

"THE BOY WITH AN ENEMY!"

Powerful Extra-Long
Complete Story of School
and Football Rivalry

By Frank Richards

The Magnet 2^d



**THE CHANCE
OF A LIFETIME!**

HE'S THE FINEST FORWARD GREYFRIARS HAS EVER HAD! WHO IS? WHY,
VALENTINE COMPTON—

THE BOY WITH AN ENEMY!



A Rousing New Long Complete School Story of HARRY WHARTON & CO., of GREYFRIARS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Very Thick!

"**T**HAT ass!" said Bob Cherry.
"Bunter all over!" grunted
Johnny Bull.

"Give him a yell!" said
Harry Wharton. "No good going out
in this—it's as thick as pea-soup!"

It was not, perhaps, quite so thick as
that. But it was thick—very thick.
Greyfriars School was wrapped in a
mantle of fog.

The fog had drifted up from the sea,
clothing the school in misty white as in
a garment. Looking from doors and
windows, nothing was to be seen but
fog. From the doorway, where Harry
& Co. stood, they could barely make
out the House steps. The quadrangle
was hidden—the ancient elms invisible.

Somewhere beyond that misty cloak
was the sunset, but not a gleam pene-
trated the fog. It was not yet lock-up
—if anybody had wanted to be out of
doors. Few did. Even Bob Cherry, of
the Remove, was disinclined for the
open spaces.

The Famous Five were looking out at
the weather, when a dismal squeak
came from the foggy quad. It an-
nounced that one fellow, at least, was
out of the House—and that that fellow
was Billy Bunter. It indicated, also,
that the fat Owl of the Remove was lost
in the fog.

Which was not surprising. Billy
Bunter was short-sighted. And a fellow
with the vision of an eagle might have
got lost in that soupy mist.

Harry Wharton & Co. were rather
anxious about the weather—like a good
many fellows at Greyfriars that day.
On the morrow, a football match of
rather unusual interest was scheduled
to take place—weather permitting. But

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if this fog lasted, obviously Soccer
would be off. So the Famous Five and
a dozen other fellows, stared into the
fog, and debated whether it was likely
to clear—till that fat, dismayed squeak
reached their ears.

Going out in it did not seem much
use. A fellow could hardly see his
hand before his face outside the House.
But if a fellow could not see, he could
hear—so Bob Cherry gave Bunter a
yell to guide him.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" bawled Bob.
"This way, Bunter! Hallo, hallo,
hallo!"

Bob's voice awoke every echo of the
House, and boomed and echoed over
the quad. Stentor, of old, had nothing
on Bob Cherry in that line. There
could be no doubt that the fat junior in
the fog heard him—everybody at Grey-
friars must have heard him, if not
everybody in Kent.

A fat squeak came back:

"I say, you fellows!"

"This way, Bunter!" bawled Bob.

"Oh, dear! Help! I'm lost! I say,
you fellows, come and help a chap! I
say. I can't see anything."

The fat squeak sounded farther off.

Bob's powerful voice was undoubtedly
audible—extremely audible. But the
fog echoed it in all directions.

Anybody but Bunter, no doubt, would
have ascertained the direction from
which that shout came. Bunter, ap-
parently, didn't! Instead of following
the shout, it seemed that he pursued
some of the echoes. Anyhow, his dismal,
dismayed, dolorous squeak died away
in the fog, and was lost to hearing.

"Oh, the ass!" said Frank Nugent.

"Bunter!" roared Bob. "This way!
Hallo, hallo, hallo! Bunter! Bunt!
Bunt!"

Echo answered "Bunt" with a boom.

But there was no other answer. The

hapless Owl of the Remove had gone
wandering away. If he heard and
answered, his fat squeak was unheard.

"Try again!" said Harry.

"Think you'd better?" asked Vernon-
Smith of the Remove, sarcastically.
"We don't want the roof down on our
heads!"

"Shut up, Smithy!" roared Bob.
"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

But answer there came none from the
quad. But from within the House came
several voices.

"Stop that row!" shouted Wingate of
the Sixth, from his study.

"What's that young ass yelling for?"
exclaimed Coker of the Fifth, coming
along in wrath. "Look here, you noisy
fags—"

"Shut up, Coker!" said Harry
Wharton. "Go it, Bob!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" bawled Bob.
And the rest of the Co. added their
voices.

There was no doubt that it was a
"row." Carne, of the Sixth Form,
came almost stamping along to the
door. Carne, who was a prefect, had
his ashplant under his arm. His ex-
pression showed that he was ready to
handle it.

"Who's making that row?" hooted
Carne. "What the dickens—"

"There's a fellow out in the fog,
Carne!" Harry Wharton explained
hastily. Coker of the Fifth could be
told to shut up, but a prefect of the
Sixth Form had to be treated with tact.

"It's Bunter!" said Frank Nugent.
"He's lost!"

"The lostfulness is terrific, my
esteemed Carne!" said Hurree Jamset
Ram Singh. "If the ridiculous Bunter
does not find his absurd way back to
the House, he will go on wandering
like the ludicrous Flying Dutchman."

"Young ass!" growled Carne, staring out into the fog. "What the thump did he go out for, in this?"

"That's an easy one!" grinned Vernon-Smith. "He went to the tuck-shop. He started, at any rate! I don't suppose he got there."

"Anything up?" asked a pleasant voice, and the juniors looked round, as Valentine Compton, the new fellow in the Fifth, came to the door.

"Bunter's lost in the fog, Compton!" said Harry.

"Oh, my hat! Looks as if he's lost for good!" said Compton, staring into the thickness outside. "He might hear, if you call him! Give him a yell!"

"That's what I was doing!" answered Bob. "I'll try again—"

"Stop that row, Cherry!" rapped Carne.

"But I say, Carne—"

"Stop it, I tell you!"

The chums of the Remove looked at Carne expressively. Compton of the Fifth looked at him, compressing his lips a little. Vernon-Smith winked at Tom Redwing, who frowned. Some of the fellows grinned.

They all knew why Arthur Carne, of the Sixth, weighed in with the voice of authority. His look of bitter dislike at Compton would have told them, if they had not known.

Almost everybody at Greyfriars liked the new fellow in the Fifth. Carne was an exception. The fact that Compton had been put into the first eleven, and Carne dropped to make room for him, was the chief cause.

Football matters were in the hands of Wingate, the captain of the school, and Carne had to toe the line. But he was a prefect, and he made every use of his official position to make himself unpleasant to his successful rival in Soccer.

The mere fact that Compton of the Fifth had told Bob to give the lost Owl a yell, was sufficient reason for Carne of the Sixth to order him to be silent.

"But look here, Carne, Bunter's lost!" exclaimed Bob. "He can't be left wandering about."

"He shouldn't have gone out!" grunted Carne.

"Well, he did!"

"That's enough!" snapped the prefect.

"Look here—" began Harry Wharton.

"That's enough, I tell you!"

"The kid can scarcely be left wandering in the fog, Carne!" said Compton mildly.

Carne looked at him.

"I've not asked you to speak, Compton! Mind your own business!"

"Look here, Carne—" roared Coker in angry indignation. "Don't you be a goat, see? I came here to kick these fags for kicking up a row—but if there's a kid out in the fog, he's got to be got in, see? And I tell you—"

"You can hold your tongue, Coker!" said Carne coolly.

"Wha-a-t?" stuttered Horace Coker. He glared at Carne. Even a Sixth Form prefect was not going to tell Horace James Coker, of the Fifth Form, to hold his tongue! Holding his tongue, moreover, was not in Coker's line. "Why, you cheeky tick—think you can talk to a Fifth Form man like that, because you're a measly prefect! Why, I'll—"

Compton pushed Coker back, as the burly and indignant Horace made a stride towards Carne. Coker could have lifted Carne off his feet with one drive of his leg-of-mutton fist—and he looked like doing it. But prefects of the Sixth were not to be punched without awfully serious consequences accruing. Compton interposed in time.

"Hold on, old man!" he said. "Look here, I'll go out and look for the kid!"

"Rot!" said Coker. "You can't see a foot! You'll get lost, the same as Bunter!"

"I'll chance it!" said Compton, smiling. "The young ass will have to be found! No objection to my going out to look for Bunter, Carne?" he asked, with polite sarcasm.

Carne scowled, but made no reply. Compton of the Fifth went down the steps, and a crowd of fellows watched him disappear into the fog.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Coker, too!

"WHAT does this mean?"

Mr. Quelch, master of the Remove, came rustling to the door, with a decidedly annoyed expression on his face. He rapped out the words.

Fog was floating into the House and drifting down passages. Really, it was not the kind of weather for the door to be opened wide. Mr. Quelch was surprised, and he was annoyed to see the door standing wide open, a crowd of fellows staring out, and wisps of vapour floating in.

"Why is that door open?" snapped Mr. Quelch. "Really, Carne, as a Sixth Form prefect, I should have expected you not to allow junior boys to

Valentine Compton has made a name for himself in the Greyfriars First Eleven. But he's also made a bitter enemy of Carne, who has been "dropped" from the team to make room for the new man!

throw the door wide open in such weather."

Evidently Quelch was cross!

Carne coloured with annoyance. Really, he was not to blame. Harry Wharton & Co. had opened the door, to give a look at the weather, intending to close it again without delay. Billy Bunter's dismal squeaks from the fog had caused it to remain open.

"I think the door had better remain open, sir," said Carne.

"What—what? I shall insist upon it being immediately closed, Carne!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch warmly.

"Oh, very well, sir!" said Carne, with cool impertinence. "If you desire to shut a boy of your Form out in the fog, sir, I, of course, have no objection. I will close the door at once."

"What?" Mr. Quelch was taken aback. "Am I to understand that a Remove boy has been foolish enough to go out in this mist?"

"I believe so, sir! Get out of the way, Cherry—your Form-master desires me to close the door."

"Leave it open, Carne!" snapped Mr. Quelch. "I was not aware that a boy was out in the quadrangle. Do not be impertinent, Carne."

Carne gave a slight shrug of the shoulders, and walked away to his study in the Sixth.

Mr. Quelch cast a rather grim look after him, and then glanced at his head boy.

"Who is out of doors, Wharton?" he asked.

"Bunter, sir."

"The utterly foolish boy!" Mr. Quelch peered out of the dim doorway. "If he is out of sight of the lighted windows, he may—"

Mr. Quelch broke off, compressing his lips. It was clear that if Bunter was unable to see the lighted windows of the House, he was hopelessly lost, though within the walls of the school, and might go wandering, as Hurree Singh had remarked, like the Flying Dutchman.

"Compton of the Fifth has gone out to look for him, sir," said Nugent.

"Indeed! That is very good-natured of Compton!" said the Remove master. "But it will be difficult—if not impossible—"

"Let's all go, you fellows," said Bob Cherry. "We can stick together and root about after the fat duffer—"

"We can't leave him to it!" agreed Harry Wharton. "Let's!"

"Stop!" Mr. Quelch rapped at the chums of the Remove. "Are you suggesting going out in this mist, Cherry? Have you no common sense? You will be as hopelessly lost as Bunter, if you go out of sight of the House."

"But, sir—"

"Remain where you are!" snapped Mr. Quelch. "I will not permit any boy of my Form to leave the House for one moment."

The Famous Five remained where they were. No doubt Mr. Quelch was right—hunting for Bunter in the almost impenetrable mist was rather like hunting for a needle in a haystack—only more so! Obviously, searchers were more likely to lose themselves than to find Bunter.

"Yes, you fags stick where you are!" said Horace Coker. "What the dooce do you think you could do, you young asses?"

Harry Wharton & Co. made no reply to that. In their Form-master's presence they could not tell Coker of the Fifth what they thought of him.

"I'll jolly well go, though!" added Coker. "That chap Compton will get lost—he hasn't much gumption! Here, young Wharton, cut up to my study in the Fifth, and get my electric torch."

Harry Wharton did not answer, neither did he move. Coker of the Fifth was the man to give orders, which he seemed to expect fellows to carry out. Generally, what Coker expected did not happen.

"Do you hear, Wharton?" rapped Coker. "Deaf, you young ass?"

Harry Wharton seemed deaf. At all events, he took no more notice of Horace Coker than a graven image might have taken.

The other fellows grinned.

Coker did not grin. He frowned.

"You silly young ass, will you go and fetch the torch from my study, as I've told you!" he roared.

Mr. Quelch was standing in the doorway, peering out with grim annoyance on his brow. He glared round at Coker of the Fifth.

"Coker," he snapped, "kindly do not shout at a boy of my Form!"

"I've told the cheeky young tick—"

"That will do, Coker!"

Coker breathed hard. In Quelch's presence, he could not proceed to whop one of Quelch's boys. That was annoying to Coker; but it was, perhaps, fortunate for him, as the Famous Five were prepared to strew him all over the House if he started. Having breathed hard, and glared at the captain of the Remove, Horace Coker

tramped away to the stairs, to fetch his torch himself.

More and more fellows collected at the door. There was no sign, and no sound, of Billy Bunter—or of Compton!

It did not seem of much use for any other fellow to chance it—if there was anything to be done, Compton was able to do it. It was probable that the Fifth Form man, searching for Bunter in the blinding mist, had lost his own bearings. So long as Mr. Quelch was there, at all events, the Remove fellows were not allowed to try it on—and nobody else was keen to do so.

Horace Coker came back in a few minutes, his electric torch in his hand. He stepped out of the doorway and flashed on the torch.

The beam of light penetrated the fog for a little distance. It did not seem probable to the other fellows that either the torch, or Coker, would be of much use; but Horace's confidence in himself was unbounded.

"Better not risk it, old man!" said Potter of the Fifth.

"You'll get lost, Coker," said Greene.

Coker glanced back over his shoulder.

"Don't talk rot!" he said.

Having delivered that injunction, Horace Coker tramped down the steps, and the beam of his torch faded into the mist.

Bump!

That sound floated back to the doorway from the fog.

There was a chuckle.

"Good old Coker!" said Bob Cherry. "Bet on Coker running into the first tree that came handy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Eyes were strained into the fog. Nothing could be seen of Horace Coker, but he could be heard:

"Ow! What's that? Oh crumbs! My nose! Ow! Blow that tree! Bother that silly tree! Ow! Where's that torch fallen? Oh crikey! Blow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You had better come back, Coker!" called out Mr. Quelch.

There was a sound of rustling and brushing. Coker, apparently, was groping for the torch he had dropped when he bumped into the tree. The sound died away.

"Coker!" called out Mr. Quelch.

No answer.

"Coker!" shouted Potter. "Come back, you ass! Coker!"

But answer there came none. Coker, having lost his torch, was probably trying to grope back to the House. Evidently he had groped in the wrong direction, and was gone.

There were three fellows out in the fog now—and whether they would find one another, or would be found themselves, was quite an interesting question to the crowd watching from the doorway. Not a sound and not a sign came from the thick mist on the quadrangle, and the Greyfriars fellows could only watch, and wait, and wonder!

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Bunter Butts In!

BILLY BUNTER groaned.

"Oh crikey!"

It was awful for Bunter.

From the bottom of his fat heart, Bunter wished that he had never borrowed a half-crown from Lord Mauleverer after class.

But for that loan exacted from his good-natured lordship, Bunter would have been in his usual stony state, and

would not have made the attempt to get across to the tuckshop.

But at tea-time, with a half-crown in his pocket, Bunter had naturally headed for the tuckshop like a homing pigeon.

It was foggy—and Bunter did not like fog! It was cold—and he did not like cold! But he was prepared to face both fog and cold in so good a cause! Certainly it had never crossed his fat mind that he might be lost—actually lost within the walls of the school!

It was not a great distance from the House to Mrs. Mumble's little establishment in the corner behind the elms. In normal weather Bunter would have done that distance in two or three minutes. In the fog, he expected to do it in four or five. Instead of which, he had not done it at all. He had been nearly half an hour out of the House, and had not arrived anywhere.

Having realised that he could not find his way to the school shop, the fat junior tried to find his way back to the House—and discovered that he could not do that, either!

He had had a glimpse of hope when, in answer to his squeaks, he heard the boom of Bob Cherry's powerful voice. Unfortunately, he followed the echoes of that boom in the wrong direction, and was more hopelessly lost than ever.

"Oh lor!" groaned Bunter.

He would have given Mauly's half-crown—indeed, he would have given all that Lord Mauleverer possessed—to find himself back in the House again.

He wandered and wandered. He bumped into trees, he collided with walls, he stumbled over the chains of the Sixth Form green, he slipped on damp grass. He was cold, he was hopelessly lost, and he was getting scared. It was awful—and getting awfuller!

Like a beacon of hope, a glimmer of light struck his eyes through the blinding fog. He blinked at it, through his big spectacles. It was—it must be—a lighted window!

Bunter plunged through the fog towards that lighted window.

He bumped into a wall, and gasped. He groped, and found a window-sill above the level of his fat head. Over it glimmered the light.

It was a study window! Whether it was a master's study, or one of the Sixth Form studies, he had no idea. But it was a study—and there was a light glimmering through the blind.

The window was out of reach of the fat Owl of the Remove. But he could clamber on the sill, and tap on the panes, to be let in. He did not care whose study it was—even a beast like Loder or Carne would let a fellow in who was lost in the fog.

He grasped at the cold, clammy sill with both hands. As he did so, the light in the window suddenly went out. He stepped back, blinking in dismay.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "Beast!"

It was absolutely rotten luck!

Someone must have been in the study while the light was there. The turning out of the light looked as if someone had left the study—just when Bunter wanted the window opened.

He groaned dismally.

It was all Mauly's fault! If Mauly hadn't lent him that half-crown, he would be safe in the House all this while! Doorsteps and dish-water in Hall were better than this!

Suddenly, from above him, came the sound of an opening window.

He jumped.

The chap—whoever he was—was opening the window. Why he had turned off the light first, was a mystery.

Neither could he have known that Bunter was there, as the fat Owl had not yet tapped.

But the window was opening, and it was a gladsome sound to the fat ears of the Owl of the Remove.

He heard the lower sash thrown up. He could not see the window—he could hardly see the stone sill—so thick was the fog. But there was no mistaking the sound. Billy Bunter stretched out both fat hands before him, to make sure of not running into the wall again, and groped.

As he did so, there was a thudding sound, within a yard of him.

Someone had dropped from the window!

The amazed fat junior had a momentary glimpse of a dim shadow in the fog, and it vanished.

He was left blinking.

In sheer amazement, he blinked after the vanished shadow. Whoever it was had not seen him, or dreamed that he was there. Who was it? Why—

Bunter grinned. He fancied he could guess. Obviously it could not be a master who had jumped out of his study window. This must be a Sixth Form study—and the Sixth Former to whom it belonged had jumped out—and the Owl of the Remove guessed why—and why the light had been turned off first.

Clearly—to Bunter—some sportsman of the Sixth was going out of bounds, and taking advantage of the fog to cover his movements. Loder, or Carne, or Walker, most likely. Bunter, who knew many things that did not concern him, knew something of the manners and customs of the black sheep of the Sixth—and suspected more!

Whoever he was, and whatever he was up to, he had vanished instantly into the fog—but he had left an open window behind him!

Bunter concentrated on that!

He groped to the window-sill again, clutched at the cold and clammy stone, and clambered.

It was not a difficult climb to any fellow but Bunter. It rather presented difficulties to Bunter, owing to the amount of weight he had to lift.

But he got on the window-sill at last, gasping and panting, puffing and blowing. He groped in.

Bang!

"Ow!" squeaked Bunter, as his head came into contact with the sash.

Then he rolled in at the window.

All was dark in the study, save for a faint glow from the fire. Whose study it was, he did not know nor care—he knew that it must belong to someone in the Sixth Form. He rolled across to the door, and turned the handle. He opened the door, and blinked out—into the Sixth Form passage.

A moment more, and Billy Bunter was rolling into that passage. From an open doorway, farther along, Loder of the Sixth glanced out, and stared at him.

"Bunter!"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "Yes, Loder?"

"What have you been doing in Carne's study, you young sweep?"

"Oh! I didn't know it was Carne's study, Loder—"

"What?"

"I—I mean, I—I found the window open. I got in by the window. I've been lost in the fog!" gasped Bunter.

Loder stared at him, and laughed.

"You silly young ass!" he said. He turned back into his study. And Billy Bunter, greatly relieved to find himself safe inside the House again, rolled away.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

A Hack for Horace!

"O!" roared Coker. The Bull of Bashan, celebrated for his roaring, might have roared like that—but only in his more strenuous moments. Coker roared—and hopped. Coker was hurt!

He was startled, surprised, astounded, amazed—but, more than anything else, he was hurt!

How long Coker of the Fifth had been groping in that blinding fog he did not know. Having lost his torch, and lost his direction, Coker wandered and blundered, and tripped, and bumped, and grew more and more puzzled, bewildered, and fed-up.

He did not find Bunter. He did not find Compton. He found clammy trees

found him—or he had found the other fellow.

And then—the amazing thing happened!

Before Coker could speak, before he could even realise that his fingers were touching somebody, the unseen fellow closed on him and kicked!

The hack landed on Coker's right ankle.

He roared, tottered, and hopped!

The figure vanished instantly in the fog.

Coker was left hopping.

It was so amazing an occurrence, that Horace Coker could hardly believe that it had happened—only there was a fearful pain in his ankle, that left no doubt on the subject.

So far as he knew, only Compton of the Fifth and Bunter were in the quad. But why either of them should kick

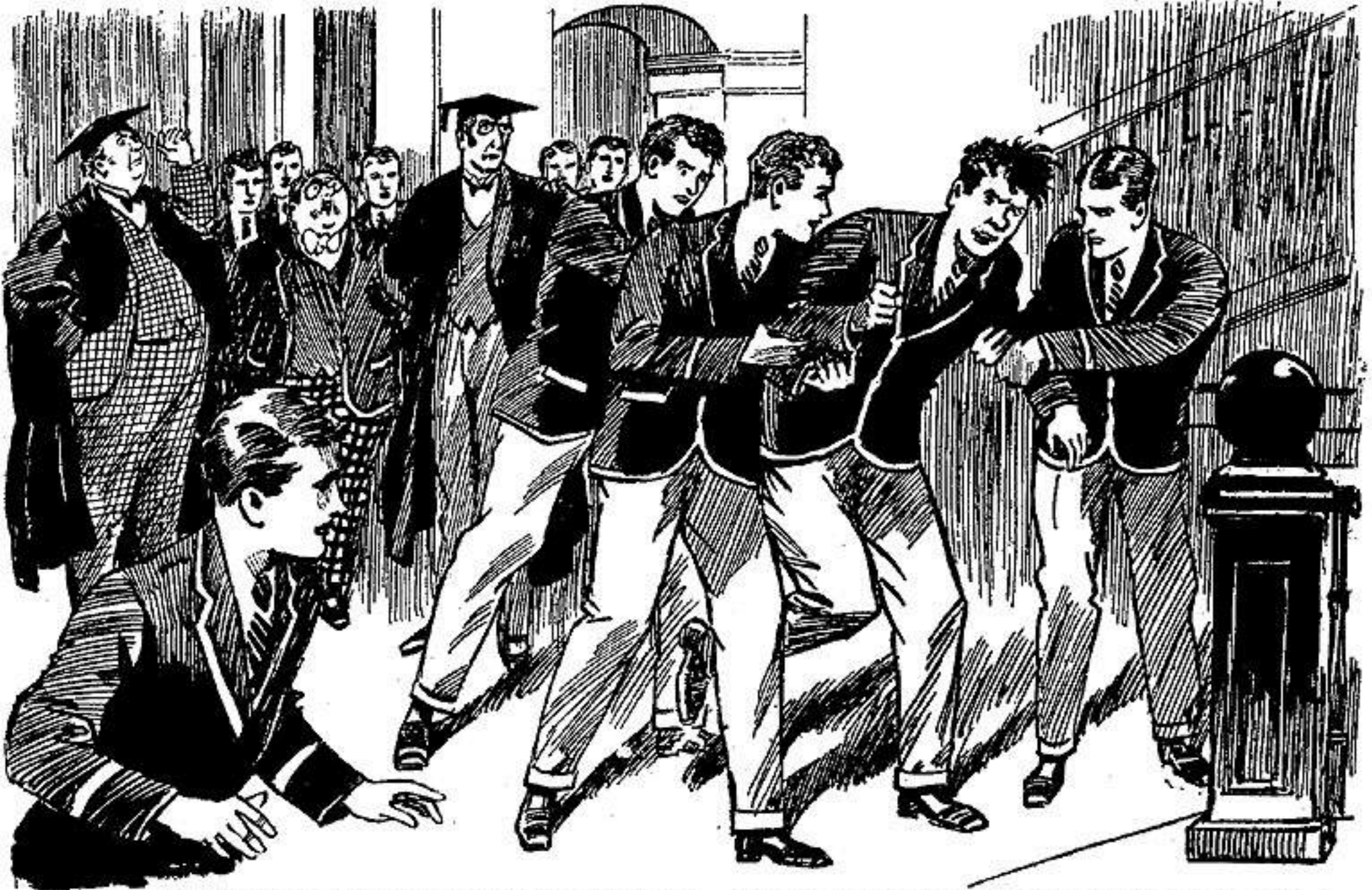
unknown to Coker himself. Coker had had no doubt that Compton had landed himself in difficulties in the fog, and that he—Horace—was the man to find him and help him out. And he was going to do it because he liked the chap.

But his liking vanished on the spot now.

Unless Compton had gone suddenly mad, there seemed no reason why he should have hacked Coker like that. Mad or not, Coker wanted to get hold of him; and bang and thump him hard.

He realised that it could not have been Bunter. He had seen only a flitting shadow, but it was as tall as a Fifth Form man—a foot, at least, taller than the fat Owl of the Remove.

Moreover, it was very improbable that the short-sighted Owl could have landed that kick so neatly, and still more im-



"You are a foolish, clumsy boy, Coker!" boomed Mr. Prout. "And to say that you have been kicked on the ankle is ridiculous! Go to your study!" "But—" "Take him to his study!" snapped the master of the Fifth. Compton took one of Coker's arms, and Potter the other, while Greene pushed from behind. Spluttering with indignation, Coker was propelled to the stairs.

trunks, into which he bumped; he found damp walls, on which he banged; he found buttresses and angles of buildings, on nearly all of which he gave himself a knock or two. More and more exasperated and bewildered, Horace Coker groped about, with his hands extended before him in the mist, feeling his way—and deeply repentant that he had ventured out into the foggy quadrangle at all. Even Coker realised now that he was not going to find anybody—but that he was badly in need of finding himself!

He would rather have seen the lighted doorway of the House just then, than have seen his name up in the list for the Rookwood match on the morrow. But he was as unlikely to see the one as the other. He wandered and groped, and groped and wandered.

Then, suddenly, his outstretched fingers touched a figure, dim in the fog. Some other fellow, groping about, had

out and cut, was the most amazing of mysteries.

Coker hopped on one leg. His ankle was hurt. He knew that there was going to be a big bruise, and he knew that he would be limping for days, though at the present moment he could not even limp; he could only hop.

"Mad!" gasped Coker. "Must be mad! Mad idiot—Ow! Oh, my ankle! Oh crikey! I'll smash him—when I find him! That mad idiot Compton—"

Coker liked the new fellow Compton. Indeed, that was chiefly why he had come out into the fog to look for him. He liked the fellow, but had, of course, much more faith in his own gumption than in Compton's. Any fellow in the Fifth could have told Coker that Compton had more brains in his little finger than he—Horace James Coker—had in his head. But this was quite

probable that he could have put so much beef into it.

It was not Bunter. Therefore, it was Compton.

Coker hopped, howled, and breathed wrath and anguish and vengeance.

His last state was worse than his first. He was still hopelessly lost, and he had to grope on, with a severe pain in his ankle—a pain so severe that it hurt him to put his foot to the ground.

Alternately hopping and limping, Coker groped dimly and drearily on, as anxious to find Compton and punch him as he had previously been to find him and get him out of the fog.

"Oh! Ow! Oh! Yow!" yelped Coker, as he hopped and limped, stumbled and groped. "Ow! Yow! Wow!"

A voice came through the mist:

"Hallo! Who's that?"

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It was Compton's voice. Coker's roar and his series of painful ejaculations had perhaps guided the new senior.

Coker halted, his eyes gleaming. If that mad ass came within reach, Coker was going to give him something back for that hack on the ankle.

"Is that Bunter?" came the calling voice. "Stand still and call out! Don't move again, Bunter! Stand still, and I'll get you! Call out, you young ass!"

"Here!" yelled Coker.

"I hear you!" came the voice from the mist. "Call again!"

"Here!"

"Oh, good! I'll get you!"

A figure loomed up—a dim shadow, the same height as the one that Coker had glimpsed before that had so unexpectedly hacked him. Coker's eyes glittered at it. Compton fancied that he had found Bunter. He was going to discover that he had found Coker again—and it was going to be a painful discovery. Coker clenched a leg-of-mutton fist ready.

"Hallo! Who— That's not Bunter! Who the dickens— Yaroooooh!" came a startled roar, as Coker punched.

Bump!

The dim figure sat down.

"Who's that?" came a startled yell. "What are you punching for? Is that some lunatic? Oh, my hat!"

"Get up!" roared Coker. "I'll punch you again! I haven't finished yet!"

"Coker! Is that Coker?"

"Yes, you swab! Yes, you tick! Yes, you mad ass! I'll give you hacking a fellow in the fog!" roared Coker. "I've got a damaged ankle, and I'll jolly well give you a damaged eye to match! Gerrup!"

"You potty idiot!" Compton scrambled up. But he backed warily, giving the incensed Horace no chance for another punch. "Have you gone mad, Coker? What's the matter with you? I thought I'd found Bunter—"

"You've found me again, you swab!" roared Coker. "Where are you? Come here, you funk! I can't hop after you now you've crippled me, as you jolly well know! Lemme gerrat you!"

"You howling ass!" came Compton's gasping voice from the fog. "How did you get here? I thought you were in the House! I saw you there before I came out."

"You rotter!" roared Coker. "I came out to look for you, and you hacked me on the ankle—"

"Has somebody hacked you on the ankle?"

"Yes. You did!"

"You potty chump, I didn't!" gasped Compton. "Why should I?"

"I don't know why you should, you swab; but I jolly well know you did, as my ankle's badly damaged!"

"Oh, you ass! I never even knew you were out of the House! I've not been near you! You must have knocked your ankle on something—"

"Oh, don't talk rot! I suppose I know if a fellow boots me on the ankle!" hooted Coker. "You kicked me, and ran for it!"

"I did not!" yelled Compton.

"Then who did?"

"Goodness knows—if anybody did! Have you seen Bunter?"

"No, I haven't! And it wasn't Bunter! Too tall for Bunter—"

"If you saw anybody, fathead, you must have seen that it was not I!"

"How could I see in this fog? I just saw a shadow, but it was somebody as big as myself. If it wasn't you—"

A doubt was smiting Coker.

"Of course it wasn't me, you blitherer, if it happened at all!"

"Is anybody else out, then?"

"How should I know?"

"Oh!" gasped Coker. "I—I never thought of anybody else being out! I never knew anybody was! I—I— If you say it wasn't you, Compton—"

"Idiot!"

"Well, what was a fellow to think, not knowing anybody else was out?" demanded Coker. "I know I've been hacked—I can hardly walk! Ow! When I get in, I'll jolly well find out who's been out of the House, and smash him for hacking me like that! A dirty, cowardly trick!"

"Are you sure—"

"Oh, don't be an ass!" snorted Coker. "Look here, give me a hand! I'm sorry I punched you, if it wasn't you; but what was a fellow to think? I say, give me a hand! I've got to go dot-and-carry-one!"

Compton loomed through the fog again. Convinced by that time that it was not Compton who had hacked him—though he could not begin to guess who it might have been—

(Continued on next page.)

Coker was no longer in a punching mood. He was glad to lean on Valentine Compton's strong arm.

He leaned heavily. Compton realised that he was hurt, though he still had a suspicion that Coker had banged himself on something in the fog; it was altogether too astonishing if somebody really had hacked him. But it was plain that Horace was in need of help, whatever the cause of the damage. The good-natured new fellow easily forgave the punch, delivered under a misapprehension, and gave Coker all the aid he needed.

"I'll get you back to the House," he said. "Bunter will have to wait! Come on, old chap!"

"I say, I'm really sorry I punched you, Compton!"

"That's all right."

"What was a fellow to think?"

"Goodness knows, with a brain like yours, Coker! Come on!"

"Look here—"

"Oh, come on! Lean on me. That's right! This way!"

"You needn't make out that you can find your way in this fog, Compton! Why, I can't!"

Valentine Compton laughed. He could do many things that the egregious Horace could not do.

"It's not easy," he said. "But I've been through lots of fogs at sea, you know. I'm rather used to steering a course in a mist."

"Oh!" said Coker. "Well, if you can, all right; but I jolly well don't believe you can—see?"

"Well, let's try!" said Compton.

He led Coker onward. It was well known at Greyfriars that Valentine Compton, since leaving his prep school, had spent most of his time on his uncle's yacht, the Firefly, before coming to Greyfriars a few weeks ago. Perhaps that was why he was able to steer a course, as he expressed it, in the blinding mist that had Coker quite beaten.

Five minutes of groping, and a glimmer of yellow light loomed in the fog. It came from the open doorway of the House.

"By gum!" ejaculated Coker, in surprise. "That's luck! I say, Compton, that's the door! Head that way—see?"

"Come on!" said Compton.

And he led the limping Horace on, and guided him up the steps of the House.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Surprising!

"I SAY, you fellows—"

"Who—"

"What—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

"Bunter!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

The whole crowd, in the House doorway, spun round, as if moved by the same spring, at the fat voice behind them.

They gazed at Billy Bunter. They blinked at him as if they could hardly believe their eyes.

Bunter's fat voice had been heard squeaking for help from the foggy quad! Compton had gone out to look for him, and Coker had gone out to look for Compton; and neither had yet returned. But here was Bunter—coming to the door from within the House. The Greyfriars fellows stared at Bunter as if he had been the ghost of a fat Owl!

"It—it—it's Bunter!" stuttered Bob Cherry.

"Bunter!" repeated Mr. Quelch.

"Bless my soul!"

"Absurd!" boomed Mr. Prout. The Fifth Form master had joined the growing crowd at the door. "Ridiculous! Then the boy was not out of doors at all! Who stated that the boy was out of doors?"

"Wharton!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch angrily.

"But—" gasped Harry.

"Oh! Wharton!" boomed Prout. "I am not surprised—not in the least surprised! Wharton, of course! A foolish prank—"

"Nothing of the kind!" exclaimed Harry. "Bunter was out of doors, and a dozen fellows heard him calling out from the fog—"

"Yes, rather!"

"The ratherfulness is terrific."

"Nonsense!" boomed Prout. "The boy is here! Quelch, you see that the boy is here! Two boys of my Form have gone out into this dreadful fog—for nothing! They may be lost—I have no doubt that they are lost—and it turns out to be a foolish prank of the Remove boys! Really, Quelch—"

"Bunter was out!" exclaimed Harry.

"He is here!" boomed Prout. "How dare you—"

"Will you allow me to speak, Mr. Prout?" exclaimed the Remove master acidly. "Bunter, have you been out of the House?"

"Yes, sir!" gasped Bunter. "I got lost in the fog, sir!"

"Absurd!" snorted Prout. "An utterly absurd statement, as the boy is here, and clearly has not been out of the House. No one saw him come in! I ask you, Quelch, whether he could have entered unnoticed, with the doorway crowded—I may say, crammed!"

"How did you enter, Bunter?"

"I found a study window open, sir, and climbed in!" answered Bunter.

"Oh!" gasped Mr. Prout.

"I—I couldn't find the door, sir!" gasped Bunter. "I—I couldn't see anything. Then I found Carne's window open, sir, and climbed in, and—"

"I quite understand!" said Mr. Quelch. "You were very foolish to venture out in the fog, Bunter; but I am glad you have found your way safely into the House."

Mr. Prout's face was a study. There was a general grin on all other faces. That simple explanation of Bunter's surprising reappearance had not occurred to Prout. With a very pink complexion, the Fifth Form master resumed staring into the fog.

"I say, you fellows, I've had an awful time!" said Bunter. "I say, I never got to the tuckshop after all! I say, have you fellows had tea?"

"Compton's gone out to look for you, fathead—"

"Has he? I say, have you had tea?"

"And that ass, Coker, has gone to look for Compton."

"Has he? What about tea?" asked Bunter anxiously. "I've told you I never got to the tuckshop. I'm fearfully hungry. If you fellows are coming up to tea now, I'll tea with you, if you like."

"We're waiting till Compton comes in, fathead!"

"I wouldn't wait!" said Bunter, shaking his head. "Why, he may be lost for hours and hours! It's like soup in the quad. What's the good of waiting for Compton to come in?"

"Kill him, somebody!"

"Beast!"

As Compton of the Fifth had gone out to Bunter's rescue, the fat Owl might have been supposed to be a little concerned about him. Perhaps he was!

But it was late for tea, and Bunter was hungry; and lesser considerations had to give way to greater!

Nobody else, however, was thinking of tea, late as it was. With the selfishness to which Bunter was accustomed, nobody seemed to care whether he was hungry or not. Everybody seemed concerned about Compton of the Fifth—as if Compton of the Fifth mattered two hoots, or one, in comparison with Bunter of the Remove! But there it was—and Billy Bunter could only grunt impatiently, and wait for the fellows to get it into their silly heads that, at tea-time, tea was the most urgent and important consideration in the universe!

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here they come!" shouted Bob Cherry, as dim figures loomed on the steps, in the light from the doorway.

"Compton—"

"He's found Coker."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker had gone out to look for Compton! But nobody doubted that it was Coker who would need looking for, once he was out in the fog! Evidently they were right! Compton came up the steps with Horace Coker limping and leaning heavily on his arm.

"Ow!" was Coker's first remark as he came in.

The door was shut at last. There was quite sufficient fog in the House by this time.

Compton looked round as the door was shut.

"Hold on," he said. "I'd better go and look for Bunter."

"Bunter is here, Compton!" said Mr. Quelch. "Fortunately he found an open window and was able to enter."

"Oh! Very well, sir!" said Compton. "I'd better help you up to your study, Coker."

"Is Coker hurt?" exclaimed Mr. Prout.

"He has knocked his ankle, sir."

"I haven't knocked my ankle!" bawled Coker. "I've been hacked on the ankle! I told you I was hacked in the fog, Compton!"

"Yes, yes, old chap—but—"

"Hacked!" repeated Mr. Prout. "What do you mean, Coker? You were excessively foolish to go out at all! What absurdity are you talking now?"

Fifty pairs of eyes, at least, were fixed on Coker. His statement that he had been "hacked" in the fog made the fellows jump.

"I tell you I've been hacked!" howled Coker hotly. "Some fellow's out of the House, and he kicked me!"

"Nonsense!" boomed Prout.

"I've got a damaged ankle!" bawled Coker. "Compton's had to help me back to the House! I was kicked on the ankle!"

"Absurd!"

"I thought it was Compton, at first, as I thought he was the only fellow out of the House, except that fat ass Bunter! I jolly well punched him, thinking it was him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I know it wasn't Compton now! He's helped me back, like a brick! But it was somebody."

Prout waved a plump hand at the excited Horace.

"Do not be absurd, Coker! Nothing of the kind can have happened! You have collided with something in the fog, obviously."

"I didn't!"

"Coker, old man!" murmured Potter and Greenc.

"Shut up! I tell you, I was hacked!"

round Coker. "I'll jolly well show you my ankle!"

"You will do nothing of the kind!" boomed Prout. "You are a foolish, clumsy, blundering boy, Coker, and you have had an accident in the fog, and I forbid you to make any such absurd and ridiculous statement! Go to your study!"

"But——"

"Take him to his study!" boomed Prout.

Compton had one of Coker's arms. Potter took the other. Greene pushed him from behind. Spluttering with indignation, Coker was propelled to the stairs, and got away to his study in the Fifth.

Then the crowd broke up, and the Remove fellows went up to their studies to tea—to the infinite relief of Billy Bunter! And there was considerable chuckling and chortling as they went over Coker's extraordinary statement that some person unknown had hacked him in the fog. Nobody, of course, thought of believing that old Horace had got it right—nobody doubted for a moment that that clumsy ass, Coker, had banged into something in the fog, and fancied that he had been hacked.

But in Coker's study, when Coker bared his ankle to apply embrocation, there was doubt.

Potter and Greene stared at the black bruise on Coker's ankle. Compton gave it a very hard look.

"That was a hack!" said Compton quietly.

"Blessed if it doesn't look like it!" said Potter, in amazement. "But who the dickens——"

"And why the dickens——" said Greene, equally amazed.

"Ow!" said Coker. "Wow! You've got some sense, Compton—you can see what it was! Ow! Wow!"

Potter and Greene, perhaps, still doubted. But Compton did not doubt, and he was deeply puzzled. Least of all did Coker doubt, as he grunted, groaned, and rubbed embrocation on his ankle!

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Loder Makes a Discovery!

LODER of the Sixth looked into the study of Walker of that Form.

James Walker, seated in an elegant attitude, with his chair tilted back, and his feet on the table, reading a yellow-backed novel, glanced round at him.

"Isn't Carne here?" asked Loder.

"Haven't seen him!" answered Walker; and he resumed his novel, and Gerald Loder stared at the back of his head.

"Where the deuce is he?" asked Loder.

"Looked in his study?"

"No; I know he isn't there."

"Draw the prefects' room, then."

"I've looked there, fathead!"

"Well, he can hardly be out of doors in this jolly old fog!" yawned Walker. "Perhaps he's gone to see Wingate, to tell him, for the umpteenth time, that he's the right man for the eleven tomorrow, and that that new Fifth Form man isn't."

"Oh, I shouldn't wonder!" Loder grinned, closed Walker's door, and went along to the study of Wingate, the captain of Greyfriars.

It was quite probable that Carne was there. That term, Arthur Carne had taken up games and rather neglected his old pals, Loder and Walker of the Sixth, as well as his racing acquaintances at the Cross Keys and the Three Fishers.

His keenness had made him friendly with the games men, and "old Wingate" had viewed him with an approving eye. It was a fact that, but for the wonderful form shown by Compton, the new man in the Fifth, Carne would have been picked for the first eleven, and would have figured in the Rookwood match, due that week.

Only Carne failed to see how much better the new man was. His bitterness on the subject disgusted some fellows, and amused others.

Loder, who resented his new and improved manners and customs, was very

much amused—and not at all displeased by Carne's failure to realise his ambition.

On the other hand, football had proved a rather cheaper, as well as more healthy, occupation, than spotting winners and backing losers! Carne had plenty of money—and still had it! Loder, who also had plenty, no longer had it—having dropped all his available resources on Bonny Blue, a deceptive gee-gee that ought to have come in first, but had actually come in eleventh.

Gerald Loder, at the present moment, was severely pushed for a five-pound note. Carne, having played football instead of backing horses, was in funds—and Gerald hoped to "touch" him for the necessary fiver. In return for which Loder was prepared to tell Carne that he fully deserved a place in the eleven, that Wingate was a fool to leave him out, and that that new man in the Fifth was a tick, a swab, and a barge!

But he had to find Carne first. As he had seen Billy Bunter emerge from Carne's study, having climbed in at the open window, he knew that Carne could not be there. At least, he took it for granted that no fellow could be sitting in his study with the window open in a damp, reeking, sticky fog.

As the fellow was not with Walker, Loder went to look for him in Wingate's study, little doubting that he was there, urging his claims once more on the captain of the school.

Wingate's door stood open, and there were several Sixth Form men in the room. They were discussing—rather anxiously—the weather. If that putrid fog lasted over the morrow, it was evident that the Rookwood match was off—very much off. Bulkeley of Rookwood could not bring his men over to play Soccer in pea-soup! It was an anxious topic to the games men—though Loder was very little interested in it.

"Carne here?" he asked, looking in.

"Carne? No!" answered Wingate. Gwynne, Sykes, and North were there—all members of the eleven. "I say, Loder, what's this about a Fifth Form man saying that somebody hacked him in the fog outside? Heard of it?"

"Haven't heard!" answered Loder.

He turned away to continue his search for the elusive Carne. He did not care two straws whether a Fifth Form man had been hacked or not, and did not ask who it was, or how it was supposed to have happened.

"They went out to look for that young ass, Bunter of the Remove—Compton and Coker——" he heard Gwynne say, as he went.

"Seen Carne?" Loder called out, as he spotted Bancroft of the Sixth in the passage.

"In his study, I think!"

"No, he isn't!" grunted Loder.

"The light's on, anyhow!"

"Oh!" said Loder.

He tramped up the passage again to Carne's study. The light under the door seemed to indicate that it was occupied.

Greatly puzzled, Loder tapped at the door and threw it open. He had been keeping an eye open for Carne ever since he had seen Bunter emerge from the study, and he did not understand how the Sixth Former could have got back to his room unseen.

But Carne was there. The light was on, and Carne was bending over his fire, stirring it to a blaze.

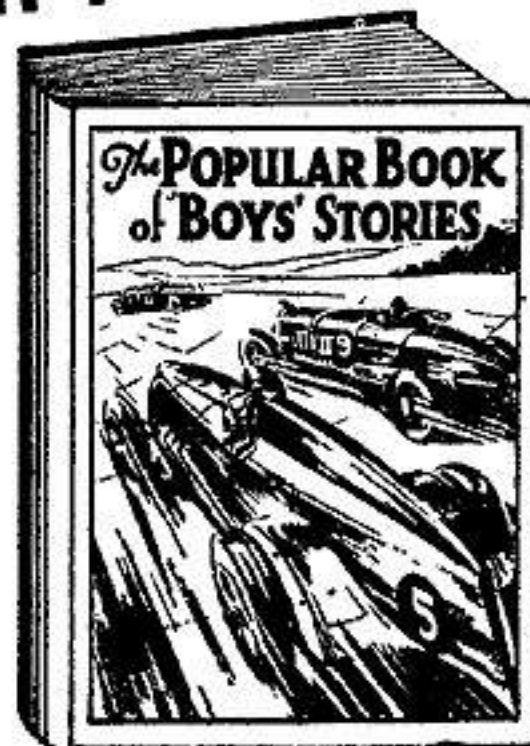
He looked round with a little start as Loder came in. His face was a trifle pale; and, cold as it was, there was a bead of perspiration on his brow.

Loder looked at him very curiously.

"So you're here!" he said.

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"Look at this!" roared Coker. He pulled up his trousers-leg and then unrolled the bandage from his foot, displaying the injured ankle. Carne felt a pang as he looked at the gash of that cruel hack. The sight of what he had done made it clearer to him what a rotten, cowardly action it had been.

"Eh? Yes! Why shouldn't I be here?" said Carne. He gave Loder a furtive look, and turned to the fire again, stirring it industriously.

Loder glanced at the window. It was shut, and the curtain drawn. But it must have been open when Bunter got in—and there had been no light showing from the study when the fat junior came out at the door.

Loder was puzzled, and vaguely suspicious. Carne, obviously, could not have been sitting there in the dark, with the window open, when Bunter got in. Yet, ever since, Loder had had his eye on the passage, and had not seen Carne come to the study.

He could hardly imagine that Carne had, like Bunter, got in by the window. Yet it looked as if he had.

"Been out in the fog?" asked Loder, in perplexity.

"No, you ass!" Carne continued to stir the fire, and did not look round as he answered. "Not the weather for going out!"

Loder stared.

"You haven't been out?" he exclaimed.

"Not since class."

"You picked up that mud on your boots in the Sixth Form passage?" asked Loder sarcastically.

Carne gave so violent a start that he dropped the poker. It clanged on the fender.

Loder, more and more surprised, and rather amused, saw his face flame, and then become pale again, as he looked down at his boots. The quad was wet and muddy, and Carne's boots were the same. Obviously they had not become wet and muddy indoors.

"What the dickens is this game, Carne?" asked Loder. "You've been out, and you must have got in at the

window! Why? It's not lock-up yet—you could go out by the door, if you liked."

"You inquisitive fool!" Carne gave him a look that was half-furtive and half-fierce. "I—I got my boots muddy this afternoon! Why the dickens are you butting into my study and questioning me? Mind your own business!"

"You haven't been out?" grinned Loder. "Were you here when Bunter was in the study?"

"Bunter?" said Carne blankly. "What the dickens do you mean? Bunter hasn't been to this study!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Loder.

As he had seen Billy Bunter emerge from Carne's study, that statement amused him. Obviously, Carne had not been there at the time.

Carne's face reddened and paled again. He dropped the poker, and came towards Loder, his hands clenched, and his eyes glinting. It was plain that he was in a state of jumpy nerves and savage temper.

"What do you mean?" he snarled. "Why should a fag come to this study? Bunter's out in the fog, too! There was a crowd at the door looking for him when I came to my study. He's out of the House."

"He's in now," grinned Loder. "He got in at your window!"

"Wha-a-at!" Carne fairly staggered.

"I saw him coming out of your door, and asked him. He found the window open, and got in."

"Bunter did?" panted Carne.

"Yes, you ass! And there was no light in the study when he came out. You weren't here!"

Carne leaned a hand on the table for support. His face was so white that it looked like a ghastly mask. Loder's

own grinning face became serious, and a little alarmed, as he looked at him.

"Carne, old man, what's the row?" he asked. "What the dooce have you been doing?"

Carne did not answer. His trembling lips moved, but no word came. He looked like a fellow stricken by utter terror—as, indeed, at that moment he was.

Loder had left the door ajar when he stepped in. He turned to it hastily, and closed it.

"Carne, you fool, what have you done?" he breathed. "I've just heard in Wingate's study that a Fifth Form man says he was hacked in the fog—and—and—and Compton went out to look for Bunter. Have you—"

Loder did not need to finish the question. Carne's look was enough. Loder's own face paled a little.

"You awful rotter!" he breathed. "You've crooked the man that's got your place in the eleven—hacked him in the fog! Oh gad!"

"Shut up!" hissed Carne.

He tried to pull himself together. Until Loder came into the study, he had been feeling a mingling of terror and remorse. Now it was wholly terror that he was feeling.

It had seemed safe—absolutely safe. He had gone to his study, after seeing Compton of the Fifth go out into the fog; he had jumped from the study window, absolutely certain that none could see, none could suspect. His only doubt was whether he would be able to find his enemy in the fog.

He had found him—at least, he had glimpsed a tall figure, which could not possibly have been Bunter's. Only Compton was out as well as Bunter, so he had no doubt. It was after he had

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gone to his study that Horace Coker had followed Compton out, and Carne had no knowledge of that; he was not thinking of Coker, or of anyone, but the fellow who had, as he looked at it, butted into the eleven and barged him out.

Safe—safe as houses! He had nothing to fear but his own conscience. And now—

The wretched fellow felt his brain swimming. He held on to the table, his knees weak under him. If this was known— He shuddered at the thought of the horror, the scorn, in every face. Even that was not the worst. It would come before the Head; he would be expelled for such an act!

"Well, that's the limit!" muttered Loder. "Carne, you must have been mad!"

"Are—are you sure you saw Bunter go—"

Carne's voice cracked.

"He found your window open and clambered in," said Loder. "Good heavens, Carne! You looked for Compton in the fog, and hacked him! You madman! Have you crocked him for to-morrow?"

Carne nodded in silence.

"Suppose he spotted you—"

"How could he in the fog? I never saw him—only a glimpse!" muttered Carne. "Might have been anybody; only I knew nobody else was out. Serve him right!" He gritted his teeth. "A nobody from nowhere, barging in and bagging a man's place! I've slaved at Soccer all the term, and now that new swab comes and steps into my shoes! You'll keep this dark, Loder?"

"It's too fearfully thick—"

"Thicker than some of the things you've done?" sneered Carne. "If you talk about me, Gerald Loder, I've got a tongue in my head, too! After all, nobody can suspect anything. Thank goodness, you've tipped me about that fat fool Bunter, though! I might have said I was in my study all the time!" He caught his breath. "What did you come here for? What do you want? You haven't come to talk about football, I suppose?" added Carne, with a sneer.

Gerald Loder looked at him, long and hard.

"We're pals," he said. "I'm saying nothing. I won't tell you what I think—"

"Don't!" said Carne. "What did you come here for?"

"I came to ask you if you could lend me a fiver? I dropped all I had on Bonny Blue, and Banks is dunning me."

"Well, I can't!"

"I think you might—in the circumstances!" said Loder significantly.

Carne gave him a look. He did not speak. But when Gerald Loder left the study there was a borrowed fiver in his pocket. And Carne was left to harassing thoughts.

But he was safe! Who could know? Who could suspect? Bunter had found his window open. Well, any fellow might have left his window open, and forgotten to shut it when the fog came on. Nobody could suspect him or question him. But if anyone did, he knew what to answer, now that he had had the tip from Loder. He had not been in his study at the time; there were a dozen places where he might have been. He could not have been seen and recognised in the fog. He was safe! And Compton, who had bagged his place in the team for the Rookwood match, was crocked. Wingate would want another man, and that other man would be Arthur Carne!

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He drew comfort from that. But he was unwilling to meet other fellows' eyes until he had to. He remained in his study till the bell rang for calling-over, in blissful ignorance of the fact that it was not his football rival, but Horace James Coker, who had captured that treacherous hack!

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

A Jolt for Captain Compton!

B UZZZZZZ!

Herbert Vernon-Smith jumped.

The Bouncer of Greyfriars at that moment was in Mr. Prout's study. He was standing at the telephone, about to lift the receiver from the hooks, when the bell buzzed with such suddenness that it made him jump almost clear of the floor.

"Oh!" gasped Smithy.

It was startling enough.

The Bouncer, of course, had no right in the Fifth Form master's study. He had no right whatever to use Prout's phone. But the beaks were at tea in Common-room, and Vernon-Smith had listened at Common-room door to Prout's boom within, and so was assured that "Old Pompous" was safe off the scene.

A Remove fellow could have asked his Form-master, Mr. Quelch, for leave to use Quelch's phone—for any purpose he could have explained to a Form-master. But the scapegrace of Greyfriars could hardly have explained to Mr. Quelch that he had an appointment with Ponsoby & Co. of Highcliffe after lights out that night—an appointment that had to be washed out because of the fog.

Smithy wanted to ring up Highcliffe School to tell Pon that it was off, and he had to get hold of a phone surreptitiously, if he got hold of one at all.

Having ascertained that Prout was at tea in Common-room, he decided on the Fifth Form master's instrument. There was no light in the study, and he crept across the room in the dark to the telephone, and his hand was almost upon it when the bell started its raucous buzz.

That was a thing that no fellow could have foreseen. Nothing could have been more unlucky than a call for Prout at that moment. If Prout came to the study and found a Remove junior there, it meant no end of a row.

There was only one thing for Smithy to do, and he did it quickly. He grabbed the receiver off the hooks to take the call. Somehow or other, he had to shut off the caller and get rid of him, which was rather rough luck on Prout, if it was a call he wanted to take. But the Bouncer, in the circumstances, could not afford to worry about Prout. His thoughts were concentrated on Herbert Vernon-Smith.

"Hallo!" said the Bouncer into the transmitter, making his voice as deep as he could, in the hope that it might be taken for Prout's.

"Is that Mr. Prout?" came a hard, sharp voice over the wires.

"Speaking!" said Smithy coolly.

He wondered who the speaker was. The voice was not exactly familiar, but he knew that he had heard it before.

"Captain Compton speaking!" came the hard voice.

Smithy jumped again.

He knew now where he had heard that sharp, strident, far from agreeable voice—the hard voice of a hard man. Back into his mind came that night in the smugglers' cave, under the rocks of the Shoulder, when Captain Compton and his nephew had pulled in from the sea at midnight

It was Compton's uncle—the captain of the steam-yacht Firefly—who was speaking.

The voice went on as Smithy stood staring at the telephone.

"I am sorry to trouble you, Mr. Prout, but I should be extremely obliged if you would allow me a few words with my nephew, who is in your Form—"

"Oh!" breathed Smithy.

Only Herbert Vernon-Smith knew—but he was sure—that Captain Compton was a smuggler, and that his handsome steam-yacht, the Firefly, was used, not for pleasure cruising, but for conveying contraband goods from foreign shores. Only Smithy knew that Valentine Compton of the Fifth Form went secretly down to the sea-cave, by the secret passage from Greyfriars School, to carry up smuggled goods run into the cave on dark nights.

Smithy knew—only too well. Smithy had trailed the schoolboy smuggler to the hollow oak in Lantham Chase, where the contraband goods were hidden, to be picked up later. Smithy had snaffled those contraband goods and dispatched them by parcels post to Inspector Grimes at Courtfield—much to that official gentleman's astonishment.

But what Smithy knew was a secret locked in his own breast. Nothing would have induced him to harm Compton of the Fifth, who—whatever else he was—was a splendid footballer, a splendid fellow, and liked by nearly every man, senior or junior, in the school.

But if Smithy felt kind and friendly towards Valentine Compton, he had no such kind feelings towards the hard-faced man who pulled the strings.

Smithy was not a very scrupulous fellow himself, but he had nothing but scorn for a man who was making use of a schoolboy under his control to play a desperate and lawless game.

Captain Compton wanted to speak to his nephew on the telephone. Certainly Mr. Prout, if he had taken the call, would have consented at once. Compton would have been sent for, and left on the phone.

Vernon-Smith's face set grimly.

Captain Compton, yachtsman and smuggler, was not going to get that talk with his nephew in Prout's Form. Smithy was glad that he was there to intercept the call. If Captain Compton had smuggling instructions to give, he could find another way. If he wanted to inquire why the contraband packets had not been in the hollow oak at Lantham, he could find other means of inquiring. Instead of a talk with the schoolboy smuggler, he could have a talk with the Remove junior, who had set himself to defeat the smuggling game, so long as it was carried on through Greyfriars School. Every difficulty that he could put in the way of the leader of the smuggling gang was so much to the good, from the Bouncer's point of view.

The sharp voice went on, with a sharper note of impatience. Captain Compton, was, no doubt, surprised by the silence at Prout's end.

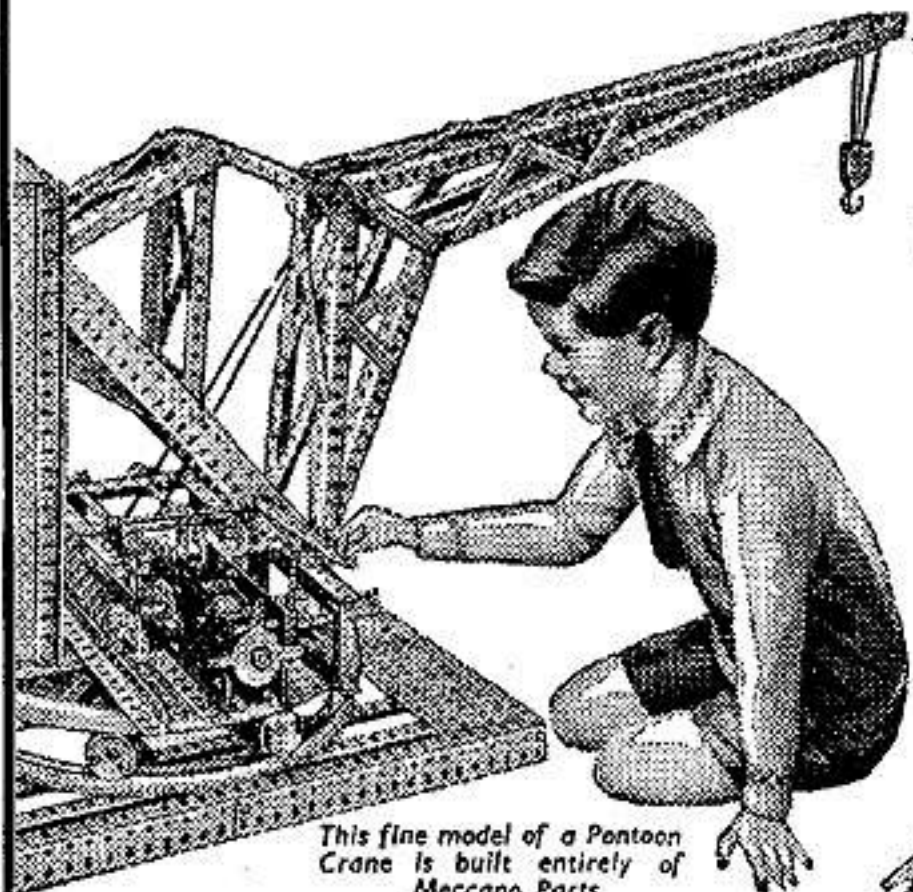
"Are you there? Hallo! Are you there, Mr. Prout? It is an urgent matter, or I should not have troubled you. I am called away, and have to speak to my nephew concerning the Christmas holidays."

Vernon-Smith grinned. That would have been good enough for Prout—but it was not good enough for the Bouncer, knowing what he knew!

"Please answer me!" snapped the sharp voice. "Are you there?"

(Continued on page 12.)

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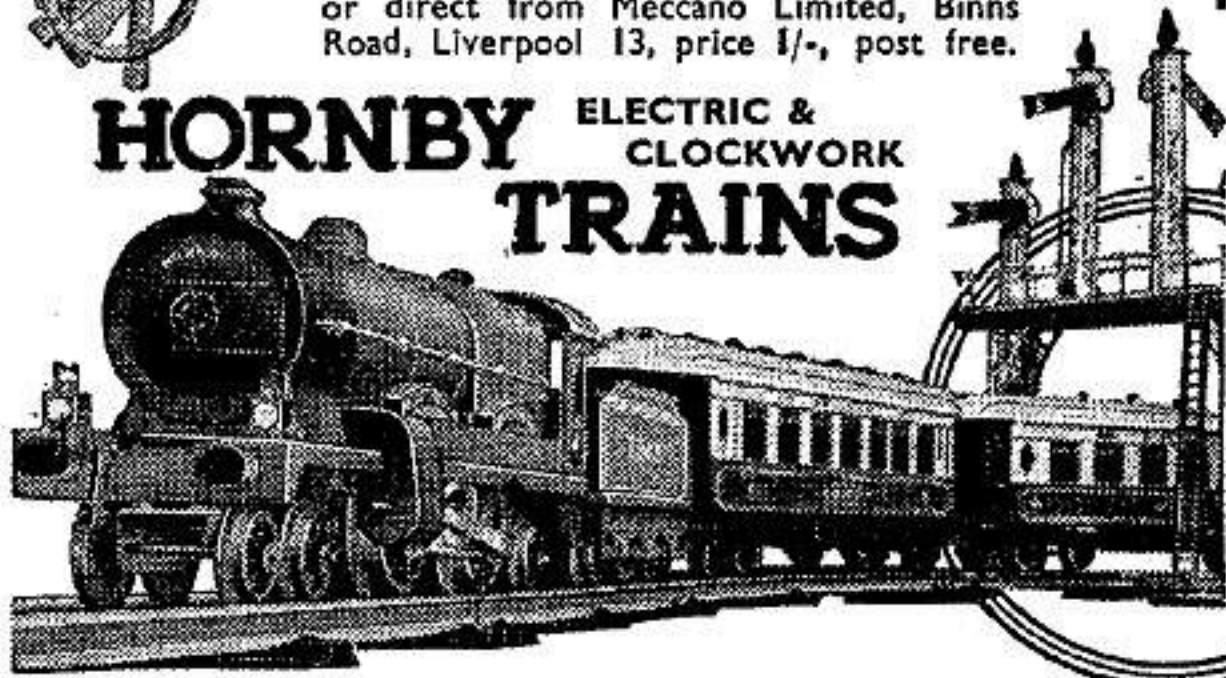
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"Here!" answered the Bounder. "Speaking, old bean!"

"What—what? Who is that?" came a gasp from the other end. It was obvious to the captain that it was not a Greyfriars Form-master who used such an expression.

"Little me," said the Bounder.

"What? Who are you?"

"Find out!"

"Wha-a-at? What did you say?"

"Getting deaf? I said find out!"

"Who is speaking? That is not Mr. Prout! Is that some schoolboy playing tricks on a master's telephone?"

"You've got it!" said the Bounder, with a chuckle.

"You young rascal!"

"You old rascal!"

"What?" gasped the captain.

"Deaf again? I said old rascal!"

"Good gad! Will you call Mr. Prout? Will you call my nephew to the telephone! You impertinent young scoundrel, I have to speak to my nephew about the Christmas holidays!"

"Gammon!"

"What? What did you say?"

"You seem frightfully deaf, old thing! I said gammon!"

"What do you mean?" The sharp voice came with suppressed fury in it. The Bounder could guess what would have happened to him had there not been the length of a telephone wire between him and Compton's uncle.

"You impudent young scoundrel——"

"You impudent old scoundrel!" said Smithy cheerfully.

There was a choking sound over the wires. The man at the other end seemed to be gurgling with rage.

The Bounder chuckled. He was rather enjoying this talk on the telephone—though it was clear that Captain Compton was not.

"By gad!" The voice came in a hiss of rage. "I will report this to your headmaster, and you shall be detected and punished for your insolence, whoever you are, you young jackanapes!"

"Go it!" said the bounder.

"For the last time, will you call my nephew to the telephone?"

"Ask me, instead!" suggested Vernon-Smith.

"What—what? Ask you what? What do you mean?"

"I mean that I'm the fellow who knows!" chuckled the Bounder. "Your nephew doesn't know what happened to the packets."

"The—the—the p-p-packets?"

"Yes—the p-p-packets!" mimicked the Bounder. "He can't tell you why you didn't find them in the hollow oak at Lantham Chase, because he doesn't know!"

The Bounder heard a gasp as he grinned over Prout's telephone! He could guess what a shock his words had given the yachtsman-smuggler.

There was a shake in the sharp voice when it was heard again.

"Who is speaking?"

"Wouldn't you like to know?"

"Is it a Greyfriars boy?"

"Guess!"

"What do you mean by what—what you just said?"

"Didn't I speak plainly? Compton of the Fifth doesn't know a thing about the packets. I'm the sportsman who snaffled them!"

"Good gad!"

There was a whir on the line after that startled ejaculation. Captain Compton had rung off suddenly.

Smithy chuckled softly. He could guess the state of alarm and surprise of the yachtsman-smuggler. He was well aware that he had given the captain a

severe jolt. He could easily imagine the alarm and fury of the man who so suddenly and unexpectedly found that his secret was suspected, if not known, by someone to whose identity he had not the slightest clue.

Grinning, the Bounder put through his call to Highcliffe, and quietly left Mr. Prout's study.

Prout was still booming over the tea-table in Common-room, blissfully unaware of what had happened in his study.

Smithy, as he left Masters' passage, passed Compton of the Fifth talking with Blundell and Fitzgerald of that Form. They were discussing the weather, and the Rookwood match, and Valentine Compton's face was smiling and cheerful. He was telling Blundell that he fancied that the fog would clear off by morning; and as Compton was known to have had two or three years of seafaring with his uncle, he was listened to with respect on the subject of weather-signs.

The Bounder glanced at him curiously as he passed—but Compton did not even notice him.

Smithy wondered what he would have thought, and said, had he known that a Remove junior knew his secret, and had set himself to put "paid" to every move in the smuggling game!

He grinned as he strolled on to the Rag.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

What Bunter Knew!

"I SAY, you fellows! Coker——"

There was a chuckle in the Rag.

Coker of the Fifth, in his study, was still busy with embrocation. Coker was not amused by what had happened in the fog—but most other fellows were. It was so like old Horace to barge into something in the fog, give himself a knock, and hop in on one leg. That amused the Greyfriars fellows; and they were still more amused by his extraordinary fancy that some person unknown had hacked him. The mere mention of Coker's name was sufficient to cause a chuckle.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's the latest?" asked Bob Cherry, as Billy Bunter rolled in and squeaked. "Coker been falling over his own feet again?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows, he was hacked!" said Bunter. "Queer, ain't it?"

"The queerfulness would be terrific, if true!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "But the hackfulness was a preposterous delusion."

"I say, you fellows, I've looked into his study," said the fat Owl. "I say, it's true! He's got a fearful hack on the ankle—anybody could see that it was a kick!"

"Rot!" said Harry Wharton.

"Compton says so——"

"What?" There was general interest at that. "Compton does?"

"I jolly well heard him!" said Bunter, happy at having made an impression. "I heard him say it was a hack, plain enough!"

"If Compton said that, it must be so!" said Bob Cherry. "Ho's not a silly ass like Coker! But——"

"I say, you fellows, a lot of the Fifth have been to see him," said Bunter. "Blundell said he thought Compton was right!"

"But what rot!" said Frank Nugent. "Who'd play such a dirty trick? And who'd want to damage poor old Coker?"

"Nobody!" said Harry Wharton. "Coker's a hotheaded ass, and lots of

fellows would like to boot him—but a cowardly trick like that is a very different matter. Nobody would do it!"

"Nobody was out, except Compton and Bunter!" remarked Skinner. "Did you hack old Horace, Bunter?"

"Oh, really, Skinner——"

"The silly idiot thought it was Compton, and punched him!" chuckled Hazeldene. "But if it's true, who was it?"

"Nobody!" said the captain of the Remove. "Coker's an ass, and one duffer makes many! It never happened—it couldn't!"

"Well, Compton's no fool!" said Johnny Bull thoughtfully. "If he thinks that Coker was hacked—and Blundell, too——"

"Sure it wasn't you, Bunter?" grinned Skinner.

"It wasn't Bunter, and it certainly couldn't have been Compton," said Harry Wharton, "and so it never happened, as nobody else was out."

"Well, Carne of the Sixth doesn't like Coker very much," remarked Bunter. "They've had rows. Lots of fellows know that Carne rather funks Coker, though he's a prefect!"

"Carne!" repeated Wharton, staring at the fat Owl. "You blithering ass! Carne was in the House at the time—he came to the door while you were out in the fog, and lots of fellows saw him. He never went out. He went to his study after Quelch fairly barked at him."

"I mean, he might have got out of his window," explained Bunter.

"He might have got out of his window!" repeated Wharton blankly. "Why the thump should a man get out of his study window, when the door was open?"

"Well, if he didn't, who did?" demanded Bunter.

"Eh? Nobody did!"

"Somebody jolly well did!" declared Bunter. "Of course, I couldn't see who it was in the fog, but I know he jolly nearly jumped on my head!"

"What's that?" gasped Bob Cherry.

Billy Bunter grinned. He liked to be the fellow with news—especially startling news. He had made a sensation this time. Every fellow in the Rag gathered round him.

"Cough it up, Bunter!" said Skinner. "This is news! It was Carne's window you found open, wasn't it?"

"Yes! It wasn't open when I got to it!" explained Bunter. "I was going to tap on the glass, and then the light went out, and the window opened suddenly, and somebody jumped out! I suppose it was Carne—jumping out of Carne's window! Who else could it have been?"

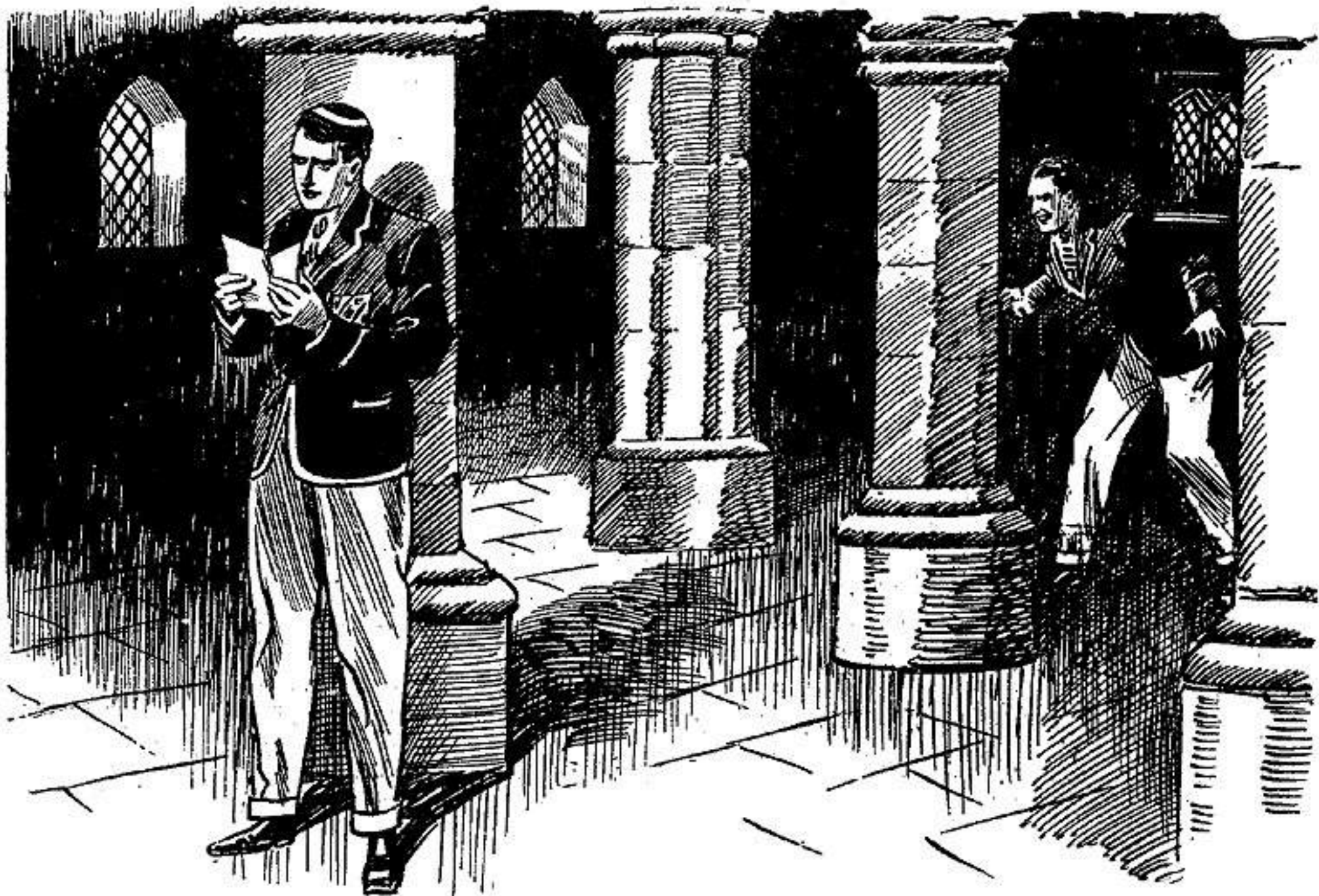
Harry Wharton & Co. gazed at the fat junior. There was a buzz of excited voices in the Rag.

Since his adventure in the fog, Billy Bunter had been occupied in filling the empty spaces in the interior Bunter; and his jaws had been too busily occupied for chin-wag. So nobody, so far, had heard the details of what had happened to the fat junior outside the House.

Now, however, that Bunter had devoured all the foodstuffs that he could scrounge up and down the Remove passage, his fat chin was at liberty to wag—and, naturally, it wagged! Talking came next to eating, in William George Bunter's list of the joys of life.

Seldom, if ever, did Billy Bunter find an audience to hang on his words. But he had one now. Almost for the first time in history every fellow in the Remove was eager to hear Bunter.

"You see, it must have been Carne jumping out of his study window!" said



Peering from behind one of the old stone pillars, Carne watched while Compton read his letter. "Oh!" A startled gasp came to his ears. "Oh! Impossible! Good heavens!" Carne started. Evidently Compton had found some startling news in that letter—some bad news—dismaying news. It was a bitter satisfaction to Carne, and he grinned.

the fat Owl. "I thought, of course, that he was going out of bounds, getting out that way—"

"Fathead!" said Vernon-Smith. "It wasn't lock-up then. He could have walked out if he'd liked, and no questions asked."

"Well, that was what I thought. It seemed so queer, a fellow dropping from his study window, you know!" said Bunter. "What was a fellow to think? But now I know that old Coker was hacked, you see—"

"It's impossible!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"Oh, is it?" said Skinner.

Skinner's eyes were gleaming. He was "on" this, rather like a dog on a bone! Carne of the Sixth had a heavy hand with an ashplant. He had "whopped" Skinner for smoking—to Skinner's deep and intense indignation, as he more than suspected that Carne himself smoked in his study.

"By gum, it looks—" said the Bounder.

"Looks?" jeered Skinner. "More than looks, I fancy! If we'd known that another fellow was out in the fog, we should have known what to think. Carne came to the door when we were all there, and he could have walked out if he'd wanted to. Instead of that, he went to his study and sneaked out of the window. Looking for a fellow in the fog, to pay off old scores! We all know he funks Coker!"

"You're forgettin' one thing, Skinner!" drawled Lord Mauleverer.

"What's that, ass?" yapped Skinner. His lordship smiled.

"I was there, you know! I noticed that Carne went back to his study before Coker said anythin' about goin' out! Carne never knew that Coker had gone out at all, old bean."

"Why, of course!" exclaimed Harry

Wharton, in relief. "He couldn't possibly have known that Coker was out. So you can shut up, Skinner!"

Harold Skinner scowled. He felt rather like a dog deprived of his bone. But he had to admit the facts! Carne of the Sixth, undoubtedly, had been off the scene before Horace Coker had said a word about going out after Compton. Carne had not known that Coker was out at all.

"By gum!" said the Bounder. "By gum! The hound!"

All eyes turned on Smithy.

"Well, what now?" asked the captain of the Remove gruffly. "Are you going to back up Skinner's rot? You know as well as I do that Carne didn't know, and couldn't have known, that Coker was out in the fog—"

The Bounder's eyes gleamed.

"He'd have been a bit more careful if he'd known that!" he said. "When he went to his study and dropped out of the window, he only knew that Compton was out. That's why he went."

"What the dickens do you mean?" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Compton wasn't hacked—"

"Oh, you're a fool!" said Vernon-Smith contemptuously. "Compton wasn't hacked—because Coker got it! Carne can't have seen his man in the fog; if he could have, his man would have seen him! He was hunting for a fellow in the fog, and found one, and hacked him—taking him for Compton, as he never knew that anybody else was out—"

"Oh!"

"Smithy!"

"Isn't it as clear as daylight?" sneered the Bounder. "Who'd shove himself into the first eleven to-morrow if Compton was crooked? Who's been like a bear with a sore head ever since he was dropped from the team to make

room for that man in the Fifth? Who the dickens would want to hack Coker? Coker got it because he was barging about in the fog, and was taken for somebody else—the man Carne wanted."

A deep silence followed the Bounder's words.

He spoke with complete conviction, and his words carried conviction to every other mind. If Coker had really been hacked—and it seemed that he had—who had done it, except the fellow who had slipped secretly out of his study window? And why, except that, believing that Compton was the only senior out of the House, he had taken Coker for Compton?

But for Billy Bunter's adventure at the open study window, nothing would have been known, or could have been known, or even remotely suspected. But there was not a fellow in the Rag to whom it did not seem clear now.

"Oh crikey!" Billy Bunter broke the silence. "What an awful beast! I say, you fellows—"

"It's too utterly rotten!" muttered Harry Wharton. "Carne's a bit of a brute, and a bit of a blackguard, but—but this—"

"Old Coker's come in useful for once!" grinned the Bounder. "If Carne hadn't fancied he'd got his man, he'd have gone on groping till he got Compton—and Wingate would have lost his best man to-morrow!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! There's the bell!"

It was the bell for calling-over.

The juniors, in deep, suppressed excitement, crowded out of the Rag. Few, if any, doubted that the Bounder had hit on the truth. Nobody could have wanted to hack Coker—but a mistake in the blinding fog might very

(Continued on page 16.)

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THE BOY WITH AN ENEMY!



(Continued from page 13.)

easily have occurred. Now that it was known that Carne had secretly left the House by his study window, it was difficult to doubt. Every man in the Remove, when he took his place in Hall for calling-over, turned his eyes on the Sixth, to look at the suspected Sixth Former.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Hissed in Hall!

POR old Coker!" There was a suppressed chuckle in Hall as Coker of the Fifth came in. His injured ankle was bound up with yards of bandage.

Coker, obviously, was crooked. Had Coker been booked to play football any time for a week ahead, he would certainly have had to wash it out. His rugged face showed that he was feeling the damage rather severely. Every now and then he gave a grunt or a suppressed yelp as he got a painful twinge. He leaned on Compton's sympathetic arm as he came into Hall and parked himself among the Fifth.

Most of the fellows were still under the impression that Coker had bagged that damage on his own, by barging into something in the fog. That was, in fact, exactly like Coker! Still, a belief was spreading in the Fifth that poor old Coker really had been hacked—and in the Remove there was no doubt on the subject. Some fellows were sympathetic, some were amused—all eyes turned on the limping Horace.

One fellow in the Sixth stared at him blankly. That was Gerald Loder. Loder had heard that a Fifth Form man had been hacked, and taken it for granted that it was Compton. Since his talk with Carne he had been busy in his study with that valuable periodical, the "Racing Tipster," so he had heard nothing more, so far. When he turned up in Hall for calling-over, he fully expected to see Valentino Compton with a damaged ankle. He stared in blank surprise when Compton walked in, evidently uninjured—with a limping Coker leaning on him for support. Gerald Loder gave a low whistle.

"The silly ass!" he murmured.

"That ass Coker!" said Walker of the Sixth. He grinned. "I say, he bunged himself on a tree, or something, I hear, and has been spinning a yarn of some man hacking him!"

Loder made no reply. He had been referring to Carne, who, obviously, had got the wrong man in the fog.

Carne had not yet arrived in Hall.

Loder, glancing round, noted that fact, and wondered what Carne would feel like when he came in and realised what had happened.

Almost every fellow in the Remove noted the fact, as well as Loder of the Sixth. The whole of the Lower Fourth stared in the direction of the Sixth—looking for Carne.

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"I say, you fellows, can you see him?" squeaked Billy Bunter. "I say, I can't see Carne—"

"Not there!" said Smithy.

"He hasn't come in yet," said Johnny Bull. "Not anxious to face the fellows, perhaps, if he's done as Smithy thinks."

"I say, you fellows, think he's run away?" asked Billy Bunter. "Think he's bolted before he's found out?"

"Fathead!"

"Oh, really, Smithy—"

Mr. Hacker, the master of the Shell, came in to take the roll. Most of the other masters were present. Hacker was about to begin, when Carne of the Sixth came quietly in, and stepped beside Loder.

His face was a little pale, but he was quite cool and composed. Perhaps, as Johnny Bull had suggested, he was unwilling to face a sea of eyes, after what he had done. But there he was—cool and quiet, with his feelings, whatever they were, well hidden.

Loder glanced at him, with a rather sardonic grin.

One glance showed him that Carne did not yet know how matters stood. He was still in the belief that he had got away with his dastardly trick of crocking his football rival.

There was silence in Hall as Mr. Hacker prepared to call the names, and through that silence came a squeak from the Remove:

"I say, you fellows, that's Carne! He's come in!"

"Silence!" called out Wingate.

Carne gave a start. He stared in the direction of the Lower Fourth, and made the discovery that every eye there was fixed on him.

Bunter's squeak, and the general stare of the Remove, surprised him and disconcerted him—in the present uneasy state of his conscience. In normal times he would have wondered what it meant—now he wondered with a pang of uneasy trepidation.

Nothing was known, of course, nothing could be known or suspected! Still, what did it mean? He whispered to Loder:

"What's up, Loder? Are those fags staring at you, or me?"

"You!" said Loder.

"Well, what—"

"Goodness knows, unless somebody saw you—"

"You fool!"

Loder shrugged his shoulders.

"You're the fool!" he answered contemptuously. "Look at Coker! Look at Compton! Can you see which has a damaged ankle?"

Carne looked at him, and then at the Fifth Formers. His face became almost grey as he did so.

Walker's voice came in at his ear:

"Heard about Coker? Bashed his ankle on something in the fog, and makes out that a man hacked him!"

"Coker!" breathed the wretched Carne.

"Coker all over, what?" grinned Walker. "Jevver hear of such a clumsy ass? But making out that a man hacked him, you know—that's rich!"

Carne did not speak. He could not. His feelings were too deep for words.

Even when he had told himself that he had crocked his football rival, and got back the place that belonged to him, he had felt remorse and shame for what he had done. Now he learned that even that miserable satisfaction was denied him.

He had acted like a coward and a brute—for nothing. He had lowered himself in his own eyes, exposed himself to the scorn of a fellow like Loder—and all for nothing. That fool Coker, for some unimaginable reason, had gone

out into the fog after Compton—and he had hacked Coker by mistake. Compton was unhurt—Compton would play in the Rookwood match on the morrow. He had failed—worse than failed: he had been a scoundrel for nothing—nothing at all!

Loder gave him a scornful sneer. Loder's own limit was a pretty wide one—but he felt disgust at what Carne had done. Loder had, once, done something of the same kind himself; but he could make allowances in his own case. He could make none for Carne. He was going to keep it dark—but he was not going to pretend to disguise what he thought of it.

Calling-over was like a nightmare to Carne of the Sixth. He stood in dismay and misery.

After roll had been called, Blundell of the Fifth came over to him with a very curious expression on his face.

"Look here, Carne, I suppose it's not true that you were out of the House when Coker was hacked?" said the captain of the Fifth.

Carne stared at him.

"I! Wh-what do you mean?" he stammered. "Was Coker hacked? I hadn't heard about it till Loder told me a few minutes ago."

"They've got some yarn on, among the juniors, whispering it up and down Hall!" said Blundell. "You weren't out of the House, were you?"

"I haven't been out in the fog, naturally! What the dickens do you mean?" Carne forced himself to speak casually, but his heart was like ice.

What did the juniors know? What could they know? Was that why they had all been staring at him when he came in?

"Well, from what I hear, they're making out that you got out of your study window," said Blundell.

"What utter rot!"

"Of course, it's rot!" agreed Blundell, but he gave Carne a very curious look. "I thought I'd tip you what was being said."

He left Carne feeling suffocated. What could they know? How, in the name of all that was impossible, could Lower Fourth juniors know anything of what he had done?

But he had to pull himself together. He dared not let his rising terror be seen in his face.

He joined Loder and Walker, going out of Hall—and the former promptly moved off by himself. If there was going to be a fearful row about this, Loder did not want to get mixed up in it. And if it came out, there was no doubt that the "row" would be a record!

Hiss!

Carne started as if he had been stung!

A dozen Remove men were hissing! He knew that it was directed against him. He compressed his whitening lips.

Walker stared round, astonished.

"What on earth's that!" he exclaimed. "Have those fags gone mad? They're hissing somebody—in Hall! What the dooce—"

Carne's heart almost died in his breast! The colour ebbed from his cheeks, leaving him ghastly. He hurried out of Hall.

"Here, Carne!" Wingate of the Sixth stopped him. "I want to speak to you! There's some mad yarn going the rounds—"

"I don't want to hear it!" breathed Carne.

"You'd better—"

"Oh, rot!"

Carne brushed past the captain of the school and walked on, leaving George

Wingate staring and frowning. He could not face Wingate at that moment—he knew that his face would betray him. He almost ran to his study, and shut the door after him.

What had he done? Shame, remorse, were swallowed up in terror. What had he done? It had seemed so safe—so safe—even when he learned that Loder knew! And now—it seemed as if the whole school knew! Even the fags hissed him in Hall—hissed him, a prefect of the Sixth! And he had not dared to call them to account—he had only hurried away, to escape scornful eyes. What had he done? If it was known, he would be booted out of Greyfriars games—even if he was not turned out of the school—and the Head would expel him, if he knew, and if it was proved.

During the next hour, Arthur Carne paced his study, not daring to open his door—and that hour was a full and sufficient punishment for what he had done!

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

The Purloined Pie!

“BUNTER!”

“Oh crikey!”

Billy Bunter in Study No. 7 of the Remove, jumped at the sound of Wingate's voice in the passage. The voice of the head prefect of Greyfriars School was alarming to a fat Owl who had unnumbered sins on his fat conscience.

Prep, in the Remove, had been rather neglected that evening—as it had been in other Forms. Every study buzzed with talk. What had been known in the Remove, before calling-over, was now known all over Greyfriars. Fellows of all Forms discussed it breathlessly.

Billy Bunter was less interested in that thrilling question, who crooked Coker, than in a more important matter, however. Bunter was thinking of a study supper. After prep, he was pointing out to Peter Todd, in Study No. 7, that it was up to him to stand his whack in a study supper.

Bunter, to Toddy's surprise, was making a contribution—a handsome contribution—nothing less than a steak-and-kidney pie! Peter Todd remarked that he would believe in Bunter's steak-and-kidney pie when he saw it—whereupon, Bunter opened the door of the study cupboard and revealed it to Peter's astonished eyes.

“Perhaps,” said Bunter, with crushing dignity, “you believe me now, Toddy!”

Seeing was believing! Toddy, gazing at the pie, had to believe in it.

“As I'm standing this pie,” said Bunter, “I think it's up to you and Dutton to stand something! Fair whacks all round, Peter! That's cricket!”

“Whose pie is it?” asked Peter.

“Oh, really, Toddy—”

“Was there a pie in Coker's hamper?” grinned Toddy. “I heard that he had a hamper to-day.”

“If you think I'd snaffle a fellow's pie, Toddy—”

It was at that moment that the voice of the Greyfriars captain was heard calling in the Remove passage, and Billy Bunter jumped and ejaculated, and hurriedly closed the cupboard door.

“I—I—I say, Toddy, is—is—is that Wingate?” he gasped.

“Sounds like him!” grinned Toddy. “Sounds as if he wants you, old fat man!”

“I—I say, what d-d-do you think he wants?” stammered Bunter. “Think

Coker may have told him about the pie?”

“Ha, ha, ha!” roared Peter. “I shouldn't wonder!”

“Bunter!” came Wingate's voice again. “Where's Bunter?”

Prep being over, most of the Remove had come out of their studies. Redwing's voice was heard, answering Wingate:

“I think he's in his study, Wingate!”

“Call him, then!”

“All right!”

“Oh crumbs!” gasped Bunter. “I—I say, Peter, don't you say anything about that pie! Kip-keep it dark, old chap! I—I say, d-d-don't mention that I'm here! I-t-tell that beast Redwing that—that I've gone down!”

Billy Bunter did a nose-dive under the study table. He vanished from sight as Tom Redwing opened the door and looked in.

“Bunter here?” he asked. “Wingate wants him.”

Peter Todd was grinning. Tom Dutton was staring at Bunter under the study table. Dutton, being deaf, had not heard Wingate's calling voice, and he was wondering what the dickens Bunter was up to.

“Isn't he here?” asked Redwing, glancing round the study.

“He says he isn't!” answered Peter Todd. “He left a message for you that he was gone down.”

“Eh?”

“What's Bunter got under the table for?” asked Tom Dutton.

“Under the table!” repeated Redwing blankly. “Is that blithering fat ass under the table? What's he doing there?”

“Oh crikey! I—I'm not here!” came a fat squeak from under the study table.

“Dutton, you beast—”

“You fat ass!” said Redwing. “Wingate wants you!”

A fat face and a large pair of spectacles peered out from under the table.

“I—I say, Reddy, tell Wingate I'm not here!” gasped Bunter. “I—I don't want to see a prefect! I—I'd much rather not! Tell him I don't know anything about the pie! I never knew Coker had one!”

“Oh, my hat!” ejaculated Redwing.

There was a heavy tramp of feet in the Remove passage, and Wingate looked into Study No. 7 over Redwing's shoulder.

“Bunter! Is Bunter here?” he rapped. “He's wanted!”

Bunter's fat head popped back under the table like that of a tortoise into its shell. Wingate frowned into the study, just too late to witness that performance.

“Where's Bunter, Todd?” he rapped.

“Bunter?” repeated Peter. “I—I don't think he's very far away, Wingate. He was here at prep ten minutes ago.”

Which was perfectly true, though Peter's reply savoured more of the wisdom of the serpent than of the innocence of the dove. Still, it was not for Peter to give the fat Owl away. But Tom Dutton, still astonished by Bunter's strange antics, and naturally wanting to know what they meant, weighed in again:

“I say, what's Bunter up to, Toddy?” he asked. “What is the silly ass playing this game for?”

“Do you know where Bunter is, Dutton?” asked Wingate impatiently.

Dutton stared at him. Wingate had forgotten for the moment that Dutton was deaf.

“Eh? Of course I do!” answered Dutton. “I suppose everybody knows

what mutton is! What do you mean, Wingate?”

“I want Bunter, you young duffer!”

“Yes, I know,” said Dutton. “Everybody at Greyfriars knows, I should think. He stuffs like anything! But you haven't come here to tell me that Bunter's a young stuffer, I suppose?”

“Ha, ha, ha!” came from the passage.

“What!” ejaculated Wingate, staring at Dutton. “Oh, I forgot you were deaf, kid!” He roared: “Where's Bunter?”

“I say, Bunter, Wingate wants you!” said Dutton.

“Beast!” came from under the table. Wingate stared round the study.

“That's Bunter! What the thump—Where is the young duffer? Bunter, you young ass—”

“Oh lor'!”

Billy Bunter crawled out from under the study table.

Wingate stared at him in astonishment.

“What the dooce were you under the table for?” he exclaimed.

“Oh, nothing!” gasped Bunter. “I—I wasn't hiding because I heard you call me, Wingate! I—I was looking for a—a—a pin I'd dropped—”

“Ha, ha, ha!”

“I—I say, Wingate, it—it wasn't me!” gasped Bunter, blinking very uneasily through his big spectacles at the captain of Greyfriars. “I—I—”

“You know something about Coker, and—”

“Oh, no! Not at all!” exclaimed Bunter, in a great hurry. “I haven't been anywhere near Coker's study, Wingate! I never watched him go down to the House dame's room for some stuff for his leg; and as for going into his study while he wasn't there, why should I? The—the fact is, I—I'd almost forgotten there was such a chap at Greyfriars at all; and I never heard anything about his hamper—”

“His what?”

“His—his hamper! If there was a steak-and-kidney pie in it, I know nothing about it—absolutely nothing! It's a bit thick for Coker to report a chap to a prefect because he's missed a steak-and-kidney pie! You can ask Toddy if I've touched it! Toddy knows, as I've told him we'd have it for supper in the study—”

“Ha, ha, ha!” came a shriek from the Remove passage.

Wingate stared blankly at the fat Owl, and then his face relaxed into a grin.

“You young ass!” he said. “I came here because Coker—”

“I know!” gasped Bunter. “But he was pulling your leg, Wingate—he was, really! I never had the pie! Perhaps Potter and Greene had it—or that new chap, Compton! He went in to look at Coker's back, and he might have snaffled the pie while Coker wasn't looking—”

“You young duffer!” roared Wingate. “I came here because Coker—”

“It's no good coming here for the pie, Wingate! It's not in the cupboard! I—I don't like steak-and-kidney pies! Hate 'em! I don't believe Coker had a steak-and-kidney pie at all, and— I say— Wow! Yow! Wow!”

Wingate grasped the Owl of the Remove by the collar and shook.

“Ow!” roared Bunter. “Wow! I—I say, I—I—I'll go halves, Wingate! I—I will, honour bright! Wow!”

“Ha, ha, ha!” shrieked the Removites.

The idea of the fat Owl offering the captain of the school “halves” in a purloined pie made them howl.

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Shake, shake, shake!

"You young idiot!" bawled Wingate. "I came here because Coker says he was hacked in the quad, and you're supposed to know something about it."

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "I—I thought— Oh, I—I see! I never had the pie!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Follow me to the prefects'-room!" growled Wingate

And, having given the fat Owl a final shake, he stalked out of the study.

"Ow!" gasped Bunter. "I say, you fellows, I'm blessed if I see anything to cackle at! I—I thought he was after the pie, of course! Not that I've got a pie, you know! I say, if Coker comes up here while I'm gone, don't mention that there's a pie in the cupboard! He might think it's his, if he's missed one!"

"He might!" chortled Bob Cherry.

"The mightfulness is terrific!"

"I—I say, Toddy, don't you start on that pie while I'm gone!" said Bunter anxiously. "I say— Yaroooh! Leave off kicking me, you beast! Wow!"

Billy Bunter rolled down the Remove passage after Wingate. He was relieved in his fat mind on the subject of the steak-and-kidney pie. It was not for that that he was wanted. It had been a case of the guilty fleeing when no man pursued. Still, he was rather worried about what might happen to that pie while he was gone to the prefects'-room.

On the Remove landing he blinked back through his big spectacles at the chuckling juniors.

"I say, you fellows, don't let Toddy snaffle that pie while I'm gone! And—and I'll whack it out when I come back!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bunter!" came Wingate's voice from the stairs.

"Ow! Oh, yes! I'm coming, Wingate!" squeaked Bunter.

And he rolled after the captain of Greyfriars. He had to go, and he went; but his fat thoughts lingered on the steak-and-kidney pie in Study No. 7. Though lost to sight, it was to memory dear!

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

In the Prefects'-Room!

CARNE of the Sixth hastily picked up a pen, and dipped it into the ink as a knock came at his study door.

He had had time to pull himself together a little, but his heart gave a jolt as Wingate of the Sixth looked in.

He had told himself, over and over again, that nothing could be known. Even if he was suspected—and he could not imagine why he was suspected—nothing could be known!

At all events, he had to brazen it out somehow. He could not hope that the matter would be allowed to drop where it was. Ever since he had shut himself in his study he had been in dread of a footstep and of a tap at the door. Now it had come. But he had had time to recover from the shock, and he was cool.

"Oh, come in, Wingate!" he said quite casually; he managed to smile. "I suppose it's too much to hope that you've looked in to tell me I shall be wanted for Soccer?"

"I want you to come along to the prefects'-room, Carne," said Wingate rather abruptly.

"Anything on?"

"Yes. There's a ghastly story all over the school now, and the sooner it's

knocked on the head the better. A whole mob of fellows seem to have made up their minds that you gave Coker that hack."

Carne breathed hard.

"I hope you don't fancy anything of the kind, Wingate," he said.

"I'm not likely to believe anything of the kind if I can help it," said the Greyfriars captain. "But, for your sake, Carne, you'd better face it at once."

"I'm more than willing to do that, of course," said Carne. "I can't begin to imagine what's started it. I don't like Coker; he's cheeky to the Sixth. But as for looking for him in the fog and hacking him, it's too utterly ridiculous on the face of it."

"I know. I don't believe a word of it—I need hardly say that. But we'd better get it cleaned up at once. From what I've heard it's Bunter of the Remove who fancies he knows something, and has told the others. I've taken him to the prefects'-room—he's waiting there now—and Coker and Compton, too. You're ready to face it, of course?"

"Of course!" said Carne. His lip curved bitterly. "I don't think I need ask who's started this yarn. Compton—"

"Compton hasn't said a word!" snapped Wingate. "I've asked him to come to the prefects'-room to tell us anything he may know, as he was out of the House at the time, but he's said nothing so far."

"Not to you!" sneered Carne. "But somebody's started this dastardly story; and I know who's been my enemy ever since he came to Greyfriars."

"Rubbish!" said Wingate tersely. "I don't believe Compton's your enemy, though you've made yourself his. If he was, he wouldn't tell lies about a man; he's not that sort. If ever there was a fellow as straight as a die, it's Compton of the Fifth. You'll do no good by talking like that. Carne. Look here, come along with me and let's get it over; it's not a pleasant matter."

Carne followed the Greyfriars captain to the prefects'-room.

In that apartment most of the prefects of the Sixth were gathered. Carne glanced round; it was almost a full meeting, only Loder of the Sixth being absent. He realised that Wingate had called a prefects' meeting to deal with this unpleasant matter.

Whatever decision the prefects came to would be accepted by the school—and Wingate certainly hoped that that decision would clear a Greyfriars Sixth Former of all suspicion of having acted like a cowardly ruffian. He had little doubt that an official investigation would prove that there was nothing in it, and probably most of the prefects shared that view. Carne hoped that that would be the outcome. After all, what had he to fear?

Coker, rugged and far from good-tempered, stood on one leg, rather a contrast to the slim, handsome, elegant Compton, who stood by his side. Coker gave Carne a very grim look. Horace was fearfully keen to discover who had crooked him. After what he had heard on the subject up and down the House, Coker had little doubt that Carne was the man. He did not like Carne much, anyway; too much Sixth Form "side" about him, in Coker's opinion.

"Look here, Carne," began Coker hotly, "if—"

"Silence, please!" said Wingate.

Snort—from Coker.

Coker had a pain in his ankle and another in his temper; and Coker

wanted to make it quite clear that he—Horace James Coker of the Fifth Form—was by no means overawed by his surroundings. Fags might walk in fear and trembling when they entered the prefects'-room. Not Coker! Coker snorted and snorted again to make that clear to all the assembly.

Billy Bunter eyed Carne very uneasily through his big spectacles.

The fat Owl liked to come into prominence. He realised that he was, positively for one occasion only, an important chap; but he realised, too, that Carne was the man to take it out of him afterwards.

Carne's eyes turned on him for a moment with a glitter in them that Billy Bunter did not like at all. He would have been very glad to exchange the distinguished company of the prefects'-room for that of the steak-and-kidney pie in Study No. 7. Neither did he feel very comfortable so near to Coker of the Fifth; he could not help wondering whether Horace had missed that pie yet.

"Now," said Wingate, "you men know why we're here—to go into a rotten yarn that's spread all over the school; an absolutely rotten story, with not the slightest foundation, in my opinion."

"Hardly worth looking into," said Walker.

"Only to clear it up and prove that there's nothing in it," said the Greyfriars captain. "A whole mob of Lower boys seem to have got it into their silly heads that a Sixth Form man and a prefect has done a foul thing—to the extent of hissing him in Hall. We've got to clear it up; and when we've done that the school will be satisfied. And any further demonstration will mean whippings. But I expect the young duffers will be sorry when they find it's all a silly mistake."

Carne breathed more freely.

He was, in a sense, up for judgment—but it was before a very favourable bench of judges. The idea was to prove not his guilt, but his innocence. It was clear that Wingate found it impossible to believe that a Greyfriars prefect had done so brutal and cowardly a thing, and that his object was to make that clear to all the school.

"Now, we'll begin with Coker," said Wingate. "Coker states that he was hacked in the fog—"

"I should jolly well think so!" hooted Coker. "And if it was Carne, he—"

"You're sure it was a hack, and not an accident?"

"Don't be an ass!"

"What?" roared Wingate.

"I've shown that hack to a couple of dozen fellows!" bawled Coker. "Like to look at it yourself? Look here!"

Coker pulled up his trousers-leg, and then unrolled the bandage from his foot, displaying the injured ankle. Arthur Carne felt a pang as he looked at the gash of that cruel hack.

The sight of what he had done made it clearer to him what a rotten, cowardly action it had been. From the bottom of his heart at that moment he wished that he had not done it—even if Compton had been the victim.

"That's a hack!" said Gwynne of the Sixth, staring at it.

"Even Coker couldn't have collected that banging on a tree, or a wall," said Sykes, with a nod.

Wingate nodded assent.

"That's settled," he said. "Coker was hacked. Somebody crooked him—and meant to do it. Let's get on. You didn't see him, Coker—"

"Only a glimpse of a shadow," grunted Coker. "I can't see in the fog."
 "Could you tell whether it was a senior or a junior?"
 "Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter, as he saw the drift of that question. "I—I say, Wingate, I—I never—"
 "Silence!"
 "Oh lor!"
 "It was a senior!" rapped Coker. "I couldn't see him, but he was a fellow as tall as myself, or very nearly—"
 "Compton's height?" asked Carne, with a bitter sneer.
 "Just about," answered Coker, "but he—"
 "That all you know?" asked Wingate, interrupting.
 "That's all—except that I'm jolly well going to smash him when I find him out!" said Coker. "And if it was Carne—"
 "That will do! You had no idea who it was, and never suspected anybody at the time?"
 "I thought it was Compton, as he was the only fellow out—I mean I supposed he was the only fellow out. I thought he must have gone mad to do it. I punched him—"
 There was a chuckle in the prefects'-room.
 Coker glared round at the august assembly.
 "Nothing to cackle at!" he snapped. "I was rather an ass to fancy for a minute that it was a decent chap like Compton; but, thinking that there was nobody else about, I thought so. He found me afterwards and helped me in. I've told him I was sorry I thought it was him even for a minute."
 Carne's eyes gleamed.
 "But you did think it was Compton, if only for a minute?" he said.
 "I've said so!" grunted Coker. "A mistake—a silly mistake, if you like. Compton knows I'm sorry."
 "That's all right, old bean!" said Compton amicably.
 "And I jolly well think—" resumed Coker.
 Wingate raised a hand. Nobody in the prefects'-room wanted to know what Horace Coker jolly well thought.
 "That's enough," said the Greyfriars captain. "Now your turn, Compton. Did you see anybody in the fog?"
 "Nobody, till I found Coker hopping on one leg," answered Compton.
 "You saw nothing of the fellow who hacked him?"
 "Nothing at all."
 "It wasn't you, as Coker fancied at first?"
 Valentine Compton smiled slightly.
 "No."
 "That's all right. Nobody here fancies that it was, even for a minute," said the Greyfriars captain. "But I was bound to ask you. Now we've got to ascertain whether any other man was out. Bunter!"
 "Oh crikey. It wasn't me, Wingate!"
 "You young ass! Stand forward, and tell us what you know, if you know anything!"
 And the general attention was concentrated on the Owl of the Remove.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

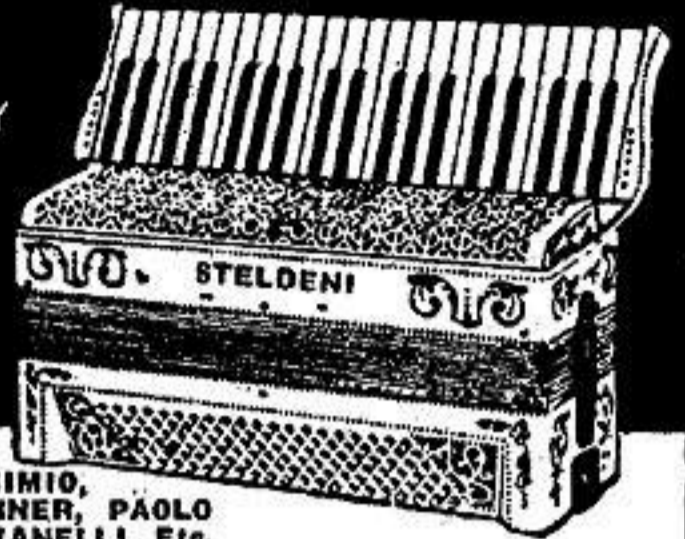
Not Proven!

BILLY BUNTER blinked at Wingate. He blinked at Carne; he blinked round at the circle of faces. The Owl of the Remove was feeling uneasy in the presence of the august body of prefects. And at the back of his fat mind was a lingering uneasiness about what might be happening to the steak-and-kidney pie, while his eyes and spectacles were off it.
 "You were out in the fog, Bunter—" Wingate began his questioning.
 "Yes, Wingate," mumbled Bunter. "You see, I was going to the tuckshop, and I never got there, and—"
 "Never mind that. Did you see anybody in the quad?"
 "Only Carne!" answered Bunter.
 Sensation!
 Every prefect sat up and took notice, as it were, at that reply.
 Coker's jaw jutted grimly. Compton eyed the fat Owl curiously. Carne's face whitened. He had been feeling that he was, after all, safe. But he did not feel so safe now. Was it possible that the fat young scoundrel had actually seen him?
 "Carne?" repeated Wingate. He breathed hard. "Take care what you say, Bunter. You were out in a thick fog. You're rather short-sighted, I think. Are you telling us that you recognised a man in the fog, when Coker did not even recognise the fellow who came close enough to back him?"
 Carne breathed freely again. It was impossible, of course.
 "I—I mean—" stammered Bunter.
 "Did you recognise Carne, or not? Yes, or no?"

(Continued on next page.)

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"Oh, no!" answered Bunter cheerfully. "How could I?"

Carne laughed in sheer relief.

"What do you mean, you young ass?" asked the Greyfriars captain testily. "First you say you saw Carne, and then you say you never recognised him. Do you call that sense?"

"Oh, really, Wingate——"

"Did you see anyone at all?"

"Yes; I jolly well did! I thought it was Carne, of course. I couldn't recognise him in the fog. How could I?"

"What the silly young ass thought can't matter very much," said Walker, staring at the fat Owl. "He might have thought it was you, Wingate, or me, or any fellow. He's idiot enough!"

"Oh, really, Walker——"

"Let's have it clear!" said Wingate quietly. "Why did you think it was Carne, Bunter, more than any other fellow?"

"Well," said Bunter warmly, "if he'd jumped from your window, I should have thought it was you. He jumped from Carne's window, so I thought it was Carne."

"You saw somebody jump from Carne's study window?" exclaimed Wingate.

"Yes. I was just going to tap, you see, when the light went out, and the window opened, and he jumped out," explained Bunter. "Might have jumped right on my head if I'd been a bit closer. He never saw me."

The assembly exchanged glances. Carne breathed hard; and Coker's jaw jutted still more grimly.

Wingate went on quietly:

"Can you say for certain, Bunter, whether it was a senior or a junior jumped from Carne's window?"

"Oh, yes! Too big for a junior," said Bunter. "Besides, what would a junior be doing in a Sixth Form study?"

"Never mind that. How did you know it was Carne's study, in the fog?"

"I didn't."

"You didn't!" exclaimed Wingate.

"Not till after I was in," explained Bunter. "You see, Carne left the window open when he scooted off in the fog, and I climbed in, and got into the House that way. I was jolly glad to get in, and——"

"Did you see that it was Carne's study when you got in?"

"Oh, no! I never noticed. I didn't care whose study it was. Why should I?" said the fat Owl. "All I wanted was to get into the House."

Carne cut in swiftly.

"You young idiot! It might have been any man's study."

"Of course it might," agreed Bunter. "I hadn't the faintest idea whose study it was, and didn't care a rap! Why should I?"

"But you've said that it was Carne's study!" roared Wingate.

"Yes, that's right," said Bunter cheerfully. "It was Carne's study, Wingate."

"By gum!" said Wynne. "I shouldn't care to be a judge, and have to deal with witnesses like that."

"Oh, really, Gwynne——"

"The young ass must mean something," said Wingate. "Look here, Bunter, try to talk sense! You say you never knew whose study you got into."

"Of course I didn't!"

"Yet you say, as a positive fact, that it was Carne's study?"

"Yes; that's right," agreed Bunter.

"It was Carne's study."

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"How do you know it was?" roared Wingate.

"Because Loder said so."

"Loder!" gasped Wingate.

"You see, he was at his door when I came out into the passage," said Bunter. "He asked me what I was doing in Carne's study. I told him I'd got in at the window, as I found it open."

"Oh, you young ass! Couldn't you say that before?" growled Wingate. "It seems, then, that it was Carne's study you got into. Was he there?"

"No; not after he'd jumped out of the window, of course."

"You silly young ass! Can't you get it into your silly head that anybody might have jumped from a study window?" roared Wingate. "If Carne wasn't there, any fellow might have gone to the study to get out."

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "I never thought of that, Wingate!"

"You found the study empty?"

"Yes; nobody was there."

"Is that all you have to tell us?"

"I was jolly hungry——"

"What?"

"You see, I never got to the tuck-shop, and I was late for tea, so——"

"For goodness' sake, shut up!" howled Wingate.

"Oh, all right! C-c-can I go now?" asked Bunter. "I—I've got to see to something in my study. It's rather important."

"Stand where you are, and be quiet!"

Billy Bunter cast a longing blink towards the door. He was getting more and more anxious about that steak-and-kidney pie.

These proceedings in the prefects' room were, no doubt, very important, but hardly so important as the pie. If those beasts were scoffing it during Bunter's absence——

Wingate sat with a wrinkled, worried brow.

Billy Bunter's evidence was not easy to deal with; but certain facts had been disentangled from it. It was clear that some fellow had jumped out of Carne's study window into the fog. It was scarcely possible to doubt that the fellow who had so secretly and surreptitiously sneaked out of the House, was the fellow who had hacked Coker. Who was it?

Bunter had taken it for granted that a fellow jumping out of Carne's window was Arthur Carne. It was fairly certain that plenty of other fellows would take that for granted, too. But it was by no means certain.

Some Greyfriars man had been guilty of a treacherous, cowardly act. The state of Coker's ankle was proof of that. But who?

The evidence, such as it was, pointed to Carne. But it could not, in common fairness, be called conclusive. After a few minutes of troubled thought, the Greyfriars captain proceeded to sum up.

"We've got this far—some cur hacked Coker. We must take it that it was the fellow who jumped from Carne's window. That fellow isn't likely to come forward and give his name. We're at a dead end."

Arthur Carne drew a deep, deep breath. Suspicion would cling to him—he knew that. But there was no proof. He had escaped.

"Now, Carne, tell us what you know?" went on Wingate. "First of all, where were you at the time?"

Carne reflected.

"I was at the door when the crowd was there," he said. "I came to stop the row, and was told that a junior was lost in the fog. Quelch came

along, and was rather ratty, and I went to my study. I was going to squat over the fire with a book till tea, but I remembered I'd left the book in the library, and went there to fetch it. I came back to my study with it, and soon after that Loder came in."

"How long was your study empty?"

"Ten minutes or so."

"Plenty of time for Bunter to get through. Did you know that Bunter had got in there?"

"No. I found the window open, and wondered who the dickens had done it; but I supposed that some young sweep had done it to let in the fog—a trick of some junior. I didn't think of Bunter."

There was silence again. Carne had given his version quietly, glibly, and with cool self-possession.

Wingate drummed on the table.

"We're not getting much forrader," he said. "Any fellow might have looked for an empty study, if he wanted to sneak out of the House unseen. Carne's study happened to be picked. Mine might have been, if I hadn't been there. Or yours, Gwynne, or yours, Walker. I don't call it cricket to put a thing on a man because his study window was used by somebody unknown and unrecognised."

There was a murmur of approval from the prefects.

"I can't say more than that I know nothing about the matter," said Carne, more and more confident. "But I feel bound to point out that, if a fellow gets a hack, it's only sense to look for some fellow who's got a grudge against him. Coker ought to know best who's likely to have done it. Some fellow he's rowed with in the Fifth, I should imagine."

The prefects nodded at that.

"What about that, Coker?" asked Wingate.

"Rot!" said Coker. "Nobody's got a grudge against me that I know of. Besides, it's jolly certain that I got that hack by mistake in the fog. Everybody knows it was intended for Compton!"

"Nobody can know anything of the kind," said Wingate sharply.

"Well, I jolly well know it!" retorted Coker. "Who the thump would want to hack me? I'm not in the first eleven—though I ought to be! We all know jolly well who's feeling sore about Compton getting his place in the eleven."

Carne set his teeth.

Now that so much had come out, he was rather glad of that mistake in the fog. Had that hack got to the right address, so to speak, few could have doubted by whom it had been delivered, and why. But the theory of a mistake in the fog was, after all, only a theory. Only Carne knew that it was a fact.

The Sixth Form men looked at one another.

Wingate frowned.

"Don't talk rot, Coker!" he snapped. "If Compton had got that hack, I should want a lot of proof before I'd believe that a Greyfriars footballer would deliberately crock a man. But Compton never got it. There's absolutely no reason to suppose that it was intended for Compton. You got it!"

"I'm jolly sure——"

"We're dealing with facts!" growled Wingate. "You were hacked! Nobody else was! That's the fact we're dealing with. If you've been having rows lately with any fellow in your Form—and you generally are——"

"Look here——" roared Coker.

"Quiet, please!" Wingate looked round. "We've got to this! Somebody unknown sneaked through Carne's study



“Toddy had that pie, Wharton,” said Bunter, “and, as captain of the Form, I want you to go to Toddy and say—yaroooh! Yoop! Yoo-hoop!” Crash! Toddy’s boot landed and Bunter bounded. “Ha, ha, ha!” yelled the Famous Five. Bunter’s eyes almost popped through his spectacles at the sight of Peter Todd!

and hacked Coker in the quad! There’s no jot or tittle of evidence who it was, except that it was a senior, or some overgrown junior big enough to be mistaken for a senior—there are five or six in the Lower Forms. The presumption is that it was some fellow with a grudge against Coker. Such a fellow is most likely to be in his own Form, where he’s always having rows—or in a Lower Form, where he’s pretty unpopular. I put it to this meeting that there’s no more evidence against Carne than against any other man at Greyfriars.”

all over the school till dorm. And, though it was generally admitted that the august body of prefects could not very well have come to any other decision, hardly a fellow in the school regarded Carne as cleared. Officially he had escaped—unofficially, the belief remained fixed in nearly every mind that Arthur Carne had hacked Coker of the Fifth in mistake for his football rival.

Compton would write to his nephew at Greyfriars.

The yachtsman-smuggler must have been deeply disturbed by what his unknown interlocutor had said to him on the phone, that was certain. He could not fail to know that there was someone at Greyfriars School who suspected his game, and the schoolboy smuggler’s game. It amused Smithy to think of his alarm and uneasiness. The Bounder did not want to harm Compton of the Fifth—was, in fact, determined not to harm him—but he wanted to give the hardest knocks he could to the hard-faced man who had sent the boy to Greyfriars for a lawless purpose. The harder the knock he gave the leader of the smuggling gang, the better Smithy was pleased—and he knew that that talk on the telephone must have given Captain Compton a very hard knock indeed.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Shadow of Shame!

“ONE for you, Compton!” called out Vernon-Smith.

It was in break the following morning.

A number of fellows had gathered to look for letters in the rack. Harry Wharton & Co., having drawn it blank, went out into the quad to punt a footer till third school. The fog had rolled away with the night; and a bright winter sunshine streamed down on Greyfriars—to the general relief. The weather was going to be all right, after all, for the Rockwood match.

Billy Bunter lingered at the letter-rack, blinking at the letters through his big spectacles. Bunter, as usual, was in expectation of receiving a postal order; and—also as usual—was disappointed about the same. Herbert Vernon-Smith, after looking over the letters, lingered on the spot. He had noted at once that there was a letter addressed to Valentine Compton.

The Bounder was not in the least afflicted by Bunter’s inquisitiveness concerning other fellows’ correspondence. But he was interested in that letter for Compton of the Fifth. He grinned as he saw it there.

After the telephone-call the previous day, he had no doubt that Captain

Vernon-Smith would have given much for a sight of that letter. But, keen as he was on his peculiar conflict with the smuggler, there was a limit. Once a lost letter of Compton’s had come, by accident, into his hands, and he had elucidated the secret cipher in which the captain wrote to his nephew. But spying into a letter was outside the limit. The Bounder could not do that.

Smithy was no fool; and he did not attempt to delude himself that the end justified the means. He had no use for self-deception. He would have given a handful of his ample pocket-money for one “squint” at that letter. But he would not have opened it to save his life.

But he stood watching with a slightly sardonic grin on his face as Valentine Compton came along to take the letter.

He had little doubt that the Fifth Form man was going to get a shock when he read it.

“Hear, hear!”

“We’ve got to find the rotter, if we can!” went on the Greyfriars captain. “But reckless suspicions won’t do any good. It’s pretty rotten for this story to have been started. That young fool Bunter seems to be responsible, having taken it for granted that it was Carne, as the fellow used Carne’s window.”

“He ought to be jolly well whopped!” said Walker.

“Oh! I—I say——” gasped Bunter.

“I jolly well think——” began Coker.

“You can both shut up!” said Wingate gruffly. “You got anything to say, Compton?”

“Nothing!” said Compton, with a smile.

“I put it to the vote,” said Wingate, “that there’s no evidence who crooked Coker, and that Carne is under no more suspicion than any other man at Greyfriars!”

Which was passed unanimously; and the prefects’ meeting broke up.

Coker, having replaced the bandage on his foot, snorted as he tramped out—Compton smiled—and Billy Bunter gasped with relief and flew to the Remove passage as fast as his fat little legs could carry him.

Ten minutes later, the verdict was known to all Greyfriars, and discussed

"I say, Smithy, sure that letter's for Compton?" asked Billy Bunter. "Sure it ain't for me, old chap? I was expecting a postal order this morning, and—"

"Fathead! Here's one for you, Compton!" repeated the Bounder.

Compton came along with Blundell of the Fifth. He was very chummy with Blundell, whose study he shared. He had come along to look for letters; but he did not display any particular keenness. He was talking about the Rookwood match, due that afternoon, as he came.

"Ripping day, after all, for footer!" he said.

"Oh, ripping!" said Blundell. "You were right about the fog clearing off, old chap! Jolly old weather prophet, what?"

"We pick up that sort of knowledge at sea," said Compton, smiling, "and I've been a good bit of a seafarer, you know."

"Blessed if I know how you've kept up with school stuff, when you've been at sea since you left your prep school!" said Blundell. "But Prout thinks you the bright particular star in the Form—and so you jolly well are."

"I had a tutor on my uncle's yacht," explained Compton. "I was kept up to it, you know. My uncle always intended to send me to his old school—though it was left rather late. Did you say there was one for me, kid?" he added, with a glance at the Bounder. "Chuck it over, will you?"

"Here you are!" Vernon-Smith handed over the letter. Compton gave him a nod, and slipped it carelessly into his pocket.

The Bounder's eyes glimmered. He knew, or, at least, guessed, that the subject matter of that letter was of urgent importance to Compton. He knew that the Fifth Former must be anxious to read it; and that he would go quietly to some quiet spot for that

purpose, safe from interruption. But nothing in Compton's careless manner betrayed anything of the kind. He slipped the letter into his pocket, as if it was a matter of no moment at all.

"Hallo, here's that swab!" muttered Blundell. "Let's get out of this!"

Arthur Carne came along to look for letters. Blundell gave him a grim look. Three or four fellows moved away, as if to give Carne plenty of room. No one spoke to him.

Carne glanced round him, compressing his lips bitterly.

In his own Form—the Sixth—Carne was treated much the same as usual. The prefects had found him not guilty, and could hardly go behind their own verdict. But even in the Sixth there was a trace of avoidance. In other Forms, there was more than a trace.

The Fifth Formers simply snorted at the idea that Coker had been crooked by some Fifth Form man with a grudge against him. He had been crooked because he had been mistaken for Compton—by Compton's rival in Soccer! Not a man in the Fifth doubted that. In the Shell, the Fourth, and the Remove, the general opinion was the same. Even the fags of the Third and Second discussed how that "brute Carne" had crooked a man to keep him out of the Rookwood match, and crooked the wrong man.

Plenty of fellows had avoided Carne that day—some quietly, some openly—to let him see what they thought of him. Twice he had been hissed in the passages.

Now as he came to the letter-rack, Blundell of the Fifth glared at him, and ostentatiously moved out of his way, as if he were unclean.

Three or four other fellows followed Blundell's example. Even Price of the Fifth, who had been pally with the black sheep of the Sixth, affected not to see him, and went out of the House rather hurriedly.

Carne's face was a little pale, but a crimson flush came into it. He had hoped that the affair would die away after the prefects' verdict. So it might, in the course of time, but it was not likely to die away soon.

"Let's get out, Compton!" said Blundell, catching his friend's arm.

"No hurry, old man!" said Compton.

His glance at Carne was compassionate. He did not doubt, any more than the others; and he knew well enough for whom that treacherous attack in the fog had been intended. But everybody knew how good-natured Compton was, and undoubtedly he felt sorry for a fellow so deep down on his luck.

It was no light matter for a fellow in Carne's position—a Sixth Former and a prefect—to be regarded with avoidance and scorn; despised even by juniors in the Lower School.

"Look here, let's get out!" grunted Blundell; and, as Compton did not go, he dropped his arm, and went out of the House by himself.

Carne's eyes turned on Valentine Compton. They almost burned as he looked at the new man in the Fifth. Never had his dislike for the handsome Fifth Former been so deep and so bitter.

He was disgraced in the school—covered with disgrace as with a garment—and it was all through Compton of the Fifth. If the fellow had not bagged his place in the eleven he would never have done that mad, reckless thing.

Hiss! came from somewhere.

Carne's ears burned!

He knew that it was some junior that hissed, and, as a prefect, he could have called that junior to account, and handed over "six" from his ash! But he lacked the nerve to do so. Instead of that, he affected to hear nothing, and walked out of the House.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! 'Ware hacks!" shouted Bob Cherry, in the quad.

Carne's face crimsoned again.

(Continued on next page.)

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"Who crooked Coker?" yelled a voice.

And there was hissing.

Carne walked on quickly.

"Look out for your shins, you men!" shouted the Bounder, from the doorway. And there was a laugh that made Carne's ears tingle as he hurried on.

"Chuck that, you young ass!" said a voice over Vernon-Smith's shoulder, and he glanced round at Compton of the Fifth.

"Don't you believe he did it, Compton?" asked Smithy.

"If he did, he's got enough, without ragging from juniors," said Compton. "Don't hit a man when he's down!"

"Oh, you're an ass, Compton!" said Vernon-Smith, and he went out of the House.

But he did not go far. Leaning on a buttress, at a little distance, he had his eye on the door, and he grinned, as, a few minutes later, he saw Compton come out and walk away towards the old Cloisters.

Compton did not notice him; he had not the remotest idea that Vernon-Smith was interested in his movements. But Smithy was very much so. He watched the tall, athletic figure as it went; knowing, as well as if Compton had told him, that the schoolboy smuggler was going into the most secluded spot available to read that letter unobserved. He passed out of sight, and Smithy, with a shrug of the shoulders, detached himself from the buttress, and went to join the Remove fellows punting the footer.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER

The Hidden Message!

CARNE of the Sixth breathed hard and his eyes burned at the sound of a footstep in the silent old Cloisters.

He was alone there, with his harassed and gloomy thoughts.

It was the quietest and most secluded spot to be found within the school precincts; that was why Carne had gone there. He wanted to get away from all eyes.

His walk in the quad, in break, had been a sheer torture to him.

Five or six Remove men had hooted him. Hobson of the Shell had stared at him, and deliberately turned up his nose. Temple, Dabney, and Fry of the Fourth had whispered together and solitude of the Cloisters, where he the Second Form bished. Tubb of the Third had said to Bolsover minor, of that Form, in a loud whisper: "Look—that's the swab that hacked a man in the fog yesterday!"

All these were juniors, amenable to the ashplant. But the wretched Carne was not thinking of handling the official ashplant now.

What he had done had shamed him in his own eyes, and shamed him in the eyes of all Greyfriars fellows. Prefect of the Sixth as he was, he hardly dared to look a scrubby fag of the Third Form in the face!

He was glad to get into the silence and solitude of the Cloisters, where he was, at least, free from scornful eyes and mocking voices. He leaned on one of the old stone pillars, his hands driven deep into his pockets, his brows knitted darkly.

It was the Rookwood match that afternoon. Had all gone well, he would have been playing in that match, with Compton laid up with a damaged ankle—so he had planned!

But would he? Had he "got" Compton, as he had set out to do, would

he not have been worse off, instead of better? It was only because Coker had been the victim that he had scraped through. After what that fat fool Bunter had seen, it would have been altogether too palpable had Compton been the victim. Even as it was, most fellows believed that he had got Coker by mistake. Had he not made that mistake, he would have been condemned—officially, as well as unofficially. He had not calculated on unforeseen chances—such as that fat ass Bunter being close by his study window when he jumped out. Certainly he would not have been rewarded with a place in the eleven. He realised that now.

And he could never even dream of playing the same game again, even if a favourable chance offered. If Compton was ever crooked, in ever so cunning and stealthy a way, everybody would know the truth at once. His name would leap to every lip!

That had to be washed out entirely. It had been a desperate resource, and it had failed him, and left him worse off than before.

How was he going to stand the outcome? He clenched his hands, in his pockets, with rage at the thought that he, Carne of the Sixth, a prefect, was skulking in the Cloisters, afraid to meet fellows' eyes!

He dreaded the sound of the bell, when he would have to go back to the House, running the gauntlet of scornful eyes and jeers and hisses.

He snarled at the sound of a footstep. If some fellow had followed him there, to taunt him— His hands clenched convulsively.

The footstep came on. He glanced round, and glimpsed, for a moment, the handsome face of Compton of the Fifth passing.

The Fifth Former did not glance in his direction, and did not see him; and had passed out of view in a moment.

Carne gritted his teeth.

What did that fellow want there? He had not come to "rub it in"—he evidently did not know that Carne was there. Compton certainly could not be seeking seclusion, like Carne, to avoid fellows' eyes. What the dickens had he come mooching into the Cloisters for?

The footsteps stopped at a little distance. There was a sound of slitting paper, as if an envelope had been opened.

Carne knew, then, that the Fifth Former had come there to read a letter. Why the dickens did he want to get out of sight of everybody while he read his letter?

It was in Carne's thoughts to go along to where the Fifth Form man stood and pick a quarrel with him. It would have done no good. It would have made matters worse, instead of better—but there would have been a savage satisfaction in dashing his knuckles into that handsome face.

"Oh!" A startled gasp came to his ears. "Oh! Impossible! Good Heavens!" Carne started.

Three or four of the old stone pillars were between him and Compton. But he heard that exclamation clearly.

Evidently Compton had found some startling news in that letter—some bad news—dismaying news!

That was a bitter satisfaction to Carne. He grinned sourly. That fellow—handsome, popular, wealthy, fortune's spoiled favourite to all appearances—had his own troubles, then!

Compton, obviously, believed that he was quite alone in that solitary place. Carne, vindictively curious, put his head round the stone pillar on which he had

been leaning, and glimpsed the Fifth Former.

Compton's profile was to him. The handsome face was pale, the eyes fixed on the letter he held in his hand. He was reading it—or rather, devouring it with his eyes!

Carne watched him, astonishment mingling with vindictive satisfaction. What on earth could have knocked the fellow over like that? What did that look on his face mean? Was it fear?

Fear? Any Greyfriars fellow would have laughed at the idea of Compton of the Fifth feeling fear! The fellow who had swum out on a running tide to rescue Bunter in a drifting boat, and risked his life—the fellow who had knocked out the brawny, beefy Coker in a scrap without turning a hair—the fellow who was admired for his pluck as much as anything else! Fear?

And yet Carne knew that he was not mistaken. Something in that letter had given Compton a spasm of fear—fear of what? What, in the name of all that was amazing, could that fellow have to be afraid of?

Compton's lips moved.

He muttered a word—a word he was reading!

"Suspected!"

Carne suppressed a gasp.

It was a low mutter; the fellow, evidently, unconscious that he was speaking aloud, as well as unconscious that there were ears to hear! But Carne heard it, and marvelled.

His teeth came together hard!

It had never even occurred to him before that there might be a chink in his enemy's armour. Compton had been only two or three weeks in the school, and nobody at Greyfriars knew anything of his former life, except what he had chosen to tell. But he had seemed above-board, in every way—even to Carne! Good at games as he was, he was equally good in class, high in the opinion of his Form-master, Prout. He had made friends among the best fellows—he had nothing to do with Price, the black sheep of the Fifth, or with Loder & Co., the sportsmen of the Sixth. Carne himself, bitterly as he detested him, would have had to give him good conduct marks.

But—

Was it a sham—had the fellow his shady secrets, like Price or Loder, or Carne himself? If he had—

Carne's eyes glittered at that thought. It was an entirely new idea to him, but his mind followed it up with avidity.

What was that letter that knocked him over, drove the colour from his face and frightened him—yes, frightened him? What did the word "suspected" mean? Who suspected him—of what?

Carne's suspicions naturally ran on shady secrets of his own sort. Was that a letter from a bookmaker? Carne had had such a letter, in his time, and had been scared almost out of his wits by it. Was the fellow in a scrape of that sort? By gum, if he was, there was a chance for a prefect! If only he could get a glimpse of that letter—

He could!

Compton, leaning on the stone pillar by which he stood, had the letter in his hand, raised to read—reading it through again! A fellow stepping behind that pillar could see it, easily!

Carne moved on tiptoe.

Compton would not have seen him, had he looked round. But he did not look round. His gaze was concentrated on the letter. A few moments, and the spy was behind the stone pillar, where he stood, peering past it—at the letter!

It was written on a single page, in a common round-hand, and Carne read every word with ease!

He read—and stared! He doubted his eyesight! What was there, in that, to knock the fellow over? The letter ran:

"If you should be out of gates on Wednesday, better take the clock and the watch to be repaired. You will find they are unreliable, as I suspected."

Carne stood dumbfounded. A bell rang in the distance—it was the bell for third school.

Valentine Compton gave a start, crumpled the letter into his pocket, and walked quickly away. He went without a backward glance—without a suspicion that eyes had been on him, or on the letter. Not till he had disappeared did Carne move from the spot.

Utterly mystified, Arthur Carne went slowly to the House.

A scurrying fag running for his Form-room after the bell had stopped, wasted a moment in uttering a hiss before he vanished.

Carne did not hear it—he did not heed it. What did that idiotic letter mean? Why should a brief note about repairing a clock and a watch have so startling and terrifying an effect on Compton of the Fifth? What was the meaning of it?

Had Carne known what the Bounder knew, he would have known that Captain Compton wrote to his nephew at Greyfriars in a hidden cipher. He would have known that every fourth word in the letter had to be read, to make the real meaning. Had Carne read every fourth word, leaving out the rest, he would have been startled, for he would have read: "Be on the watch. You are suspected."

But Carne of the Sixth did not know what the Bounder knew, and did not dream of anything of the kind; and it was in a state of utter perplexity and mystification that he arrived in the Sixth Form Room.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Seeing Justice Done!

"I SAY, you fellows—"
"Come on, Bunter!" said Bob Cherry heartily.

"I was going to say—"

"Don't say! Just come on, old fat barrel!"

"Oh!" Bunter blinked at the Famous Five through his big spectacles. "Is it a feed?"

"A—a—a feed?" gasped Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was after dinner—and although the kick-off was not due yet, and the Rookwooders had not arrived, fellows were already gathering on Big Side. The Rookwood match filled all thoughts—or almost all thoughts. There were few Greyfriars men who did not intend to watch the first eleven that afternoon—and more especially its latest recruit, Valentine Compton.

Billy Bunter, however, seemed to be thinking of other things.

Harry Wharton & Co. gazed at Bunter. They could hardly believe that even Bunter had forgotten the Rookwood match. Apparently, however, he had.

"A feed!" repeated Harry Wharton. "You cormorant, have you got anywhere to put a feed, just after dinner?"

"Well, I didn't get much at dinner!" said Bunter sorrowfully. "Quelch keeps an eye on a fellow! He stopped
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me at the fifth helping of boiled mutton—"

"Or you'd have gone on to the fifteenth?" asked Bob sympathetically.

"And I got hardly any pie!" said Bunter. "Only three goes! Look here, you fellows, if it's a feed, I'm on!"

"It isn't!" grinned Bob. "You howling ass, have you forgotten the match?"

"Eh? I never carry any," said Bunter. "I don't smoke, like Smithy! What do you want a match for?"

"Oh crikey! Football match!" gasped Bob.

"Oh! Is there a match on?" asked Bunter. "I didn't know you fellows were playing football to-day."

"Ye gods!" said Frank Nugent. "It's a first eleven match, you howling ass—it's the Rookwood match—you blithering jabberwock—"

"Oh!" said Bunter. "Is it? Well, I'm not coming! Blessed if I like hanging about in a cold wind, watching a game! Playing is more in my line, you know."

"Oh crumbs!"

"But I was going to say—"

"Fathead! Come on, you fellows," said Johnny Bull. "May as well get down to the ground! There goes poor old Coker—dot-and-carry-one—walking with the aid of a stick!"

"I say, you fellows, don't walk off while a chap's talking!" hooted Bunter. "I say, do listen to a chap! I say, that beast Toddy—"

The Famous Five grinned. Peter Todd came out of the House, while Bunter was speaking. As Bunter had his back to the doorway, he did not see Peter.

"What about Toddy?" asked Bob with a chuckle.

"I say, do you know what the awful brute did?" said Bunter. "You know I had to go to the prefects'-room after prep last night—Wingate wanted a chat with me, you know. Well, while I was gone, Toddy scoffed my steak-and-kidney pie."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Peter Todd had come to a halt, a few feet behind Bunter. The Famous Five, facing him, were quite amused to see him there. Bunter, with his podgy back to him, naturally did not see him. He breezed on:

"The awful cad, you know! I was afraid of what might happen to that pie all the while I was chatting with the Sixth Form chaps in the prefects'-room. I say, when I got back to the study, I found that Toddy had scoffed it! He made out that he thought it was Coker's, and had taken it back to Coker's study—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at!" said Bunter hotly. "Of course, he scoffed it! Toddy's a fool, but he's not fool enough to give away a steak-and-kidney pie!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked the Famous Five.

The expression on Peter's face, as he stood just behind Bunter, quite entertained them.

"Well, you can cackle; but I can tell you, it's pretty thick, scoffing a fellow's pie," said Bunter. "Fellows make out that I snaffle tuck. Now look at Toddy, bagging a whole steak-and-kidney pie while a chap's back is turned. And telling whoppers about it, too—making out that he took it to Coker's study. Untruthful, you know. If there's a thing I never could stand, it's untruthfulness. Fancy a fellow being greedy and untruthful, you chaps!"

"Fancy!" gasped Bob.

"Only fancy!" gurgled Nugent.

"Well, look here! Toddy had the

pie, and I expect him to do the right thing," said Bunter. "I was going to whack that pie out in the study. Toddy had the lot. Well, I think it's up to Toddy to stand one of the same. I've told him so. He makes out that he never had the pie. Of course, a fellow doesn't exactly expect him to be truthful—his father's a solicitor, you know. But there's a limit, isn't there?"

Peter Todd, behind Bunter, drew back his right foot. The Famous Five waited for the crash.

Bunter, happily unconscious of the impending crash, rattled on:

"Well, I want you to speak to him, Wharton, as captain of the Form. I want you to see justice done."

"I think I shall see justice done pretty soon," answered Wharton, with his eye on Toddy's boot.

"Well, that's all right," said Bunter. "You go to Toddy, and tell him that he's got to do the right thing. He can get a steak-and-kidney pie like that for about seven-and-six. Even then it won't be as good. Mrs. Mimble's pies ain't like those that Coker gets in his hampers."

"Coker!"

"I—I—I mean, that pie wasn't Coker's. I—I mean, Mrs. Mimble's pies ain't like those I get from Bunter Court, you know. Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! Now you go to Toddy, old chap. I think he's in the House somewhere. Anyhow, he's not far away."

"No; I don't think he's far away," agreed Wharton. "Carry on!"

"Well, you go to him, and put it to him, as captain of the Form, and head boy. He had my pie. I could make him pay for it, if I went to Quelch about it, you know; but I don't want to go to a beak—"

"No. I—I think I wouldn't," stammered Bob Cherry. "A beak might want to know too much about that pie."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"So long as Toddy does the right thing, all right," said Bunter. "I shall be satisfied, if he stands one as big as the one he scoffed last night. I'll overlook him telling me whoppers about it. I don't expect fellows to be truthful like me, really. It's the pie that's really important. Toddy had that pie, and he's got to stand another—see? That's fair play. Now, as captain of the Form, I want you to go to Toddy and say— Yaroooh! Yooop! Yoo-hoop!"

Crash!

Toddy's boot landed.

Bunter bounded.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Famous Five.

"Yow-ow-woop!" roared Bunter. He spun round like a fat humming-top, his little round eyes almost popping through his big, round spectacles at the sight of Peter Todd. "Ow! Beast! Ow! Rotter! Wow! Keep off, you beast! I—I say, Toddy, I never said you scoffed that pie! Yaroooh!"

Bunter bounded again. He bounded and bounded, as Peter booted. Forgetful even of the steak-and-kidney pie, important as it was, the fat Owl careered away across the quad, leaving the Removites yelling.

It was rather unfortunate that Coker of the Fifth was in the way. Coker, proceeding slowly and painfully with a damaged ankle, was quite unable to dodge a charge, and Bunter crashed before he saw him.

"Oh!" gasped Coker, staggering.

"Ow!" spluttered Bunter, reeling from the shock.

"You mad ass!" gasped Coker. He



Billy Bunter pushed the door to, and stood behind it. The next moment the door opened suddenly and sharply. Bang! "Whoop!" roared Bunter in astonishment and anguish, as the oak banged on his fat little nose. "Yow-ow-woop!" "What—who—" There was a startled exclamation from Carne.

grabbed Bunter by the collar. "I've been looking for you, you fat young scoundrel! I believe you got after a pie in my study last night."

"Owl! Leggo! I didn't! I never—wow!"

"Well, I left it in my study cupboard, and I found it on my table," said Coker. "Somebody must have shifted it. Looks to me as if you meant to have it. Price saw you in the passage."

"Owl! Leggo! I wasn't there—I was in the Rag when Price saw me in the passage—"

"I'd jolly well boot you," said Coker, "if I could stand on two feet to do it. Take that, anyhow!"

Bang!

Bunter's bullet-head smote one of the ancient Greyfriars elms. Bunter's head was hard, but the elm-trunk was harder.

Bunter roared.

"Yoo-hooooop!"

"That's a tip!" said Coker; and he limped on his painful way to the football ground, leaving Billy Bunter rubbing his head, and uttering a series of anguished yelps.

Bunter had stated that he wanted justice done; but now that it had been done, he did not seem satisfied, somehow.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

Punching Coker's Nose!

"ON the ball!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Play up, Greyfriars!"

"Oh, good man!"

"Compton—Compton!"

Nearly all Greyfriars were gathered round the football field. First eleven matches always drew a crowd; but this was a record. Seniors and juniors and small fags were packed round the field.

Mr. Prout, portly and ponderous, had rolled down, greatly pleased by the knowledge that it was a boy in his Form who was the star player and the great attraction. Mr. Quelch and Mr. Hacker walked down together. There was a rumour that even the majestic Head had an eye on the field from his study window.

Bulkeley and his men from Rookwood, were in great form. Man for man, they were as good as Greyfriars—with one exception. In neither team was there a brilliant man like Compton of the Fifth.

Even Arthur Carne realised that as he looked on from the outskirts of the crowd. In the first ten minutes of the game Compton put the ball in, amid roars from the Greyfriars swarm. The Rookwood defence was sound, and Carne knew that he, at all events, would never have penetrated it as Valentine Compton had just done. The roars of cheering, coupled with his rival's name, were gall and wormwood to him.

"Goal! Goal!"

"Compton—Compton!"

"Bravo!" roared Coker of the Fifth, forgetting the pain in the ankle, and roaring with all the power of his lungs.

"Good old Compton! Hurrah!"

The cheering was deafening as the sides lined up again.

Looking over the heads of a mob of fags, Arthur Carne watched his rival.

Remembering what Compton had looked like as he read that mysterious letter in the Cloisters in break that morning, Carne had wondered whether the star man would be off his form that day. How and why, he did not know, but he knew that Compton had had a knock—a hard knock. Inexplicable as it was, something in that letter had hit him hard.

But if that was so the Fifth Former

had evidently dismissed the trouble from his mind now. Never had he been in finer form.

His handsome face, a little flushed, looked bright and happy. He seemed to be living and breathing Soccer, obviously enjoying every minute.

At dinner Carne had glanced along from the high table where the prefects sat, and noted Compton among the Fifth, with a cloud of thought on his brow. He knew the cause of it. And he had had a lingering hope that the secret trouble, whatever it was, might affect his form in the Rookwood match. He saw now that that hope was delusive.

Compton had bagged the first goal; he was going to bag more. He was going to cover himself with glory on the football field. He was going to be cheered to the echo when he came off, happy and glorious. Greyfriars were going to win that game, and owe it to Compton. Carne's eyes glittered at his rival.

"Look at that swab!" It was a voice among the mob of fags. "I say, that's Carne! Check to come here, after trying to crock old Compton."

There was a sound of hissing. The colour wavered in Carne's cheeks. He turned quickly, and walked away from the football field.

He could not face it. He felt like an Ishmael at the school.

It was Gatty of the Second, his own fag, who had jeered. That was what he had fallen to—beating a shamed retreat from a jeer of his own fag. He could have whopped the cheeky young rascal—but what was the good? They were all thinking and saying the same. Carne did not reappear on the football ground. Loder and Walker were there, but they looked another way when they saw Carne. They did not

want his company. Nobody wanted it. He went into the House and to his study, a prey to rage and misery and malice. The way of the transgressor was hard.

Nobody gave him a thought. All eyes were on the game and on Compton in the Greyfriars ranks.

The game was going hard and fast—hard play and good football all the time.

Potter of the Fifth put the ball in, but it was Compton's play that gave him the chance.

Magnificent player as he was, easily the star of the team, Compton never forgot for a moment that Soccer was a team game; never showed a trace of selfishness with the ball. Anyone could see that he was just as keen on another man scoring, as on scoring himself; his whole thought was for the side. If anything could have added to his popularity, that would have done it; for a little self-assertiveness might have been excused in a man obviously head and shoulders above the rest. But there was no trace of it about Compton. Whatever else he was—and the Bounder knew!—he was a sportsman to the finger-tips.

Greyfriars were two up at half-time; Rookwood had not succeeded in breaking their duck.

"Looks like a win for us, what?" grinned Bob Cherry.

"The winfulness will be terrific!"

"Old Compton's in even better form than he was at Lantham!" said Harry Wharton. "Wingate's got a prize-
packet in that new man!"

"Bit better than Carne, what?" grinned Bob.

"Ha, ha! Yes!"

"By gum! If that swab had crooked him——" said Johnny Bull, with a deep breath. "How jolly lucky he got Coker in the fog!"

"Perhaps Coker thinks so!" grinned Vernon-Smith.

Horace Coker looked round at the Removites.

"No perhaps about it, young Smith!" said the great Horace. "I'm jolly glad that cur bungled in the fog yesterday! Jolly glad! It would be different if I'd been in the team, of course! I fancy I should have done as well as Compton if——"

"Eh?"

"Or a bit better, perhaps——"

"Oh crikey!"

"But, as I wasn't in the team, I'm glad that swab Carne got me instead of old Compton! Ow!" added Horace, as he got a painful twinge in his ankle. "Wow!"

"I say, you fellows——"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's the jolly old Owl! Two up, Bunter!" said Bob. "Two to the good, old fat man!"

"Eh?" asked Bunter. "Two what?"

"Oh, wickets!" said Bob, with withering sarcasm.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh! Have they started?" said Bunter, with an indifferent blink at the football field.

"It's half-time, you cuckoo!"

"Is it?" said Bunter. "I say, I came here to speak to you, Coker!"

"Well, don't!" grunted Coker.

"I say, about your damaged leg," said Bunter, blinking at him through his big spectacles. "I'm awfully sorry, Coker! Does it hurt?"

Coker stared at him. Plenty of fellows had sympathised with him about

that damaged ankle. He had hardly expected all this sympathy from the fat Owl of the Remove, however. Still, if a fag was sympathetic, Coker could be civil.

"It jolly well does!" he answered.

Bunter blinked at the bandaged foot.

"I say, it's rough luck, Coker!" said Bunter. "Could you run in that leg? Suppose a bull was after you?"

"Likely, you young ass!" said Coker.

"But suppose it was?" said Bunter. He seemed keenly interested. "Or suppose a fellow punched your nose, and cut off—could you run after him?"

"Of course I couldn't, you young idiot!" grunted Coker. "That dashed leg wouldn't take my weight."

"But suppose some fellow came up and hit you on the nose!" said Bunter.

"Mean to say you couldn't get after him, with the aid of your stick?"

"No!" growled Coker.

"Good!" said Bunter.

His next proceeding startled Coker!

Crash!

A fat fist, with quite a lot of weight behind it, banged on Coker's nose, and he staggered.

Bunter cut off.

"Why—I—I—I'll——" gasped Coker, astonished and enraged. "I'll—Yow-ow-ow!" He made a bound after Bunter, forgetful of his injured ankle. But he was reminded of it the next second as his leg crumpled under him, and he dropped on his left knee. "Ow! Wow! Oooooogh!"

"He, he, he!" floated back from Bunter—at a safe distance.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Bounder.

"Why, I—I—I—I'll——" gurgled

Coker. He got on his sound leg again, glared at the fat Owl with the deadliest of glares, and waved his stick threateningly. "Bunter, you cheeky young scoundrel, I—I—I'll—— Wow!"

"He, he, he! What will you do?" jeered Bunter. "I'll jolly well punch your silly nose again, Coker! Who's afraid of you, I'd like to know?"

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

Bunter evidently was not afraid of Coker—now! Not so long as Coker had a damaged ankle, and could not get after a fellow who punched his nose and cut off! The explanation of Bunter's deep interest in his injury dawned on Coker now!

"You—you—you—I—I—I——" gasped Coker.

"Yah! You come here, and I'll jolly well punch your nose again!" chortled Bunter. "You can't scrap, Coker! I could whop you with one hand tied behind me! You're no good! Yah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker tottered towards the grinning Owl.

Billy Bunter backed away—putting his fat fingers to his fat nose as he did so!

Coker gurgled with fury. The other fellows yelled.

Pheep! went the whistle.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! They're going it!"

All eyes were turned on the football field again.

Coker rubbed his nose as he watched.

Billy Bunter rolled away, chortling. It was his first opportunity to punch Horace Coker's nose, without being immediately slaughtered. He chortled as he rolled; and Coker was left rubbing his nose.

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Owl on the Prowl!

"O H!" breathed Billy Bunter. He side-stepped with amazing celerity.

He was just in time.

A head appeared on the stairs, rising into view. It was the head of a prefect—Carne of the Sixth. From the staircase, a fellow could look along the Fifth Form passage, past the games study.

Had Carne done so, he might have spotted Bunter, swift as Bunter was. But after a split second he had no chance.

Bunter was coming down the Fifth Form passage to the landing. He was passing an open doorway when he spotted Carne—and side-stepped. Instantly he was out of sight in Blundell's study, which happened to be the one he was passing at the moment.

"Oh lor'!" breathed Bunter, palpitating at his narrow escape.

Billy Bunter had been exploring the Fifth Form passage. The second-half of the Rookwood match was in progress, and every man in the Greyfriars Fifth, who was not playing in the team, was watching the game. Even Stephen Price, the shady black sheep of the Fifth, was there with Hilton. Not a single soul was in any of the Fifth Form studies.

Naturally it occurred to Bunter, in those auspicious circumstances, to look in at Horace Coker's quarters. He was interested in that steak-and-kidney pie.

Coker's own words had borne out Toddy's remarkable statement that he had taken that pie back to its owner. If it was still there, Bunter knew what was going to happen to it!

But, alas, it was not there! Probably Coker had scoffed it for supper the previous evening, with Potter and Greene, after Peter had deposited it in his study. Anyhow, it was gone—gone from Bunter's gaze like a beautiful dream!

It was a bitter disappointment. Bunter was hardly consoled by a bunch of bananas he found in Coker's study. However, he ate the bananas.

Then his footsteps led him into the next study. In that room, which belonged to Hilton and Price, he did not expect to snaffle much in the way of tuck, but he knew where Price kept his cigarettes. The fat and fatuous Owl liked a cigarette when he could get one for nothing.

In Price's study, he had better luck than in Coker's. He rooted out a packet of cigarettes, and found six or seven in it.

With the packet clutched in a fat hand, he rolled down the passage to the landing, intending to head for a Remove study with his plunder. Then the sight of Arthur Carne's head rising into view on the stairs caused his sudden, prompt retreat into the nearest refuge.

In Blundell's study he listened with painful intentness.

He did not venture to latch the door, lest Carne should hear the sound; he pushed it to and stood behind it.

He had not the slightest doubt that he was safe in that study so long as Carne did not see him in passing—and Carne could not see through an oak door! With Price's packet of cigarettes clutched in a grubby fat hand, the Owl of the Remove listened to Carne's footsteps and waited for them to pass.

They arrived—but did not pass. What happened next was a surprise to Bunter.

So absolutely certain did he feel that Carne could not possibly be coming to the quarters of the fellow he loathed that he had not the remotest misgiving that the door would open.

It did open—suddenly and sharply.

Bang!

"Whoop!" roared Bunter in astonishment and anguish, as the oak banged on his fat little nose. "Yow-ow! Woop!"

There was a startled exclamation.

"What—Who—"

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!" Bunter clasped both fat hands to his damaged nose, the packet of cigarettes dropping unheeded to the floor. "Wow! Ow! Oh! Wow!"

Carne had opened the door suddenly and stepped swiftly in, like a fellow anxious to get quickly out of sight from the passage, lest a chance eye should see him entering a room where he had no business. Not for a second had he supposed that there was anyone inside the study.

He jumped almost clear of the floor at Bunter's startled, agonised yell; he dragged the door away and stared at Bunter.

"Oh! Ow! Wow!" howled Bunter. "You've smashed my nose! Ow! Oh crikey! I say, my nose is squashed! Wow!"

Carne's eyes glittered at him.

"You young rascal, what are you doing here in a Fifth Form study? Grub-raiding, as usual, you greedy young scoundrel?"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. He hoped that Carne would not spot the packet of cigarettes on the floor. "Oh, no! I—I just stepped in here to—to—to look out of the—the window to—to to see how the—the footer's going on. I—I didn't dodge in here because I saw you coming, Carne!"

"Come along!" snapped Carne. "I—I heard you in here, you young rascal, and came in after you! Get a move on!"

"Yow-ow-ow!"

Bunter was led from the study, with a finger and thumb gripping his fat ear. He emitted a series of shrill squeaks as he went.

On the landing, at the end of the passage, Carne released the fat ear; his foot shot out.

Thud!

"Whoop!" roared Bunter as he flew.

Carne followed him up. Billy Bunter did the landing in three bounds, and went down the stairs two at a time in a series of wild jumps, like a kangaroo. He was out of the House almost in the twinkling of an eye and scuttling down to the football field. He was not fearfully interested in the Rookwood match, but it was a safe distance from Carne.

THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER.

Carne Makes a Discovery!

CARNE of the Sixth stood for a few moments after Bunter had vanished down the stairs, then he turned and walked quickly up the Fifth Form passage.

A minute more and he was inside the study in which he had so unexpectedly rooted out the Owl of the Remove.

Bunter was dismissed from his mind. Certainly he would have preferred no eyes to fall upon him there, but Bunter mattered little. The fat Owl had been given the impression that Carne had heard him in the study and rooted him out. He could have no idea, no suspicion, that the Sixth Form man had

any personal reason for visiting Blundell and Compton's study.

But Carne had—a very strong reason! Like Bunter, he had realised that the attraction of the Rookwood match, drawing every fellow away from the House, gave him a chance of prowling unseen. True, his object was very different from Bunter's.

He was there to search Compton's study for what he could find. He scarcely knew what he hoped to find; but something—anything—that would give him a stick to beat his enemy.

The fellow had secrets; of what kind he did not know, but he suspected that they were of his own kind. Whatever they were, he was going to root them out if he could.

That letter into which he had spied in the Cloisters had knocked Compton over with dismay. Carne had been thinking of that ever since.

Obviously no fellow could be dismayed, startled, terrified, by a letter advising him to take a clock and a watch to be repaired. Very little reflection convinced Carne that the letter meant something else; that it was, in fact, written some sort of a secret code, or cipher.

And the word Compton had muttered with quivering lips haunted him. Suspected! Whatever the "code" might be, whatever that letter actually meant, the word "suspected" was part of the genuine message. Was some sporting friend outside the school giving him the tip that their dealings were suspected? Some racing man with whom he backed horses? That was the only meaning that Carne could put to it.

Having shut the study door, he proceeded to make a search of the room as carefully as Inspector Grimes, of Courtfield, might have done in the quarters of a suspected crook.

But his search, meticulous as it was, seemed only to reveal that there was nothing suspicious in the study.

Carne set his teeth.

The football match would be over soon—he had not much more time. If the fellow had such things as racing papers, smokes, and notes from "bookies," where did he keep them? Somewhere where Blundell would never see them!

In Carne's own study there was a loose board, under which he parked his supply of cigarettes. He wondered whether there was anything of that kind in Compton's study.

If so, it would be safe enough, from an unsuspecting ass like Blundell. The prefect proceeded to examine the floor, treading carefully, and pressing every board, listening for a creep, feeling for the slightest movement. Then, suddenly, he gave a jump, and pounced on a packet that lay on the floor.

He grabbed it up, his eyes blazing.

"By-gum!" he breathed.

He would never have noticed it lying there but for his examination of the floor in search of a loose board. It lay close to the wainscot, near the doorway. Carne fairly gloated over it.

It was a packet of cigarettes. There were six or seven smokes in it. Carne knew the brand—it was the kind that Price of the Fifth smoked.

"By gum!" he repeated.

The fellow must have been a careless fool to drop the packet there. But it rather substantiated Carne's suspicions of a loose board over a secret hiding-place.

Carne's eyes gleamed and glinted. He was on the track now!

Any fellow in the Fifth, told that Compton smoked secret cigarettes,

would have laughed at the idea, so well did the fellow keep up appearances—yet Carne held the proof in his hand!

He gloated over it. It was not all that he wanted—but it was a clue. It would lead to more. If the fellow was a spoofing humbug in one respect, he was in others. Carne had only to investigate.

A distant roar reached his ears. It was a tremendous volume of sound, waking every echo of Greyfriars School. He started as he heard it—and knew that the football match was over.

They were cheering a Greyfriars victory—cheering Compton! They would not cheer him when he was up before the Head!

But that tremendous roar warned Carne that he had no more time for investigation. The fellows would be coming back to the House. He did not want to be spotted spying in Compton's study.

He left the study hastily, and hurried down the stairs. He looked out of the doorway, with a bitter face. Fellows were shouting, cheering, waving their caps—and, amid the roar of cheering, the name of Compton was heard again and again.

An uproarious crowd was heading for the changing-room—and over it, tossing like a bark on stormy waves, swayed Compton, his handsome face flushed and laughing—carried on the shoulders of Wingate and Gwynne. Greyfriars had won the match, and Compton of the Fifth had kicked three of the goals, out of a total of four to one. He swept along, shoulder-high, with a shouting, cheering, waving crowd surging round him. Prout's portly boom was heard amid the cheers—even Billy Bunter was adding a fat squeak.

"Chuck it, you men!" Carne heard Compton's laughing voice. "Draw it mild, you know!"

"Hurrah!"

"Good old Compton!"

"Good man!"

"Hurrah! 'Rah! 'Rah! 'Rah!" roared Bob Cherry.

Carne hurried back into the House.

THE NINETEENTH CHAPTER.

The Shadow of a Secret!

"WHAT the deuce—" Compton of the Fifth stared into his study.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Billy

Bunter.

He blinked round in great alarm through his big spectacles. For the second time that day the fat Owl was caught in that study. Bunter's luck seemed to be out.

There was a celebration going on in Hall. Compton of the Fifth was the man whom everybody delighted to honour. It had seemed to Billy Bunter an excellent opportunity to nip into the study and recapture the packet of cigarettes which Carne had caused him to drop there. He needed, he supposed, only a minute or two.

But he found that he needed more. Nobody, so far as Bunter knew, had been to the study—but the packet was not to be found. The fat junior hunted high, and he hunted low, but no packet of cigarettes rewarded him. He was still hunting, when Compton looked in at the doorway.

Alarm and guilt were legibly written in Bunter's fat face, as he stared at the Fifth Form man. And the alarm intensified when he saw the expression on Compton's face.

That face was generally good-humoured in expression; often it wore a pleasant smile. Bunter was quite startled, as well as alarmed, to see the dark look that came over it, and the glint that came into the keen grey eyes.

"You young rascal!" Compton stepped quickly into the study.

"I've heard of your spying and prying, you young rotter!" said Compton, between his teeth. "Why are you spying in here?"

It never crossed Bunter's fat mind that the handsome Fifth Former was a fellow with secrets to keep. He did not dream that Compton of the Fifth could be startled, and even alarmed, at the sight of any fellow rooting in his study.

"I—I—I—wasn't!" he stuttered.

"What were you looking for?"

"N-n-nothing!" gasped Bunter.

Compton picked up a cricket-stump from a shelf.

Billy Bunter viewed that action in deep alarm. The Fifth Former made a swift stride towards him, and grasped his collar with his left hand.

"Now, tell me what you were hunting for, you spying little scoundrel!" he said.

What he had read in the letter in the Cloisters that morning, was fresh in Compton's mind. He had dismissed it while the football was on; but it came back to haunt him with uneasy quietude.

According to what Captain Compton had written to him in the secret code, he was suspected. It seemed to him impossible—but he knew that the warning could not be unfounded. Who, in all Greyfriars, could suspect the Schoolboy Smuggler? There had been no sign. And now—he found the Peeping Tom of the Remove searching his study.

The cold, hard, grim look on his face almost terrified the hapless fat Owl. He squirmed in the Fifth Former's muscular grasp.

"I—I—I say, Compton, it—it—it was mine!" he stuttered.

"What?"

"You—you see, I—I dodged in here when I saw a prefect coming, and—and dropped it!" gasped Bunter. "I—I was only looking for it, Compton."

Compton stared at him long and hard.

"What were you looking for, then?"

"A pip-pip-pip—"

"What?"

"A pip-pip-pip-packet!" gasped Bunter. "You—you see, I had a pip-pip-packet of smokes, and—and I never got them from Price's study, Compton, and I—I dodged in here, and—and dropped them, and—and—and I was only looking for the pip-pip-packet, Compton! I—I haven't been to the cupboard—"

To Bunter's immense relief, the dark, grim look vanished from Compton's face, as if wiped away with a duster. He laughed.

"You young ass!" he said.

"You—you see," stammered Bunter, "I—I thought I'd come up and look for the pip-pip-packet while you were in Hall. I never thought you'd be coming up, and—and I say— Yow-ow-ow! Keep that cricket stump away, you beast! Wow!"

Whack!

The stump whacked on Bunter's tight trousers. He roared.

"Ow! I say, old chap—stop it, you beast! I say, old fellow— Oh, you rotter! Yaroooh!"

"You mustn't have smokes," said Compton. Whack! "You mustn't drop them about my study!" Whack! "You mustn't nose into senior studies at all!" Whack! "If I catch you here again," Whack! "I'll give you a few more, and harder!" Whack! "Now cut!"

"Yaroooh!"

Bunter cut promptly. He yelled as he went.

Valentine Compton threw the door

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shut, and pitched the cricket stump back on the shelf.

He stood with a smile on his face for a moment. But the smile vanished, and a clouded look of harassed thought took its place.

Suspected!

That word rang in his mind. How? By whom? He had got away as soon as he could from the cheering crowd in Hall, to think. But thinking seemed to serve no purpose. He drew the letter from his pocket, and read it over again. The code presented no difficulties to a fellow used to it. He read it at a glance. His eyes lingered on the last word. Suspected! But by whom? In all Greyfriars he had only friends—with a single exception. He had one enemy—Carne of the Sixth—a bitter and unscrupulous enemy!

But it could not be Carne! The fellow who had crooked Coker in mistake for his football rival, would be glad enough to discover anything to that rival's discredit. But he knew nothing—he could know nothing. But if there was some man at Greyfriars who suspected him, and if it was not Carne, who was it?

The study door opened.

Compton thrust the letter hastily into his pocket, expecting to see Blundell enter.

But it was not Blundell. It was Arthur Carne of the Sixth Form who stood in the doorway, and the sardonic sneer on his face showed that he had

observed Compton's hasty action in putting the letter out of sight.

Their eyes met. For a moment there was silence, while their glances crossed like rapiers.

It was Compton who spoke first—quietly and coolly.

"What do you want, Carne?"

"Only a word or two," said Carne. His voice vibrated with malice. "I've just looked into Hall—I've been hissed out. They're still cheering you, Compton, but they hissed me out! I'll make you pay for it! By gum, I'll make you pay for it!"

"Might a fellow ask how?" drawled Compton. His manner was calm, his voice drawling; but his eyes were keen, alert, and hard. "Are you going to crook me, as you did Coker?"

"No!" said Carne. "No! I'm going to show you up, you spoofing rotter! I'm going to let the school see you in your true colours! The fellows will have something else to think about, then!"

Compton breathed hard and deep. In spite of himself, the colour wavered in his face.

Carne, watching him like a cat, saw it, and gloated.

"I've found you out!" he said. "I've spotted you—and as soon as I can pin you down, look out! You've got everybody fooled. But wait till I nail you and you go up to the Head! Only wait!"

The schoolboy smuggler looked at him—dumb!

Carne waited for a reply, but no reply came; and, with a scornful sneer, he turned and walked away.

"I say, you fellows!"

Harry Wharton & Co. were in the Remove passage when Billy Bunter arrived there—wriggling.

"I say," gasped Bunter, "that beast Compton—"

"What?" roared the Famous Five, with one voice.

"That rotter Compton—"

Compton of the Fifth, just then, was the hero of the hour, the chums of the Remove were almost husky cheering him. They glared at Bunter.

"That beastly-beast Compton—"

Bunter got no further. Five pairs of hands descended on him, and Billy Bunter descended on the floor of the Remove passage!

Bump!

"Yoo-hoop!" roared Bunter.

"Give him another!"

Bump!

"Yooop!"

Billy Bunter had been stumped, and he wanted sympathy! That was the sort of sympathy he got! Still, no doubt it was as much as he deserved!

(The next extra-long yarn in this super series: "THE WAY OF THE TRANS-GRESSOR!" is a real top-notch! Watch out for it in next Saturday's MAGNET!)

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IN THE NICK OF TIME!

Final Instalment of Dicky Nugent's Sensational Serial:

"THE RINGMASTER OF ST. SAM'S!"

Tinkle-tinkle! The brazen clanger of rising-bell rang out across St. Sam's, and Doctor Birchermall leaped from his bed with a ringing whoop of joy.

"Hip, hip, hooray! It's the grate day at last!" he chortled. "To-nite's the opening nite of the sercuss on the footer-field—and with the pick of St. Sam's as the 'turns,' and me as ring-master, it won't half be a success!"

The Head was as egg-sited as any Second Form fag. Pawsing only to cover his somewhat bony carcass with a dressing-gown, he rang the bell to summon Binding the page.

"I must have a conference with my principal artists before brekker," he mermered. "I want to be satisfied that everything is going off without a hitch and—why, Binding, what on earth is the matter?" he cried, breaking off suddenly, as the skool page poked his boolit head in the doorway.

Binding, who looked as if he had recently spotted a spook or something, gulped several times before he answered. "P-p-please, sir," he stammered, "there's a lot of the blokes missing this mornin', sir—an' their beds ain't even been slept in!"

"Bless my sole! Nice goings-on, I must say!" snorted the Head. "However, I haven't time to look into it myself to-day, so you must report it to one of the masters who

are not engaged in the sercuss. Mr. Swishing-ham will do."

"Yessir; but—"

"Before doing so, Binding, kindly inform all those who are performing to-nite that I want to see them in my study at once."

"But it can't be done, sir!" yelled Binding. "The covays you want are the covays that are missing!"

"Missing?" gasped Doctor Birchermall, dumb-founded. "The sercuss covays?"

"Hevery one of 'em, sir!" said Binding.

"Impossible!" roared the Head. "You're dreaming, Binding! Go down to the sercuss-tent and see if they're there! Do you here?"

"Yessir!" And Binding scooted off.

Doctor Birchermall's heart was beating wildly, as he flung aside his dressing-gown and hurriedly tumbled into his clothes. He simply couldn't believe that his performers had really vanished—yet something seemed to tell him that it was true!

Trembling in every lim, he finished dressing and rushed downstairs to his study.

Binding returned in a cuple of jiffies with Mr. Spangler close at his heels. One look at the sercuss proprietor's worried dial was sufficient to prepare the Head for the worst.

"You haven't seen them?" he phaltered.

"Search me!" said Mr. Spangler. "They haven't been down to the

sercuss tent since last night; that's as sure as eggs!"

"Then it's a case of fowl play!" cried the Head. "Mark my words, Spangler, von Schyster has had a hand in this!"

Mr. Spangler started violently.

"Is it possible that that scoundrell—"

"It's almost certain that von Schyster is the culprit!" said Doctor Birchermall, banging the desk with his fist to emphasise his words.

"You are sure that every one of the artists is missing, Binding?"

"Yessir—eggsept your dawter, Miss Molly, sir."

"Ha! So the villan didn't have the nerve to kidnap my dawter!" growled the Head. "But with that solitary egg-seption, it seems that every one of the artists we were relying on for to-nite has gone. A nice how-d'you-do, Spangler, what?"



The GREYFRIARS HERALD

No. 217.

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December 5th, 1936.



I FANCY WE SCORED OVER GENERAL CURRY!

Smiles TOM BROWN

groaned the sercuss proprietor. "If the show duzzent open, I shan't be able to pay von Schyster's dett; and von Schyster will collar the sercuss, lock, stock and barrel! What can we do?"

Doctor Birchermall stroked his beard thoughtfully.

"We've got to reskew our performers from von Schyster's klutches in time for to-nite's show."

"Ow! Yessir!"

To think was to act, with Doctor Birchermall. Having thought out this brilliant wheezo for tracking down his missing performers, he waisted no more preshus minnits, but got bizzy right away. In the space of a few jiffies, the assembled skool was lissenng breathlessly to his instructions for scouring the countryside in search of a tuckshop that had sold a big batch of German sossidges. And a few jiffies after that, the fellows were streaming across the quad, gulping down their brekker as they went.

Some went on foot, some on pushbikes, some on roller-skates, and a few on horseback.

After that, the Head and Mr. Spangler adjerned to the former's study to await developments. Hour after hour they waited there, in an aggerny of suspense, whiling away the time in innumerable games of noughts and crosses, and growing grimmer and grimmer as the day passed without tidings.

Then suddenly the tellyfone-bell jangled—and news came through at last! It was the Honorable Guy de Vere, the aristocrat of the Fourth, at the other end, and his cultchered voice was farly trembling with eggitement.

"A clue at last, sir, bai Jove!" he cried. "I've discovered a tuckshop where they've had a ship-pin' ordah for German sossidges by fone—an' the customah is callin' for them himself in half an hour!"

"Eureka!" yelled the Head. "The address, de Vere—at once!"

Two minnits later, Doctor Birchermall and Mr. Spangler were driving at a reckless speed in the direction of the villidge from which the Honorable Guy was foning. And

the three watched the German unlock the door of the barn, then go inside.

"Now's our chance!" said Mr. Spangler. But Doctor Birchermall shook his head and grinned.

"I have a better plan than that," he said. "Why not play with von Schyster as a cat plays with a mouse? Let's wait till he goes, and then reskew our chaps. When he turns up to-nite to loait over the sercuss field to open, he'll get the shock of his life, and we shall have the lart of the term!"

So Mr. Spangler decided to possess his sole in patience. And very glad he was afterwards that he did so, for everything turned out just as Doctor Birchermall had antissipated.

The villanous kidnapper departed, and very soon afterwards the Head had busted the lock of the door and broken into the barn.

An eggstraordinary sito met the reskevers' eyes. Sitting on the floor, roped to the wall in a long line, were the missing sercuss players, while, suspended by a string in front of each of them was a German sossidge—to be eaten

without the aid of the hands!

It was a grate moment when the prisoners turned their eyes from the sossidges to find the Head standing before them. Hungry as they were, masters and boys alike broke into a defening cheer. The eggitement was simply terriffick!

"Three cheers for the Ringmaster of St. Sam's!" shouted Jack Jolly. And

they were given with a will!

Soon they were all on their way back to the skool, and when the time came for the sercuss to start, every fellow was in his place, waiting for the word "Go!"

So the St. Sam's sercuss took place that nite, after all, and a tremendous crowd raptcherously applauded every turn from start to finish.

But the turn they applauded most of all was the unrehearsed act when Mr. Spangler paid back the raskally von Schyster his loan, and then made him run the gauntlet round the ring. As Doctor Birchermall remarked afterwards, von Schyster's face was worth a ginny a box. And for once in a way, everybody agreed that the Head was right!

And then it happened! From out of the blue, as the General walked down to the gates, descended the last thing the general had expected to see at Greyfriars that afternoon—an aeroplane in difficulties! The general had to run pretty quickly to avoid being knocked down and fellows scattered wildly, too, as the machine swooped down to earth.

Crash! It was over! Then there was a horrid yell from the chaps as they saw flames leaping up from the plane.

"The pilot! He'll be burnt!"

Now, going on General Curry's opinion of Greyfriars chaps, the spineless spectators might well have been expected to put as much distance between the blazing plane and themselves as they could.

But they didn't! To the gallant general's amazement, they all made a rush in the other direction—back towards the plane! And before the general had time to decide what he was going to do about it himself, they had opened the door of the cockpit and dragged out the unconscious pilot at the risk of their own lives!

Wharton, Smithy, Bull, and Rake were the heroes of the day in case you want their names: but 'here were plenty more where they came from, had they been needed!

So, taking it all round, I fancy we scored over General Curry. In fact, he was so impressed that he missed his train to go back to the Head and withdraw all he had said.

What more could you ask?

"THE COUNT OF MONTE CRISTO."

The chap who had the nerve to pinch the above book from my study is advised to return it at once. I can forgive him for taking "The Count." But if he hangs on to it, he'll "take the count!"

FRANK NUGENT, Study No. 1, Remove.



"The entire skool!"

When things got on the move with a vengenz!

They met the Honorable Guy and parked the car, then hid themselves in the branches of a tree on the other side of the road.

They were only just in time. Hardly had they made themselves comfortable before a tall, forin-looking fellow came tinkling along towards the tuckshop. He wore his hat pulled well down over his eyes and he sneaked along like a thief in the nite.

"Von Schyster!" hissed Mr. Spangler. "Let me get at him and I'll—"

"Patience, my dear chap!" whispered the Head. "Wait till we've reskewed the prisoners; then we'll give him what for, if you like!"

Their wildest hoaps were realised when Hair von Schyster emerged from the tuckshop. He was farly staggering under the weight of two handfuls of German sossidges! No longer was there any doubt about the fate of the missing sercuss performers!

Doctor Birchermall led the way down from the tree. Followed by Mr. Spangler and the Honorable Guy, he shadowed the sossidge-laden German out of the villidge till they reached a lonely barn. So this was where he had kept the St. Sam's sercuss performers in captivity!

From behind a hedge, the three watched the German unlock the door of the barn, then go inside.

"Now's our chance!" said Mr. Spangler. But Doctor Birchermall shook his head and grinned.

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PIRATE COSTUMES IN CLASS NEXT TERM?

Beaks' New Ideas May Have Strange Results

If there's anything in what Skinner says, we're in for a high old time next term.

Skinner, of course, knows everything, so there may be something in it. But it sounds a bit too steep for us.

What he says is that some of the masters have become converted to this New - Ideas - in - Education bizney.

They've been listening to a professor johnny who says that the common-or-garden class-room method of teaching kills chaps' imagination.

This professor johnny has drummed it into them that growing lads were never intended to spend most of their waking hours sitting at desks with their eyes glued to a blackboard. His idea, Skinner says, is that youngsters like us ought to be allowed to develop our separate individualities, and so on.

According to Skinner, this means that if we feel like turning up to class in fancy-dress—in a pirate's costume, for instance—we should do it. And if we feel like tipping the inkwell over our next-door neighbour, we should jolly well tip the inkwell over him. And our Form-

Christmas vacation.

All we can say to Skinner is, that when Quelchy tells us to turn up in pirates' clobber and to tip ink over each other and to go out tuck-snatching and to have nights out on the loose, we'll believe him.

BUT NOT BEFORE!

And then it happened! From out of the blue, as the General walked down to the gates, descended the last thing the general had expected to see at Greyfriars that afternoon—an aeroplane in difficulties! The general had to run pretty quickly to avoid being knocked down and fellows scattered wildly, too, as the machine swooped down to earth.

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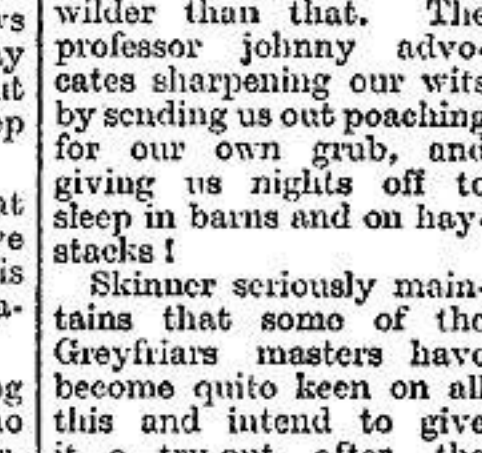
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HOSKINS WANTS A STRAW DIET!

Says JAMES HOBSON

If you imagine the only thing about which Hoskins is potty is music, you've made a big mistake.

Matter of fact, he has spasms of pottiness over quite a lot of things. The latest is his diet.

First we knew about it was at dinner-time the other day, when he pulled out a paper bag containing something that looked like sawdust. Hacker spotted it and asked what it was.

"Minced straw, sir!" was our genius' cheery reply.

"And why, pray, have you brought a bag of minced straw with you to dinner?" Hacker inquired.

"To eat, sir!"

We grinned. Hacker jumped.

"To—to eat? To eat, did you say, Hoskins?"

"Yes, rather, sir," said Hoskins cheerfully. "I've decided to go in for the Straw Diet. Doctor Blurb, the famous diet chap, says that if we all eat straw with every meal, we shall become a race of supermen!"

"So I'm turning myself into a superman right away, sir," said Hoskins. And, just to prove it, he up-ended the bag over his soup.

Since that time, Hoskins has religiously taken a bag of minced straw with every meal. He shows no signs, however, of turning into a superman at the moment, and somehow I don't think he ever will.

Just for a lark, you see, we're going to chain him up in the stables this afternoon with a large bundle of straw, and charge a penny a time for fellows to see the Human Donkey feed. By tea-time I have an idea that Hoskins will have had enough of the straw diet to last him for the rest of his natural!

"Bless my soul!"

"I suppose he will. But what of it?"

"Well, he'll have to get the tuck from a tuckshop somewhere, won't he?" argued the Head. "And as he's a German, it's ten to one in doennuts that his thoughts will natcherally turn to German sossidges!"

"My hat!" mermered the sercuss proprietor.

"So, if my reasoning is correct, all we have to look for is a shop which has sold one man enuff German sossidges to feed about thirty hungry people! See?"

"By Jove! I believe you've hit it!" cried Mr. Spangler. "I can't see a flaw in the arguement. There's only one snag, sir—who's going to do the searching?"

"But how are we going to find out where they are?"

Doctor Birchermall pondered deeply for some minnits. Then suddenly his eyes began to gleam and a low chuckle escaped him.

"By h o k e y! I wonder—"

"You've thought of a way of doing it?" asked Mr. Spangler eagerly.

"I've thought of the only way of doing it!" grinned the Head. "If von Schyster is holding our chaps prisoner, he'll have to feed them, won't he?"

"It's—it's terribul!"

Mr. Spangler scratched his nose.

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