some offence with which I am unacquainted. As their Form master, I desired to be present, if you have no objection, sir."

"Quite so!" said the Head. "Mr. Prout, surely this matter, whatever it is, might very well have been left in Mr. Quelch's hands—"

"Mr. Quelch, sir, is unlikely to take a sufficiently serious view of the conduct of these boys, sir," said Mr. Prout, breathing heavily. "Mr. Quelch, I fear, would regard their outrageous conduct as a trifling incident."

"Come, come!" said the Head tartly. "Their insolence—their impudence—their disrespectful audacity, sir—"

"Kindly tell me what these boys have done, Mr. Prout, as you have interrupted me, and they are here," said the Head, with an unusual note of sharpness in his voice.

"Dr. Locke, you—you see—the painful—the exceedingly painful—results in my countenance of—of an accident in the fog, and—and an attack by a brutal footpad. You cannot approve, sir, of these—these disfigurements being made the subject of mocking merriment among Lower boys."

"Certainly not!" said the Head, frowning.

"You cannot approve, sir, of a mob of juniors bursting into a peal of unseemly laughter, sir, at the sight of my—my disfigured face, sir."

"Most certainly not!" "That, sir, is what they have done! If, sir, I am to be mocked—held up to ridicule—persecuted, sir, in open quad by a set of unruly and disorderly Lower boys—" Prout gasped.

Dr. Locke fixed stern eyes on the culprits.

"Oh crumbs!" murmured Bob Cherry. The juniors understood now. They had not even seen Prout; they had been laughing at Bunter. Prout, for his part, had not seen Bunter, and had taken their laughter unto himself. The mistake was so utterly ludicrous that the Famous Five could not help grinning, in spite of the awful presence in which they stood.

They tried to keep grave. They knew that it was a time to be serious. But the utter absurdity of the situation was too much for them. In spite of themselves, there came a chortle from the Famous Five.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Poor old Prout I

"SILENCE!" The Head rapped out the word like a bullet. His brow was like thunder. He could scarcely believe his ears or his eyes. "Oh! Sorry, sir—" gasped Wharton.

"You—you see, sir—" stammered Bob.

"The sorrowfulness is terrific, honoured sir! But—"

"How dare you!" exclaimed the Head, angry and shocked by that unexpected outbreak of untimely mirth. "I repeat, how dare—"

"Oh, please excuse us, sir!" stammered Wharton. "But—but—but—you see, sir—Mr. Prout's making a mistake—oh dear—"

"It's a mistake, sir," stammered Nugent. "We—we—oh dear!" He nearly went off with another joyous chuckle; but fortunately controlled the impulse in time.

Mr. Quelch was glaring at his hopeful pupils. He had come with them to see fair play, and he was utterly scandalized by their unseemly merriment in the august presence of the Head.

Prout, of course, began to boom.

"This is an example of their usual conduct, sir! I need not dwell upon their insolences—their utter want of respect, sir—when they venture to repeat their offence in your presence, sir—"

Dr. Locke made a gesture, and Prout rang off. The Head fixed his eyes on

the Famous Five with grim sternness, reducing them to silent gravity.

"Explain yourself, Wharton! It appears that you have been guilty of the impudence of—of laughing at a member of my staff in the quadrangle, on account of—of facial disfigurement."

"No, sir! Oh, sir! No, sir!" stammered Wharton.

"We—we didn't, sir!" gasped Johnny Bull.

"Oh, no, sir!"

"Nothing of the kind, sir."

"You do not venture to cast doubt on Mr. Prout's statement?" exclaimed the Head. "You do not venture—"

"Oh, no, sir! But—" gurgled Johnny Bull.

"Do you deny that you laughed—"

"Oh, no, sir! We laughed—"

"A noisy and vulgar outbreak of unseemly mirth—" came from Prout. "A shout, or rather a yell, of coarse laughter—"

"We—we laughed, sir—" stammered Wharton. "But—but—"

"Enough!" said the Head. "I shall deal with you severely. You must be made to understand that respect is due to—"

"Oh, sir! We—we—we—"

"You need say no more. I shall be—"

"But we didn't laugh at Prout, sir!" gasped Wharton. "I—I mean Mr. Prout! We never laughed at him, sir! We never saw him."

"Never knew he was there, sir!" said Nugent.

"Not till he came down on us, sir, after we laughed," said Bob.

"We—we—were laughing at Bunter, sir—" stuttered Johnny Bull.

"Bunter had a lot of jam on him, sir—"

"And he looked awfully funny, sir—"

"All stinky with jam, sir—"

"And we—we laughed—"

"At Bunter, sir—"

"Bunter, of our Form, sir—"

"And we never saw Mr. Prout—"

"Just Bunter, sir—"

It was a sort of chorus from the chums of the Remove, all speaking together. They were rather pressed to get it out

in time, for the Head had picked up the cane from his table.

The Head blinked at them. He laid down the cane again. He glanced at Mr. Quelch. Quelch, after a moment of astonishment, smiled. He could not help smiling. Prout's ridiculous mistake would have made a stone image smile.

"Dear me," said Mr. Quelch.

"Bless my soul!" said the Head.

Prout stood dumb.

Even upon the portly and pompous mind of Prout it dawned that there had been a mistake.

He realised that there was other objects of merriment at Greyfriars in addition to himself!

Scarlet spread over the plump countenance of Prout. A freshly-boiled beet-root would have looked pale beside him at that moment.

"Oh!" he gasped.

There was silence. It was a brief silence; but it was a tense one. Quelch turned his face away, doubtless to hide his emotions. His shoulders were shaking slightly.

The Head's face twitched.

"We—we're so sorry, sir!" stammered Wharton. "We—we wouldn't laugh at Mr. Prout for—for anything, sir! But—but we couldn't help laughing at Bunter, sir—he looked so funny with the jam sticking all over him. I—I'm sure Mr. Prout won't mind us laughing at Bunter, sir."

An inarticulate sound came from Prout.

Quelch moved towards the window. His shoulders were shaking more than ever. He was struggling to suppress a laugh; but the laugh, slowly but surely, was getting the upper hand.

The Head was struggling to keep a calm, grave, majestic, countenance. But its calm majesty was breaking down.

"Mr. Prout!" the Head almost gasped. "According to these juniors, a—a mistake has been made! It appears that it was—was a Remove boy who— who excited their merriment! If you desire further investigation to be made into the matter—b'm—"

Prout desired no further investigation. He knew that the juniors had spoken

the truth, and that further investigation would only reveal a jammy Bunter, the cause of the merriment he had so mistakenly taken unto himself. His only desire, just then, was to get out of the Head's study—to get out of sight—to hide his blushes.

"No, sir!" he gurgled. "Nunno! I—I am satisfied—it—it appears that—that I acted under a misapprehension."

"If you are satisfied, sir—"

"Quite!" gulped Prout.

And he fairly fled.

The Head's door closed after him.

Mr. Quelch, at the window, was making suppressed gurgling sounds. The Head seemed on the point of a break-down.

He hastily pointed to the door.

"You may go," he said. "I am satisfied with your explanation—please leave my study at once—at once—"

The juniors knew perfectly well why the Head was in a hurry for them to depart. They knew that he could not control his own merriment much longer. They dutifully left the study.

The door had scarcely closed on them when the Head broke down. A ripple of irresistible laughter peeled from him.

"Ha, ha! Bless by soul! Mr. Quelch—"

"Ha, ha!" Quelch looked round from the window at last. Remove men would hardly have known his usually severe countenance at that moment. It was suffused with mirth. "Oh, sir! Ha, ha! Most—most ridiculous! Really, sir—ha, ha, ha!"

"Most unfortunate—ha, ha!" ejaculated the Head. "Really, Prout is too—too sensitive! If a Lower boy cannot laugh without Prout supposing that he is the object of it—ha, ha—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" trilled Mr. Quelch.

"Really, this is—is ludicrous. Poor Prout! Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Wharton & Co., as they went down the corridor, heard the sound of laughter from the Head's study. They grinned at one another.

"Poor old Prout!" gasped Bob.

"The awful ass! Fancy his putting his foot in it like that—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Even the Beak's laughing!" gasped Nugent. "Well, it's enough to make a cat laugh! Poor old Prout! Ha, ha, ha!"

And the Famous Five yelled again. A dozer fellows demanded to know what the joke was, and when they were told they yelled, too. Even Bunter, jammy as he was, chortled when he heard it. In a few minutes all Greyfriars knew what had happened, and were chortling over it. There was chuckling in Common-room when the story reached the august apartment—even the grim face of Hacker melted into a grin, and Capper chortled, and little Mr. Twigg sniggered till he almost choked.

Prout, himself, in these days of trial and tribulation was far from gay. But there was no doubt that he was adding considerably to the gaiety of existence at Greyfriars.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

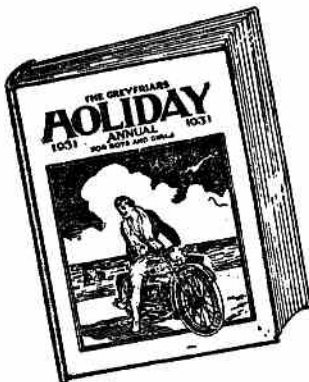
"Help!"

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! It's jolly old Coker!"

Coker of the Fifth glanced round, frowning.

It was Saturday afternoon, and Harry Wharton & Co. were sauntering along the towpath by the Sark when they came on Horace Coker. Coker evidently was out of the sanatorium at last.

A Budget of Ripping School Yarns



You will revel in the budget of ripping school yarns and thrilling adventure stories of the HOLIDAY ANNUAL. Each tale will hold you enthralled. Here you can meet all the jolly schoolboy characters of Greyfriars, St. Jim's, and Rookwood Schools whose merry pranks cannot fail to entertain. There are lots of other interesting features, too, including pithy poems, puzzles, and eight beautiful plates.

HOLIDAY ANNUAL

At all Newsagents and Booksellers—o

The chums of the Remove paused to greet him.

"Feeling fit, old bean?" asked Harry Wharton cheerily.

"If you call me old bean—" began Coker.

"My mistake—I mean old ass!" said the captain of the Remove. "Glad to see you out of sanny. We've missed you."

"Like your cheek!" answered Coker ungratefully.

"Well, we couldn't help missing you. Greyfriars without you is like a circus without a clown!" explained Wharton.

"Exactly!" agreed Bob Cherry.

"The exactfulness is terrific."

Coker frowned more darkly.

"Seen Prout's nose?" asked Nugent.

"Blow his nose!" growled Coker.

"Well, he can do that for himself! Are you going to tell him that you gave him the black eye?" grinned Nugent.

"Shut up, you young ass!" Coker looked alarmed. "I was rather an ass to mention that to you kids—only, of course, you were to blame in the matter, as I said. But since I've come out of sanny I find there's no end of a jaw on the subject. Prout would be frightfully wild if he knew! Just keep your silly heads shut about it, sea?"

"Mum's the word!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "I fancy Prout would strew the hungry churchyard with your bones if he knew, Coker."

"We're keeping it dark, Coker," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "It's rather a shame on Prout, though. You really ought to own up and let the school know that Prout never got it from a potman at a pub."

Coker snorted.

"I don't want advice from a cheeky fag!" he said. "Clear off! Like your cheek to stop and speak to a Fifth Form man! Blessed if I know what Greyfriars is coming to."

"You silly ass—"

"If you want me to smack your head, Wharton—"

"You benighted bandersnatch—"
Smack!

"Ow! Oh, my hat!" gasped Wharton, as Coker suited the action to the word. "Why, I—I—I'll— Bump him!"

"Hands off!" roared Coker. "I'll smash the lot of you! I'll mop up the towpath with the whole gang of you! I'll—I'll—yarooooooh!"

Bump!

In the grasp of five pairs of hands Horace Coker established contact with the towpath. He roared.

"Give him another!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "Good old Coker! Fancy asking us to bump him, his first day out of sanny! But why disappoint him? Give him one more."

"You young sweeps! I'll—I'll—whoop!"

Bump!

The Famous Five walked cheerily on their way, leaving Coker sprawling and spluttering. They were out of sight along the winding path before Coker got on his feet again and glared round for them—which was, perhaps, just as well for Coker.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" murmured Bob Cherry, a few minutes later. "Here's the jolly old Prout bird! Mind you don't smile."

At a little distance the portly figure of Prout came in sight, approaching. The Famous Five composed their features to an expression of almost preternatural gravity.

Prout was wearing a soft hat, with the brim pulled down over his face as

much as possible. Even so, he could not hide the remarkable state of two of his features. His black eye, which had become purple, was now fading to minor shades, but it was still fairly conspicuous. His nose had taken a turn for the better, but it was still in a bulbous condition, and worthy of a second glance.

Prout no doubt had chosen that path by the river—a solitary one in the winter—in order to take the air without meeting curious eyes. He had to take exercise, and he shrank coyly from public notice.

That he was not pleased to meet the chums of the Remove was proved by

passed. Prout acknowledged the salute stiffly and with a glowering eye.

Having got safely past Prout, the Famous Five ventured to smile. They strolled on, and a few minutes later there was a sound of pounding footsteps in the wood that bordered the towpath.

"I say, you fellows!" came a gasping voice.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

Billy Bunter emerged breathlessly from the wood. He blinked back under the shadowy trees behind him through his big spectacles.

"I—I say, you fellows, I've seen him again!" he gasped.

"Who—Prout?"

GREYFRIARS CELEBRITIES.

No. 19.

This popular gallery of Greyfriars celebrities would be incomplete without Mrs. Mumble, the worthy old dame of the tuckshop, so our Greyfriars rhymester selects her for his subject this week.



WITH fingers all sticky and smeary,
I take up my pen, Sister Jane;
I've promised to write to you, dearie,
Yes, over and over again.
But when I'm not making meat-patties
I'm turning out tarts by the tray,
Or frying the doughnuts; and that is
The reason for this long delay.

You see, I'm as busy as busy
From dawn till the setting of sun;
My brain is bewildered and dizzy,
And right off my legs I am run!
For when I'm not tending the oven
I'm serving young gents in the shop;
I dare not be slack, or a sloven,
Lest takings should suddenly drop!

This moment is peaceful and quiet;
My patrons are now "cramming"
Greek—
A far less enjoyable diet
Than that which in tuckshops they seek!
But soon I shall see them stampeding
With whoopings and shouts and alarms,
To the tuckshop; and then I'll be needing
More legs, and a new pair of arms!

I wish you could see Master Bunter,
A very plump patron of mine;
He's hungry—no, not as a hunter,
But nearly as hungry as nine!
He has an amazing capacity.
He gobbles up tarts by the score;
And when you rebuke his rapacity
He just comes up smiling for more!

And then there is Bull, with a weakness
For veal-pie, and also for "grouse";
And Alonzo, the essence of meekness,
Who nibbles his food like a mouse!
And his lazy young lordship,
Mauleverer,
Who scatters his banknotes like chaff;
And Coker—there isn't a cleverer
Comedian at raising a laugh!

But now I must end this epistle;
The schoolboy bombardment begins!
I hear Master Cherry's shrill whistle,
He gives me the broadest of grins.
"Tarts, madam! And mind they are
fruity!"
He cries, in the tones of a cymbal;
So I must be doing my duty—
Yours breathlessly, dear—
JESSIE MIMBLE.

the dark frown that corrugated his plump brow at the sight of them.

"Don't smile, for goodness' sake!" breathed Bob Cherry.

"The smilefulness is certainly not the proper caper, my esteemed chums!" murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "Let us imitate the ludicrous gravity of the ridiculous owl!"

Prout's sound eye was on them as they advanced. There was a suspicious gleam in it.

Undoubtedly he was searching their faces for a smile.

Five owls could not have looked more solemn than the Famous Five as they came up with Prout.

They capped him respectfully as they

"Blow Prout! That beast!" gasped Bunter.

"What beast, fathead? Loder of the Sixth?"

"No, you ass! That beastly tramp—the brute who tried to rob me, who nearly had my forty-guinea gold watch and—"

"Oh, that jolly old sportsman!" said Bob Cherry. "Is he still hanging about. I should have thought he'd have cleared off by this time."

Bunter blinked uneasily into the wood.

"Well, he hasn't," he said. "I saw him on the footpath and dodged into the trees. I say, you fellows, that brute

ought to be run in! It ain't safe to have him hanging about."

The Famous Five looked alert at once. If Mr. Herbert Harris was still in the vicinity they were quite prepared to deal with him. Prout was not at hand to intervene a second time.

"Is he coming this way?" asked Johnny Bull, pushing back his cuffs.

"No; he was going the other way when I saw him," answered Bunter. "I—I was afraid he might be after me, though! He knows I've got a watch that cost forty-five guineas—"

"Sure you saw him?" asked Wharton. "Of course I'm sure! Think I wouldn't know 'his trousers again?" grunted Bunter. "I had a jolly good mind to collar him and march him off to the police station. Only—only—Blessed if I see anything to cackle at, you silly chumps."

The juniors chuckled. They could not quite see Billy Bunter marching Mr. Harris off to the police station.

"Look here, let's go after the brute," suggested Johnny Bull. "Nobody's safe with that footpad hanging about. It may have been that merchant who gave Prout his prize nose—if he really got it from a tramp, as he says. Let's root him out."

"Good egg!"

"Come and show us where you saw him, Bunter."

"I—I say, you fellows, I—I'm in rather a hurry. I—I've got to see a chap!" stammered Bunter.

And the Owl of the Remove departed. Apparently he was not anxious to come into contact with Mr. Harris, even in company with the Famous Five. The chums of the Remove chuckled and turned into the wood, heading for the distant footpath.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" ejaculated Bob Cherry suddenly. "Hark!"

From the direction of the river a sudden shout rang and echoed through the wood.

"Help!"

"Oh, my hat! Come on!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. And the Famous Five, with one accord, tore away through the wood in the direction of the shout for help. It was Coker's voice that shouted, and they heard it again and yet again as they tore on.

"Help! Help!"

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Prout to the Rescue:

MR. HERBERT HARRIS looked out of the thickets upon the towpath with a scowling brow and a suspicious eye. Mr. Harris was not in a good temper or a happy mood that afternoon. That morning he had been chased by an angry farmer, who found Mr. Harris suspiciously near his chicken-run. Later, a bulldog had discovered him exploring a backyard, and Mr. Harris had barely escaped a very fine set of teeth. Fleeing from those teeth, Mr. Harris had fairly run into Police-constable Tozer, of Friardale, who was looking for a gentleman of Mr. Harris' description. Again Herbert's escape had been narrow, and he was now feeling quite fed-up. If this sort of thing went on, Mr. Harris saw nothing for it but to give up sneak-thieving, and take to work—a prospect which naturally dismayed him very much.

He looked cautiously out of the thicket, before emerging into the open. It was necessary to see whether the coast was clear—Mr. Harris being in the sad

state of Ishmael of old; his hand against every man, and every man's hand against him.

He grunted angrily and drew his head back into the brambles at the sight of Coker of the Greyfriars Fifth. But on second thoughts Mr. Harris put his head out of cover again, and examined Coker with his eye.

Coker looked a prosperous fellow. He was alone, and the path by the river was solitary. And Coker, walking along slowly, with his hands in his pockets and his brow corrugated with thought, was quite off his guard.

Mr. Harris' eyes gleamed. This looked like a chance for him. With a few pounds in his pocket, and perhaps a watch and chain and a pin or two to dispose of, Herbert Harris was prepared to clear out of that part of the country, and seek fresh fields and

He sprawled under Mr. Harris, who planted a knee on his chest, and brandished a grubby, knuckly fist over his upturned, startled face.

"Gotcher!" said Mr. Harris.

Coker spluttered wildly.

"Ow! You cheeky rotter! Gerroff! I'll smash you! Ow! Gerroff!"

"You give me any trouble," said Mr. Harris distinctly, "and I'll bung your face through the back of your 'ead! See? 'And over wot you've got about you, sharp!"

"Why, you—you beastly thief!" gasped Coker.

He struggled, and had he had a fair chance Coker might have handled Mr. Harris with success. But he was pinned down and almost helpless.

"Help!" roared Coker.

"Dry up!" hissed Mr. Harris ferociously. "You want your face busted in?"

"Help!"

"You will 'ave it, then!" snarled Mr. Harris, and his fist came crashing down. By luck more than anything else Coker twisted aside in time. Mr. Harris' fist crashed on the earth, and Mr. Harris let out a yell of surprise and anguish. His knuckles were barked, his wrist horribly jarred.

"Help!" yelled Coker struggling.

"By gum!" hissed the enraged footpad. "I'll give you 'elp, s'elp me!"

And he rained blows on Coker. But there was help at hand—nearer than the juniors who had heard Coker's yell, far off in the woods. A portly figure came hurrying up the towpath.

Mr. Prout was quite close at hand, though the winding path by the river had hidden him from the tramp's sight. He hastened his footsteps as he heard Coker's yell for help.

"Goodness gracious!" gasped Mr. Prout, as he came on the scene.

He recognised the tramp who had given him his prize nose a few days before. There was no mistaking the frowzy Mr. Harris, still more, there was no mistaking his checked and patched trousers.

Prout had no weapon but an umbrella. He clubbed the umbrella, rushed at Mr. Harris, and smote.

The footpad gave a fearful howl at that unexpected crash on his head. It smashed in his battered hat, and it also smashed Mr. Prout's umbrella. The footpad leaped up from Coker, and whirled round at his new enemy.

"Scoundrel!" gasped Prout.

"You!" hissed Mr. Harris.

He jumped at the portly Form master. A knuckly fist crashed in Prout's eye—his sound eye!

"Ooooooooooh!" gasped Prout.

He went over backwards as if a cannon-shot had struck him. With a crash, he landed on his back on the towpath, and lay there, knocked out.

Mr. Harris turned back to Coker. But Coker was on his feet now.

"Come on, you rotter!" gasped Coker.

Mr. Harris came on fast enough. They closed and struggled furiously. Prout was hopelessly hors de combat; he lay dazed and gasping. Horace Coker was putting up a great fight; but his foot caught in a root, and he went down heavily, Mr. Harris on top.

"Now!" snarled Mr. Harris.

There was a crashing in the underwoods, and a shout:

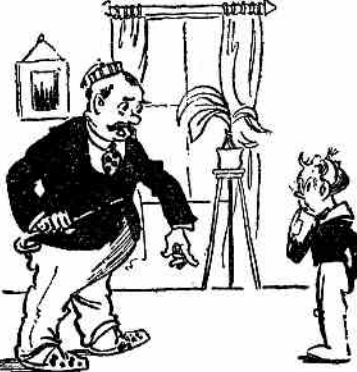
"Collar him!"

Bob Cherry was the first to leap out of the wood. He leaped right on Mr. Harris, rolled him off Coker, and rolled on him.

Harry Wharton was the next. He got a grip with both hands on the back of Mr. Harris' frowzy collar. A few

A
POCKET KNIFE
is
ALWAYS HANDY.

Well, CRACK A JOKE and win one, like H. F. Hurley, of 6, Maidstone Road, Norwich, who has sent in the following riddle:



Father (swishing cane):
"Bobby, did you or did you not hear me call?"
Bobby: "Yes, father; but you've always told me not to answer you back!"

Set your mind on winning one of these useful prizes to-day!

pastures now. This big schoolboy looked as if he was worth a footpad's while.

Like Moses of old, Mr. Harris looked this way and that way. There was nobody in sight but Coker. And Coker came on slowly towards the spot where Mr. Harris crouched in the brambles.

Coker, as a matter of fact, was thinking. This was unusual; but Coker had a lot of food for thought. His secret weighed on his mind a little. He felt that it was not fair on Prout to keep the cause of his celebrated black eye dark. Yet open confession meant painful results, from which Coker naturally shrank. He was taking that solitary walk to think the matter out, and certainly was not thinking about footpads.

That subject, however, came uppermost in Coker's mind, all of a sudden, as Mr. Harris, leaping from the thicket as Coker came abreast, bore him down on the towpath with a bump.

"Ow!" gasped Coker.



Collaring Bunter with one hand and the tarts with the other, Vernon-Smith proceeded to plaster the sticky comestibles over the Owl of the Remove. "Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Famous Five, greatly entertained by the sight.

moments more, and Nugent, Johnny Bull, and Hurreo Singh were on the scene — breathless, but businesslike. And Mr. Harris, in the grasp of many hands, bumped and thumped, hustled and rolled and jolted and jabbed till he hardly knew what was happening to him, fairly collapsed.

"Ow, stow it!" he moaned. "I gives in! Wow! I gives in! Moooooh! Let a bloke alone! Ow! I give you best! Oooooh!"

Mr. Prout sat up "Secure the villain?" he gasped. Bob Cherry chuckled. "You don't want us to let him go this time, sir?" he asked.

"What? What? Secure him—hold him fast! Bless my soul!"

Prout passed a hand over his sound eye—the eye that had been sound! It was no longer sound! It was bruised and battered, and, with a thrill of horror Prout realised that he was going to have another black eye!

He staggered to his feet. "You—you have the villain safe? This is the wretch who attacked me on Wednesday! Bless my soul! Secure him!"

"We've got him, sir," said Harry. Prout kept his hand to his eye. The horror of the situation almost overcame him. Another black eye!

"Oh, sir!" gasped Coker. "I—I—I—I hope you're not hurt, sir! It—it was

ripping of you to come to my help, sir! I—I—"

"Take that wretch to the police station," said Prout faintly. "I—I must get back to the school! I—I am hurt! I—I am certainly hurt! My—my eye! Oh dear! Take care that that villain does not escape, Coker!"

"Rely on that, sir!" said Coker grimly.

Mr. Prout hurried away. He took the shortest cut back to Greyfriars, with a faint hope that something might be done for his eye before it got fairly into its stride, as it were.

Harry Wharton & Co. and Coker were taking plenty of care of Mr. Harris. Mr. Harris, breathless and battered, was marched away, safely grasped by many hands till he was handed over to P.-c. Tozer, in Friardale. Mr. Tozer took him in charge with a deep satisfaction, which was not in the least shared by Mr. Harris.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Again!

GOSLING jumped. "Good evings!" he ejaculated.

Gosling, gazing at Mr. Prout as he came in, could scarcely believe his ancient eyes.

His startled gaze followed Prout as

the Fifth Form master went dizzily on towards the House.

Needless to say, many other startled glances fixed on Prout.

"He's done it again!" gasped Potter of the Fifth.

"Another black eye!" stammered Greene. "Oh, my hat! Prout's come in with another black eye! Oh crikey!"

Long before Mr. Prout reached the shelter of the House the news was spreading like wildfire.

Prout had done it again! With one eye still barely convalescent, and displaying nearly all the hues of the rainbow. Prout had come in with another black eye.

It really seemed incredible; but there it was! Black as an arctic midnight Prout's eye leaped, as it were, to all other eyes!

Cappor and Hacker met him in the quad. They gazed at him almost unbelievably.

Prout blinked at them painfully. "That—that footpad—" he gasped. "Oh!"

Grim unbelief was plainly expressed in the faces of the two masters. Prout tottered on.

There was a yell from the quad as he went in.

"Prout's done it again!" "He's got another black eye!" "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Prout's been scrapping again!"
 "Prout's going it!"
 "Upon my word!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch, meeting Prout as he came in.
 "What—what—what—" He gazed, and gazed.
 Prout gasped.
 "That footpad—" "
 "Oh!" "
 "I—I assure you—" "
 "Oh!" "
 "Mr. Prout!" It was the Head's voice. From his study window, Dr. Locke had seen the Fifth Form master approaching the House. Incredulously, the Head had stared at Prout's new adornment.

He came out of his study, his face grim and set. He met Prout face to face and Prout fairly groaned.

"Sir!" gasped Prout.

With a purple eye, a black eye, a swollen nose, and a broken umbrella in his hand, Prout blinked unhappily at his chief.

"Mr. Prout!" The Head's voice was deep. "Again!"

"I—I was certainly not—not to blame, sir—I—I—a most unfortunate occurrence—I—I—"

"Very unfortunate indeed!" said the Head.

"You see, sir—I—I—"

"I see you too well, Mr. Prout!" said the Head grimly.

"That—that rascally footpad—"

"Indeed!"

"I—I assure you, sir—I—I—"

"We will not discuss the matter, Mr. Prout," said the Head icily. "I can only say that a Form master of Greyfriars is expected not to sustain such a series of remarkable accidents causing facial disfigurement. You have not forgotten my remarks on the last occasion, Mr. Prout!"

"Sir! I—I—"

"I must adhere to what I said then," said Dr. Locke icily. "This kind of thing cannot continue, Mr. Prout."

"Dr. Lockel! If you will allow me to explain—" gurgled Prout.

Dr. Locke raised his hand.

"Explanations are superfluous," he said. "Explanations do not meet the case, Mr. Prout. I shall expect your resignation."

"Sir! I—I—I—" babbled Prout.

Dr. Locke turned away and swept back to his study. Prout turned a dizzy eye on Mr. Quelch.

"My dear Quelch! I—I am most unfortunate," he stammered. "On this occasion, I—I—"

"No doubt, sir," said Mr. Quelch very drily.

Prout staggered away to his study. He shut the door and threw himself, gasping, into a chair.

"Prout's done it again!" He heard an excited voice from the quad.

"Another black eye—a real corker!"

"What does he do it for?"

"Goodness knows! He said it was a footpad—"

"Same story again! Toc jolly thin!"

"Yes, rather!"

"It's the push this time, for Prout!"

"About time, too!"

"Two black eyes, and a banana nose and—"

"Shocking!"

"Altogether too thick!"

The voices floated in at the open window. Fellows did not seem to care whether Prout heard or not.

Prout groaned.

Greyfriars was fairly buzzing with it. Prout had done it again—and this time it was the "push" for Prout!

He had done it once too often—and now he had to go! And the general opinion was, that it was high time he went!

— — —

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

Coker Does the Right Thing!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

Billy Bunter met the Famous Five when they came in, bursting with excitement and news.

"I—I—I say, you fellows! Prout's done it again!" gasped Bunter.

"Prout?"

"Yes! He's come in with another black eye! The Head's sacked him! I say, you fellows, fancy Prout doing it again! He, he, he!"

"Sacked him!" ejaculated Harry Wharton.

Bunter chortled.

"Yes, rather! That is, he's asked him to resign—three or four fellows heard him! Fancy Prout doing it again! He, he, he!"

"Oh, my hat!" said Bob Cherry.

"Poor old Prout!" chuckled Bunter.

"Must have been drinking, you know—that's the only way of accounting for it! Makes out that it was a footpad again! He, he, he!"

Bunter rolled away chuckling; and the chums of the Remove looked at one another.

"Poor old Prout!" said Bob. "I—I suppose it must have made the Head pretty sick with him, seeing him with another jolly old black eye! But—"

"But Prout wasn't to blame," said Harry. "It was jolly plucky of him to go to Coker's help as he did."

"Yes, rather! But—"

"The Head can't know the facts," said Harry. "I dare say he was too fed-up to give Prout a hearing. He must fancy that Prout goes around looking for shindies for the sheer love of the thing. Look here, Prout's a pompous old ass—but—" He paused. "Look here, let's go to the Head and report taking that brute Harris to the police station. We ought to report it and it may do poor old Prout some good."

"Let's!" said Nugent.

And the chums of the Remove, with that benevolent intention, proceeded to the Head's study. Wharton tapped on the door.

"Come in!"

The Head's voice was a little sharp. He was frowning when the juniors entered the study.

"What is it, Wharton?" he asked quite testily. The affair of Prout had deeply disturbed the Head.

But his expression changed as Harry Wharton told his tale. Gradually the frown cleared from his brow.

"Bless my soul!" said the Head.

"You say that this—this footpad was actually attacking a Greyfriars boy—and—and Mr. Prout went to his aid—"

"Yes, sir; it was the same footpad who attacked Mr. Prout on Wednesday. He's under arrest now; we took him to the station."

Dr. Locke coughed.

"Very good!" he said. "You may go."

And the juniors went; charitably hoping that they had done poor old Prout some good.

The Head remained looking very thoughtful. Certainly, black eyes were very much out of place on the countenance of a Greyfriars Form master. On the other hand, Prout had certainly done his duty in helping a Greyfriars

boy in the hour of danger; and his second black eye, at least, might justly be regarded as an honourable scar. And—as it was now proved beyond doubt that there really was a footpad, the swollen nose was perhaps adequately explained after all!

And yet—

Tap!

"Come in!" sighed the Head.

Coker of the Fifth entered the study. There were signs of his struggle with Mr. Harris on Coker's face. There was also an expression of dogged determination mingled with apprehension.

"What is it, Coker?"

"I—I've come to—to tell you something, sir," said Coker. "I—I feel bound to make a clean breast of it since—since Mr. Prout played up so splendidly, sir! He butted in—"

"What?"

"I mean, he came to my help when that brute Harris was fairly slogging me, sir, and he got it in the optic!" Coker stammered. "It was really ripping of him, sir, for of course he's no good in a scrap, and the tramp just knocked him spinning! But that makes it all the more plucky of Prout, sir. So I'm going to confess, sir, about his eye—"

"Eh?"

"I mean his first eye, sir!"

"His what?"

"His first black eye, I mean, sir—the one he bagged in the fog last week! I—I gave it to him, sir."

The Head fairly jumped.

"You—what—how?"

"It was an accident, of course, sir!" gasped Coker. "I never saw Prout in the fog! Some juniors had bumped me over, and I ran after them, and—and hit out, and—and it was Prout! I got him right in the eye, sir—by an awful mistake!"

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed the Head.

"After that I was laid up in sanny, sir, and—and as Prout never knew what had happened to him—he thought he had run into a tree or something—I never let on! I—I thought Prout would be frightfully wild if he knew! But—but when I found the fellows were thinking he'd bagged that eye in a row in a pub, or something, I—I was rather worried, sir, and—and now—now I've come to tell you, sir."

"Bless my soul!" repeated the Head.

"If I'm going to be flogged, sir, I can stand it," said Coker heroically. "But Prout butted in to help me today, and he's going to have fair play. So—so I've told you, sir!"

The Head gazed at Coker.

"You struck Mr. Prout in the fog—unintentionally?"

"That's it, sir! As he never saw me, he never knew—he fancied he had biffed his head on a tree or something—but the fact is, I got him right in the eye."

"That will do, Coker! You acted foolishly, recklessly, thoughtlessly, obtusely—but I am glad you have told me this! You may go!"

Coker went.

Dr. Locke sat in deep thought—but there was remorse as well as deep thought in his face. Poor old Prout!

The Head rose at last, left the study, and made his way to Prout's study. He tapped at the door, and opened it. Prout was sitting in his armchair, his hand to his eye.

He started to his feet at sight of the Head.

His face undoubtedly was a picture. But there was no condemnation in his

(Continued on page 28.)

UP, the ROVERS!



By Popular **JOHN BREARLEY.**

(Opening chapters retold on page 26.)

Wanted by Scotland Yard!

IN the dressing-room, with the sound of the cheering outside still ringing in their ears, the Rovers found Thomas waiting for them, already changed. His face wore the nervous, half-sullen expression of a dog who expects a licking. The Rovers looked at him grimly.

"I—I'm sorry, chaps—sorry, Jimmy!" he mumbled.

"So I should blame well think!" snorted Harvey angrily, before Jimmy could reply. "For two pins I'd sock you on the jaw myself. You ought to be in a home!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Chuck it, George!" said Jimmy wearily. "The mischief's done. It's all right, Thomas—can't be helped now. Forget it!"

"He'd like to!" sniffed Atkins, a downright youth who had little time for the grouchy forward. "Wait till the F. A. gets him on the mat! He'll be suspended for a month!"

"Or more!" growled Harvey. "You're a bad-tempered scut, Thomas, and you've lost us our first game! You make me sick!"

Ordinarily the skipper of the Rovers would have been the last man to kick another when he was down, but now he was tired and exasperated. For the last awful twenty minutes of the game he had been giving only half his attention to football, although the Spurs' forward had led him a tremendous dance. All the time he had been wondering what young Jimmy would do now; for though George Harvey said little at all times, he thought a lot and knew a lot. He could have taken Thomas by the neck at that moment and beaten him black and blue.

Further warfare was prevented, however, by Bill Nye, who pushed through

the angry, weary men and hustled the big centre-half to a bench.

"Stow it, all of you!" he ordered sharply. "Things are plenty bad enough without all of ye quarrelling. Thomas, me lad, you get along to the Spurs' room and say ye're sorry, like a man. It won't do much good, but I like my players to be gentlemen. The rest of ye get dressed."

Thomas, shrugging his shoulders, went out sulkily, and the veteran trainer, strolling across to where Jimmy sat pulling off his boots, patted him clumsily with a big, gnarled hand.

"'Tis a bad business, lad; don't let it down ye! We'll get Johnson out of the reserves a-Monday and try and polish him up. He's a good worker!"

Jimmy nodded slowly.

A real "live wire" from Scotland Yard to turn out for the Rovers! WHAT'S IN THE WIND?

"He's all right—but not for first-class footer, Bill. He's a scratchy shot, too. Thomas was a slacker for work, but once we'd made an opening he could score goals. Our luck's right out!"

His voice sounded curiously flat; and, seeing him so utterly tired and fed-up, the trainer wisely left him alone. The journey back to the hotel, and the meal that followed, passed almost in silence. There were two hours to waste before it was time for the team to catch the train back to Railton, and while some of the men went for a stroll and others trailed into the billiard-room, Jimmy wandered into the hotel lounge and sat down before the fire to think.

Well, another disaster had happened—to himself and the Rovers. Henry Sylvester's words came back to him, harsh and insistent, ringing in his mind

like a knell. He laughed shortly—the warning had come true quickly enough. The only bright spot in the whole incident was that, at least, it had been a genuine affair and not a deliberately-planned blow aimed at him by the mysterious enemy or enemies who were trying to ruin him.

Jimmy sighed. More than ever he found himself wondering what he was up against. His mind went miserably along the old trail. For the first time vague doubts pricked him as to his ability to keep his father's old club going.

The disasters since James Brennan had died had been too swift and cruel—bewildering in their rapid sequence. First the loss of the three thousand pounds that would have secured Cowan of Oldham Athletic, then the fire, and now—this! Johnson of the reserves was a good strong footballer up to a point, but with all his failings Thomas was by far the better and more experienced man, if only for his deadly shooting. Games, after all, were won by goals. And Thomas was the finest marksman in the Rovers' camp.

Now his suspension for a month or six weeks was a certainty.

"Wow!" grunted Jimmy; and stared hard into the glowing fire before him.

So absorbed did he become that he did not at first notice a man who came quietly into the lounge and strolled over towards him. It was not until the stranger touched him lightly on the arm that he looked up. The newcomer was a heavily-built man of middle age, with a red, square face and the faintest tinge of authority in his voice when he spoke.

"Mr. James Brennan?"

Jimmy frowned in surprise.

"That's my name!" he answered slowly. "But—er—I don't think I know you, do I?"

The other did not answer at once. His eyes, keen, brown and rather small, held a shrewd light as they surveyed Jimmy leisurely, and his heavy mouth twitched.

"I don't think you do, sir—yet. I'm Detective-Inspector Daniels, of the C.I.D."

"You—what?" stammered Jimmy. "Daniels—C.I.D.!" repeated the burly man. "And," he went on placidly, as Jimmy struggled from his chair, "I must ask you to come with me to Scotland Yard, Mr. Brennan. At once, if you please!"

Scotland Yard Steps In!

JIMMY swayed, an icy hand gripping his heart.

"Scotland Yard—wants me?" he whispered. "Is—is this an arrest?"

"An arrest?" Detective-Inspector Daniels smiled at him queerly. "Bless you, no, sir! There's nothing to worry about—yet. I'll maybe keep you an hour; maybe two. But I want you to come right along."

With a sudden shrug, the youngster bit his lip and sturdily pulled himself together. His first thought, as usual, however, was connected with the Rovers. He glanced at his watch.

"Oh, very well!" he said quietly. "If you want me, I must come. I take it, though, that I shall miss my train back to Railton with my men. May I tell them?"

At the detective's brief nod, Jimmy strode across the hotel lounge. By the best of luck, old Bill Nye, with some of the Rovers at his heels, sauntered in just as he neared the door.

Jimmy grabbed him.

"Bill," he jerked rapidly, "more trouble! This gentleman wants me—at Scotland Yard. Oh, it's all right, I think!" he went on, as the trainer's jaw fell. "You take the boys home as usual, and I'll catch the nine-five and change at Hallam Junction. It's a darn slow train, I know, and I shan't land in till the small hours. But it can't be helped."

Bill Nye blinked for a moment in doubt. Then, seeing he could help best by not asking too many questions, he nodded briskly.

"All right, lad. I'll ask mother to leave some supper ready for ye when ye do arrive. Don't worry about the team. Anythin' else I can do?"

"No—oh, yes!" Jimmy paused on his heel. "You'd better phone my uncle, too. I promised to look in this evening after we'd got back, and he may be wondering why I haven't come home with you and the others."

Turning coolly to the waiting detective, he drew a long breath.

"I'm ready when you are, Inspector Daniels," he said; and, with a last nod to the bewildered Rovers, followed the official out of the lounge.

Daniels had a cab waiting outside, and in a very short time they were in the great building on the Embankment, the headquarters of Britain's Police Force. During the journey the detective chatted pleasantly enough on football and other topics of the day until they reached his office, a bare, official-looking room, where he nodded Jimmy to an armchair and sat himself down at a desk facing the puzzled youngster. His manner, though still kindly, became keener.

"Now, my son, to business! Sorry if

I gave you a little shock just now; but orders are orders!"

Jimmy smiled.

"O.K., inspector! And now—what?" For a moment the detective did not reply, but sat surveying his visitor thoughtfully. His thumb, moving unseen behind the desk, reached out until it pressed a tiny lever let into the woodwork. This done, he leaned forward with a quizzical smile.

"I think you've been having a little trouble lately, Mr. Brennan?" he suggested, tapping some papers gently. "Yes?"

"Yes, sir. Just a bit!" Jimmy grinned wryly.

"First—sorry to jar you—your father died—er—rather—"

"He was murdered!" snapped Jimmy bluntly.

"H'm! Well, anyway, the verdict was manslaughter, of course. And then a certain forged cheque came to light and also a spot of clever impersonation. After that you had a disastrous fire, and someone attacked you pretty murderously and got away—what?"

"You've got it put, sir."

"Just so," nodded Daniels gravely. "Now, Mr. Brennan, from what I hear, you're a pretty plucky sort and you seem to know your own mind. I want you to talk to me plainly. Tell me—what's your idea of all this?"

His eyes drifted absently for an instant to the wall behind Jimmy's chair. A calendar hung on that wall, and just beside the calendar a tiny hole, invisible to unsuspecting eyes, had opened. The official's satisfied glance returned to his visitor who, at the invitation to unburden his mind, was sitting bolt upright, struggling for words.

"What do I think?" exploded Jimmy at last. "I'll tell you, sir, if you want plain words. I think someone was up against my dad; and now they've killed him, they're up against me. Who it is, or why, I don't know and can't think. Dad had no enemies, and, as far as I know, neither have I. But that's my opinion—for what it's worth."

"And it's my opinion, too, lad," was the swift retort. "Your dad certainly died as the result of an intruder's assault; also, the burning of your stand was plain arson. At the same time, it's only right you should know that you were strongly suspected of—well, having a hand in the forged cheque. Now wait"—as Jimmy gave a strangled gasp. "That's all over. We've been keeping our eyes open in Railton, and we're satisfied about you. Otherwise you wouldn't be here as a visitor—see?"

Jimmy saw all right; but he sat silent while Daniels shook a thoughtful head.

"It's a queer case. No real motive—nothing." He stopped. Then: "Care to help us, Mr. Brennan?"

In a flash Jimmy was on his feet.

The First Chapters Briefly Retold.

James Brennan, owner of the Railton Rovers F.O., decides to pay a huge transfer fee for an experienced centre-forward to put new life into his failing team. The deal does not materialise, however, for Brennan is robbed of his savings by means of a forged cheque and then attacked by some unknown assailant who deals him a blow to the heart which proves fatal. Jimmy Brennan, his son, is forced to sell his house for five thousand pounds in order to carry on. Then, to add to Jimmy's misfortune, Thomas, the Rovers' only centre-forward, is ordered off the field for striking a player during the Rovers' match with the Spurs!

(Now read on.)

"H-help you?" he stammered. "Gosh, you just bet I will! How?"

There was a little pause while the detective, fiddling with a pencil, seemed to be thinking something over. Suddenly he looked up and fixed Jimmy with a bright eye. His queer smile grew broader.

"That was bad luck about your centre-forward to-day, lad. You'll be losing him for at least a month—what?"

Jimmy, after making sure he had heard aright, fell back sharply in complete amazement. What the deuce had Thomas got to do with it? He could only stare at his smiling interrogator open-mouthed.

"Y-yes, I suppose so. But I don't understand," he muttered at last.

"Got another to take his place?" asked Daniels quietly.

"Why, in a way. We—we've got a reserve, of course. But—"

"But not a very good one, I believe?"

"Well, he won't be as useful as Thomas," admitted Jimmy. Then quickly: "But what is all this to do—"

Daniels smiled at him.

"Just this. How would you like us to find you a new centre-forward?" he asked, his eyes never leaving Jimmy's face for a second.

The owner of the Rovers grew more bewildered still. The proposition was so astounding that he began to wonder if either he or the inspector had gone crazy.

"You find me a centre-forward?" he gasped after a while. "Why—"

"That's right. Ever heard the name of Tim Osborne, son?"

Jimmy frowned thoughtfully. He had a vague idea of having heard the name somewhere, but couldn't think where. He shook his head.

"No. At least— Oh, look here, Mr. Daniels, come off it! What's all this leading to, for goodness' sake!"

With a quick movement the detective threw his pencil on the desk and laughed aloud; then just as suddenly he leaned forward and became confidential.

"Well, it's like this, my son, now I've bamboozled you. I mean what I say—seriously. We've got to find out who is behind this plot to get you down. Well, we've tried. We've had a man down in Railton for some time; but he finds that, working on the usual lines, he's up against it. I can tell you this—that whoever is after your scalp is as shrewd as they make 'em, and he's covered his tracks well."

"Oh!"

"Now, you've got to be watched—protected, in fact. You're right in line for real trouble, Brennan. And we've got to get a man placed as closely to you as possible, but without rousing suspicion. As I say, we're up against someone who knows his job, and any false step on our part is going to be tumbled. Now do you see?"

A great light dawned on Jimmy all at once. He jumped up eagerly.

"You mean—"

"Yes. Your centre-forward's foolishness this afternoon was a godsend to me. I was watching you and the game, and as soon as I saw what had happened I saw our opportunity, too. What it means is that you're a player short for the next few weeks, and you've got to get another. And if you're agreeable to help us, that player will be young Tim Osborne, of this department. What about it?"

"By golly, yes!" Jimmy's eyes were blazing with excitement. "Thomas is sure to be suspended, and not even the shrewdest man in Railton will see anything in me picking up an unknown centre-forward, especially if I tell the papers I've got him cheap. Gosh!" A swift doubt damped his enthusiasm suddenly. "But—but I suppose this Osborne is up to first-class standard?"

Daniels laughed again. "Would I send him down if he wasn't? No, lad; take my word for it, that part's all right. Young Osborne's all there as a footballer; and when he's not playing he'll be as close to you as—well, any of the other Rovers. You've heard of Maxport Hornets, of course—the great Northern amateur side? Well, he played for them in several games last year. He was working up that way."

Something clicked in Jimmy's memory.

"By gad, I've placed him now!" he cried excitedly. "I knew I'd heard his name. He was working for a chum I was at school with—Peter Frazer. Owns a big iron foundry in Maxport. Mr. Daniels"—he bent forward quickly—"is Osborne the fellow who helped old Pete in a lot of trouble? I heard about it."

"That's him," nodded Daniels. "Well, is it a bargain, lad?"

"My stars, it is!" grinned Jimmy fervently. "If half Peter told me is true I'll be glad to meet Osborne!"

"You've met him!" thought Daniels, but did not say so: instead, he touched a bell, and a stalwart man in plain clothes came in. The detective indicated Jimmy.

"Sergeant Wade, this is Mr. Brennan. He's catching the 9.5 from Euston to Railton. Go with him, please—and don't leave until the train steams out. Understand?"

Rising, he held out his hand and don't worry. Now I've got Osborne placed where I want him we'll get results."

With a strange feeling of excitement at this curious glimpse of Scotland Yard's methods almost suffocating him, Jimmy shook hands and followed his hefty guardian out of the room.

Detective-Inspector Daniels pulled back the lever in his desk.

"Well, Tim, hear all right?" The pale, very slim young man who had entered the office within thirty seconds of Jimmy's departure nodded briefly as he deposited a suit-case on the inspector's desk.

"Course!" He looked at the other with plaintive eyes. "You're a cunning, long-winded old Isaacs, aren't you?" he jeered. "Why couldn't you tell young Brennan what you wanted right away, 'stead of leadin' him up the garden for hours and hours?"

Daniels chuckled comfortably. "You know my methods, Watson!" he quoted, with a wink. "I wanted to sound the kid first. Anyway, everything's settled. Anything else you want?"

"Yep. I want those flashlight photos the Railton police took of young Brennan's old house, that knife they found in his garden, and also the report of his evidence at his father's inquest."

A look of quick surprise flashed across the inspector's face, but he made no comment as he turned to a big wall safe.

Young Tim Osborne, late of the

Canadian Secret Service and now a particularly bright member of Scotland Yard, had his own ways of dealing with cases, and police headquarters—who are not so hide-bound as some people think—let him go ahead.

Daniels passed over the articles required with only one warning.

"Take care of that knife, Tim!"

Waiting till Osborne had opened the suit-case and locked it again, the inspector held out his hand.

"S'long, Tim! Good luck! Take care of young Brennan!" He paused to hurl a final friendly insult at his young assistant. "And don't let the nasty, rough footballers hurt you!" he begged earnestly. "Egad, I'd give something to hear the crowd when you trot out in football gear! Maybe"—cheerfully—"they'll take you for a corner flag, though, instead of a centre-forward!"

Tim Osborne looked at him sadly. "I may be slim," he murmured; "but, thank goodness, I'm not fat!" And, with a withering glance at the inspector's burly frame, he sauntered gently from the room.

Left to himself, Daniels rubbed his hands contentedly.

"A darn good kid!" he muttered.

"Now we'll get somewhere at last!"

Meanwhile, Jimmy, feeling rather like a small boy in charge of a huge and silent nursemaid, was making tracks for Euston Station with Sergeant Wade. Quietly but briskly, he was shepherded to the ticket office, the refreshment-room for coffee and sandwiches, and at length to an empty first-class carriage. There the big C.I.D. man spoke a few short words to the guard of the train, and a

(Continued on next page.)

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"Reserved" notice was quickly posted on the compartment window. Finally, just as the train was steaming out of the station, the plain clothes detective held out his hand.

"You're all right now, sir! Change Hallam Junction; reach Raikou 1.30. They'll be watching out for you there, G'night!"

He was gone before Jimmy could say a word. The youngster grinned wearily. A thin drizzle, with a threat of worse to follow as the night wore on, pattered against the windows when the train glided out of the station, and Jimmy drew the blinds and stretched out comfortably on the seat. After the long day it had dawned on him suddenly that he was dog-tired.

Also, his mind was in a whirl. A detective—a special Scotland Yard man—was to play for the Rovers, to act as watchdog to himself, and at the same time discover the identity of his mysterious enemies. A few weeks ago Jimmy might have resented the idea of anyone looking after him at all, but now his sober sense told him that Daniel's scheme was for the best; and the sooner the troubles were cleared and further disasters prevented the better it would be for himself—and the Rovers.

(There will be another thrilling instalment of this gripping serial next week, chums, so make sure you read it!)

WHO PUNCHED PROUT?

(Continued from page 24.)

Chief's glance now. Prout was a wronged man! The Head had come to set the wrong right!

"Sir!" gasped Prout. "Sir! My resignation will be placed in your hands to-day, sir, if that—"

"Nothing of the kind, sir!" said the Head. "Not at all, Mr. Prout! I have come to tell you that your resignation is not desired—that I shall, indeed, refuse it if tendered."

Prout gasped. "I am now acquainted, sir," said the Head, "with the true facts, and I realise, Mr. Prout, that you have been blameless. The facts will be made known; I shall myself explain the matter to the school, and the unpleasant surmises, rumours, and innuendoes on this subject, sir, will be at an end. That is what I came to tell you, my dear Prout."

Prout gasped. The Head retired, leaving him still gasping.

Prout did not go. Greyfriars heard the explanation given by the Head of the whole mysterious affair; and except perhaps in the case of a few doubting Thomases, it was considered that Prout was cleared.

It appeared that he was, after all, not a forty old gentleman who had developed a sudden taste for shindies and fist-cuffs, but the hapless victim of a series of lamentable misadventures.

Coker, in view of his confession, was pardoned for that accidental jolt he had given his Form master in the fog. Not that Coker, in his own opinion, needed pardon; he did not regard himself as being to blame in any way. Still, he was glad to get off scot-free.

Prout did not go, but it was considered judicious for him to retire from Greyfriars for a week or two, until his majestic countenance should assume a more normal aspect. One black eye might have passed muster, but two, with a swollen nose to enhance their effect, were really rather too much of a good thing. So Prout, for a space, retired from the public eye, and a temporary master came to take the Fifth.

So all was well that ended well, though it was long before Greyfriars ceased to chuckle over Prout and his peculiar predicament.

THE END.

(Next week's MAGNET will contain another ripping yarn of Harry Wharton & Co., entitled: "SKINNER'S NARROW SQUEAK!" Don't miss it, chums, whitherer you do!)

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Greyfriars Herald

Edited by HARRY WHARTON, F.G.R.



No. 20.

LAUGH AND GROW FAT.

November 22nd, 1930.

FOUND!!!

In the Junior Common-room, a complete collection of peculiarly designed wooden pieces, forming, I understand, what is termed a Midget Football Field. If the owners will apply to me, I shall have great pleasure in inviting them to bend over and allow me to express my opinion of Midget Football in forcible terms—with the aid of a cane.—Apply, H. S. Quelch, Esq.

FILM FAME FOR FIFTH-FORMER

COKER (ALMOST) BECOMES A STAR

"The very man!" That was what the film magnate said when he spotted Coker of the Fifth. Coker guessed he was a film magnate, because he was sitting in an expensive car and smoking an expensive cigar, while the rest of his company worked at the scene they were filming in Friar Dale Lane.

Coker, of course, felt by no means displeased. His nose went up several degrees higher in the air and that "get-away-you-fags" expression of his intensified tremendously.

Quite a lot of Greyfriars chaps were looking on, and the general opinion among them was that either the film magnate was cross-eyed and looking at someone else, or that he was off his rocker. The idea that he wanted Coker to act for the films seemed too absurd to be entertained.

Imagine our astonishment when the merchant with the cigar sent an emissary to Coker to ask if he could call at the studio on the following day.

Coker, of course, was willing to do anything. Fortunately, Potter and Greene were there to look after him. They managed to convince the emissary that if Coker was wanted, he would have to be called for at Greyfriars.

Well, that was that! Coker was rather wild with his two retainers for interfering! But his joy at the prospect of going on the films soon banished every other feeling. He strutted about the House that evening as though he had bought Greyfriars and everything in it.

Naturally he took it for granted that the film magnate would send for him. And, strangely enough, he was right. After morning lessons next day, somebody did call. Not the magnate himself, by the way, but an odd-job boy who had been there the previous day.

An interested crowd followed the boy up from the gates. "You Mr. Coker?" asked the boy, stopping in front of the great man of the Fifth.

Coker gave a lordly nod. "Quite right, youngster! You have called, of course, to ask me to sign on for the films as a star at an enormous salary?"

The boy grinned. "Yes, rather—I don't think!" Coker looked a trifle nettled.

"I suppose that means I'm to be tried out in a smaller part first—"

"It ain't a small part, gov'nor—it's a long part! That's why Mr. Levy picked you out—cause you've got the biggest feet and longest legs he's seen lately!"

Coker glared. The rest of us chuckled. "Shut up, you young idiots!" snapped Coker. Then he turned to the boy again.

"What part am I wanted to take then?" he asked. "If it's not a star part, and not a small part, what the thump is it?"

"Well, gov'nor," came the answer, "if you really want to know the truth, it's the hind legs of a comic elephant!"

For a moment there was silence. Then a howl went up as the crowd took in the full meaning of the film company's offer.

"Ha, ha, ha!" "What about it, sir?" asked the boy cheerfully. "Coming back with me to sign on?"

"You—you—" stammered Coker. Then he made a rush down the steps at Mr. Levy's youthful representative. He was beyond words for the moment, but there was quite a lot he felt he could say with the toes of his Number Nines.

A crowd of us lined up to protect the visitor, and Coker was soon whirled off his feet, carried into the House, and locked in his study.

All this happened last week, and Coker still blushes when he meets any of us who were there to hear his great film offer. Apparently, Horace James was not honoured by the suggestion that his claim to fame lay in his resemblance to the hind legs of a comic elephant!

"TALKIE" LANGUAGE AT GREYFRIARS AT TABBOY

The English language is becoming so Americanised by the "talkies" that things in the near future may easily come to this: "Say, kids!" sang out Henry Samuel Quelch, moseying into the Junior Common-room, covered all over in soot and molasses. "Who's the cheap skate that fixed this for me, huh? You, Wharton?"

"Nix!" snapped the captain of the Form. "Any other guy in this joint?" queried the Form master, glaring round the room like he wanted to make potato-scrappings of everybody. "Say, I wanna have you hombres know that I ain't standing for this. No, siree! Bunter!"



"Yeah?" drawled the fattest guy in the outfit. "I guess you got soot all over your fins. Tell Poppa Quelch suthing about it. Attaboy!"

"Waal, if that ain't strange!" said Bunter. "Guess that soot must have settled on to me somehow, some place, some time."

"I'll say!" sneered the boss of the Remove. "I got a kinda hunch you're the bird that fixed this for me."

"Aw, skidoo, big boy!" drawled Bunter. "If you reckon I'm the guy that mixed up soot and molasses in a jug an' left it over the door of the class-room—"

(Continued at foot of next column.)

PATENTS APPLIED FOR BUT NOT THIS WEEK

A recent visit to Greyfriars of Bernard Glyn, the celebrated inventor of the St. Jim's Shell, has stimulated interest in up-to-date inventions. Glyn certainly is a clever chap, and some of the creations he told us about are the last word in ingenuity. I suggest we try to induce him to come to Greyfriars for a lengthy stay and give the old school the benefit of his weird and wonderful scientific knowledge. Think what a help he could be! Here's a preliminary list of inventions we are badly in need of, none of which should be beyond Glyn's brainy compass.

1. Guaranteed cane-proof trousers.

2. An alarm-clock that will not only wake up Lord Mauleverer, but keep him awake, too!

3. A 1,000-voice-power megaphone to enable the ref. to make Dutton understand when he's offside.

4. A burglar-proof rabbit-hutch that will save our pet rabbits from the marauding hands of that incurable conjurer, Kipps!

5. A looking-glass that will enable Coker to see himself as others see him.

6. A pair of magnifying-glasses powerful enough to give the shareholders in Fish's latest swindle a sight of their dividend.

7. An automatic gag that will operate every time Bunter mentions the words "postal order" or "titled relations."

With the schoolboy inventor at Greyfriars there is little doubt but that these urgent needs of ours would soon be satisfied. Now, Glyn! It's up to you!

(Continued from previous column.)

"Say, who told you all about that, huh? Guess I was correct in once! Step right this way!" said Henry Samuel.

After which, that schoolmaster guy sure did beat up the dust on Bunter's pants. And how!

(Continued at foot of next column.)

FAVOURITISM KILLS BOY'S CAREER

A TALL STORY And Billy Bunter's Written It

"Beasts!" Thus Billy Bunter, captain of the Fourth at Tuckminster—or, at least, that's what he would have been, but for the jealousy of the other caddis.

Bunter was the handsomest, bravest, and cleverest junior in the Skool. At the moment our story opens he was tying up his satchel outside the door of Skelton's study (Skelton, by the way, for obscure reasons, was the Fourth kaptin). Being the owner of egg-tremely sharp ears, he had just heard Skelton and his pals, Broomstick and Bones, lazing over the idea of including such a chap as Buster in the football eleven. Hence, Buster's scornful but dignified remark:

"Eavesdropping again, you fat rotter?" came an unpleasant voice from behind him just then, and Waystead, one of the so-called leaders of the Fourth, planted a savage kick on Buster's anatomy.

Buster flushed as he wheeled round. It was just like Waystead to put the worst interpretation on his innocent actions.

"Oh, really, Waystead!" he gasped indignantly. "You know jolly well I wouldn't eavesdrop; such behaviour would be beneath me. I demand an apology."

"B-r-r-r!" said Waystead. An instant later he was lying on his back, blinking up at a million stars. Billy Bunter had given him a sly tap on the jaw—just a tap on the jaw from Buster was like a kick from a mule!

"Feeling a little better after that interlude, our hero stroled lazily away. As he did so, a brilliant wheeze occurred to him—a wheeze that would enable him to play for the Junior XI against St. Falstaff's, despite the sinnical opposition of Skelton & Co.

Briefly, the idea was for him to use his marvellous powers of ventriloquism to imitate the voice of the Fourth Form master, Mr. Littlegrub, and order Skelton to include him in the team.

Naturally, Skelton wouldn't dare to disobey an order coming from such a source.

It was a daring and original wheeze. But Billy Bunter was a daring and original chap, and he didn't hesitate to carry it out.

The grate day of the match with

St. Falstaff's dawned at last. As the boys streamed out of their Form-room, Skelton thought he heard the harsh, unmelodious voice of Mr. Littlegrub calling him. "Skelton!" said the voice. "Yes, sir," said Skelton. "Kindly see to it," said the voice, "that Waystead is dropped from the Junior Eleven this afternoon and Buster put in instead!"

Skelton recoiled as from a blow. "But—but—" "But me no butts, Skelton. You know the penalty of dafying your Form master."

"Too trew, sir!" said Skelton. Of course it was natcher that Skelton never dreamed that Mr. Littlegrub had not uttered a syllable—that the whole thing was simply a marvellous piece of ventriloquism on the part of Billy Bunter. Nor did he dream of disobeying "Mr. Littlegrub's" order. Once outside the Form-room he made a B-line for the notice-board, deleted Waystead's name, and put in Buster's instead. Which was very gratifying to our handsom hero.

Buster was still more gratified

St. Falstaff's fellows rung their hands with greef as they saw him, knowing only too well that their number was up now!

With a sudden lightning-like rush Buster charged into the fray, knocked down half a dozen men and sped down the field with the ball.

Nothing could stop his triumphant rush. Buster eluded the desperate half-backs and backs with the ease of an eel. Then he pawed and shot.

Thud! The ball leaped from his foot like a bullet from a gun, leaving the goalie standing. A roar went up from the eggited spectators.

"Goal!" Then there was another roar from Buster's jellus fellow-players. "You—you loony!" "You maniac!"

"Well, what's the matter now?" demanded Buster. "Good snuff goal, wasn't it?"

"Of course, it was!" shrieked Skelton. "It was a magnificent goal. The only unforchunit thing about it was that it was our own goal; you've scored against your own side!"

"And lost us the match!" hooted Broomstick, as the ref's whistle went for fool-time. "Let's spifficate him!"

Buster drew a deep breath. This was the unkindest cut of all! To think that he had scored that brilliant goal only to receive the abuse of his blindly-jellus Form-fellows! Akkustomed as he was to it, he had never dreamed that jellus would carry them as far as this.

Let us draw a veil, dear reader, over the scene that followed, and content ourselves with the observation that Buster had a very uncomfortable five minnits with the rest of the Junior XI after that. Needless to say, there was no trewth in the base allegation that he had scored against his own side; jellus on the part of the team, the ref, and the spectators was at the bottom of it all. So as they bumped and bashed and buffeted him, Billy Bunter consoled himself with the reflection that even though everybody else thought that Tuckminster had lost, he knew differently. And, what was more, he knew that his brilliant jellus at socker and nothing else had been responsible for Tuckminster's Triumph!

when the time of the match arrived and a crowd of Fourth supporters insisted on his having a tuck-in at the skool shop at their eggspense.

Buster waded into the grub. It suited him to do so. He wasn't worrying about the match; a few minutes in the second half was all he needed to win the match for Tuckminster!

At last his appetite was appeased and he stroaled down to the footer field. The game was nearly over now, and the teams were level, with the score 1-1.

Buster grinned. He knew it was the easiest thing in the world for him to score the winning goal. He trotted on to the field and the

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TRY MIDGET FOOTER GREAT CRAZE

What silly ass said Greyfriars was behind the times!

Take Midget Football. The rest of the country is lagging behind; still engrossed in that old-fashioned pastime, Midget Golf. We've gone a lot better by taking up Midget Football.

Bolsover, Stott, Trevor, and Fish between them built the first Midget Football Field. The idea was Vernon-Smith's, but the Bouncer couldn't spare the time to do the donkey-work, so Bolsy and the others took it over from him. For weeks they laboured in the woodshed. Then, one night their work was completed, and they put up the "Field" in the Common-room.

It consisted of four wooden obstacles, representing the forward line, the halves, the backs, and the goalie, which had to be negotiated before the player was allowed to shoot at the miniature goal.

Wharton fell for it at once; and the rest of us crowded round to watch. It was a pretty slick sort of game. The first move was to kick the ball through a hole in the first barrier. Harry managed that all right. The next was to send the ball up a sloping board so that it just reached the tray at the top without going over. This, our worthy skipper managed after two attempts.

The third stunt—a sort of double-cannon movement down a wooden alley intended to bring the ball back through another opening—was a bit more difficult. But Harry did it eventually as also the next wheeze which was simpler. Then, amid cheers, he placed the ball for his shot at goal.

Fish fixed the midget goal in front of the door, and Harry shot.

He missed the goal, and at that moment Mr. Quelch came in. The ball and Quelch's face met in fearful collision, and from Quelch came an agonised howl.

"Oh! Whooop! Ow!" Quelch went down; and the fall of Quelch signified the fall of Midget Football at Greyfriars! The proprietors of the "Field" greased out of the Common-room as fast as their legs could carry them, and poor old Wharton was left to face the storm alone.

He is still nursing his palms reminiscently as I write.