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BUNTER SURPRISES "SLIM JIM!"

(A dramatic incident from this week's grand school story dealing with the adventures of Harry Wharton & Co., of Greyfriars.)

Our Special Football Feature!



This week "Referee" tells you about the methods of "DICK" PYM, the English International Goalkeeper of Bolton Wanderers.

IT is the opinion of most of the attackers in first-class football that good goalkeepers are very plentiful. That is only natural. It is also my own opinion that, taking one club with another, the position of goalkeeper is more satisfactorily filled than any other position in first-class football.

The foregoing being true, it follows that there is much difference of opinion as to who is the best goalkeeper of modern times. I am not going to be dogmatic on the point, but suggest that, taking everything into consideration, the vote should be given to "Dick" Pym, the keeper of Bolton Wanderers, who has often played for England.

There is, of course, one very good reason why goalkeepers up to first-class standard are plentiful. The goalkeeper has a job different from that of any other player on the field. He is essentially "on his own." Moreover, no matter in what class of football a goalkeeper plays, he has the same sort of shots to deal with—high ones, low ones, fast ones, slow ones. Therefore, when the youngster advances from minor football to the top class, he has not a great deal to learn in the way of new problems.

But the fact that goalkeepers in all classes of football get the same sort of shots is a special reason for young goalkeepers taking stock of the way masters do things. And there is no man who can be watched more profitably than Dick Pym.

Fisherman, Too!

The career of this goalkeeper provides rather a quaint switch. His father was a fisherman in Devon, and it was expected that young Dick would also take to fishing. He did in his early days. But from luring fish into the net off the Devon coast, he has turned round to keeping shots out of the net at football.

To-day, fishing is his favourite hobby. As soon as each football season is over he dashes off back to Devon, and joins the lads in the fishing-smacks. When his football career is over, the probability is that he will go back to Devon for good, for he is now interested financially in a fishing fleet.

Now, Dick Pym, like many goalkeepers, was just "pushed into the job." He was playing one day in the forward line of a local team in his native village of Topsham. Things went badly for Topsham that day. They had a goalkeeper who had been "picked up," and he had to pick up some half-dozen out of the net before half-time. The

captain of the side decided upon a change. "You try what you can do in goal," he said to Pym. Quite willing, Dick went into goal; but he was powerless to stop the tide flowing so strongly against Topsham, and before he had been there long three more goals had been piled up against the side.

By this time the captain was in a panic, and not in a good temper. "I thought the other fellow was the worst goalkeeper in the world," he said to Pym, "but now I know he wasn't!"

His Motto!

In telling that story against himself, Pym adds that the cutting remark made by the captain of his boy team decided him to be a goalkeeper. "I will prove that fellow wrong," said Pym to himself. And he has done it to the extent of playing for England.

Now as to the methods of this master between the posts. I have said that he is a good man to watch and to copy. That means he is orthodox, and I want to tell you here that in a goalkeeper orthodox methods pay. There is nobody to remedy the mistakes of a

goalkeeper—hence he must take "safety first" as his motto.

This "safety first" idea is shown in the way he does certain things. If a high ball is sent in his direction he takes one quick look at the position of his own backs and of his opponents. If he sees that his backs can hold off those opponents, Pym catches the ball, brings it down, and kicks it up the field. But if opponents are in such a position that they may rush him into the net if he catches the ball, he doesn't catch it. He plays for safety, either punching out with his fist, or, if the shot is too high for him to do that, he slips it over the net with his fingers.

If he has time to catch the ball, but no time to kick it away, he throws it away—towards the touchline. He knows that by throwing it towards the touchline he is giving himself more time to get back into position.

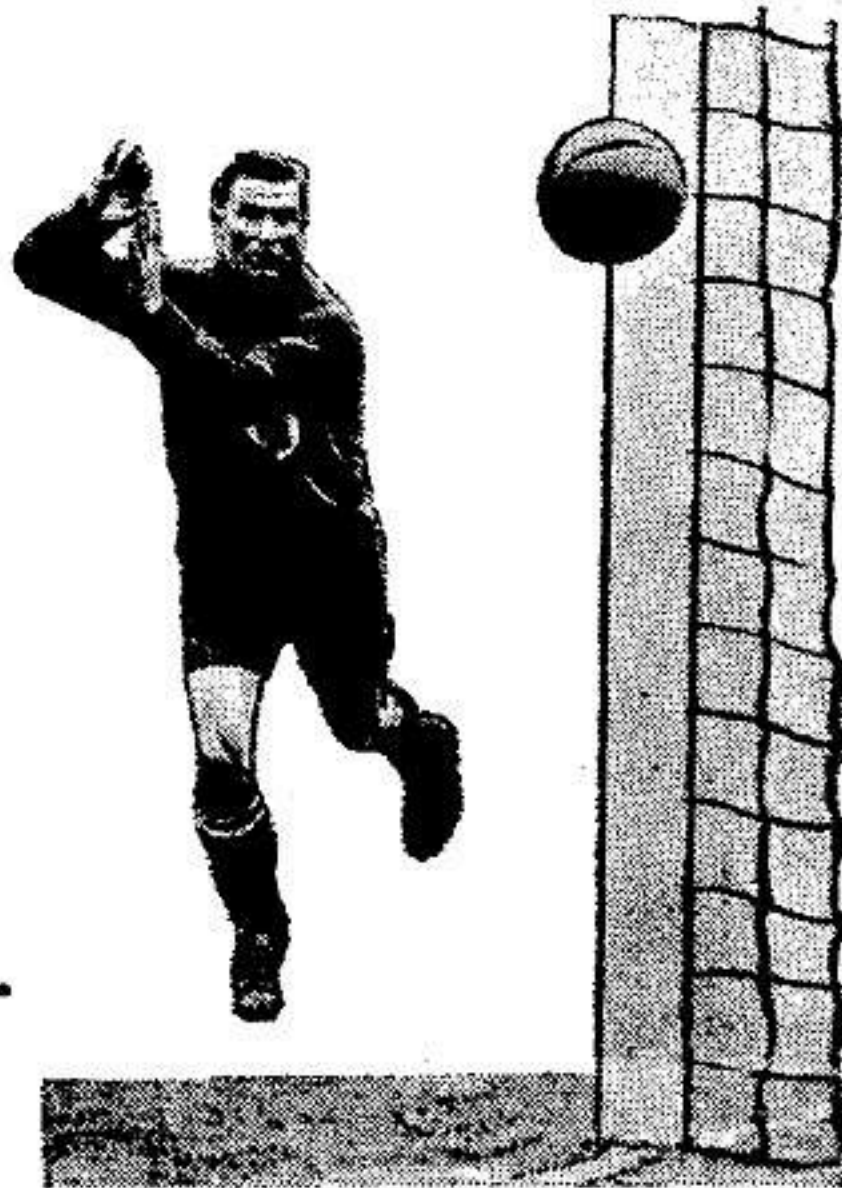
The Great Asset!

But though Pym plays the goalkeeper in the orthodox way, and takes safety first as his motto, this doesn't mean that he is lacking in courage. He isn't. There are occasions in the career of a goalkeeper when he must almost literally take his life in his hands. When that centre-forward has the ball at his toe, and is past the backs, there is only one hope for the goalkeeper. He must go and meet the oncoming forward. And if the forward kicks the ball ever such a little way ahead, then the goalkeeper must dive for it—full length, even at the risk of landing in hospital, as Pym has done more than once since he went to Bolton.

Then he can make a flying save with the best. Cup Finals are won by the goals which are scored, but the Cup can be saved by good goal-keeping. Dick Pym saved Bolton Wanderers in the Final Tie of 1926 against Manchester City. The Wanderers were a goal up, but Manchester were putting on pressure. The ball went to Tom Browell quite close in. Browell applied his head, and the ball seemed to be going into the corner of the goal for a certainty. In fact, the people were yelling "Goal!" But Dick Pym sprang across like a cat, touched the ball with the tips of his fingers, and turned it round the post. A Cup Final saved by agility. And that is one thing to look for in a good goalkeeper—agility.

Pym is a great goalkeeper because he combines safety first with great courage and marvellous anticipation.

"DICK" PYM got his hands to it and turned what looked like a certain goal into a corner!



BUNTER, THE STICKER! They don't want Billy Bunter at Greyfriars—the Head has said so, and so has Bunter's late Form master. But that makes no difference to Billy; he's made up his mind that he's going back to Greyfriars at all costs. Read how he wangles it!

BUNTER COMES TO STAY!



A rattling fine long complete school story of Harry Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars, "starring" Billy Bunter, the Owl of the Remove.

By **FRANK RICHARDS.**

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Back to School!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob Cherry. A crowded train was gliding into Courtfield Junction.

Many heads—all of them belonging to Greyfriars fellows—were put out of the carriage windows; among them the head of Bob Cherry, of the Remove, with its unruly shock of flaxen hair.

It was the first day of the new term; and from all quarters of the kingdom Greyfriars men were gathering again at the old school. More than one train had disgorged a swarm in Courtfield Station, and the platform was alive with them. Most of them looked merry and bright; some of them looked as if they would have liked the holidays to last longer. Bob Cherry, needless to say, was full of spirits and exuberant cheerfulness; that being his permanent state. Many voices echoed on the platform; but Bob's powerful tones boomed above them all as he hailed the friends he spotted in the crowd—quite unable to wait till the train stopped.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Wharton, old bean! Inky, old tulip!"

Harry Wharton and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh looked round towards the incoming train. They had arrived together, and were waiting for the rest of the "Co." Wharton waved his hand to Bob, and Hurree Singh gave him a cheery, dusky grin.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Johnny Bull here yet?" bawled Bob.

"Not yet."
"And Franky?"

"Frank's on the platform somewhere," called back Harry Wharton. "Here, don't shove, Coker!"

Coker of the Fifth, like the Remove chums, had come in by an earlier train, and was waiting on the platform for his friends, Potter and Greene. Coker expected them by that train, and he shoved his way forward, regardless of the fellows who received his hefty shoves. Mere juniors—fags of the Lower Fourth—were nothing in Coker's eyes—less than nothing, if possible. Harry Wharton staggered to the right, and Hurree Singh to the left, as Coker of the Fifth shoved his way towards the train.

"Look here, you Fifth Form ass—" exclaimed Wharton wrathfully.

"My esteemed, fatheaded Coker—" gasped Hurree Singh.

Coker gave them a glance.

"Shut up!" he said.

"You silly ass!" roared Wharton.

"Silence!"

Coker of the Fifth never could understand that, not being a Sixth Form man or a prefect, he was nobody in particular, and had no right whatever to order fellows about. Ordering fellows about was one of Horace Coker's many little weaknesses.

He turned his back on the indignant juniors, and stared at the train. He expected Potter and Greene by that train, and he had no time or attention to waste on indignant fags.

The train had not yet stopped. Porters shouted to the crowd on the platform to stand back. Every window showed a head or a couple of heads—two or three doors had been already recklessly flung open. Voices shouted

and hands were waved, and hats, Bob Cherry's voice sounded like that of Stentor of old, as the train slowed down in the station.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Is that you, Coker? What's that sticking on your face, Coker?"

"Eh, what?" Horace Coker passed his hand over his face. "What—"

"All serene—it's only your nose!" said Bob cheerfully. "I didn't recognise it as a nose for a moment."

Coker glared.

"You cheeky young sweep!" he roared.

"Same to you, old bean, and many of them!"

"Don't make all that row?" snapped Coker.

"What?"

"Behave yourself! Not so much shindy!"

Bob Cherry grinned.

Coker simply couldn't help giving orders. But his lofty commands did not worry Robert Cherry of the Remove.

"Same old Coker!" grinned Bob. "Same old cheeky ass! Same old face like a doormat, and same old manners like a bear!"

The train stopped, Bob's carriage stopping just opposite the spot where Horace Coker was standing and frowning in lofty wrath.

The door flew open.

From the open doorway flew Bob Cherry.

Perhaps it was by accident that the cheery Bob flew into Coker. Perhaps it was not.

At all events, there was a sudden and terrific collision.

Bob Cherry came out of the carriage a good deal like a torpedo, and landed on Coker's broad chest like a battering-ram.

There was a wild roar from Horace Coker as he staggered backwards and sat down on the platform.

Bob Cherry sat on Coker.

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"Whoop!" roared Coker. "Why, I—I—I—I!"

He grasped Bob Cherry with both hands.

"Rescue, Remove!" yelled Bob.

Harry Wharton and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh grasped Coker at the same moment. Wharton seized his collar, while the dusky junior annexed his ears—extensive ears that gave a good hold.

Coker went over on his back, and his head tapped on the cold, hard, unsympathetic platform. The roar that came from Horace Coker could have been heard far beyond the confines of Court-field Station.

Bob Cherry jumped up cheerily.

He stayed only to jerk out Coker's tie, and to jam his hat down on his dizzy head—the work of a moment. Then he walked along the platform with Wharton and Hurree Singh, leaving Coker of the Fifth to sort himself out. Frank Nugent joined them; but the chums of the Remove did not leave the station yet—they were waiting for Johnny Bull.

Horace Coker sat up in a dizzy state, clutching at the hat that was rammed down hard on his bullet head, and raising his voice in wrath.

"Oh, here you are, Coker!"

Potter and Greene of the Fifth had alighted from the train, and they stood and looked down at Coker.

"Ow! I'll smash 'em!"

"What are you sitting down there for, old chap?" asked Potter. "Tired?"

"You silly chump!"

Horace Coker scrambled to his feet. "Those cheeky fags!" he gasped. "I'm going to smash 'em! You fellows come with me—this way—"

Coker rushed along the crowded platform in pursuit of the merry Removites, bumping fellows right and left, amid yells of protest.

Potter and Greene did not follow. They looked at one another and grinned. It was just like Coker to begin the new term with a row among the fags, they considered; but they did not want any themselves. If Coker chose to start a shindy in a railway station, Potter and Greene were ready to leave him to it. And they left him.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here comes Coker!" shouted Bob Cherry, as the great man of the Fifth bore down on them.

"Shoulder to shoulder!" grinned Nugent.

"All hands repel boarders!" chuckled Bob.

Coker of the Fifth rushed down on the four. Coker never counted odds—which was plucky of Coker, but rather unfortunate, sometimes, in results. He swept down on the quartette to sweep them practically out of existence. Instead of which, the four, declining to be swept, collared Coker on all sides, jerked him over, and rolled him along the platform, yelling.

Coker's hat vanished in one direction, his necktie in another; and his voice spread over the whole station.

Fellows who had been hustled out of Coker's way, rushed to lend the chums of the Remove a hand, or foot. There was little to be seen of Coker of the Fifth, under so many hands—and feet—but there was much to be heard of him. His remarks were continuous and emphatic.

"Cave!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, as the stalwart form of Wingate of the Sixth loomed over the laughing crowd.

And the juniors faded away, leaving Horace Coker sprawling, breathless, and dishevelled, as the captain of Greyfriars reached the spot.

"Coker! Is that you, Coker?"

"Ow! Groogh! Yes! Wow!"

"You look more like a tramp than a Greyfriars man! What the thump do you mean by kicking up a shindy here?"

"Ow! Wow! Those cheeky fags—wow!—I'll smash 'em— Groogh!"

"Get up, you ass, and chuck it!" said Wingate severely. "You ought to be jolly well ashamed of yourself—playing fag larks with a mob of juniors on the platform!"

Coker gasped.

"Fag larks! Me! Why, I—I—I—"

Indignation choked Coker.

"That's enough!"

Wingate of the Sixth strode away, leaving Coker sitting on the platform, breathless, gasping, and with feelings too deep for words, even had Coker retained sufficient breath to utter any.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The Sad Case of William George Bunter!

"O H dear!"

Billy Bunter, once of the Greyfriars Remove, uttered that ejaculation in tones of the deepest and most dismal dolefulness.

First day of term should have found Billy Bunter en route for Greyfriars School. But it did not find him there. Sammy Bunter was starting for Greyfriars. Bessie Bunter had started for Cliff House. But Billy Bunter—once of the Remove—was not to start.

Bunter had thought it over and over during the last days of the vacation, but it had seemed too awful to be true, and he simply could not realise it.

It was too absolutely rotten.

Injustice Bunter was accustomed to. He had never been valued at his true value at Greyfriars, or anywhere else. Carping fellows found fault with Bunter; testy Form masters never saw what a perfect character he was.

If he did not rejoin the Remove for the new term it was quite likely that the Remove would not miss him. If Mr. Quelch did not see him again, it was probable that the Remove master would forget his fat existence. The Remove had never been proud of him; Mr. Quelch had never prized him as a really discerning Form master would have done. Still, there was a limit to injustice—or ought to have been. Excluding Bunter from Greyfriars School altogether was too thick—it was beyond the limit.

And that was what had happened.

Not that Bunter wanted particularly to resume the absorption of knowledge from Mr. Quelch. Not that he was tired of the holidays. Bunter disliked the end of the holidays as much as he liked the end of the terms. But— There was a but.

Had Mr. Bunter decided to take him away from Greyfriars and send him to Eton or Harrow Bunter would not have objected. Greyfriars did not think much of him; but that, obviously, was the fault of Greyfriars; he might have received justice in another school.

But that was not Mr. Bunter's intention.

His intention was to place William George on a stool in his office now that the headmaster of Greyfriars refused to take him back for the new term.

That meant work!

Bunter shuddered at the prospect.

It was true that at Greyfriars Mr. Quelch made him work—as much as he could! But in an office it would be real work—not what was called work at school.

Bunter naturally felt some contempt for a school that did not know how to prize its brightest jewel. But he wanted to go back to Greyfriars. It was the lesser of two evils.

And he was not going!

"Good-bye, old bean!" grinned Sammy Bunter, as he stepped into the taxi. "Any message for the fellows?"

William George eyed him morosely.

"Go and eat coke!" was his reply.

"I'll tell the chaps you're not coming back this term," said Sammy. "I like making fellows happy."

"Beast!"

Sammy Bunter grinned and waved a fat hand, and the taxi rolled away with him. Billy Bunter blinked after it gloomily through his big spectacles.

The sound of the wheels died away.

Bunter turned back morosely towards the house.

The injustice of it rankled deep in his fat breast.

After all, what had Bunter done to cause the Head to take such a drastic step as to refuse him admittance to his old school for the new term?

He had simply taken French leave at the end of the previous term—or nearly at the end.

He had broken detention! Well, fellows had done that before! He had led his Form master a dance! Well, that was Quelch's look-out! He had stayed away from school without leave! Suppose he had? He had started his vacation a week or so before the school broke up, giving himself leave to do so. Well, what of it?

If he had gone back on that occasion he would have been licked. Surely that was a good and sufficient reason for not having gone back.

Quelch, of course, had been in a wax.

At the beginning of the vacation Bunter had given little thought to the end of the vacation. It was not Bunter's method to meet troubles half-way. But now the end of the vacation had come and the trouble had to be met.

And the trouble had materialised in the form of a letter from Dr. Locke to Mr. Bunter, stating the Head's decision—which was that a recklessly insubordinate Lower boy had better not return to the school at all.

The Head was sorry, but he was firm. He was bound to support the authority of the Form master, who had been flouted and treated with the grossest disrespect by Mr. Bunter's son. And the decision was final.

Mr. Bunter had had to accept that decision. Billy Bunter's opinion was that he ought to have appealed to the governing board of Greyfriars to call the headmaster to order. Such a decision was a crying injustice—if it meant that Bunter was to do any work! And it did!

He had told his father that he was willing to go to Eton, to Harrow, to Winchester, to Rugby—anywhere but to work!

Mr. Bunter declined to entertain any such suggestion. He stated that a fellow who was turned out of one school was likely to be turned out of another. It was in vain that Bunter pointed out that Greyfriars was probably the only school in the kingdom where his uncommon merits would not have been acknowledged.

Mr. Bunter declined to listen. It was the office for Bunter—and Bunter for the office! Like a sword of Damocles an office stool was suspended over Billy Bunter's head.

It was awful!

Bunter rolled dismally into the house



The door flew open, and Bob Cherry came out of the carriage a good deal like a torpedo, and landed on Coker's broad chest like a battering ram. "Whoop!" There was a wild roar from Horace Coker as he staggered backwards and sat down on the platform. (See Chapter 1.)

The Ford was at the gate, and Mr. Bunter was about to leave for the City.

Bunter blinked at him pathetically.

Mr. Bunter eyed him severely.

"William!" he said, in his fat voice.

William blinked at him.

"I shall make final arrangements to-day, William."

"Oh dear!"

"To-morrow you will accompany me to the City."

"Wow!"

"I shall place you under the special direction of Mr. Snarker, who will see that you do not laze and slack, as I fear you have been accustomed to do at school."

"Oh!"

"This is your last day of idleness. Make the most of it!"

"I—I say—" gasped Bunter.

"Well?"

"I'd rather go back to Greyfriars!" groaned Bunter.

"That is out of the question, as you are well aware, as your headmaster has refused to take you back."

"If you wrote to him—"

"I have written."

"If you phoned—"

"I have phoned."

"If you called to see him—"

"I have no time."

Mr. Bunter rolled doorward.

"I—I—I say, father, if—if the Head would let me go back, he—he—he might—"

"I should be glad," said Mr. Bunter grimly. "Your laziness, idleness, obtuseness, and general incapacity are more suited for a public school than for a City office, William. But I have no

hope that he will take you back. I have no doubt your Form master is relieved to be rid of you. It stands to reason he would be."

It was injustice upon injustice, like Pelion piled on Ossa. Even in his own circle, where surely his merits should have been known and prized, Billy Bunter was not appreciated.

"But—but if he would!" gasped Bunter. "If—if I asked him and he consented—"

Sniff from Mr. Bunter.

"You may ask him if you like," he said. "You may do anything you please to-day. To-morrow—the office."

Mr. Bunter departed down the gravel path, and the Ford grunted away with him. Billy Bunter blinked after him dolefully.

"William!"

"Yes, mater?"

"I have a cake for you."

Bunter brightened.

Mrs. Bunter at least sympathised, and her sympathy took a practical form that Bunter could understand and appreciate.

There was consolation in the cake.

But the consolation ended with the cake, and the cake did not last long. Nothing of an edible nature lasted long in Bunter's hands.

The fat junior wandered into the garden. He was thinking. This was rather unusual on Bunter's part, but he had a problem to solve. At Greyfriars they were all beasts. Bunter could not think of a single fellow there who was not a beast. Yet he yearned to go back to Greyfriars. There are beasts and beasts, and Bunter had a well-

founded apprehension that he would find Mr. Snarker, in the office, a worse beast than any beast he had ever encountered at Greyfriars.

He was going back!

Surely the Head could not resist a personal appeal if Bunter pointed out to him how unjust it was to take any notice of that beast Quelchy! Surely all the fellows would rally round and petition the Head to let him stay!

It ought to be so at least. Bunter had doubts, but he stifled them. His father had said that he could appeal to the Head if he liked—that he could do anything he liked that day. His father undoubtedly would be glad if he got back to Greyfriars by hook or by crook. He did not expect William George to prove a prop to his declining years in the office. Billy Bunter resolved to try it on.

It was with a palpitating heart that Billy Bunter sat in the train. He was going to try it on. Somehow, anyhow, he was going to wedge into Greyfriars. They were all beasts in Greyfriars, from the Head down to the porter, from the Sixth Form to the Second. But the alternative was work, and that was unthinkable!

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

No More Bunter!

JOHNNY BULL jumped out of the train at Courtfield, and the Co. greeted him cheerily and vociferously. The Famous Five linked arms and walked down the platform, cheerily upsetting Temple of the
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Fourth in their career, and bumping Hobson of the Shell into an automatic machine. Tubb of the Third got in the way and was left for dead—more or less. Nugent minor of the Second, who also got in the way with a cheeky grin, was spared, being the brother of Nugent of the Remove. Nugent minor, however, had something to say.

"You fellows heard?" he squeaked.

And the Famous Five came to a halt to hear the news.

"Heard which and what?" inquired Bob Cherry.

"About Bunter major."

Now the chums of the Remove had seen a good deal of Billy Bunter in the vac, but they had not seen him for some days now, and had forgotten his existence. It was inexcusable, but they had.

But, reminded of his fat existence by Dicky Nugent, they did not look overjoyed to remember that he was still an inhabitant of the universe.

"Oh, Bunter!" said Johnny Bull. "Blow Bunter!"

"Bless Bunter!" said Harry Wharton.

"The blessedness is terrific!"

"But have you heard?" persisted Dicky Nugent, who evidently regarded his news, as yet untold, as of interest.

"Give it a name," said Frank.

"Bunter's not coming back!" announced Dicky.

"Bunter not coming back? Gammon!" exclaimed Johnny Bull. He spoke as if he considered such news too good to be true.

"Honest Injun!" said Nugent minor. "I've had it from Sammy Bunter. He's back, as fat as ever, stuffing in the buffet this blessed minute! He says that his major ain't coming back to Greyfriars at all."

"My only hat!"

"Poor old Bunter!" said Bob Cherry. "I suppose the beaks were bound to come down heavy on him for bolting away from school last term. But—poor old Bunter!"

"Well, what did the fat duffer expect?" asked Johnny Bull. "A chap can't run away from school when he likes and come back when he chooses."

"So Bunter's not coming back this term?" said Wharton.

"Not this term or any other!" said Dicky Nugent. "Fancy no more Bunter in the Remove! You fellows have all the luck. I don't see why they couldn't have told Sammy to stay at home along with him."

"Is Sammy cut up?" asked Frank.

Nugent minor chuckled.

"Not an awful lot. His appetite's as good as ever, anyhow. I saw him at his seventh doughnut!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Wharton & Co. walked on, assimilating the startling news. They had wondered what would be the result of Bunter's exploits of the last term—till they forgot Bunter. Bunter, apparently, had expected the vacation to wipe the whole thing out—had hoped, at least, that his transgressions would be forgotten in his long absence during the summer holidays. That was like Bunter.

"Quelch was frightfully mad with him," Bob Cherry remarked. "He got old Quelch's rag right out. I suppose he knew what to expect."

"I'm sorry," said Wharton. "I can't say I shall miss Bunter a whole lot, but—poor old Bunter!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, Toddy!" bawled Bob Cherry, catching sight of Peter Todd of the Remove outside the station. "Heard the news?"

Toddy looked round and shook his head.

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"Bunter's not coming back!"

"Gammon!"

"Bunter minor says so."

"Wish father to the thought, I expect," said Peter. "Bunter will be back all right in Study No. 7. Fancy Study No. 7 without Bunter! These jolly things don't happen in real life!"

Apparently there would be dry eyes in Study No. 7 if Bunter did not materialise that term. The Famous Five smiled and walked on. In the High Street they came on Tom Dutton, Bunter's other study-mate in Study No. 7, and paused to give him the news. Tom Dutton being deaf, many fellows did not take the trouble to talk to him; for which very reason the Famous Five often bestowed the pleasure of their conversation on Dutton.

"Heard the news, Dutton?" asked Bob Cherry, giving Tom a smack on the shoulder that made him jump.

"Eh?"

"Bunter isn't coming back!"

"No; but you've hurt my shoulder, you ass!" said Tom, rubbing it. "You haven't hurt my back."

"Oh, my hat!" roared Bob. "Bunter—not—coming—back—to—school!"

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Dutton warmly. "You're a fool yourself, if you come to that—smacking a fellow on the shoulder and nearly cracking the bone!"

"Not fool—school!" shrieked Bob. "Bunter—"

"New fellow?" asked Dutton.

"New fellow—no! What do you mean?"

"I don't know anybody named Punter."

"Great pip! Bunter! BUNTER!"

"Oh, Bunter! You needn't yell. I can hear you all right when you don't mumble. Bunter was my study-mate last term. What about him?"

"You tell him, Johnny," said Bob, gasping. "I'm winded!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bunter's staying at home!" shouted Johnny Bull.

"In the summer?" asked Dutton, in surprise. "Must be jolly warm in Rome in the summer. I'd prefer Norway myself, if I went abroad for the vac."

"Help!" gasped Johnny Bull.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Frank Nugent took up the tale. It was only fair play to whack it out, when Tom Dutton had to be told something. "Bunter's not coming back!" raved Nugent.

"I can hear you all right, Nugent! Bunter's running back, is he?" said Dutton. "Isn't he coming by train?"

"Oh, my hat! No, no! Not coming back at all," shrieked Nugent. "The Head won't have him back. He's not coming."

"Well, that's rot!" said Tom.

"True!" shrieked Nugent.

"Can't be true! Bunter lives somewhere in Surrey, and he couldn't possibly run back all this way, right across Kent. Trying to pull my leg, or what?"

"Help!"

"Your turn, Wharton," chuckled Bob, and the captain of the Remove filled his lungs and took up the tale.

"Bunter's gone for good!" he shouted.

"I'm not surprised to hear that," assented Dutton. "Whenever Bunter's gone anywhere, you can safely bet on it that he's gone for good."

"Not food—good!" shouted Wharton.

"Eh? Good food?" asked Dutton.

"Well, I suppose he will get good food if he can—so long as it's sweet and sticky."

"I think we'd better leave Dutton to pick up this piece of news," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "We've told all

Courtfield, but Dutton hasn't caught on to it yet."

Five or six people were staring at the juniors by this time, apparently entertained.

"Oh, let Inky take his turn," chuckled Bob. "Whack it all round."

"My esteemed Dutton," shouted Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, "we are tryfully attempting to impart an execrable piece of preposterous news."

"Eh?"

"The ridiculous Bunter is excludefully barred from returning to Greyfriars," yelled Hurree Singh. "He is turned out of the absurd school!"

The next moment, Hurree Jamset Ram Singh staggered back, that movement being caused by a smart tap on his dusky nose from Tom Dutton's knuckles.

The nabob gasped, and stared blankly at Dutton. That youth, with an excited look, pushed back his cuffs.

"Come on!" he shouted.

"Has the esteemed chump gone potty?" gasped Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Absurd fool, am I?" roared Dutton. "I'll give you absurd fool! I may be a little hard of hearing—especially when fellows mumble as you fellows do! But calling me names like that—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked the juniors.

"Don't try to explain," gasped Bob Cherry. "It will take us till the Christmas vac. Run for it!"

And the Famous Five trotted on their way, leaving Tom Dutton staring after them in indignant wrath, and still ignorant of the news they had been striving so strenuously to impart.

By the time the Remove fellows gathered at Greyfriars, Tom Dutton was the only fellow in the Form who did not know that Billy Bunter wasn't coming back that term. And so, naturally, Tom was the only fellow in the Remove who didn't think that it was too good to be true.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Merely Bunter!

MR. QUELCH snorted—that is, if a dignified, middle-aged gentleman, holding the important position of a Form master in a celebrated public school could be supposed to snort.

It sounded like a snort.

Two days in the term were very busy ones for a Form master—first day and last day. Last day, perhaps, was not quite so strenuous as first day, but then, a term's fatigue had accumulated on last day, which made it worse. On the other hand, on the last day of the term, a Form master had the happy prospect of not seeing anything more of his Form for a long time, which was a solace. On the first day of the term he had, of course, no such solace. So the first day of any term was not only the busiest for a Form master, but the day with the longest and most dismal prospects.

On such a day, when he had his hands full with his returning Form, with all sorts of arrangements to make; boys to question, doctors' certificates to glance at, all sorts and conditions of work of his own, as well as some few things to do to oblige the headmaster, Mr. Quelch did not want to hear the cheery ring of the telephone-bell.

But he had heard it several times that day already. Lord Mauleverer's uncle had rung him up for a few words. Hazeldene's father had phoned to mention that Haze! would be in by a later train. Someone—whose voice Mr. Quelch did not recognise as that of Herbert Vernon Smith—had rung him up

to inquire whether he was going to behave himself this term—an inquiry that reduced the Remove master to a state of cold fury. Mr. Lambe, the local vicar, had rung him up for a friendly chat, and promised to ring him up later on the subject of certain games of chess which were to be played at the vicarage; as if Mr. Quelch had time, on the first day of term, to make any arrangements about games of chess.

Now the bell was ringing again, and Mr. Quelch turned from a mass of papers on his littered table, giving utterance to a sound distinctly resembling a snort, and grabbed up the receiver.

"Well?" he hooted, in a tone of voice which hinted that matters were far from well.

"Hallo! Is that Quelchy?"

"What?"

"I mean Mr. Quelch."

"Speaking!"

"Good! I'm Bunter!"

Mr. Quelch jumped.

"Bunter!"

"Yes, sir."

"Upon my word!"

"You see, sir—"

The telephone rocked as Mr. Quelch jammed the receiver back. He breathed hard and deep.

Mr. Quelch had been under the impression that he was done with Bunter. Bunter did not seem to be under the impression that he was done with Mr. Quelch.

The Remove master sat down to his litter of papers again. Mr. Quelch had forgiven Bunter many of his offences—after the Head had consented to write to Mr. Bunter, informing that gentleman that his hopeful son could not return to Greyfriars any more. Mr. Quelch had then dismissed Bunter from his mind.

Mr. Quelch had quite a numerous Form at Greyfriars, and he was not sorry to lose the laziest and most obtuse member of it—apart from Billy Bunter's innumerable offences the previous term. Bunter had not been sacked, nothing of that sort. He had simply been forbidden to return to the school after running away from it. He was done with now—at least, Mr. Quelch believed so. For Bunter, in these circumstances, to enter into telephonic communication with his late Form master, was the height of impudence. Mr. Quelch fumed over his litter of papers.

Buzzzzzzzzzzzz!

Sharp and insistent rang the telephone-bell.

Mr. Quelch glared at it: If it was Bunter again— But it might be somebody else, somebody of importance. Disregarding the telephone-bell might mean disregarding some important matter. A letter need not be answered—but the telephone-bell must be attended to. The telephone has its disadvantages, like so many of the other wonderful inventions and discoveries that make life so much more troublesome to us than it was to our grandfathers.

Mr. Quelch grabbed up the receiver.

"Well?" he hissed.

"We were cut off, sir," said the fat voice of William George Bunter. "I was just going to say, sir—"

Mr. Quelch was about to jam the receiver back, when he realised that that would only mean another ring. It was better to hear Bunter out, and get rid of him. It would save time in the long run.

"Bunter! Is that Bunter?"

"Yes, sir! I hope you are well, sir," said Bunter affectionately.

"You young rascal!"

"Oh, really, sir—"

"How dare you telephone to me? What have you to say?"

"I was just going to tell you, sir, when you interrupted me. I want to come back to Greyfriars."

"Is that all?" hooted Mr. Quelch.

"That's all, sir. You see—"

"Under no circumstances whatever, Bunter, will you be allowed to return to this school. You chose to absent yourself from the school last term, and you must take the consequences. Your father has been duly informed by the Head, and the matter is at an end. That is final and irrevocable."

"I didn't catch that, sir! Would you mind saying it again?"

Mr. Quelch gasped.

"I thought I'd telephone first, sir," went on Bunter, "so that you wouldn't be surprised to see me when—when I came."

"If you dare to come here, Bunter, you will be ejected."

"Wha-a-at?"

"Thrown out at the gates!" roared Mr. Quelch. "Treated as an impudent trespasser!"

"B-b-but I want to come back, sir! I—I can't bear to part with you, sir!"

"What?"

"I—I'm so fond of you, sir."

"Bless my soul!"

"You're so nice, you know, sir."

"You—you—you young rascal! I forbid you to telephone to me! I decline to have a single word to say to you!"

The instrument rocked again, as Mr. Quelch emphatically replaced the receiver. The expression on his face at that moment might have made Billy Bunter change his mind about desiring to return to Greyfriars had he seen it.

Buzzzzzzzz!

Mr. Quelch gazed at the telephone. His gaze resembled that of the fabled basilisk. Had television been installed in Mr. Quelch's study, it was probable that Bunter would have dropped his receiver in terror.

But what the eye sees not, troubles not the heart. Bunter persisted cheerfully.

Once more Mr. Quelch grabbed up the receiver. He spoke into the transmitter in a choking voice.

"Bunter, how dare you! I shall write and complain to your father!"

"Oh, really, sir—"

"Silence! Go! Do not dare to telephone again!"

Bang!

The replacing of the receiver this time came very near to inflicting reckless damage on the property of the Post Office Telephone Department. Mr. Quelch sank down in his chair, breathing hard. It was unspeakable—it was iniquitous—that a busy Form master should be worried and persecuted like this, on the busiest day of the term. Mr. Quelch almost wished that Bunter was still in the Remove, so that he could have put in some hefty work with his stoutest cane.

Buzzzzzz!

"Goodness gracious!" gasped Mr. Quelch.

It was almost incredible that the Owl of the Remove should dare to persist like this. At least, it was intolerable! Mr. Quelch sprang at the telephone like a tiger. He wrenched off the receiver; he hooted into the transmitter:

"You impudent rascal! How dare you! Do you suppose for one moment that I will tolerate this unheard-of insolence? How dare you! I repeat, how dare you persist in telephoning to me!"

"What? What?" came a plump, wheezy voice over the wires. "Mr.

Quelch, this language—this language, sir—upon my word—"

Mr. Quelch almost dropped the receiver as the Vicar of Priardale's voice came through.

It was not Bunter this time!

"Oh!" gasped Mr. Quelch. "Oh! Ah! I—I—I—"

"I regret that I have—ah—troubled you, Mr. Quelch!" The vicar's tone was freezing. "I shall not—ah—trouble you again!"

"I—I—I—" gurgled Mr. Quelch.

"Enough, sir!"

Mr. Lambe rang off.

"Bless my soul!" murmured Mr. Quelch feebly.

He sat down limply at his table. And if Bunter fancied that he had made any advance in the direction of placating his late Form master, and increasing his chances of being allowed to return to Greyfriars, Bunter was labouring under a misapprehension.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Not Taking Any!

BILLY BUNTER rolled out of the telephone box at Lantham Station, with a deep frown wrinkling his fat brows.

He had made his appeal to Mr. Quelch. Mr. Quelch had failed him. Perhaps Bunter had hoped that Mr. Quelch would be moved and softened by the sound of the old familiar voice of the Owl of the Remove. Possibly he had expected that the Remove master would relent, that he would bid the absent one return; that he would say that all was forgotten and forgiven.

If Billy Bunter had had any expectations of this sort, they had been woefully disappointed.

Bunter was not quick on the uptake. It was difficult for him to realise that anyone could regard him as superfluous or unadmirable. But Mr. Quelch's answers had left him in no doubt.

His late Form master did not want him back at Greyfriars. He was not going to intercede with the Head. He wasn't going to get Bunter off. He was fed up with Bunter.

But there was always an appeal to Caesar, so to speak; and Bunter had tried the Head's private number after finishing with Henry Samuel Quelch. He had not got through to the Head. The Head's clerk had taken the call, and rebuffed Bunter ruthlessly. The Head was inaccessible to common mortals. Bunter had to give up the idea of an appeal to Caesar—by way of the telephone, at all events.

It remained to decide what he was going to do.

He had already decided what he was not going to do.

He was not going to return home!

Somehow, he had to wedge into Greyfriars. Failing that, he might run away and become a pirate or a cinema actor—he was not certain which. His bold, daring, enterprising nature and magnificent physique—he considered—fitted him for a bold and roving life. On the other hand, his striking good looks—he considered—marked him out for a distinguished career on the films. But there were difficulties in the way—he realised that there were a lot of difficulties. On the whole, he would go back to Greyfriars if he could.

Bunter was, for once, in funds, having collected several holiday tips from various relatives. Having finished on the telephone, he rolled away to the

"Pagoda" teashop, and did himself very well there. He stayed quite a long time at the Pagoda; and it was well on in the afternoon when he rolled out again, and bought a railway ticket for Courtfield.

From Courtfield the country bus bore him to within a short distance of Greyfriars School.

In sight of Greyfriars he halted.

Mr. Quelch had declared that if he presented himself there he should be ejected. He knew of old that Mr. Quelch was a man of his word. He more than suspected that Quelch would be glad of the chance of laying a cane about him before the ejection took place. He had been able to guess as much, from Quelch's voice on the phone.

If he entered Greyfriars he had to keep out of Quelch's sight. So much was clear. He had to avoid Quelch until he had made his appeal to the Head, and prevailed on that kind-hearted old gentleman to give him another chance.

If the Head failed him, Bunter felt that he would be rather at a loss. But he hoped for the best. Hope springs eternal in the human breast.

The school gates were wide open; fellows were going in and out. Bunter longed to join those who were going in.

But it was necessary first to ascertain whether Quelch was in the offing. Probably Quelch was busy on the first day of term; he wasn't likely to be mooching about in the quad. But a fellow couldn't be too sure—in the peculiar circumstances. Quelch had prevailed on the Head to refuse to allow Bunter to return to the school. Quelch would keep him from appealing to the Head if he could. That was only to be expected of such a beast. Quelch had to be avoided as carefully as a mad dog.

Bunter, blinking through a gap in a hedge at a little distance from the school gates, watched for a fellow to pass to whom he could call. He hoped to see Peter Todd, or some of the Famous Five; but any Remove man, he felt, was bound to play up and befriend him in the circumstances. But Remove men did not appear to be strolling around in sight, and Bunter waited long and waited in vain. And when the burly form of Coker of the Fifth came along Bunter blinked doubtfully at Horace Coker.

Coker was a Fifth Form man; disdainful of fags. Bunter was not on good terms with Coker; at their last meeting, the previous term, Coker had kicked him, hard, on the miserable suspicion that Bunter had bagged a cake from his study. It had been a nice cake, but hardly worth the kicking. Bunter hesitated to ask favours of Coker of the Fifth. But he was tired of waiting for help; and he resolved to risk it. It was a case of any port in a storm.

He rolled out through the gap in the hedge.

"I say, Coker!"

Coker of the Fifth stared at him.

"You!" he said.

"Yes, old chap," said Bunter, with a feeble grin.

"If you call me 'old chap' again look out for squalls!" said Coker casually.

"I don't stand familiarity from fags!"

"Oh, really, Coker—"

"I heard you'd been turned out of Greyfriars," said Coker, staring at him.

"What are you doing here, Bunter?"

"I—I've come back."

"But you don't belong to Greyfriars

now," said Coker puzzled. "All the school knows that you're not coming back this term."

"I—I've come, you know! The fact is it's all a mistake," explained Bunter. "My Form master has set the Head against me."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Once I get word with the Head it will be all right," said Bunter confidently. "He's soft—I—I mean, he's just! When he knows that Quelch has been unjust he will make it right."

"Oh crumbs!" said Coker.

"Only I've got to dodge Quelch," said Bunter pathetically. "He won't let me see the Head if he can help it. See? He's down on me. I don't know why, but he is! Cross-grained old hunks, you know. I say, Coker, will you go in and see where Quelch is, and bring me word if the coast is clear for me to dodge into the school?"

Coker almost fell down in his astonishment at such a request from such a negligible microbe as a Lower Fourth fag.

He gazed at Bunter speechlessly.

"You can do it all right," said Bunter. "You ain't very bright, Coker, but you've got sense enough to do that."

Still Coker did not speak. He only gazed at Bunter, wondering whether his large ears were deceiving him, or whether he was hearing aright.

"You'll do it?" asked Bunter hopefully. "You see, I've got to speak to the Head! I've tried to get through on the phone, but can't get him. It will be all right when I speak to him. I'm sure of that! The Head won't lose a fellow like me from the school if he can help it, that stands to reason. Go and see if the coast is clear, and bring me word—"

Coker woke to action.

He did not answer Bunter. Such unparalleled cheek was unworthy of an answer from Coker of the Fifth. It was time for actions, not for words.

Coker's actions were energetic. He made a stride at Bunter, seized him by the collar, and slung him round. Then Coker's boot—a rather large size in boots—was planted on Billy Bunter's tight trousers.

"Yaroooogh!"

Bunter flew.

Coker of the Fifth strode on. He had not refused Bunter in words, but he had made his meaning clear—painfully clear.

Bunter sprawled in the road, gasping.

"Ow! Oooch! Grooogh! Beast!"

Coker turned in at the school gates and disappeared.

Billy Bunter crawled back dismally through the hedge into the field. Coker, obviously, was not going to be of any use to him. The Owl of the Remove still watched the gates of Greyfriars from a distance, like a fat Peri at the gates of Paradise.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Help Required!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"

"What's the merry jest?"

"The jestfulness appears to be terrific!"

The Famous Five were gathered in Study No. 1 in the Remove. They were making themselves at home once more in the old school. There was rather a spread in Study No. 1. The Famous Five had returned from the holidays in funds. It was past tea-time; the chums of the Remove were hungry, and the spread was disappearing fast

under their attacks, while a buzz of cheery voices filled the old study.

And then the door opened, and Richard Nugent of the Second Form presented himself, with a grin and a chuckle, and an envelope in his hand.

Dicky Nugent seemed to be in an advanced state of merriment. A Second Form fag was not supposed to come grinning and chuckling into a Remove man's study. But Nugent minor grinned all over his cheeky face, and chuckled explosively.

"What's up, you young ass?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Nugent minor.

"What on earth—" began Frank Nugent.

"Anything happened, young 'un?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha! Yes! Ha, ha!"

"Well, what's happened?"

"Bunter!"

"Eh!"

"What?"

"Bunter!" shrieked Nugent minor.

"Ha, ha, ha!" He leaned on the study door and wiped his eyes. "Bunter! He's come back!"

"Bunter come back!" ejaculated Wharton. "How can Bunter have come back? He's gone for good!"

"The goodness is terrific!"

"Toddy asked Quelch if it was true," said Harry, staring at the fag. "He told him it was! Bunter's not coming back."

"Ha, ha! He's come!" chortled Nugent minor.

"If that is a joke—"

"It is! Bunter's no end of a joke!" chuckled the fag. "I was coming in from Friardale, and I thought it was Bunter's ghost when he jumped out of the hedge. But it wasn't his ghost—it was Bunter! He asked me to bring you this note. I said I would. He says he's coming back. Ha, ha, ha! Says that Quelch has deceived the Head about him, and that the Beak will put it right when he knows! Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Wharton took the note and opened it. The chums of the Remove read it together. Wharton had half suspected that Dicky Nugent was pulling his leg. But the letter, obviously, was written by Billy Bunter: The sprawling, scrawling hand was unmistakable. Still more unmistakable was the spelling:

"Dear old Harry,—I'm in a fearful phix, old chap. I've come back. I'm gowing to make an appeal to the Head to set this matter rite. It will be all rite as soon as the Head really knows how the matter stands. Quelch has blakkened me to him, of course or he would never have dunn this. You know that.

"I want you to help me get in without that beast spotting me and kiking me out. I'm waiting in the lain by the old oke. Kum at once!

"W. G. BUNTER."

"Well, if that doesn't take the jolly old biscuit!" said Bob Cherry. "Did you ever—"

"Well, hardly ever!"

"The preposterous Bunter must be fairly off his ridiculous rocker!" said Hurree Janset Ram Singh, in wonder.

"Why should he imagine that an appeal to the Head will alter matters?" asked Nugent. "The Head won't change his mind. Why should he?"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"I suppose Bunter thinks he's wronged, and the Head doesn't know what a really lovely chap he is, and he's going to tell him."



"You fellows want to keep me away from Greyfriars," said Bunter. "You're afraid I might put you in the shade. Look here, Wharton, I'll give you my word not to oust you out of the captaincy. I can't say fairer than that." "Oh, solissors!" "I've always been kind to you fellows, and as for Inky—he can't say I've been down on him for being a nigger."
(See Chapter 7.)

"The howling ass!"

"I—I suppose I'd better go out and see him," said Harry, doubtfully. "If he butts into the school Quelch will be in a fearful wax. He's in a wax already about something—I noticed that. May be able to persuade the shrieking ass to go home again."

"Can't very well leave him hanging about in the lane waiting," said Bob Cherry. "But better keep it dark. We don't want Quelch on our necks, and he would be jolly wild if he knew we were meeting Bunter near the school. He would call it aiding and abetting the chump. He will go right off at the deep end if he hears even a whisper that Bunter is within ten miles of Greyfriars!"

"The darkfulness is the proper caper," agreed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "The least said is the soonest mended by a stitch in time, as the English proverb says."

"Good old English proverb!" grinned Bob Cherry. "Well, Bunter can wait till we've finished tea, and then we'll all go together. Some of us may be able to knock a little sense into his fat head—perhaps!"

"The perhapsfulness is terrific!"

Harry Wharton & Co. finished their tea rather hastily. They did not yearn in the very least for the fascinating society of Billy Bunter; but they were sorry that the Owl had got it "in the neck" to such an extent. They were more than willing to do anything they could for the fat junior, though certainly not to the extent of smuggling him secretly into the school, as Bunter appeared to expect. They could sympathise with a fellow who was down on his luck; but there was a limit.

William George Bunter might think it probable that the Head would rescind his decision after Bunter had explained to him what a really splendid fellow he was, and what a perfect beast Mr. Quelch was.

But it did not seem probable to anybody but Bunter.

Bunter had a high opinion of himself, but he had it all to himself, and undoubtedly the headmaster was unlikely to take his word for it that he was a splendid fellow who really could not be spared from the school.

Bunter's intention of appealing to the Head, in fact, was only another sample of Bunter's obtuse fatuousness. He had no more chance with the Head than with the Remove master—a fact that would have been perfectly clear to anyone but William George Bunter.

Tea over, the Famous Five left the study and strolled downstairs in a casual sort of way and out of the House. They did not want their mission guessed by anyone else. There was no use in attracting their Form master's wrath to themselves. And they hardly dared to think what the effect would be on Henry Samuel Quelch if he discovered that Bunter was at the school gates, seeking surreptitious admission.

Coker of the Fifth met the juniors in the quad. He stopped them with a frowning brow and upraised hand.

"Look here, you fags—" he began.

"Want another ragging, old bean?" asked Bob Cherry affably. "We're the men to oblige you, if you do."

"I've seen Bunter!"

"Eh, what?"

"That young sweep is hanging about the school," said Coker. "He had the nerve to speak to me. I kicked him.

I don't approve of this. That young rascal has been turned out of the school for insubordination—a thing I never could approve of. He can't be allowed to hang round. Bad form, and all that. If you fags have anything to do with it, I warn you to chuck it. See?"

"Is that all, Coker?"

"I darsay you're going out to see him," said Coker, with unusual astuteness. "I shouldn't be surprised at anything from you disorderly young scamps. Take it from me, I shan't permit anything of the sort."

"Any more?"

"No!" roared Coker. "Only——"
"Don't sing it over again," urged Bob Cherry. "We've had it once, and that was once too often. Gentlemen, chaps, and fellows, Coker is asking for it again, and he won't be happy till he gets it. Are we going to make Coker happy?"

"Ha, ha! We are!"

A sudden rush of the Famous Five strewn Horace Coker in the quadrangle. By the time Coker was able to abandon the horizontal for the perpendicular, the chums of the Remove were out of gates and sauntering down Friar-dale Lane to meet the waiting Owl of the Remove.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Nothing Doing!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

"Oh, here you are!"

"Yes, dear old chaps!" said Bunter.

Bunter's fat voice was full of affection—a proof that William George Bunter was on the make.

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He stood in the gap in the hedge, and the juniors halted in the lane facing him. He blinked at them through his big spectacles pathetically. Bunter was down on his luck, and the chums of the Remove were sympathetic. Still, they did not see what could be done. Had it rested with them to readmit W. G. Bunter to Greyfriars School no doubt they would have done it—making that their self-denial week, as it were. But it did not rest with them.

"Dear old fellows!" said Bunter. "How jolly to see you again! How well you're looking! I was awfully sorry to part with you in the hols!"

"The sorrowfulness was all on your esteemed side," remarked Hurrec Jamset Ram Singh. "On our side, my esteemed Bunter, the joyfulness was terrific!"

"Oh, really, Inky—"

"But the sympathise is great in the present execrable situation," said the nabob kindly. "But cut out the soft sorrowfulness, my esteemed fat Bunter."

"I wanted to see you chaps, you know," explained Bunter. "I want you to do something for me. But that isn't the chief reason. I really wanted to see you because—because you're so nice, you know."

Evidently Bunter was a believer in the efficacy of "soft sawder."

"Wash all that out!" said Bob Cherry unceremoniously.

"Oh, really Cherry—"

"Young Nugent brought in your note," said Harry Wharton. "We've come. Now we're here, what do you want, Bunter?"

"Just to see you again, old chap."

"Wash that out!" roared Bob.

"Cut the cackle and come to the hosses," suggested Johnny Bull. "You haven't much time to waste if you're catching your train home."

"I'm not catching a train home, old chap."

"What are you going to do, then?" demanded Nugent.

"I'm coming back to Greyfriars."

"Fathead!"

"I'm going to appeal to the Head," explained Bunter. "The Head doesn't know how matters stand. Quelchy has pulled his leg. You see, the Head's written to my pater, telling him that I can't come back. I'm not blaming the Head because I know he must have been deceived. As soon as I open his eyes it will be all right. But Quelchy is against me. That's the trouble."

The Famous Five gazed at Bunter. Well as they knew their Bunter, he surprised them again. Apparently he really believed that he had only to tell Dr. Locke what a splendid fellow he really was to set the matter right at once.

"What on earth do you think you can say to the Head?" asked Harry Wharton as patiently as he could. "You ran away from school last term, like a howling ass. You gave Quelchy a fearful lot of trouble. The Head's decided not to let you come back. That settles it, doesn't it?"

"Not at all. The Head only knows what Quelchy has told him, and, of course, Quelchy must have misrepresented the matter because he's down on me."

"You burbling chump—"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Quelchy must have reported to the Head exactly what happened. You know what you did, I suppose?" exclaimed Wharton. "Do you think a fellow can run away from school and come back if he chooses?"

"Exactly, old chap—I mean, I didn't

run away. I—I just left, you know, and—didn't come back."

"Where's the difference?" asked Bob.

"Well, if I'd come back Quelchy was going to lick me," argued Bunter.

"Are you going to tell the Head that you didn't run away from school, but only left and stayed away?" asked Nugent.

"Yes, old fellow. You see, Quelchy was down on me. He gave me detention, and was going to cane me. He's unjust. Well, if I explain to the Head that old Quelchy was unjust, he can't very well punish me, can he? It will be his duty to punish Quelchy instead."

"Oh, my hat! But Quelchy wasn't unjust!" shrieked Bob. "You had detention because you asked for it, and you were going to be licked for bolting out of detention. Do you think the Head will call that unjust?"

"Of course, when I explain to him. He's not a bad sort. A bit of an old donkey, if you like, but a good sort in his way, and just," said Bunter. "I've heard you fellows say that the Head is always just."

"But you've got justice!" yelled Bob.

"Can't you see that?"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

Apparently Bunter could not see it. At all events he was determined not to see it. How could a sentence be just if it caused Bunter discomfort? That was how the Owl of the Remove looked at it.

"Well, what do you want us to do, anyhow?" asked Wharton.

"I've got to get into the school without that artful beast Quelchy spotting me," explained Bunter. "He told me on the phone that if I came he would have me ejected. He means it! You know what a beast he is!"

"You've been telephoning to Quelchy?" exclaimed Johnny Bull.

"Yes, old chap. He was simply brutal—absolutely unfeeling. He seems to have taken a personal dislike to me," said Bunter sorrowfully. "I can't imagine why, but he has."

"You can't imagine why?" gasped Bob.

"No. If he was down on you fellows I could understand it. That would be natural enough. You're no credit to the school, if you don't mind my mentioning it, old chaps. But why should he be down on me?" argued Bunter. "Everybody likes me except Quelchy."

"Great pip!"

"It's just a case of personal dislike," said Bunter. "It's very wrong in a Form master. Bad form, you know; quite unfitting and all that. I shall explain that to the Head when I see him. I shall point out that Quelchy is frightfully bad-tempered and unreasonable and altogether unfit to be a Form master at Greyfriars at all. Getting his rag out with me like this shows that he's an absolute beast. It makes me suspect that he drinks or something."

"Oh, my only Uncle Christopher!"

"That would account for it—if he drinks!" said Bunter. "How can you fellows account for it otherwise?"

"Help!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Are you going to suggest to the Head that Quelchy drinks?" asked Harry Wharton, in quite a faint voice.

"Well, I think I ought to mention it," said Bunter. "Taking an utterly unreasonable and vicious dislike to the most thoroughly decent fellow in his Form, looks like it, doesn't it? You see that?"

"Oh dear!"

"It's all a question of getting to the Head, and putting it to him," said Bunter. "Of course, if the Head refuses to give me justice, I shall be in rather

a fix. But you fellows always said he was just."

Evidently, it was useless to argue with William George Bunter. He was clad in obtuseness as in armour of triple steel.

"Being down on me as he is, Quelchy will keep me from seeing the Head if he can," went on Bunter. "I know that! He doesn't want me to show him up to the Head. It might mean the sack for him if the Head really knew how he's treated me—how he's misrepresented me—making out that I ran away from school, when I did nothing of the sort, really—only just cleared off, you know. Mind, I shan't have any mercy on Quelch. I shall tell the Head exactly what I think of him, and if he's asked to resign, so much the better."

"Oh crumbs!"

"Knowing all that, it's his game to keep me from seeing the Head," said Bunter. "I could tell that from the way he spoke on the telephone when I rang him up from Lantham. His voice was quite savage. Bitter."

The Famous Five could only gaze at Bunter.

"So you see how the matter stands," said Bunter. "You fellows must smuggle me in, somehow, unknown to Quelch. Some of you can keep a watch on him—see?—and when the coast's clear, you can smuggle me in, and I'll watch for a chance of getting at the Head. Once I get an interview, I've no doubt the thing will be all right. If Quelchy is sacked, that's where you fellows come in—a new Form master won't be such a beast. Couldn't be! Now, don't lose any time about it—the sooner it's fixed, the better. In fact, I'm hungry now."

"You unspeakable idiot," said Bob Cherry. "We can't smuggle you into the school, and it wouldn't do you any good if we could. The Head wouldn't listen to a word of your silly rot, and if you started telling him bosh about Quelchy, he would lick you before you were kicked out."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"If you want to see the Head, Bunter, the best thing you can do is to walk up to the school and ask to see him," said Harry Wharton. "He might—possibly—let you come in and speak."

"He might," murmured Nugent.

"Not that it would do any good," said the captain of the Remove. "But that's the only way, anyhow."

"Don't be a silly idiot, Wharton! If Quelchy caught sight of me, he would take jolly good care that I didn't get to the Head. He's afraid of being shown up if I see Dr. Locke."

"There's nothing to show up!" shrieked Bob. "Quelchy reported to the Head exactly what happened."

"Then why has the Head turned me out?" demanded Bunter.

"Because you deserved it."

"I might have expected something of that sort from you, Bob Cherry," said Bunter bitterly. "You want to keep me away from Greyfriars! I suppose you're afraid of being put into the shade if I play football this term."

"Oh, crikey!"

"You born idiot—" gasped Harry Wharton.

"You, too!" said Bunter. "You want to keep me away! Look here, Wharton, I'll make a bargain with you. I know you feel uncomfortable about what would happen if I used my influence in the Form against you. You're captain of the Remove, but you know jolly well who ought to be captain. I'll give you my word not to oust you out of it."

"Oh, scissors!"

"I can't say fairer than that," said

Bunter, blinking at the dazed chums of the Remove. "I've always been kind to you fellows! You, for example, Inky—you can't say that I've ever been down on you for being a nigger."

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh gazed at Bunter without replying. He seemed at a loss for words.

"And you Franky," said Bunter. "I may have told you sometimes that you're rather a milksop! Well, ain't you? But you can't say I've not been friendly and pally with you just the same."

Nugent breathed hard and deep.

"And you, Bull—"

"What about me?" asked Johnny Bull, in a deep voice.

"Well, you're a rough beast, with the manners of a Hun, but I've never had it up against you. I've never once told you what I really think of you," said Bunter, blinking at him. "I've been a good friend to the lot of you—better than you ever deserved, as you will admit. Wharton specially! Look how I stood by you when you first came to Greyfriars, Harry—you remember what a touchy, ill-tempered beast you were, quarrelling with everybody—you punched Nugent in the train on your way to school, I remember—I say, Wharton, don't walk away while a fellow's talking to you!"

But the captain of the Remove did walk away. Somehow—Bunter could not guess why—he seemed fed up.

His comrades followed him, just as if they, too, had become fed up with Bunter for some inexplicable reason.

The Owl of the Remove blinked after them.

"I say, you fellows—" he yelled.

They walked on.

"Beasts!"

They disappeared.

"Well, of all the rotten, ungrateful blighters!" ejaculated Billy Bunter, in great dismay and exasperation.

The Famous Five had been drawn blank, and William George Bunter was at a loose end once more.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Outside!

"**H**A, ha, ha!" There were sounds of merriment in the Rag that evening.

On the first day of term, there was no prep, and after calling-over, most of the Lower School gathered in the Rag.

There was plenty for the fellows to say to one another on the first day at Greyfriars! Note to be compared on the subject of the holidays, yarns to be spun, new boys to be criticised; but on this occasion one topic reigned supreme.

That topic was Bunter.

The news had spread that Bunter of the Remove was not coming back, and that news had been of interest to his Form. But it paled into insignificance, compared with the news that Bunter, who was not coming back, actually had come back after all.

Bunter was back—not in the school, where there was no admittance for him, but haunting the vicinity of the school like a spectre revisiting the glimpses of the moon.

Somewhere outside Greyfriars, in the dusk of the evening, Bunter lurked—the Remove knew it, the Shell knew it, the Third and Second knew it, the Fourth knew it—all the Lower School knew it, and it made them hilarious.

Bunter had always added considerably to the gaiety of existence in the Greyfriars Remove. But none of Bunter's stunts had ever produced so much hilarity as his present remarkable stunt.

Skinner was the last fellow who had met him out of gates. The gates were locked now, and communications cut off. But Skinner retailed his meeting with Bunter, weeping with merriment, to a roaring crowd.

"He wants to see the Head!" wept Skinner. "He thinks Quelch has misrepresented him! He's going to explain to the Head that Quelch is a beast!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He is going to tell the Head that Quelch has deliberately blackened and slandered him—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He thinks it's because Quelch drinks, and he's going to tell the Head so."

The juniors shrieked.

"Picture the Head's face, if Bunter got at him and told him all that!" gurgled Skinner, wiping his eyes.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Poor old Bunter!" sighed Peter Todd. "Was there ever such a howling, yowling idiot?"

"Never!"

"He tried to phone to the Head, and couldn't get him!" gasped Skinner. "So he's going to give it to the old johnny by word of mouth. He thinks that that will make it all right."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He wanted me to see the coast clear and smuggle him into the school!" moaned Skinner. "He's tried some other chaps, he told me, and they let him down. He said I could do it easily enough, and that he would ask me home for the next hols to Bunter Court if I did."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He thinks Quelch will keep him away from the Head if he can because he's afraid of what Bunter may say about him."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Is he still hanging about?" asked Bolsover major.

"I left him hanging about," chuckled Skinner. "I fancy he's got some wheeze of sneaking into the school after dark, like a giddy burglar. He's going to wedge in somehow, and lie in wait for the Head! Only he's very wary of Quelch."

"Poor old Bunter!" said Vernon-Smith, with a chuckle. "What good does he think it will do him, if he does see the Head?"

"He thinks that will set it right! He says he only wants justice! He doesn't know that he's got it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If we hear any sound to-night like a hippopotamus walking about, we shall know that Bunter's got in," said Skinner. "He asked me to leave the box-room window unfastened for him."

"Oh gad!" said Lord Mauleverer. "Poor old Bunter!"

"What on earth will Quelch say when he knows that Bunter is hanging about the school, trying to wedge in?" said Snoop.

"I wonder!" chuckled Skinner. "Somebody ought to tell him! His face would be worth watching!"

"Poor old Bunter!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

No doubt some of the fellows felt sorry for the hapless Owl of the Remove. But they could not help being hilarious. Bunter's belief that the whole matter would be set right, if he could once see the Head and explain, took them quite by storm. If Bunter did succeed in getting to the Head the Remove fellows would have given much to see the interview.

Bunter at present was the only topic. Temple of the Fourth, who had had a

magnificent holiday in Norway in the summer vac, tried to tell about it, but he tried in vain.

"It's spelt 'ski,' but you pronounce it 'she'—" Cecil Reginald Temple was saying.

"Heard about Bunter?" interrupted Fry of the Fourth.

"We had a yacht—"

"Skinner says that he met Bunter in Friardale Lane—"

"And in those jolly fiords—"

"He wants to see the Head—"

"He's hanging about outside now—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Cecil Reginald Temple had to give it up.

They knew in the Fifth Form that Bunter of the Remove was in the offing; Coker had told them in the games study. Fifth Form men chuckled over it. But it was not known, so far, in the Sixth, and the juniors wondered what the prefects would do if they knew. It was a remarkable and interesting situation; something that had never occurred before in the memory of the oldest inhabitant.

Later in the evening the news apparently spread from the Fifth to the Sixth; for George Wingate, the captain of Greyfriars, came along to Study No. 1 in the Remove, where a party of juniors had gathered to a study supper. Wingate of the Sixth looked into the study with a frowning face.

"Wharton!" he called out.

Harry Wharton looked round.

"What's this yarn about Bunter of the Remove hanging about the school?" asked Wingate. "Is there anything in it?"

Wharton did not reply.

"Coker of the Fifth seems to have seen him," said Wingate. "Have any of you kids seen him?"

"Well, yes," said Harry, feeling that he could make the admission if the matter was known.

"The young ass!" said Wingate. "I suppose he must have gone home by this time, as it's getting late; still, I suppose I'd better report it to Mr. Quelch."

The prefect duly reported to Mr. Quelch.

After an exceedingly busy day the Remove master was taking a little rest in his study. He had been on the telephone to the vicarage, trying to explain matters to Mr. Lambe; and he had found matters rather difficult to explain to that gentleman. So he was thinking of Bunter—not benevolently—when the head prefect of Greyfriars came in to report that the excluded Lower boy was "hanging about" the school.

Mr. Quelch's face was a study as he listened.

"Upon my word! You mean to say that—that Bunter is actually in the neighbourhood of Greyfriars—that he has been seen here?"

"Several fellows seem to have seen him, sir," said Wingate. "It's most unusual—most surprising—"

"Nothing surprises me in that wretched boy," said Mr. Quelch, compressing his lips. "Such conduct is quite of a piece with his conduct last term. He appears not to possess even the rudiments of common-sense. Kindly speak to Gosling for me, Wingate, and tell him that if Bunter should have the unparalleled impudence to present himself here, he is not to be admitted on any pretext whatever!"

"Certainly, sir!"

Gosling was duly spoken to. And so it came about that when, later in the evening, there came a ring at Gosling's bell, and the school porter discerned a

fat figure at the bars of the gate, Gosling knew what to do.

Gosling had never liked Bunter or approved of him. On principle—or for some other reason—Bunter had never tipped Gosling.

"Ho!" said Gosling. "You!"

"Yes, Gosling," said Bunter, through the bars of the gate, with a pathetic blink at the crusty old gentleman. "I've called to see the Head."

Bunter had made up his fat mind at last to act on Harry Wharton's suggestion. It seemed the only way. After all, why shouldn't an Old Boy—Bunter, if he was no longer a Greyfriars boy, was evidently an Old Boy—why shouldn't an Old Boy call to see his old headmaster? There was no reason why not, so far as Bunter could see. But no doubt there were reasons that Bunter could not see.

"Ho!" said Gosling.

"Let me in!" said Bunter.

Gosling waved a horny hand at him.

"You cut huff, young Bunter!" he said severely.

"Oh, really, Gosling—"

"Wot I says is this 'ere, you cut off! You don't belong 'ere, and I'm surprised at you!" said Gosling. "Orders is that you ain't to be let in! You go 'ome, young Bunter!"

"I say, Gosling—"

Gosling returned to his lodge regardless. Billy Bunter blinked in at the bars of the gate dismally, and rolled away. There was no admittance for Bunter, and there was no train home, if Bunter had thought of going home. And in the Rag Skinner was remarking: "Looks like rain! Bunter will get wet!"

"Poor old Bunter!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

When the Remove went to their dormitory that night they did not soon fall asleep! Bunter was still the topic; and chuckles and chortles ran from bed to bed. The Remove agreed that Bunter's remarkable proceedings were the joke of the season; and the unprecedented situation seemed excruciatingly funny—to everyone excepting William George Bunter.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Slim Jim Lends a Hand!

BUMP!

"Wow!"

There was the sound of a fall and the louder sound of a howl.

Billy Bunter was not good at climbing. He had too much weight to lift.

At a certain point of the old Cloister wall there was a place where the old bricks had crumbled, and the wall was easy to climb—easy, that is, to anyone but Bunter. The fat junior remembered that spot well; many a time had Remove fellows, and other fellows, surreptitiously left the school precincts by that route, unknown to masters and prefects. Many fellows, Bunter knew, had got out and got in at that spot; and now that the hour was late and darkness enshrouded his movements, Bunter was trying it on.

Bunter had thought it out

By that time the Lower School would be in bed; but Bunter had no use for the Lower School. It was the Head he wanted.

The Head would not retire to his own House, and to repose, till a much later hour. On the first day of term the Head was a busy gentleman. It was fairly certain that he would be late in his study that night. Once Bunter was

within, instead of without, he would be able to sneak along to that study, and see the Head, in spite of the machinations of that unspeakable beast, Quelch. It was only a question of getting in.

Now that it was dark, even Mr. Quelch's gimlet-eye could not spot him—and no other eye was likely to spot him, as all the fellows were in the House at that hour. To get into the school grounds first, and into the House next, was Bunter's game. But the question of getting in was a question not easily answered.

Any other Remove man could have negotiated that wall with ease, finding plenty of hold for hand and foot. Billy Bunter did not negotiate it with ease. He did not negotiate it at all. Three feet from the ground, Bunter lost hold, and descended much faster than he had ascended. He smote the earth with a sharp impact and howled.

"Owl! Wow! Wow!"

Billy Bunter sat for some minutes where he landed, gasping for breath.

He rose to his feet at last, and set his spectacles straight on his fat little nose.

"Beasts!" he gasped; apparently alluding to Greyfriars in general.

He blinked up at the wall again. He felt a strong disinclination to try that wall a second time. One bump on the solid surface of the globe was enough for Bunter.

If there had been some fellow inside to give him a hand up—but there wasn't! If there had been somebody outside to give him a bunk up—but there was nobody!

Bunter blinked round in the deep gloom, in a faint hope of discerning somebody. The place was lonely. The Cloisters were far from the school buildings; and much farther from any other buildings. A little elm-shaded lane ran along the outside of the old Cloister wall—but it led nowhere in particular, and was seldom or never trodden. Nobody was likely to come that way, unless it was a Greyfriars fellow returning surreptitiously after breaking bounds.

But Bunter's luck, which had been out so long, seemed to set in again at last. It was utterly improbable that anyone would come along that lonely path at that hour of the evening; and yet that was exactly what happened.

Bunter was leaning on the wall, taking a long rest before he decided on another attempt at climbing, when a dark shadow loomed up among the other shadows. Someone was coming.

Bunter blinked hopefully at the newcomer.

The latter did not see him for the moment in the deep shadow of the wall. But Bunter had a view of the stranger, in a patch of starlight that fell among the spreading elms.

He saw a small, slim man, with a soft felt hat pulled down low over his face. The slim man made no sound as he came along; he seemed to be wearing rubber shoes.

Bunter could not guess who or what he was; and he did not care in the very least. All he cared about was getting a bunk over that troublesome wall.

The slim man in the soft hat came quietly along, and Bunter called to him cautiously:

"Hi! Stop a minute, will you?"

The man stopped suddenly, as if startled. He fairly spun round towards Bunter, and his eyes glittered at the fat junior under the low brim of the hat. Bunter heard his quick, startled breathing, and grinned.

"Did I make you jump?" he asked.

The man gasped a little.

"Yes. I—I was startled," he said. He came closer, and peered at Bunter, and a look of relief came over his face as he saw that the fat figure was that of a schoolboy in Etons. Perhaps he had expected, or feared, to see someone else. "I think I've lost my way, sir," he went on civilly. "Perhaps you can tell me where this lane leads, sir?"

"If you're going anywhere, you've lost your way all right," said Bunter, grinning. "This lane doesn't lead anywhere—only along to the fir wood behind the school."

"Thank you, sir," said the man, in the same soft, civil tone. "I'd better get back to the road, then. Sure this doesn't lead to Woodend?"

"No fear. You'll have to walk towards Friardale, and turn to the left at the cross-roads for Woodend."

"Thank you, sir. I'm a stranger in these parts," said the slim man. "Much obliged, sir!"

He turned to retrace his steps.

"Hold on!" exclaimed Bunter. "I want you to help me out. Give me a bunk up this wall, will you?"

The slim man looked at him and smiled. In spite of a very keen, almost hawkish expression in his close-set eyes, the slim man seemed very pleasant and good-tempered.

"Schoolboy out of bounds, what?" he asked genially.

"That's it," said Bunter. "Locked out, you know."

"I understand!" smiled the slim gentleman tolerantly. "I have been a schoolboy myself, sir. I will bunk you up with pleasure."

"Good!" said Bunter.

The slim gentleman approached, and Bunter prepared to climb, with the aid of a "bunk." The obliging stranger bunked him—breathing a little hard as he got the benefit of Bunter's hefty weight. Bunking Bunter up really was a job for a steam crane.

But the slim gentleman got him up, and Bunter's fat hands groped over the top of the wall. His fat knees, however, seemed reluctant to follow. Bunter pulled, and dragged, and gasped.

"Give us another shove!" he stammered.

"Certainly, sir!"

The slim gentleman reached up and shoved. Bunter went over the top of the wall, landing his waistcoat on it, with rather a bump. He gave a prolonged gasp, rather like air escaping from a badly-burst tyre.

"All right now, sir?"

"Owl! Wow! Yes! Grooogh!"

"Then I'll say good-night, sir, or I shall be late getting to Woodend."

"Ooooh!"

The slim gentleman walked away, and Bunter plunged over the wall and dropped into the Cloisters, spluttering. He was within the walls of Greyfriars at last, if not within the House. He sat down on the projecting base of a stone pillar to rest.

And Slim Jim, cracksman, cat burglar, and several other agreeable things, smiled as he turned back again towards the Cloister wall—not having the remotest intention of walking to Woodend. Slim Jim, cracksman and cat-burglar, had been scouting round the precincts of the school in the dark, looking for a favourable spot to effect an entry surreptitiously and without noise—and, owing to William George Bunter, he had found such a convenient spot. Having been saved a lot of trouble, in the exercise of his profession, Slim Jim leaned on the wall and smiled genially, feeling much obliged to



"It's not a cat under the bed, it's some fag!" hissed Loder, brandishing his stick, while Walker lunged with the poker. "Come out, you young scoundrel!" A cautious head appeared from under the valance of the bed, like a tortoise from its shell. Loder and Walker jumped. "Why, it's Bunter!" (See Chapter 12.)

Bunter; and waited patiently for a later and more suitable hour for following in the direction Bunter had taken.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Butts In!

"**B**EAST!" In a deep, sulphurous whisper, Billy Bunter confided his opinion of Harold Skinner to the night and the stars.

"Beast!" hissed Bunter.

The Owl of the Remove stood on the leads under the box-room window. By that window breakers of bounds had come and gone, on many and many an occasion. Distinctly, Billy Bunter had asked Skinner to leave that window unfastened for him. Skinner could have left it unfastened easily; it would have been no trouble at all to Skinner. And it would have helped Bunter a lot—helped him to his interview with the Head—helped him to return to the Greyfriars Remove, which, of course, would have been a very nice reward for Skinner. And the beast—the worse than beast—had not unfastened the window! It was shut and fastened on the inside; and, only too plainly, Skinner had let him down.

"Beast!" said Bunter, for the third time.

Calling Skinner a beast was solacing, to some extent; but not otherwise helpful. Bunter was outside, with no means of getting inside. It was useless to linger on the leads; Bunter was no cracksman to be able to open a fastened window from the outside.

Bunter clambered down from the

leads to the ground, giving up the box-room as a bad job.

There was no entrance that way. There had to be an entrance some other way, since Bunter was determined to enter. The question was to find it.

The Owl of the Remove thought of walking round to the door, knocking, and demanding to see the Head! But he gave up that idea as soon as it occurred to him. Gosling's brutal conduct at the gate showed what he had to expect at the door. Admittance would be refused—Mr. Quelch would appear on the scene.

Even if Trotter, the page, consented to take his name in to the Head, would the Head consent to see him? Bunter knew that he would not. If he was to see the Head, it was necessary to leave the Head no choice in the matter. Bunter felt that.

Once in the Head's presence, it would be different. Dr. Locke could scarcely refuse to give him a hearing then. In fact, he would not be allowed to refuse—no command from the Head should stem the tide of Bunter's eloquence till he had stated his case.

When he had stated his case, of course it would be all right. The Head might be an old donkey, as Bunter more than suspected—he might be a bit of a chump, like all headmasters—in Bunter's valuable opinion. But he was bound to have some sense. Not much, perhaps—being a headmaster; but some!

He would be glad—as soon as he knew the facts—that Bunter had presented them to him. No headmaster could approve of a Form master blackening and maligning a fellow who was a credit to the school—deceiving him as to that

fellow's really splendid character. Bunter was sure of that. Any headmaster would be glad to know, if he had been led by the nose into committing an act of rank injustice, by the machinations of a bad-tempered Form master, who—probably—drank!

Bunter had only to put his case.

And if Quelch was sacked, in consequence, Bunter was not going to pity him! He deserved no pity.

But—confident as he felt of the outcome, once he had put his case to the Head—Bunter was in difficulties at the present moment. The Head—led by the nose, of course, by the designing, unscrupulous Quelch, who had taken an inexplicable dislike to Bunter—would not see him if he could help it. If Bunter was going to interview the Head—and he was—he had to get into the House somehow unseen and undiscovered, and waylay the Beak.

Bunter scouted round the House.

The great door of the House was closed for the night; other doors were closed, but probably not locked; but Bunter could not venture to open one of them. He might butt into a master or a prefect at the first step. He might run right into the arms of Quelch.

He would have preferred to enter by the window of a junior study. But all the junior studies were upstairs; and Bunter was of no use as a cat-burglar.

The Sixth Form studies seemed more hopeful; and Bunter scouted under the windows of the Sixth.

These windows were rather high from the ground, but practicable; Bunter was

(Continued on page 16.)

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The FROOTS of VICTORY!



By DICKY
NUGENT

HERE'S ANOTHER MIRTH-PROVOKING YARN OF THE CHEERY CHUMS OF ST. SAM'S—JACK JOLLY, MERRY AND BRIGHT, NOT TO MENTION THEIR SCAMP OF A HEADMASTER, DR. BIRCHEMALL.

L

CUCK-OO! Cuck-oo! Cuck-oo!
Midnite boomed out from the old clock tower at St. Sam's. No sound was herd, save the moaning of the autumn breeze as it shrieked through the trees and the hooting of the owls as they flitted two and fro.

Stay! What is that?

A sinnister, bearded figger, wearing the familiar skolastick cap and gown of a master, springs from the gloomy shaddows of the Skool House, and, with the stealthy, slinking movement of an eggspierced crimminal, sneaks across the moonlit quad. It is Dr. Alfred Birchmall, headmaster of St. Sam's!

Needless to say, the revered and majestick Head of that grate collidge had not abandoned the comfort of his cosy bed for nothing. Dr. Birchmall didn't like venturing far by nite. The thought of ghosts and speckters, and burglars and stray dogs filled his cowardly hart with terror. A nice warm bed, a roaring fire in the great, and a commic paper and a bag of licorish allsorts by his bedside, were much more to his liking.

The braney reader will guess, therefore, that it was something special which had brought the Head out on this particular nite. And it was!

As a matter of fact, the Head had braved the perrils of the quad for the eggspress purpose of sneaking down to the skool rifle-range and tampering with the targits.

Only a few short hours before the competition for the cup which General Crackpott had prezzented had been held, and Jack Jolly, the kaptin of the Fourth, had staggered the entire skool by scoring 99 out of a possible 100.

And now the Head was making a last desprit effort to cheet Jack Jolly of the prize he had so cleverly won. Only one more competitor was left to challenge Jack's grate score on the morrow. That competitor was young Crackpott, son of the general himself, and the Head had one very good reason for

wanting Crackpott to triumph. If Crackpott won the cup, the Head had been prommissed a free feed, and natcherally he didn't mean to lose that without a struggle. Hence his sinnister journey out of the House in the dead of nite. He was going to sneak down to the range and bring the targits up to the half-way line. At a distance of about a duzzen yards even Crackpott couldn't very well fail to score a "bull" every time, and the Head had every hope that he would score 100 and vankwish Jack Jolly without the slitest difficulty. Crash, crash, crash!

The Head's rubber-souled shoes fitted noiselessly across the duey grass. Ever and anonymously he glanced fearfully over his shoulders to see if any speckters were following him. Grately to his releef, however, the speckters were conspicuious only by their absence.

Suddenly the Head jumped.

"Grate pip!" he eggscclaimed aloud. "Are my peepers deceeving me, or is that really Burleigh of the Sixth on the Sixth Form green?"

Certainly the Head might have been eggscused for thinking he was suffering from a Lucy Nations. At the sollum hour of mitnite all St. Sam's was supposed to be in bed and asleep, and it hadn't even crossed the Head's mind that he would run into a prefect out of doors.

Yet he couldn't doubt the evvidence of his senses. It was Burleigh himself, the kaptin of St. Sam's. And, stranger still, Burleigh was bizzily engaged in a most eggstraordinary task. He had lit a bonfire right in the middle of the Sixth Form green, and was poring the contents of an oilcan over it, causing it to flare up furiously.

"M-m-my giddy aunt!" gasped the Head, in utter astonishment. "Has the boy taken leave of his senses, or has he meerly gone off his rocker?"

He crossed over to the Sixth Form green in a state of grate perplexity and bawled:

"Burleigh!"

The handsome kaptin of the skool

looked up with a start at the sound of his name, and flushed slitley in the flickering light of the blud-red flames.

"Oh crikey!" he cried. "The Head! What are you doing here, sir?"

"What the merry dickens are you doing here, if it comes to that?" retorted Dr. Birchmall sternly. "Are you deliberately trying to burn down the skool while the innosent occupants are berried in slumber, or are you practissing the garsly rights of some heathen religion?"

"Neither, sir!" answered Burleigh, with a grin. "As a matter of fact, I am making sure of getting honners in the fourthcoming Oxbridge Senior eggaminations!"

"What the thump has this eggstraordinary performance got to do with the Oxbridge Senior eggsams?" gasped the Head, even more serprised.

"Well, you see, sir, my pater, Sir Armstrong Burleigh, is very keen on my getting honners, and he has told me that I can only do it if I burn the midnite oil. So I thought I'd turn out to-nite and burn some!"

The Head glared.

"You silly ass!" he roared savvidgely. "Don't you realise that your pater was speaking metafiggeratively? What Sir Armstrong meant was that you should be poring over your books at midnite!"

"But if I pored the oil over my books, sir, they'd be ruined in no time!" objected Burleigh. "Surely, sir—"

"Silence! I refuse to argew the toss any further at this time of nite! Kindly return to the House at once, Burleigh, and report to me in the mourning!"

"But, sir—"

"Another word, and I'll flog you black and blew! Buzz off immejately!"

Burleigh, with a shrugg, buzzed off, leaving the Head to trample out the remains of his midnite efforts to win honners in the Oxbridge Senior.

"Bust the luck! If anything is suspekcted to-morrow, Burleigh is bound to remember this meeting!" hissed the Head, as he once more persued his

course towards the skool rifle-range. "However, it can't be helped. Crackpott must win the cup, and I'm the chicken that's going to help him to do it!"

And with that the Head set out to do his fowl work.

With soft, stealthy tread, he sneaked over to the rifle-range. Pawsing only to make sure that he was not overheard, he entered the dark, gloomy building. Once inside, it was the work of a minnit to move the grate board on which the targits were fixed into the required position half-way up the range.

"Good egg!" chuckled Dr. Birchmall, rubbing his bony hands with mallishus satisfaction as he regarded his handiwork. "If the biggest duffer that ever duffed can't score unlimmited bullseyes at that distance, then I'll eat my best Sunday topper! Crackpott, my boy, the cup is as good as yours! And, what's more to the point, my free feed in the tuckshop is as good as won!"

Grinning all over his dile, the Head quitted the rifle-range, and sneaked back to the silent Skool House. And in a very short time he was fast asleep and dreeming blissfully of the pork-pies, sossidge-rolls, doenuts, cream-puffs, and jinger-pop he was going to consume when Crackpott won the cup.

II.

"G O it, Crackpott!"
 "You've only got to score a hundred to win!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"

A grinning crowd had assembled in the rifle-range on the following mourning to watch the last competitor shoot. All the fellows treated the affair as a lark, for nobody eggpected Crackpott to touch the targit, let alone score ten bulls. So far, they didn't suspect the dirty work that had gone on during the nite, tho the more intelligent among them felt vaguely that something had happened since they were last there.

Jack Jolly, for instance, was regarding Crackpott's targit in a very puzzled weigh.

"Something's happened in the range during the nite," he remarked to his pals, Merry and Bright.

"What could have happened?" asked Bright.

"Dashed if I know! The targit looks easier to hit to-day, somehow. But perhaps I'm only imagining it."

Mr. Lickham also looked eggstremely serprized when he glarnced down the range.

"Bless my sole!" he cried, turning to the Head. "Am I mistaken, sir, or is that targit bigger this mourning?"

"You're mistaken, Licky!" answered Dr. Birchmall cheerfully. "Something wrong with your eyesight, perhaps. Let's get on with the giddy washing!"

The Head was in a jovial mood. He had just birched Burleigh till that grate senior had squeeled for mersy, and now he felt at peace with the world. Only General Crackpott's free feed was required to make his happiness complete.

Amid the ironnical cheers of the grate crowd, Crackpott raised his rifle and took aim.

Boom!

There was a flash of smoke from Crackpott's gun, followed by a huge cloud of smoke. With the air cleared a little, the spectators saw, gratefully to their serprize, that the duffer of the Fourth had scored a bull.

"Hooray!" yelled Dr. Birchmall eggstredly. "Didn't I tell you all that Crackpott is the best shot in the skool? Bravvo, Crackpott! Nine more like that, and you've won the cup!"

"Some hopes!" grinned Mr. Lickham. But when Crackpott followed up his first suxxess with another shot right into the centre of the targit, Mr. Lickham wasn't quite so skeptical.

"Grate pip! The boy can shoot, after all!" he mermered.

"Of corse he can!" farelly chirrupped the Head. "Jolly is a meer novice compared with this eagle-eyed young sharp-shooter. He will make mincemeat of all the rest of the competitors, beleeve me, Lickham!"

And, indeed, it seemed that the Head was going to prove correct. Crackpott's third shot was just as good as his first two. Three more lovely bulls followed in quick suxxession, and by that time the ironnical larfter had completely died away.

Nobody prezent was more serprized

than Crackpott himself. The duffer of the Fourth simply couldn't make it out. Previously he had found it hard to hit the targit at all, yet now he seemed to be doing as he liked with it. Crackpott was simply amazed.

Boom! Boom! Boom!
 Three more shots went unerringly home. Crackpott had scored 90 in nine goes!

The spectators were wild with eggitement as he took aim for the last time. One more bull, and Jack Jolly would be vankwished! Every eye was fixed breathlessly on the targit now.

Boom!
 For a moment there was a paws. Then came a roar.

"Grate pip! He's done it!"

"Hooray!"

"Well shot, Crackpott!"

Crackpott of the Fourth had acheeved the impossible. He had scored 100 out of a possible 100!

The Head went nearly potty in his delite.

"Three cheers for Crackpott!" he yelled. "I knew the boy would win, for he has had the finest tutor at rifle-work in the world! I refer, gentlemen, to myself! Now, then—hip-hip-hip—"

"Hooray!"

"And now three more for the tutor whose able instructions made this grate score possible!" grinned the Head, when the cheers had been duly given. "Let the rafters farelly echo now, boys! Hip-hip-hip—"

But there was no response whatever this time, so the Head wisely didn't persoo the matter.

The fellows streemed out of the rifle-range, eggstredly discussing the uneggpected victory of Crackpott of the Fourth, and Dr. Birchmall hurried off in search of General Crackpott, who, it was roomered, had just arrived at the skool.

Within a few minnits the only fellows left in the range were Jack Jolly and his pals, Merry and Bright, and Burleigh of the Sixth.

Jack Jolly was natcherally looking a bit bloo at being whacked by such a duffer as Crackpott, and Burleigh was still aching all over from the effect of

(Continued on page 28.)



"Now for the feed I promised you!" rasped General Crackpott, picking up a cupple of custard-pies in one hand and a cupple of froot-tarts in the other. With a quick movement he squashed the succulent pastries all over Dr. Birchmall's dial. "Yaroooh! Gug-gug!"



(Continued from page 13.)

not ignorant of the fact that Loder of the Sixth, and his sporting pals, sometimes dropped from a study window after lights out in the House, and returned to their quarters in the same way.

If a Sixth Form window was left open—and that was more likely than not, in the warm weather—and if the study was unoccupied—

The windows of the prefects' room, at the end of the Sixth Form studies, blazed with light. Most of the Sixth were probably there. More than half the Sixth Form windows were dark; and nearly all of them were open—unfortunately at the top, which was of no use to Bunter.

But Bunter sought patiently, and his patience was rewarded. One window was wide open at the bottom; the window of Walker's study. Bunter stopped under that window, hopefully.

As there was no light in the study, evidently James Walker, of the Sixth Form, was not there. What could be easier than to sneak into the study—select a favourable moment for sneaking out again down the passage—and then—why, then, all was serene. Inside the House were innumerable nooks and crannies where Bunter could lie doggo till the moment came for seeing the Head.

Bunter's fat fingers reached to the window-sill.

Walker of the Sixth kept a flower-box on the window-sill. During the vacation the Head's gardener kept a horticultural eye on that flower-box. Walker of the Sixth, on his return, had been quite delighted to find that his geraniums were still going strong. The geraniums had survived the vacation; but were not destined to survive the first night of term.

Bunter could reach the sill; but he could not lift his remarkable avoirdupois thereon.

But he had to get in! The flower-box on the window-sill was in the way, and obstructed entrance. On the ground below it might give assistance. Billy Bunter grasped it and exerted his muscular powers on it. The box was only lightly attached to its place—it came away at once in Bunter's dragging hands.

Earth and geraniums scattered over and round Bunter. But he did not mind. He jammed the flower-box against the wall and got his feet on it, and thus raised he was able to get his elbows on the sill and drag himself up.

Bunter plunged headlong into the study.

There was a crash.

A little table stood by the window, with a vase of roses on it; Walker being a fellow of rather artistic and decorative tastes.

The table went to the right, the vase to the left, and the roses right and left. "Oh!" gasped Bunter.

He picked himself up—very carefully, lest he should find any of the pieces of the broken vase in the dark.

Bunter had intended to enter the House with absolute surreptitiousness, without leaving a trace. But he had already left traces that a blind man could have followed with ease. However, that could not be helped. He was in the House now, and that was the chief thing.

He groped his way across the study to the door.

The door was ajar.

A streak of light came in from the lighted passage. Bunter put his eyes and his spectacles to the crack, to survey the passage before venturing out. He hoped to find it clear. But the coast was not clear. Some distance up the passage, near the door of the prefects' room, Wingate and Gwynne stood talking. In the other direction Loder of the Sixth sat on a window-seat, with a newspaper in his hands. And Walker was coming along the passage. The coast, evidently, was far from clear.

Bunter popped back from the door. He could not venture to leave the study yet. He waited; and had the pleasure—or otherwise—of hearing the voices of Loder and Walker approaching, with the sound of footsteps.

Bunter trembled.

Were the beasts going to Loder's study, or coming to Walker's study? If the latter—

Both of them were Sixth Form prefects; and, of course, if they found Bunter, they would collar him at once and hand him over to Mr. Quelch. That was a certainty.

Bunter gasped.

Footsteps and voices came closer. Bunter caught the word "geraniums" in Walker's voice.

He could not afford to take chances. He backed away from the door and blinked round in the gloom for a hiding-place.

Sixth Form rooms at Greyfriars were bed-rooms, as well as studies. In the usual alcove was the usual bed. Bunter dropped on hands and knees and crawled backwards under the bed.

He was only in time.

As the glimmer of his spectacles vanished under the bed the study door was pushed open, and Walker and Loder came in.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Not the Cat!

JAMES WALKER switched on the light.

"Come in, old chap!" he said genially. "They're worth looking at, I can tell you. Mimble's looked after them a treat!"

Loder of the Sixth yawned. He was not interested in geraniums. But as Walker's chum, he gave Walker his head.

"I can let you have a few blooms to shove in your study," said Walker. "I'll lend you a jug to shove them in."

"Oh, do!" yawned Loder.

"Why—what—?" James Walker stared at the overturned table under the window, the broken vase, and the scattered roses. "My hat! That thumping cat again!"

"Phew!" said Loder politely, concealing a grin as he glanced at the ruins.

Walker was red with wrath.

"I'll jolly well speak to Mrs. Kebble about this!" he exclaimed. "I won't

have that rotten tabby cat about my study! I had to chase the beast out this afternoon. It's simply sickening that a man can't leave his window open without that beastly cat sneaking in! I found that brute asleep in my armchair, you know, and gave it a lift with my boot! Now look at that!"

Under the bed, Billy Bunter grinned a fat grin. It was a fat burglar, not a cat burglar, who had done the damage; but Walker of the Sixth did not think of guessing that.

"I'll jolly well bag that cat and tie a stone round its neck, and chuck it into the Sark one of these days!" exclaimed Walker wrathfully. "Help me pick up these pieces, Loder."

"I'll watch you, old chap," answered Loder, seating himself on the bed.

A bullet head popped back just in time to avoid a collision, as one of Loder's boots swung under the bed.

Walker grunted and collected up the fragments of the vase and the roses. He had no doubt that Mrs. Kebble's cat had climbed in at the open window and done the damage, and he made continuous remarks about that cat and its owner. But when he had finished, and looked out of the window at his geraniums—or, rather, at the place where his geraniums should have been and weren't—Walker fairly exploded.

"Look here!" he roared.

"What now?" asked Loder, lazily detaching himself from the bed.

"My geraniums!" shrieked Walker.

"What about them?"

"Look!" roared Walker.

"Blest if I can see them!" said Loder.

Walker almost raved.

"That fiendish cat! It's knocked the window-box down in climbing over it! Box and geraniums all gone! Look!"

"Oh, my hat!"

Walker came near tearing his hair. Had Mrs. Kebble's cat been at hand just then, undoubtedly there would have occurred a sudden vacancy in the feline tribe.

"Well, it can't be helped now," said Loder philosophically. Loder could afford to be philosophic—they weren't his geraniums. "What about that little game, Walker?"

"My geraniums!" raved Walker.

"We were going to play——"

"My geraniums!"

"Banker. Not much more time before bed."

"B-r-r-r!"

Walker dropped out of the window after the geraniums. Loder yawned again and sat on the bed. He was interested in banker, and not at all in geraniums. But he had to wait.

Sulphurous sounds floated up from James Walker, under the window, as he set the box right, scooped earth back into it, and replanted his geraniums, with a delusive hope that they might yet survive.

He left the flower-box on the ground when he clambered back into the window with earthy hands and in infuriated face.

"I'll kill that cat!" he said. "I'll kill that demoniac beast! To-morrow I'll get hold of that fiendish cat and wring its neck! I won't stand this! I tell you I won't stand it!"

"I wouldn't," yawned Loder. "What about banker?"

Walker grunted, but he nodded. He washed the earth from his hands, and Loder locked the study door. Banker was a game much affected by the sportsmen of the Sixth, but it was an entertainment that had to be kept strictly private. In the vacation Loder

& Co. were accustomed to playing the "giddy goat," but back at Greyfriars they had to toe the line—or at least appear to do so.

The two sportsmen sat down at the table at last, the window closed and curtained, and Walker produced a pack of cards.

Under the bed Billy Bunter suppressed a groan.

He was no doubt shocked at such proceedings on the part of prefects of the Sixth Form. But what worried him was that Loder and Walker had come to the study to stay.

Escape was impossible now.

Obviously, the two seniors were going to play banker till bed-time, when Loder would go and Walker, naturally, would remain.

Billy Bunter seemed to be booked for a prolonged sojourn under Walker's bed.

It was a dismaying prospect to have to remain there till Walker was asleep, and then creep away on tiptoe. It would be an hour at least, and Bunter was already feeling cramped and exceedingly uncomfortable.

It was stuffy under the bed; it was warm; it was dusty. The boys' maid had not been so meticulously careful as she should have been with the broom. Several times Bunter nearly coughed; several times he nearly sneezed. A cough or a sneeze would have betrayed him at once. Walker supposed that Mrs. Kebble's tabby cat had wrecked his windowbox and knocked over his flower-vase, but he was not likely to suspect even that detestable cat of coughing or sneezing under his bed.

Half an hour passed and the two seniors were still deep in their game. Bunter remained still and silent but with efforts that were simply agony to him. A tickle was running up his back. His fat little nose itched. He had an impression that a spider had invaded the leg of his trousers—a most horrid feeling.

He felt that he could not stand it much longer.

Even at the cost of being discovered, hauled out of his hiding-place and ruthlessly ejected from Greyfriars, he could not stand it much longer.

Only the thought of being handed over to Mr. Quelch enabled him to endure it at all. Mr. Quelch was worse than spiders.

Something had got into his nose—dust, or a fragment of fluff or something. It was tickling his nose.

Bunter struggled against the sneeze. He fought a losing fight.

He knew that the sneeze was coming—that it must come; that the stars in their courses could not prevent it from coming. He suppressed it as long as he could. Crimson in complexion, bathed in perspiration, Bunter fought against that sneeze, and when he could control it no longer and it came, it came like an explosion.

"Atchoo-ooo-oooooooooooooh!"

The sound fairly rang through the silent study.

Walker and Loder gave a simultaneous jump.

"What the thump——" ejaculated Loder.

"Great pip! What——"

"Somebody's in the room!"

"The cat!"

"It sounded like a sneeze!"

"Listen!"

The two seniors, greatly startled, listened. They felt extremely sporting at their little game in the study, but the thought of being seen so occupied took away all the sporting feeling. Visions of the headmaster's face, clouded with

wrath, loomed before them. If somebody was hidden in the study, watching the Sixth Form prefects gambling——

"It was the cat," said Walker at last uneasily. "Must have been a cat. We know the beast has been here."

"It came from the under the bed. Some fag——"

"It was the cat, I tell you!"

The cards disappeared into a hidden place. With black brows the two seniors rose from the table. They hoped it was the cat. The cat could not talk about what it might have seen in the study. But the sound they had heard sounded more like a sneeze than any sound made by a cat. Still, cats sneezed sometimes.

"It's under the bed!" said Walker in a low, tense voice. "You see, the brute was still here when we came in, and it's dodged under the bed. That's it, Loder!"

"Let's see," muttered Loder. "If it's the cat, it's all right."

"Take that stick and stand beside the bed while I poke under it with the poker," said Walker. "When it jumps out, you get it."

"Right!"

Gerald Loder grasped the stick and stood ready to swipe. If it was Mrs. Kebble's cat that was under the bed, Mrs. Kebble's cat was booked for a sudden and exciting finish to its career.

Walker picked up the poker and approached the bed.

Bunter squeezed back as far as he could to the wall on the farther side of the alcove.

"Come out, you beast!" hissed Walker, lunging under the bed.

Bunter squirmed out of the way of the poker and caught the side of his head on the leg of the bed. There was a loud crack and a fearful yell.

"Yaroooh!"

Evidently it was not the cat!

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Bunter's Luck!

"COME out!" hissed Walker.

He no longer even hoped that it was the cat. A cat might sneeze in certain circumstances, but no cat known to natural history ever yelled "Yaroooh!"

"Ow!" howled Bunter. "Keep that poker away! Wow!"

"It's some fag!" hissed Loder.

"I'll smash him!"

"I'll pulverise him!"

"Come out, you young scoundrel!"

"Come out, you spying little beast!"

"I—I say, you fellows——" gasped Bunter.

"Come out!" shrieked Walker.

"Pull the bed out and we'll get him!" hissed Loder.

"I—I say, you fellows, I'm coming out!" gasped Bunter. "Keep that poker away, you know! It's all right!"

"I'll give you all right!" breathed Loder.

Billy Bunter put a cautious head out from under the valance of the bed, like a tortoise from its shell.

Loder and Walker jumped.

"Bunter!"

They stared blankly at the fat junior as he crawled out.

Billy Bunter emerged, gasping and puffing, and picked himself up, and promptly put the study table between himself and the two staring Six-Formers.

"Bunter!" gasped Walker. "Bunter—he's not supposed to be here at all! I heard a fellow saying he had been seen hanging about the school!"

"I say, you fellows——"

"So you've sneaked in!" hissed Loder. "Quelch will be glad to see you! I'll thrash you first, and then take you to Quelch for another thrashing!"

"Mo first!" said Walker, picking up his ashplant.

"I—I say, you fellows, keep off!" howled Bunter. "I'm not doing any harm. I—I came to see the Head——"

"Collar him!" snarled Walker. "I know now who smashed my window-box and knocked my roses over. It wasn't the cat!"

"I say it was, you know!" gasped Bunter. "I—I saw him! I say, you keep off! I'll tell the Head you were playing banker!"

That was a sheer inspiration.

In another second Loder's grasp would have closed on Bunter from one side, Walker's from the other. But both of them stopped short as Bunter played that trump card.

They eyed him as if they could have bitten him. But they did not touch him.

Bunter gasped with relief. He realised that his discovery in the study gave him, to some extent at least, the upper hand. Like Daniel in the lion's den he was, after all, safe from the beasts!

"I say, you fellows, you chuck it, you know!" said Bunter. "Nice for you if I tell the Head about your little games! He, ho, he!"

"You young rascal!" Loder made an attempt at prefectorial dignity. "How dare you insinuate——"

"Oh, chuck it!" said Bunter, quite aware of his power from the expression on the faces of the sportsmen of the Sixth. "You two fellows were playing banker, you've been winning Walker's money, Loder; and you've been smoking, too—the study's thick with it! Like me to tell the Head about you smoking and playing cards!"

"We—we've been doing nothing of the sort, of course!" said Loder. "If you dare to make such an accusation——"

"If you dare——" repeated Walker, but in dismaying tones.

"I ain't saying anything if you let me alone," said Bunter, with a fat grin. "I've come here to see the Head; but that beast Quelch will keep me away from him if he can. He doesn't want me to have justice. You let me out of this study, and don't tell Quelch—see?"

Loder and Walker glared at him. Making terms with a cheeky fag—and a fag who did not really belong to the school at all—was a bitter blow to the pride of the Sixth Form sportsmen. They would have preferred to collar Bunter and give him the thrashing of his life before handing him over to Mr. Quelch for further punishment and ejection. But they did not want—very much they did not want—the fat junior to retail what he had seen in that study.

They looked at Bunter—and they looked at one another. They resisted their yearning to seize Bunter and slaughter him.

In silence Walker crossed to the door, unlocked it, and threw it open.

"Hook it!" he breathed.

Bunter rolled to the door. The hour was growing late now, and most of the Sixth had gone to bed. The passage was clear.

Bunter rolled out.

Walker could scarcely resist the impulse to plant a boot behind him as he went. But he did resist it. Bunter rolled away unknicked.

Walker closed the door after him.

"Somebody else will drop on him and kick him out!" he remarked.

Loder nodded.

"I wish they'd let him come back to Greyfriars!" he muttered. "I'd like to have him here for a few days!"

Loder's expression hinted that those few days would not be days of joy to William George Bunter.

Billy Bunter rolled cautiously away down the Sixth Form passage. He had had a fortunate escape; but he was anxious to get into cover. Loder and Walker, for their own sakes, obviously would not mention that they had found him in the school. But anyone else who sighted him was quite certain to mention it. But at half-past ten all the Lower School were in bed and all the Fifth, and only a few of the Sixth and the masters were still up. Few were likely to be about the House.

Bunter tiptoed past the prefects' room, which was still lighted, and from which he heard the sound of voices. Luck favoured him; the whole place seemed deserted, and there was no alarm, and Bunter crept stealthily at last into the Head's passage.

That the Head was still up he had no doubt. On the first night of the term the Head was not likely to go to bed early. He was good for an hour at least yet, Bunter considered.

Footsteps!

Bunter suppressed a gasp, and darted into a window recess, and clothed himself in the heavy window hangings as in a garment.

Footsteps and voices! Two masters were approaching from somewhere—and the voices were familiar.

"My dear Quelch—" That was the Head's deep voice.

Bunter suppressed his breathing.

"A few details I should like to discuss!" Bunter caught those words in the Head's voice.

"Certainly, sir!" came the sharper tones of the Remove master.

The footsteps passed on towards the Head's study. A door closed in the distance down the corridor.

Bunter clenched his fat fists. Quelch was in the Head's study now with the Head—obviously it was not a propitious moment for the excluded Removite to make his appeal.

"Beast!" murmured Bunter.

He had to wait! And as he waited he realised with more and more keenness that he was getting frightfully hungry. Hungry, in fact, was not the word for it; he was famished. He had a feeling that he could understand at last certain horrid things that happened in open boats at sea. Within Bunter there was an aching void; and even his desire to be reinstated in the Greyfriars Remove took second place now to the keener desire to get hold of something—anything—to eat!

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Surprise for the Remove

HARRY WHARTON awoke suddenly. He did not know for the moment what had awakened him, but something had, and he opened his eyes wide and blinked in the gloom of the Remove dormitory.

He had an impression that something had touched his face while he was asleep, pawing over his face. It did not seem likely, unless Mrs. Keble's cat had got into the dormitory.

He turned his head from side to side, blinking, and then gave a sudden jump as a hand touched him in the darkness, closed on his nose, and pulled.

"Ooooh!" gasped Wharton.

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"Oh, you're awake!" mumbled a voice. "What beast is it? Is that you, Toddy?"

Wharton gasped again. He knew that fat voice.

"Bunter!"

"Yes, old chap!"

Bunter had released the nose, just in time to escape a drive from Wharton's fist in the dark.

"You fat dummy!" stuttered the captain of the Remove.

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

Harry sat up in bed. He was utterly amazed by the presence of the Owl of the Remove late at night in the dormitory.

"What on earth are you doing here, Bunter?" he stuttered.

"Waking you up, old chap."

"I mean, how did you get in?"

"Walker's window."

"You frabjous ass!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" came a sleepy voice from the next bed. "What's that row? Anything up?"

"Yes," said Harry. "Bunter's up!"

"Oh crumbs!" Bob Cherry, wide awake at once, sat up in bed, and stared through the darkness. "That howling idiot!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"How on earth did that fat snail crawl in here?" exclaimed Bob Cherry, in astonishment. "Does Quelch know you're here, Bunter?"

"No fear!"

"The born idiot has sneaked in at a window," said Wharton. "Goodness knows why. Why didn't you go home, Bunter?"

"I'm coming back to Greyfriars, old chap. It will be all right when I've seen the Head, and explained to him."

"Fathead!"

"That beast, Quelch, is with the Head now," said Bunter. "Chewing the rag, you know, like a pair of old women—you know what masters are when they begin to jaw. I can't see the Beak while Quelch is with him—the brute wouldn't give me a chance to speak—he don't want me to show up his wicked tyranny and misrepresentations to the Head!"

"Idiot!"

"And I'm hungry!" added Bunter.

"Do you think this dormitory is a tea-shop?" asked Bob Cherry. "If you're really hungry—"

"I am, old chap—frightfully."

"Well, I can offer you a pillow—"

"What?"

"Or a bolster—"

"Beast!"

"Or a pair of rubber shoes—"

"Oh, shut up, you beast! Haven't you got anything to eat in the dorm?" asked Bunter.

"Ha, ha! No!"

"Don't make a row and wake up all the chaps, Cherry. I don't want the Beaks to know I'm here till I've seen the Head and set matters right. I say, you fellows, I must have something to eat. It's all locked up below stairs—I can't get at anything there. What am I to do?"

"Keep quiet, and let us go to sleep!" suggested Bob Cherry.

"Beast! I'm hungry!"

"Well, of all the howling idiots!" said Harry Wharton in exasperation. "Haven't you the sense of a bunny-rabbit, Bunter?"

"More sense than any chap here, and chance it," said Bunter. "If I were a silly ass like you, Wharton, I'd go and beg for admission to a home for idiots. If I had a brain like yours, Cherry, I wouldn't trust myself outside a lunatic asylum. Look here, chuck up talking rot, and help a fellow! I've got to have

something to eat. Is there anything in your study, Wharton?"

"Oh, yes! There's an armchair—"

"You silly idiot, do you think I can eat an armchair?" hissed Bunter.

"Well, you can eat almost anything. You're welcome to try, if you like, anyhow."

"You awful rotter! Lot you care if I perish with hunger under your very eyes!" said Bunter bitterly. "After all I've done for you! I had my tea at the bun-shop at six, and I've touched nothing since, except a pork-pie and a bag of caramels and some toffee and cake!"

"Oh, my hat! You must be famished!" said Bob Cherry sarcastically. "Don't begin on us! Cannibalism is against the rules!"

"You silly chump! Is there anything in your study—"

"A table and bookcase—"

"You—you rotter!" hissed Bunter. "Is this a joking matter? I tell you I'm famished! How can I interview the Beak when I'm actually perishing with hunger?"

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"Well, if I'd known you were coming, old bean, I'd have laid in a snack for you—a few legs of mutton, and a couple of dozen pork pies, and a few loaves and pounds of butter—enough to keep you going till morning. But—"

"Beast! I tell you—"

"Oh, gad! Is that Bunter?" came Lord Mauleverer's voice. The murmur of talking in the silent dormitory had awakened his lordship.

"Yes, Mauly, old chap! I've come back!"

"Good gad!"

"I'm hungry, old fellow! Is there anything in your study?"

"Yaas!"

"You don't mind if I eat it, Mauly?"

"Certainly not—but you must be awfully peckish if you can eat my study furniture."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter breathed hard and deep. The situation was serious; indeed, tragic. But these beasts persisted in regarding it as comic.

Five or six fellows were awake now, and most of them were chuckling. Not a man realised the seriousness of the situation. Bunter's amazing return to his old dormitory in the middle of the night only made them chuckle.

"Well, you take the cake, and no jolly old error, Bunter," said Vernon-Smith. "What do you expect to happen to you when you're spotted in the school?"

"It will be all right when I've seen the Head and explained, Smithy! I say, is there any grub in your study?"

"Lots!"

"Do you mind if I eat it?"

"Yes!"

"Beast!"

"You frabjous dummy!" said Peter Todd. "You unspeakable frabjous bandersnatch! I've a jolly good mind to get up and bolster you! You'd better go straight to Quelch and ask him to give you a bed for the night."

"He would turn me out in the morning, you ass!"

"That will happen, anyhow, you fat chump!"

"Beast!"

"There's some grub in my study, Bunter," said Monty Newland. "You can wolf 't if you like, you fat duffer. It's in the cupboard."

"Thanks, old chap! I wonder you fellows ain't ashamed of yourselves, letting a chap down like this. Newland's usually mean, but he's setting you an example now," said Bunter.

"Usually what?" asked Newland.
"All right, old chap, I don't mean exactly mean," said Bunter reassuringly. "I'll tell you what—I'll be your pal when I come back into the Remove. I mean it."

"You won't alter your mind?"

"No, old fellow."

"You'd better! I shall kick you if you start palling on to me."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You cheeky beast! I—I mean, I'll get down to your study. You can go to sleep again, Toddy, and be blown to you! I shan't speak to you when I'm in the Remove again. You can consider our friendship at an end!"

"Hurrah!" ejaculated Peter Todd.

"Yah!"

Billy Bunter rolled away, and the door of the dormitory was heard to open and shut softly. Having discovered where there was food, Billy Bunter had no more time to waste, and he lost not a moment in getting down to the Remove passage, and into Study No. 9. Most of the Remove were awake by that time, and there was a buzz of voices and chuckles along the row of beds.

"Of all the burbling chumps!" said Peter Todd.

"Of all the howling idiots!" said Johnny Bull.

"Of all the terrific and preposterous jackasses!" said Hurreo Jamset Ram Singh.

"What on earth will happen to Bunter when they spot him in the morning?" asked Frank Nugent.

"Order of the boot, short and sharp!" chuckled the Bounder. "Quelchy will lick him before he goes! He won't miss a chance like that!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And he thinks it will be all right if he explains to the Head!" chortled Skinner. "I hope he won't forget to tell the Head that he suspects Quelchy of drinking! He really ought not to leave that out!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Poor old Bunter!"

The Removites settled down to sleep again. Once more silence and slumber descended on the Remove dormitory, though it was destined to be broken again before the night was much older.



Long after the last light in the great building of Greyfriars School was out, and all seemed safe, Slim Jim negotiated a rainpipe, and penetrated by way of a high window into the House in approved cat-burglar style! (See Chapter 14.)

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Nap!

"THAT'S better!"

Billy Bunter uttered that remark in tones of heart-felt satisfaction.

The Remove studies, of course, were all in darkness; that part of the house was quite deserted at night. But Bunter knew his way about the Remove quarters well enough, and he had groped to Newland's study. He did not venture to turn on the light, or to strike a match. Until he had seen the Head and set matters right, he could not be too careful.

There was a glimmer of starlight at the study window, and that was enough for Bunter. He groped to the study cupboard, opened it, and groped within. A large cake met his groping fingers.

It was only a three-pound cake, so did not last Bunter long. But he felt ever so much better when he had packed it away.

Life once more seemed worth living. He groped farther in the cupboard, and found a bag of biscuits. The biscuits followed the cake. Two or three bananas turned up next, and went to keep the cake and the biscuits company. There seemed nothing more. But Bunter was not the fellow to leave such

important matters to chance; and he groped in his pockets for a matchbox to investigate. Then he made the interesting discovery that he had no matches about him.

He could not venture to turn on the light in the study. It would show from the window, and if anybody happened to be in the quad— Really, it was not safe!

But Bunter was still hungry, and his groping fingers failed to find anything further in the cupboard of an edible nature. If there was anything eatable, it would be a sin and a shame to miss it. Yet, turning on the light was risky, he knew that.

Still, at that late hour of the night, there could hardly be anybody out of the house to witness the illumination of a Remove study window. Bunter rolled across to the window and blinked out.

Clear autumn starlight fell on the quadrangle. There had been a shower of rain; but it had cleared, and the stars had come out brightly. Bunter stared down cautiously and watchfully.

"Beast!" he muttered.

Somebody was there! At the distance, and in the uncertain light, Bunter could not recognise who it was.

But he saw, for a moment, a dark, moving shadow that flitted swiftly.

He saw it only for a moment, and then it was gone. But it was somebody, he knew that; and the light in the study window would be seen if he turned it on.

He rolled back to the cupboard and resumed his groping. Long and with painstaking care he groped, and succeeded in knocking over some crockery, which smashed on the floor.

That, however, did not matter; a little noise in the Remove quarters was not likely to be heard in the distant, occupied rooms. Monty Newland, perhaps, might think that it mattered; but Bunter was not bothering about what Monty Newland might think.

There was no more grub in the cupboard; or, if there was, Bunter could not find any. He gave up the search at last.

He had, at all events, taken the keen edge off his appetite. He could hold out now. Doubtless the Head would provide him with supper—when he had set matters right with the Head!

The question was, how long was that beast Quelchy going to stay with the

Head? Until he had gone, it was useless to attempt to interview Dr. Locke. Bunter sat down in Monty Newland's armchair while he pondered over that question. Suppose they jawed for an hour—it was likely enough. The way masters could jaw, when they got a chance, was amazing; Bunter had noticed that lots of times. Coker of the Fifth had got into a row once for being heard, by authoritative ears, to remark that when the masters got together in Common-room, they cackled like a lot of hens. Quelchy might stay up to midnight talking rot to the Head—the kind of tosh that the schoolmasters do talk! It was intensely exasperating to a fellow in Bunter's peculiar position; but there it was.

He felt that he might as well take a little nap while he waited. He was sleepy—awfully sleepy! He was fatigued with his uncommon exertions that day. It was safe enough to take a nap in a Remove study—nobody was likely to come there until a boys' maid arrived in the early hours of the morning with broom and brushes.

Bunter's eyes closed behind his big spectacles.

He decided to take a nap for half an hour—that would leave a safe margin. At the end of an hour he was still fast asleep. Had anyone passed along the Remove passage—which, fortunately, no one did—he would have been surprised to hear a deep and reverberating snore issuing from Study No. 9. It was fortunate for Bunter that he was so far from the inhabited portions of the House, or that hefty snore certainly would have betrayed him.

In the Head's study the headmaster and Mr. Quelch finished their discussion. They bade one another good-night.

Mr. Quelch repaired to his bed-room, and turned in. The Head walked down the passage to the private door that led into his own House, and disappeared.

Lights were out; the last door had closed; darkness and silence and slumber enwrapped Greyfriars School from end to end.

The Head, sleeping the sleep of the just, was not likely to hear any explanation, convincing or otherwise, from Billy Bunter that night! Mr. Quelch, slumbering peacefully, had forgotten Bunter and all his works.

And in Study No. 9 in the Remove William George Bunter snored on undisturbed; his half-hour's nap growing longer and longer.

In all the great building of Greyfriars School there was only one person who was wakeful and active; and that person was not, by any means, a Greyfriars man.

Slim Jim, the cat-burglar, had long since climbed over the Cloister wall, in the easy, accessible spot Bunter had so obligingly shown him; and Bunter—though he did not know it—had caught a passing glimpse of his shadow stirring in the starlit quad. And long after the last light was out, and all seemed safe, Slim Jim had negotiated a rain-pipe and penetrated by way of a high window into the House—in approved cat-burglar style. Silence and slumber reigned round him—but Slim Jim was active—very active, indeed, and very wide awake.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Not Nice for Slim Jim!

“O H! Oh dear!”

Billy Bunter awoke. It was not like Billy Bunter, once asleep, to wake till he was forcibly awakened. Even the rising-bell did not always awaken Bunter in the morning, and some Remove men had to awaken him with a wet sponge, or a hurling boot, or a swipe from a pillow. In the Remove dormitory of a morning there was always some obliging fellow ready to do this. Without some such aid, it was unlike Bunter to awaken, especially before day had dawned.

But circumstances alter cases. Bunter was sleeping in an armchair now. It was quite a comfortable armchair for a little nap, so long as a fellow stayed still in it. But if a fellow turned in his sleep, he was likely to turn out—which was precisely what Bunter did.

Had Bunter been in bed, he would have turned over comfortably without even opening his eyes, and snored on regardless. But when he turned in the armchair, he naturally rolled off it; and he awakened quite suddenly as his fat person thudded on the floor, and his bullet head came into contact with the fender.

He sat up dizzily and rubbed his head. For a few moments he could not remember where he was, and supposed that he had fallen out of bed. Then he remembered, and picked himself up.

He rubbed his sleepy eyes, and replaced his spectacles on his fat little nose.

He wondered what the time was. He was still sleepy, and wanted more sleep; he felt that he could have done with about twenty-four hours more. Still, he was glad that he had awakened. That night was his only chance for interviewing the Head and getting the matter set right. Obviously, if that was left over till the following day, his chance was gone. Two Sixth Form men and a dozen Removites knew that he was in the House; and in the daytime his presence could not be kept a secret. Quelchy would swoop down on him like a bird of prey; and all that he had to expect, in that case, was a record thrashing, and summary ejection from the precincts of the school. He was thankful, as he groped his way out of the study, that he had not overslept himself in taking that little nap.

But the deep silence of the House, as he crept down the Remove staircase, gave him a misgiving. Had he overslept himself, after all—had he awakened too late to carry out his plans?

If the Head had left his study, and gone back to his house, and gone to bed—

“Oh dear!” groaned Bunter.

He could not see his watch in the dark. He had no matches, and he dared not switch on any lights. He hoped that he was not too late; and, anyhow, it was easy to put that matter to the test. If the Head was still up, there would be a light in his study, which Bunter could see under the door—and if that beast, Quelchy, was still with him, they would be talking, and he would hear them. So Bunter, with great caution, groped his way stealthily towards the Head's passage to investigate. It was rather eerie, groping about the great, silent building in the dark, and Bunter did not like it at all. But he did not know how late it was, and he hoped that the Head was still up.

Still, it was a relief, when he groped

into the Head's passage, to see a glimmer of light in the distance.

That light came from under the door of the Head's study.

“Oh, good!” gasped Bunter.

There was a light in Dr. Locke's study. That settled it. The Head, obviously, must still be up!

The burning question now was whether that beast Quelch was still with him. That could only be ascertained by listening at the Head's door for the sound of voices.

Bunter hesitated some moments.

It was easy enough to creep silently along the passage and listen at the door for voices; but suppose the door opened just when he was there, listening, and Quelchy came out!

It was an awful possibility!

But it was evidently a risk that had to be taken, if Bunter was to interview his headmaster at all, and convince that gentleman that he was a misjudged and wronged youth, who ought to be allowed to return to Greyfriars, and, indeed, welcomed there with open arms.

Bunter made up his fat mind to it, and crept along the passage as stealthily as a cat on the trail of a mouse.

He reached the door of the Head's study, and bent to the keyhole and listened breathlessly.

Not a sound—not a murmur of a voice! For a long minute, for two long minutes, Bunter listened, his heart growing lighter. No one was talking in the study. Obviously, had Mr. Quelch still been with the Head, there would have been a sound of talking—one or both would have been chin-wagging. Quelchy, evidently, was gone!

Bunter breathed more freely.

Quelchy was gone; but the light in the study showed that someone was there, and that someone, of course, could only be the Head. Had Bunter known that it was now past one o'clock in the morning, he might have wondered at the Head staying up so very late, even on the first night of term. But he did not know that midnight had passed.

He still hesitated at the door. The Head must be alone now, and it was his chance—the chance for which he had taken so much trouble and so many risks. The Head would have to listen to him—there was no beastly Quelch to stand between—and the Head could scarcely fail to be convinced by Bunter's eloquence. The fat junior stood breathing fast, screwing up his courage to the sticking-point.

The study was so very silent that he wondered whether the Head had fallen asleep in his chair.

But suddenly from the silence of the room came a sound—a metallic click!

Bunter started.

It sounded like a lock opening. An ordinary sound enough, but startling in the silence.

A faint rustling sound followed.

Bunter understood—or thought he did. The Head had opened his safe to take out some papers, or to put papers away. It was a natural enough proceeding on the Head's part. It was only the sudden sound, after the deep silence, that was startling.

Another soft rustle! The man in the study was handling papers—papers that had a very soft rustle, just like bank-notes. Bunter grinned at the idea of the Head counting over his money, in the middle of the night, like some old miser.

Bunter resolved to wait a few minutes longer. It was necessary to catch the Head in a good temper, if possible; and the Head was not likely to be pleased if he was found poring over his bank-notes in his safe. Bunter waited to hear

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the safe door close, and to hear the Head sit down again.

But there was no sound of a door closing—no sound of anyone sitting down on a chair. There was rustling and rustling, as if quite a lot of banknotes were being handled and stowed away in a pocket. That was exactly what it sounded like, at least, improbable as it seemed.

Then silence!
Bunter had not heard the Head sit down, but no doubt he was sitting down by this time. He seemed to have finished at the safe, at any rate. Billy Bunter raised a fat hand, tapped at the door, and entered the study. And Slim Jim, the cat-burglar and cracksmen, swung round from the open safe with a suppressed howl of alarm.

Billy Bunter gazed at the man in the Head's study, petrified.

He was taken utterly by surprise. Not for a single instant had he doubted that it was the Head who was in the study. It had never crossed his mind that it might possibly be someone else.

He gazed at the slim man, recognising him immediately as the obliging gentleman who had helped him with a "bunk" over the Cloister wall earlier that eventful night.

He did not speak or move. He stood rooted to the floor! The open safe—the man standing at it, with a last bundle of notes that he had been examining before cramming them into his pocket—all told their tale, clearly enough even for Bunter's comprehension.

It was not the Head! The Head was gone to bed long ago. It was a burglar whom Bunter had surprised at his nocturnal task!

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He realised it in a flashing instant, with a terror and horror that deprived him of speech and movement.

He could only stand gazing at the apparition, more dreadful to his terrified eyes than a grisly spectre.

The cracksmen, as startled and surprised as Bunter, returned his gaze, for the moment nonplussed.

Up to that moment all had gone well for Slim Jim. Two hundred pounds had been packed away in his pockets. The lock of the Head's safe had given him scarcely any trouble. It was one of the softest jobs that Slim Jim had ever struck. A few minutes more and the last of the valuables in the safe would

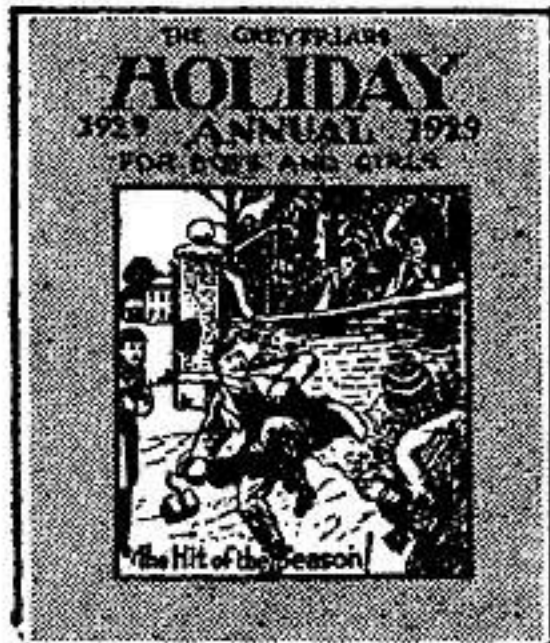
have been packed away in capacious pockets, and he would have been creeping back to the window he had left open, and descending the rain-pipe with the agility of a cat. Only a few minutes more—

Slim Jim breathed hard, and his teeth came together with a sharp click. The look in his eyes showed that Bunter had

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plenty of reason to be terrified. The little matter of knocking a schoolboy on the head was not likely to stand between Slim Jim and liberty.

With one hand he jammed the last bundle of banknotes into his pocket—with the other he gripped a short steel jemmy; then he leaped.

"Yarocoooh!"
Billy Bunter's yell of terror rang through Greyfriars and awoke every echo of the House.

He was in danger, though not in such danger as his terrified fancy painted. It was Slim Jim's intention to give him a tap on the head to keep him quiet for ten minutes or so, while the cat-burglar vanished into space. Bunter's terrified vision saw battle, murder, and sudden death before him, but really it was not quite so bad as that.

Bunter's movements, at normal moments, resembled those of a tortoise trained on easy and leisurely lines. But at this abnormal moment Bunter's movements resembled those of a cat on hot bricks.

The instant Slim Jim moved Bunter moved, and swift as the cat-burglar was the terrified Owl of the Remove was swifter.

How he did it Bunter never knew, but he did it. His hand was still on the handle of the door he had opened to enter. He had not moved it; he had been petrified. He made one wild, frantic backward leap into the passage, dragging the door shut as he did so.

Slam!
It was a large and heavy oaken door, but it moved like lightning in Bunter's

grasp and slammed with a noise like thunder.

Crash!
Slim Jim certainly had never imagined that the fat, frightened schoolboy could move so swiftly. He hit out, and the steel jemmy crashed on the closed door.

"Help!" shrieked Bunter.

He did not run; he dared not run. He knew that if he ran the door would be open in a twinkling, and that awful burglar rushing him down. Frantically, instinctively, unthinkingly, but tenaciously, Bunter clung with both hands to the big handle of the door, exerting his strength—great at that moment, in his frantic terror—to keep the handle from being turned on the inside.

He felt the grip of the burglar on the handle, on the inner side of the door; he felt it turning.

With hysterical strength Bunter held it back. It should not turn; it must not turn. The door must not open!

"Help! Help! Help!"

Bunter hardly knew that he was shrieking. But he was, with a shriek that rang and echoed and roared through the silent House.

"Help! Help! Help!"

Greyfriars fairly rang with it.

Voices shouted—footsteps echoed—lights flashed! The whole House was awakened.

"Help! Help! Yarocoooh! Help! Murder! Fire!"

"What—"

"Who—"

"Great Scott!"

From the Sixth to the Second, every Greyfriars man was wide awake. Every master was awake and out of bed. The House hummed with sound. From all directions footsteps came hurrying along. Electric lights flashed

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into illumination in every room and passage.

"Help! Help!"

Desperately Bunter clung on to the door-handle, determined that it should not turn; fiercely Slim Jim twisted at it to turn it. It was one of those big, old-fashioned, oval handles, which turn only one way—fortunately for Bunter. All his strength, and all his weight, was thrown on that handle to keep it from turning back, to keep the dreadful burglar shut up in the study; to keep the crashing jemmy from Bunter's precious head! Fear is said to lend wings; and terror may lend a tempor-

ary and fictitious strength; certainly Bunter succeeded in keeping the door fast, while the desperate cracksman wrenched within in vain. No doubt Bunter would have been beaten in time—but time was exactly what Slim Jim was not given. A whole alarmed House was pouring to the spot, and when at last Slim Jim tore the door open and leapt out, he leapt out into a crowd.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

For Valour!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"
"That's Bunter!"
"The howling ass, he's fallen downstairs, or something."

"I'm jolly well going to see!"

In the Remove dormitory, as in every other dormitory and bed-room at Greyfriars, there was wide wakefulness and immediate activity as Billy Bunter's gigantic yells rang through the night.

Harry Wharton was the first out of the dormitory. Bob Cherry and the rest of the Co. were swift behind him. That wild and frantic yelling showed that something had happened to Bunter—something more serious than a tumble in the dark.

"Help, help, help!" came the shrieks from the Head's passage.

Harry Wharton & Co. found themselves in a surging crowd making for the spot. Lights were on all over the House. Wingate of the Sixth, with a poker in his hand, was rushing into the Head's passage ahead of the others—Mr. Quelch, half-dressed, was at his heels; Mr. Prout, the master of the Fifth, was to be seen brandishing a rubber hot-water bottle, which he had snatched up in the moment of alarm, though nobody could guess what he was thinking of doing with it. As the excited crowd swarmed into the Head's corridor, the figure of the Head himself appeared from the other end in flowing dressing-gown, with alarm in his

majestic face. Electric light flooded the passage, and revealed William George Bunter clinging to the door-handle of the Head's study like a limpet to a rock.

"Bunter—"

"What—"

"He's potty!"

"What the thump—"

The meaning of Bunter's amazing attitude was not clear. Why a fellow should cling to a door-handle and yell for help was rather a mystery.

But the mystery was cleared up in another moment as the door was dragged away from Bunter, wide open, and a slim, desperate man leaped out into the passage, dropping banknotes as he leaped, and brandishing a steel jemmy in his upraised right hand.

"Burglars!"

"Look out!"

"Collar him!"

Clang! Crash! Crash!

Slim Jim, no doubt, had some hope of fighting a way through; but it was a delusive hope. Wingate's poker met the whirling jemmy with a terrific clang and crash, and poker and jemmy flew in the air together and crashed to the floor. The next instant the hefty captain of Greyfriars was on Slim Jim with a leap, and they rolled over together, struggling.

"Help, help, help!"

Bunter was still yelling frantically, apparently unconscious, in his terror, that help had come.

But nobody heeded Bunter for the moment.

It was a case of all hands on deck to deal with Slim Jim, who was fighting more like a wildcat burglar than a common or garden cat-burglar.

"Back up, Remove!" roared Bob Cherry, as he hurled himself into the fray. And the cracksman, who had almost wrenched himself away from Wingate, went down heavily again with Bob Cherry's arm round his neck. And

Harry Wharton had an arm round Slim Jim's waist the next moment, and Hurrec Jamset Ram Singh had hold of one arm, and Johnny Bull had taken possession of the other. And Coker of the Fifth plumped down on Slim Jim's chest as he sprawled, and punched at Slim Jim with terrific energy. And Walker of the Sixth trampled wildly on Slim Jim's thrashing legs, and Loder punched him, and Coker, with excited impartiality.

"Secure him!" boomed the Head's deep voice. "A—a—a burglar! Bless my soul! Secure him!"

"The securefulness is terrific!" gasped Hurrec Jamset Ram Singh.

"Ow!" came an anguished moan from under a heap of Greyfriars fellows. "Chuck it! I give in! I tell you I give in! Ow, wow, ow!"

"Secure him, but do not ill-use him unnecessarily!" said the Head, benevolent even towards a burglar.

It really looked as if there would not be much left of Slim Jim when the Greyfriars fellows had finished with him. But the Head intervened, and the hapless cracksman was allowed to rise to his feet—half a dozen fellows holding him by the arms and the collar. Slim Jim stood gasping and spluttering in a dishevelled and exhausted state, completely winded. Banknotes lay like snow about the passage, disgorged from Slim Jim's well-filled pockets during the wild struggle.

"Bless my soul!" said the Head, gasping. "He is a—a—a burglar, and he has robbed my safe! Goodness gracious! Keep him secure, my boys!"

"We've got him all right, sir!" said Wingate.

"Ow! Help! Ow! Help!"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"But who gave the alarm?" asked Mr. Quelch. "Someone was calling for help!"

"Yes; who discovered this—this miscreant at his nefarious work?" asked the Head. "He has robbed my safe! Pick up those banknotes, please! The total should be three hundred pounds and—"

"Bunter!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

"Oh dear! Yow-ow-ow! Help!"

"Bunter!" The Head adjusted his glasses and stared at Bunter, forgetting even the burglar for the moment in his amazement. "Bunter, what is Bunter doing here, Mr. Quelch?"

"I do not profess to account for any action of that stupid and absurd boy, sir," answered Mr. Quelch. "I cannot imagine how he came here at this time of the night."

"Bunter—what—"

"Ow, ow! Ow, wow!"

"It was Bunter gave the alarm, sir," said Harry Wharton.

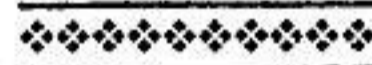
"What—what?"

"It was Bunter, sir," said Wingate. "He was holding the door of your study, sir, and keeping the burglar shut in the room when I came up."

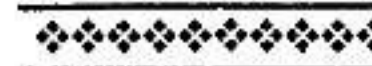
"Bless my soul!"

The Head gazed at Bunter. Mr. Quelch gazed at him. The whole half-dressed crowd gazed at him. Slim Jim gazed at him, and his gaze was extremely inimical. Billy Bunter blinked round him and realised that he was safe now, and his courage revived. The Head was there, if Bunter wanted to interview him; but Mr. Quelch was there also; in fact, all Greyfriars was there. Bunter fixed one eye on the Head hopefully, and the other uneasily on the Remove master.

"Bunter!" said the Head in a deep voice.



*This is the
cover to look
out for next
Saturday, boys!
Give an order
for your
"MAGNET"
to-day!*





"Help! Help!" shrieked Bunter, clinging desperately to the door handle of the Head's study. There was a rush of feet, and masters and juniors appeared as if from nowhere. The mystery was cleared up the next moment when Bunter was dragged away, for the door opened wide, and a slim, desperate man leaped out into the passage, dropping banknotes as he leaped, and brandishing a steel jemmy! (See Chapter 16.)

"Ow! Yes, sir!" gasped Bunter. "If—if you'll let me explain, sir—"

"It appears that you have saved me from a very heavy loss, Bunter—"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

"A very serious loss indeed, for which I cannot but feel grateful, in view of the risk you have taken, and the courage you have shown."

Bunter's eyes opened wide behind his big spectacles. This was rather unexpected. Bunter had known all about the risk he was taking, and he had taken it because he couldn't help it. But he had known nothing about the courage he had shown—in fact, he did not remember having shown any. But he was more than willing to take the Head's word for it.

"Your presence here is inexplicable," said the Head. "You were forbidden to return to this school—"

"You—you see, sir—"

"Yet you are here—"

"I—I—"

"And your presence, inexplicable as it is, has saved me from a most serious loss, and it appears that you have shown great courage and—and devotion," said the Head, "for a boy of your years to intervene, single-handed, and prevent a burglary, is remarkable. Greyfriars boys, I hope, will always display courage in times of peril; yet I should not have expected a Lower Fourth junior to face a desperate midnight marauder single-handed, with such—I must use the word—such reckless and indeed foolhardy courage. Nevertheless, foolhardy as your conduct appears, Bunter, I cannot but commend you. I compliment you upon your courage, if not upon your prudence."

Bunter could hardly believe his fat ears.

The Remove fellows found some difficulty in crediting theirs! Billy Bunter complimented upon his courage, though not on his prudence! If there was one

quality Bunter never lost in the hour of peril, it was prudence! His prudence at such times was remarkable. His courage never had been conspicuous! The Remove fellows could not help feeling that there was a catch in this somewhere.

The Head, in fact, was under a slight misapprehension.

Bunter was not the fellow to set him right.

He was willing to let it go at that! Besides, he saw light ahead—like a wrecked mariner, he saw land! In this mood, the Head was not likely to kick him out of Greyfriars—even that unspeakable beast, Quelch, who was so unjustly down on Bunter, could scarcely want to kick out a fellow who had acted with reckless and foolhardy courage in saving the headmaster from a serious loss.

"I do not understand your presence here, Bunter," pursued the Head. "But it has proved fortunate for me. You shall explain to me to-morrow. But if it means that you desire to return to Greyfriars, and that your father so desires, I shall certainly request your Form master to overlook your rebellious conduct of last term, and to take you back into the Remove."

"Oh, sir!" gasped Bunter.

His fat face beamed.

"Undoubtedly, sir," said Mr. Quelch. "After Bunter's very meritorious conduct to-night, I should have begged you to give the boy another chance at this school."

Bunter blinked at him. This from Quelch! Apparently Mr. Quelch was not the frightful beast he had supposed!

"Oh, sir!" gasped Bunter again.

The Head waved a hand, dismissing the matter.

"Mr. Quelch, perhaps you will telephone to the police station for a con-

stable to be sent for this man! Win-gate, you will no doubt sit up for a time to watch him, with some of the Sixth Form. My boys, the rest of you will return to bed at once. Bunter, you may go to the Remove dormitory with the Remove."

Bunter went, as if he were treading on air! The Head, whose learned and majestic mind was above small details, had overlooked the trifling fact that there was, at present, no bed for Bunter in the Remove dormitory. But Peter Todd generously shared his bed with the Owl of the Remove—Bunter, of course, taking four-fifths of it, and grumbling sleepily at Peter for wanting so much. And to the questions that rained on Bunter from the excited Removites, he returned only one answer—snore!

It had come off!

Nobody had expected Bunter's intended appeal and explanation to the Head to produce any result; and everybody undoubtedly was right there.

Yet it had come off!

The appeal and explanation were not made—they were not needed! Bunter was pardoned on his merits!

It was, as Bob Cherry said, fool's luck! That Bunter had been lucky could not be denied; that he was a fool was still less deniable. The Remove agreed that it was fool's luck. Bunter had butted in successfully; and, on the whole, the Remove congratulated him—if not themselves. Slim Jim probably regretted the butting-in of Bunter. But he did not matter, anyway.

THE END.

(There will be another magnificent yarn of Harry Wharton & Co. in next week's MAGNET, chums, entitled: "The Secret of the Schooner!" Mind you read it.)

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WHO SHOT HAROLD WENTWORTH? That's what everyone is asking, and that's what Ferrers Locke, our slick detective, is going to discover. Join him in the hunt, boys!

The Toughest Team in the League!



A Brilliant New Footer and Detective Serial, featuring Ferrers Locke, the Wizard Tee of Baker Street, and his clever boy assistant, Jack Drake.

(Introduction on next page.)

Who's Guilty?

"SHOT!"

The word went from mouth to mouth amongst that gigantic assembly in hushed and horror-stricken tones. Eyes from every section of the spacious ground fixed on that huddled heap of humanity.

Drake plucked Ferrers Locke by the arm, almost pinching the detective's flesh in his anxiety.

"Shot, guv'nor!"

But Ferrers Locke was leaving his seat and making for the gangway with rapid strides. Drake followed him like one in a dream.

As they climbed over the short balustrade that flanked the stand, Samuel Bigways, the managing director of the Sparsdale Athletic, reached the unconscious figure of his star outside-right.

"Shot! Good heavens!"

Bigways' ruddy face turned a sickly pallor as he knelt beside Wentworth and slipped an arm under the poor fellow's neck to raise him. A moment later the club doctor was on the scene with his bag. Without a word he cut the black-and-white jersey from top to bottom with a pair of sharp scissors, and gazed critically at the wound in Wentworth's chest.

"Missed the right lung by something under an inch," he grunted half to himself, and then busied himself with sponging the wound and bandaging it.

In the meantime, Ferrers Locke and Drake had reached the scene. A cordon of policemen barred their passage, but a word to the inspector in charge saw Locke and Drake passing through.

Samuel Bigways turned an anxious face on the celebrated detective.

"This is dreadful, Mr. Locke!" he murmured hoarsely. "Dreadful!"

Locke gave the managing director a quick glance.

"I was not aware that you knew me by name, sir."

Bigways' fleshy features assumed a ghost of a smile.

"Who does not know London's greatest detective?" he replied.

Ferrers Locke was not listening, however. His keen eyes took in the position of the still figure on the ground, lying just where it had fallen, noted the position of the chest wound, and then turned towards the stand.

"It's not difficult to see from which direction that bullet came," he confided to Jack Drake.

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Drake's eyes followed those of his chief.

"But I didn't hear a shot, did you, guv'nor?"

Locke shook his head.

"There was too much cheering and noise for one thing," he remarked slowly. "But I fancy this bullet came from a gun of the noiseless variety."

Once more he studied the unconscious figure of Wentworth, once more his shrewd grey eyes travelled to the stand, and then almost imperceptibly he stiffened. Next moment he turned to find Samuel Bigways' eyes bent upon him.

"Mr. Locke, I would give anything to know the dastard who did this," said the director.

"Hum!"

That was all the reply he got from the detective.

"He's coming round."

It was the medico who spoke, and Locke and Drake immediately turned their attention to the injured footballer.

Wentworth's eyes flickered open, his good-looking features wrinkled to a spasm of pain; then he jerked his head towards Ferrers Locke, as if inviting him to come nearer.

Locke did so, and stooped over him.

"I wanted to see you," said Wentworth in laboured breaths. "I—I have something—something important to—"

His words were drowned as Samuel Bigways suddenly flared up, his big red face red with wrath.

"Get back!" he boomed, waving his arms at the little group surrounding the wounded outside-right. "Let the poor boy have air."

Locke gave him a quick glance of disapproval, and then bent his head to a level with Wentworth's face. But the footballer had lapsed into unconsciousness again, and whatever he was minded to tell Ferrers Locke was never uttered.

"Bring the car round," thundered Bigways, suddenly beckoning to his chauffeur in the stand. "I'll take the poor boy home—"

"To the hospital," put in the doctor. "This poor chap's in a bad way. They'll have to operate to extract the bullet."

"Hospital be hanged!" stormed Bigways in a loud voice. "No Sparsdale man shall go to a hospital while I have a house at his disposal. Doctor, ring up the best surgeon you know of, and tell him to proceed to my house in Cavendish Square at once."

"Dr. Mackenzie's the man," said the medico. "But his fee—"

Bigways snapped a finger scornfully. "His fee? Pah! What do I care what his fee is! It's poor Wentworth I'm thinking about!"

A cheer went up from those people who heard that generous-hearted statement, and Bigways coloured slightly. If he had intended to bring himself into the limelight as the man who looked after the well-being of his club members as no other director in League football did, he could not have contrived it better. The news soon spread round the ground that Samuel Bigways was going to take care of Wentworth at his own palatial house in Cavendish Square, regardless of cost, and cheer upon cheer rang out.

"The car's here, sir."

The chauffeur touched his hat as he addressed his master.

Samuel Bigways motioned to the prostrate outside-right.

"Take him up carefully," he said in a soft voice, "and get him to the car. I'll follow."

Willing hands took hold of Harold Wentworth and lifted him. For one moment his eyes flickered open again, and they rested on Ferrers Locke pleadingly. Next second Samuel Bigways' bulky figure came between Locke and the injured player, and Wentworth was carried slowly and gently to the waiting car.

A dead silence settled on the vast concourse as the car drew off. Then a perfect babel of noise went round.

"Who shot him?"

"Was it a shot? I didn't hear anything."

"I'd like to have my hands on the scoundrel for a couple o' minutes!"

"Same here!"

For a few moments Ferrers Locke stood like a statue; and Drake, still overwhelmed by the tragedy, wondered vaguely what was passing in his chief's mind.

Then Ferrers Locke walked to the grand-stand, taking as his point that section which was in a direct line with where Wentworth had fallen.

It brought him dead level with the special box set aside for the exclusive use of such important personages as directors and their friends. Behind the box, of course, stretched the tiers of seats for the ordinary spectators. No policeman barred his way as Ferrers Locke, after viewing the box for some time, stepped into it. Beyond a crumpled programme, and two or three pieces of torn paper, there was nothing to see.

For a few seconds Locke stood facing the spot where Wentworth had fallen.

Then he turned and gazed at the tiers of seats behind the box. Jack looked at him with unchecked curiosity in his youthful features.

Locke returned the glance with a grim expression tightening the corners of his mouth.

"Would you care to sit in any one of those tiers of seats, Jack, and take a pot shot at a running figure on the ground itself?" he asked.

"No fear, guv'nor!" Drake said at last.

"And why not?"

"Because it would be a ninety-nine chance to one that I should hit someone in front of me, and not anyone running along the pitch."

Locke smiled.

"Good for you, my lad," he said. "Do you notice, too, that directly behind this box there's a wooden partition which almost obscures the view of the first row of spectators?"

Drake nodded.

"And what would you think, my lad, if I ventured to say that the bullet which knocked out Wentworth came from a gun levelled in this very box?"

Drake started.

"Surely you're not suggesting—"

"I'm not suggesting," interrupted Ferrers Locke quietly. "I feel convinced in my own mind that the shot was fired here. You will observe that from here there is an uninterrupted view of the pitch. Good! You yourself admit that a gun being fired from someone higher up in the stand is next door to an impossibility. It's more than that, for I saw for myself how the bullet had entered Wentworth's chest. It was almost on a dead level with the front of this box, slightly deflected towards the ground, certainly at not a sufficient angle to assume that the shot was fired from a position higher up than this."

"But there was only Samuel Bigways and another fellow in this box, guv'nor."

Locke nodded grimly.

"I am quite well aware of that."

"Then who do you think fired—the shot?" gasped Drake.

Locke smiled faintly.

"I'm not a magician, my lad," he said gently, "and to venture to name the scoundrel with such poor evidence at my disposal would be unwise in the extreme. Guesswork, as you know, is one of the things that a detective should eschew."

"But if, as you say, the shot came from here," said Drake, "it must be either the dirty work of Samuel Bigways or his companion."

"Exactly," returned Ferrers Locke. "Which of the two, I'm going to make it my business to find out."

The Watcher.

"GUV'NOR, there's that merchant Clifford Morgan!" Drake touched Locke lightly on the arm as they sauntered out through the back of the stand.

The detective returned the pressure, and his keen eyes followed the direction Drake indicated.

Some ten yards away, regarding them intently was the figure of a burly fellow, clad in a lounge suit that was surmounted by an unprepossessing physiognomy, made all the more forbidding by reason of a dirty cap that was pulled down over one side of the head in the accepted style of the "tough."

The man's furtive gaze dropped beneath Locke's fixed stare, and it

seemed, for the moment, that he would bolt into the crowd that was pressing at the exit gates. He thought better of it, however, for as Locke and Drake approached, the unprepossessing features broke into what was intended for a grin.

"How do do, Mister Locke!"

The detective halted and fixed a shrewd pair of eyes on that ugly face.

"You've not forgotten me, then, Morgan?" he said easily.

A blaze of hatred shot into the eyes of the man, and his lips parted in a snarl, revealing a row of dirty, damaged teeth.

"Nor forgiven," he said hoarsely. "I ain't forgot how yer got me three years' hard. I'm running straight now, but if ever I can settle my score with you, Mister Interfering Locke, I'll willingly do another stretch of chokey, curse you!"

Locke smiled.

"Well, that's outspoken enough. Still, I'm glad to learn you're running straight. Mr. Bigways has yet to bowl you out—eh?"

Morgan started.

"How did you know that Bigways and I was acquainted?" he asked suspiciously.

"Acquainted?" said the detective, raising his eyebrows. "Should you not say that you're in his employ?"

Morgan's mouth opened in astonishment.

"As groundsman," went on Ferrers Locke.

"Ho! And how did yer know that?" asked Morgan.

"There's not much I don't know about my customers," said Locke, with a smile. "Still, I repeat I'm glad to hear that you're running straight. You weren't by any chance in my rooms last night, were you?"

Morgan laughed, and if he were acting he did it remarkably well.

"Not blooming likely," he returned, with some heat. "If I were cracking cribs, which I'm not, I'd give your show a wide berth after the last lot."

Locke eyed him with a penetrating gaze.

"Glad to hear it," he said at length. "Because I wondered whether you were the kind friend who broke in last night and attempted to riddle me with my own revolver."

Morgan's eyes lit up with excitement.

"Did someone do that? Struth!"

"You wished he'd better luck—eh?" said Locke pleasantly. "But can you tell me how the revolver you and your friends lifted from my rooms three years ago should be left behind by my visitor of last night?"

Morgan shrugged his shoulders.

HOW THE STORY OPENED.

Ferrers Locke, the famous Baker Street detective, is devoting his attention to rounding up a mysterious gang of cracksmen which has been operating in the West End of London with great success. At the outset an attempt is made on his life. By great ingenuity Locke escapes, and a chance clue leads him to suspect that his assailant was Cliff Morgan, an ex convict, who is now employed as a groundsman at the Sparsdale Athletic Football Club. With Jack Drake, his boy assistant, Ferrers Locke goes to the Sparsdale versus Arsenal match. It wants a few minutes to full time when Harold Wentworth, the Sparsdale outside-right, races away with the ball, determined to notch the winning goal for his side. The spectators are clamouring; the goal seems a certainty. Suddenly Wentworth is seen to stop and collapse. The referee, rushing up, makes the terrifying discovery that the Sparsdale winger has been shot!

(Now read on.)

"Hanged if I know," he answered. "In the profession"—Locke smiled faintly at the description of the cracksmen's trade—"guns change 'ands time an' time agin."

"Exactly," said Locke. "Still, I dare say I shall find out in due course. Good-afternoon, Mr. Morgan—and keep on running straight."

He passed on with Drake, leaving Morgan glaring a hatred at him that was no longer masked now that he was not face to face with the man who had sent him to chokey for a "stretch."

"But if looks could kill, friend Morgan is killing me at this present moment," remarked Locke, as he wended his way through the crowd.

Drake looked back, and caught the animal ferocity on the ugly face of Clifford Morgan.

"You're right, guv'nor," he said. "You're riddled!"

The detective laughed lightly, and thereafter was silent as he gently "shoved" his way towards the still-crowded exit.

The pair of them were within three yards of an exit when of a sudden someone gave Drake a vicious jab in the back.

"Oh!" gasped Drake involuntarily.

Locke turned as he heard that cry, and as he did so a knuckly fist caught him full over the ear.

He stumbled and fell. Jack, recovering himself, saw his chief falling, saw a sea of ugly faces round him, and squared his shoulders. At a glance he could see it was a frame-up. The pair of them were being forced into a quarrel.

"You—you with the face," growled one ruffian, "wot yer glarin' at? Want a taste of my fist?"

Drake did not reply. Locke had taught him to keep a still tongue when dealing with individuals of the "tough" type.

But to keep a still tongue, and hands merely on the defensive, when three toughs were squaring up to him, was more than he could stand.

A dirty fist lunged out at him. Jack swept it aside and planted a blow on a stubby chin that drew a howl of pain from the recipient.

"Out him!"

As Locke regained his balance, and saw what was happening, he stepped to Drake's side.

Biff! Smack! Thud!

Three blows he landed, and each one drew a grunt or a howl of pain, but it was an uneven contest in more senses than one. It seemed that at least seven or eight roughnecks had set Drake and Locke aside as their especial prey. In a moment the two were fighting for their lives against foes who knew no code that came within a mile of Queensberry rules. Blows from behind, from the front—anywhere where they could be administered without harm to the strikers—rained upon Locke and his assistant.

"Back to back, my lad!" gasped Locke, a trickle of crimson running from his lip.

"Right-ho, guv'nor!" panted Drake, trying to forget that a black eye and a split lip were painful. "Take that, you rotter!"

"That" was a beautifully-timed uppercut which lifted one of the roughs literally off his feet.

"Police!"

"Op it, mates!"

Of a sudden the attack melted away. Locke and Drake were left standing back to back, panting heavily and considerably the worse for wear, what time their late assailants vanished as quickly

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as if the earth had opened and swallowed them up.

Three policemen hurried to the scene. "What's all this—" began one, and then he recognised Ferrers Locke. "Sorry, sir," he added.

Locke smiled. "Our friends like the odds on their side, officer," he said, calmly wiping his cut lip. "I really believe it was their charming intention to lay us both out. That's the correct term, isn't it?"

The constable smiled grimly. "There seemed to be enough of them, Mr. Locke. How did it start?"

Locke explained all there was to explain, which wasn't much, in all conscience.

"A put-up job," was the constable's comment; and the Baker Street detective nodded.

Drake, chancing to look towards the great grand-stand, started as he saw the lurking figure of Clifford Morgan. A suspicion came into his mind that the old lag was responsible for the attack. Could Drake have been within earshot of Clifford Morgan his suspicion would have developed into a certainty.

"That's part of the account paid off," Clifford Morgan was murmuring to himself. "Bit o' luck meeting the boys like that. Wish they'd done the job proper, though."

Unfortunately for Drake, and doubtless fortunately for Clifford Morgan, those words were uttered only in a whisper. Next moment the old lag had disappeared, and Locke and Drake, having put themselves to rights, walked out of the ground, hailed a passing taxi, and drove off to their rooms in Baker Street.

"A very eventful afternoon, my lad," said Locke, as he leaned back on the cushions. "First an unwarrantable attack upon a footballer, then an unwarrantable attack upon our two selves. What's the inference?"

"That the two things are in some manner bound up in each other," said Drake thoughtfully.

Locke, pulling at his briar, nodded. "I think you're right," he said slowly. "I'd give anything to know what Wentworth wanted to say to me."

"Why not give him a look in at Bigways' place to-morrow?" ventured Jack.

"Exactly what I'm going to do," said Locke. "Somehow, I think there's going to be a big tussle between Mr. Samuel Bigways and yours truly. It would be worth my while to look into his record, I'm thinking."

"Here we are, guv'nor!" called out Drake, as the taxi arrived at their door.

He jumped out, and as he and his chief entered their flat a figure, muffled in a heavy overcoat, stepped out from a doorway opposite. If either Locke or Drake could have identified the figure they would have had the shock of their lives, for it was Fred Bulsome, the Athletic's centre-half. What he was doing watching the house of Ferrers Locke was best known to himself. Certainly it was not the usual occupation of a professional footballer so high up in the ladder of fame as was Fred Bulsome.

At Dead of Night!

FERRERS LOCKE sat bolt upright in his comfortable leather arm-chair and sniffed.

It was close on two o'clock in the morning, and the famous sleuth was enjoying his last pipe. Baker Street lay still and silent under the stars. Drake had retired to rest hours since.

Sniff!

Locke rose from his chair and pulled his dressing-gown about him. Then he trod swiftly and noiselessly to the door and opened it.

A faint whiff of smoke blew into his face.

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in all these fine books.



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"I thought so," he muttered. "Fire!" He moved swiftly along the passage and opened the door that gave access to the stairs, but he shut it on the instant, for great volumes of smoke gushed into the passage, almost choking him.

"The fiends!" he muttered. In less than a minute the detective was shaking his assistant by the shoulder.

"Step lively, my lad," he said coolly, as Drake's dawning consciousness told him that something untoward was happening. "Step lively! The place is on fire!"

"Oh!" Drake was out of bed at a bound.

"Nip round to Sing Sing's room and wake him," said Locke quickly, "while I get on the phone for the fire brigade."

Jack lost no time. When he returned with Locke's Chinese servant, who was still rubbing the sleep from his almond eyes, Locke was replacing the receiver on the hooks.

"Good job I sat up," he remarked coolly, knocking out the dead embers from his pipe, "otherwise we should all have been frizzled in our beds!"

Drake was about to ask a number of questions, when through the quietness of the night shrieked the bell of the first fire-engine.

"Here they are," said Locke. "Don't get panicky, my lad. The fire is in the lower hall. We're quite safe now."

Yet for all Locke's words it was just on an hour before the firemen, drawn from all parts of London, had put out that conflagration, by which time a great crowd had been attracted to the scene.

"Thank you very much," said Locke calmly, as the Commissioner announced that the fire was definitely under control. "Much of a blaze?"

"I should just think so, Mr. Locke," returned the Commissioner of the brigade. "Another quarter of an hour and the whole building would have been a ruin!"

"Comforting thought," smiled the detective. "What was it—petrol?"

The Commissioner nodded. "The place must have been swamped with it," he said. "You'll want a new staircase. This one will just about stand up for a couple of days, with gentle use. Your hall is a ruin, and—"

Locke waved him to a chair and poured out a glass of refreshment.

"So it was petrol," he murmured, not hearing the Commissioner's thanks as he accepted the glass of liquor. "From the same quarter as last night, I expect. I'll—"

Buzzzzzzzz!

A furious tocsin on the telephone bell interrupted his further remarks.

The detective smiled grimly as he neared the instrument. At the back of his mind was the conviction that the call came from the same party as that of the previous night.

He was right. The same coarse voice—the same hatred glowing in it.

"Who's speaking?" "Ferrers Locke," began the detective, and he chuckled at the imprecation that reached him from the other end of the wire.

"So you're still alive—eh? Curse you! You have the luck of Satan himself. But we'll get you—get you and your baby-faced assistant!"

"I should try a little more petrol next time," replied Locke easily.

His caller rang off with a savage oath; and, although the detective interrogated the operator at the exchange,

all he could learn was that the call came from a call-box in South London.

"Was it the same chap?" asked Drake, as Locke paced the room, a thoughtful expression on his intellectual features.

The detective nodded.

"I wonder who the rotter is?" said Drake.

"I can tell you that quite easily," replied Ferrers Locke, as the Commissioner intimated that he had to go.

"You can?" gasped Drake, in amazement. "Then who was it?"

"Mr. Samuel Bigways, the managing director of the Sparsdale Athletic," returned Locke quietly. "His effort at disguising his voice is about the world's worst, I should say. I heard him at the ground to-day as Director Bigways—I heard him just now as crook Bigways, with a hoarse voice."

"Let's hop round to his house and see the blighter," said Drake eagerly.

Locke shook his head.

"No use," he replied.

"The operator told me that the call came from a box-office in South London."

But Drake was persistent.

"Well, let's phone him at his house in Cavendish Square," he said. "We can say we are inquiring after Wentworth."

"Not a bad idea," said the detective, and he crossed to the telephone.

Three minutes later he was facing Jack Drake again.

"As I expected," he remarked. "The butler informed me that his master was not at home. But if you care to waste a little more of your beauty sleep, you can trot round to Cavendish Square, in disguise, and wait for Mr. Samuel Bigways to return. It's quite possible that he will arrive by taxi—his own car would attract too much attention to his movements. When he's paid the man off, follow the taxi, and see if you can find out where the driver picked up his fare."

"Right-ho, guv'nor!"

Drake bounded out of the room, and was soon busy transforming himself into a waif of the streets. Having presented himself to Ferrers Locke, and earned a word of commendation on his make-up, he let himself out of the house by means of the back staircase, mingled a moment or so with the now departing throng of sightseers, and then made all speed for Cavendish Square.

It was a chilly job hanging around Samuel Bigways' house in the small hours of the morning, but Jack stuck it manfully. His reward came as a taxi turned the corner of the square, and finally came to a halt outside the big mansion which belonged to the Athletic's managing director.

From an adjacent doorway Drake saw Bigways alight—saw him pay off the driver.

Locke's assistant, drifting by in the approved manner of a waif on the lookout for a coin, memorised the number of the cab, and was about to ask the



Ferrers Locke moved swiftly along the passage and opened the door that gave access to the stairs, but he shut it on the instant for great volumes of smoke gushed into the passage, almost choking him. (See page 26.)

driver for a lift, when a figure in a heavy overcoat, treading as noiselessly as a cat, passed him, and touched Bigways on the arm.

There was something familiar about that tall, sturdy figure, and Jack racked his memory to place it, in vain. But he pricked up his ears when Samuel Bigways half-raised a clenched fist as if to strike the man in the overcoat.

"You fool!" hissed Bigways, in a passion. "You bungling fool! You will—"

He broke off with a snarl of rage as Drake drew level.

"Could you spare a cove wots down on his luck a copper to get a bed fer the night?" whined Drake, in cockney accents, peering into the faces of the two men. "Could you, guv'nor? I ain't 'ad a crust for—Ow!"

Samuel Bigways reached out a massive hand, gripped the youngster by the shoulder, turned him, and planted a well-shod foot on his patched trousers.

"Run away, young 'un!"

Drake had to run away; he couldn't help it, for there was a powerful drive behind the kick. He sprawled, face downwards, on the pavement, but there was a strange exhilaration surging through his being, for, brief as the glimpse had been, he had recognised in the man in the big overcoat, Fred Bulsome, the Athletic's centre-half!

"What did he mean?" muttered Drake to himself, as he lurched to his feet and raced down the square after the fast disappearing tail-light of the taxi. "Is it possible that Bulsome fired our rooms?"

Drake hurried after the taxi, saw it stop at a coffee-stall, and, with the usual check of a Cockney waif, engaged the

driver in conversation as both of them sipped their cups of coffee.

"Swell bloke, your last fare, guv'nor," said Drake. "That's old Bigways, up at the Athletic. Pick 'im up at a night club, mate?"

The taxi-driver smiled down at his youthful interrogator.

"Don't get night clubs at Blackfriars, sonny. Funny cove, though, that merchant. Got out of one cab at the bridge, dismissed 'im, and then hailed me."

Drake drank his coffee, bade good-night, or good-morning, rather, to the taxi-driver, and crept back to Baker Street at about four in the morning. He grimaced as he mounted the blackened stairs of his chief's rooms, and congratulated himself on a narrow escape. Three minutes later he was closeted with Ferrers Locke, telling him his experiences of the night.

Locke listened, without any shadow of emotion flickering across his face, as Jack mentioned the meeting between Bigways and Fred Bulsome.

"The plot gets thicker," he said simply. Then, after a pause: "Jack, my lad, there is something decidedly fishy about the whole of the Athletic team—something that demands a close and personal investigation. Do you know what I am going to do?"

Drake shook his head.

"I'm going to get a place in that team as a playing member," said Locke slowly, "or I'll eat my hat!"

"Jove, guv'nor!" exclaimed Drake in excitement. "What a wheeze!"

(Will Ferrers Locke get a place in the Sparsdale Athletic? See next week's rousing instalment, boys.)

THE FROOTS OF VICTORY!*(Continued from page 15.)*

his fearful birching. So, altogether, they didn't look a very happy lot.

"I can't credit it!" said Jack Jolly, regarding the target with grato suspicion. "To think that a silly ass like Crackpott can score 100! There must be something fishy in it!"

"There jolly well is!" growled Burleigh. "As a matter of fact, the Head has done his best to make it easy for Crackpott all along. He wanted Crackpott to win, and now he has succeeded."

"But how could the Head affect Crackpott's shooting?" asked Merry.

"By bringing the target nearer!" answered Burleigh. "Can't you see what he's done?"

"Grate pip, so he has!" cried Jack Jolly eggstidely.

"No wonder Crackpott scored ten bulls!" grinned Bright. "Why, when you look at it, the target's only about a duzen yards away!"

"Nobody could miss it from that distance!" added Merry.

"Eggsactly!" nodded Burleigh. "And it's no axcident, either. The Head moved the target so that Crackpott could win to-day! Like a thief in the nite, he crept down and performed his base desines while the skool was rapped in slumber!"

And then Burleigh tenderly rubbing his annatomy at the reckollection of his recent flogging, described how Dr. Birchmall had caught him burning the midrite oil.

Just as he concluded his story there was a movement from the doorway, and a tall, soljerly figger entered.

"Oh erikay! Crackpott's pater!" eggscained Jack Jolly.

The newcomer boughed.

"Quite right, young man! I am

General Crackpott! Purely by axcident, I have just overherd your conversation. I apologise for Eve's dropping, my boys; but, at the same time, I'm jolly glad I've learned the trooth!"

"I can assure you, sir, that what I've told is the trooth!" said Burleigh earnestly.

"Eggsactly! And now," said General Crackpott grimly, "I am going to find Dr. Birchmall. I prommised him a free feed if my boy won the cup—"

"Ah!" eggscained Jack Jolly & Co. and Burleigh.

"And I'm going to keep my prommis," went on the general. "Birchemall shall have his feed all right. But perhaps by the time I've done with him the old scamp won't want it!"

With that the general stalked out, followed eagerly by Jack Jolly & Co. and the kaptin of the skool.

On root they collected a large crowd, and by the time they found the Head half the skool was at the general's heels.

"Ah, here he is!" said General Crackpott at last.

"How do you do, general?" cried the Head, farely beaming. "Doubtless you have herd the result of the grate shooting competition?"

"I have!" replied General Crackpott. "And doubtless you will want the feed I promised you now, sir—hay?"

"What-ho!" grinned the Head.

"Very well, then. Follow me!"

Dr. Birchmall cheerfully accompanied the general to the skool tuckshop and sat up at the counter on a high stool.

"Now, sir," rasped General Crackpott, "what would you like to begin with?"

Dr. Birchmall considered carefully. "Perhaps I'll start with some custard-pies and jam-puffs," he answered thoughtfully. "After that I'll have some froot-tarts and doennutts—"

"That will do for the prezzent!" interrupted General Crackpott, picking up a cupple of custard-pies in one hand

and a cupple of froot-tarts in the other. "Here you are, sir!"

And, with a quick movement, General Crackpott squashed the suckulent pastries all over the Head's dile.

"Yaroooooooh! Gug - gug - gug! Woooooop!" shrieked the Head, in serprize and dismay. "What are you doing of, general?"

"Giving you your free feed!" grinned Crackpott's pater cheerfully. "Let's see, now! You did say jam-puffs, didn't you?"

Whiz!
"Yaroooooop!" roared the Head, as a cupple of jam-puffs descended on his skollerly head.

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

"And then some doennutts!" went on the general, reaching out for a dish of doennutts farther up the counter.

"Keep 'im off!" shrieked Dr. Birchmall, dodging wildly.

Covered all over with jam and pastry, the Head rushed from the tuckshop.

"Half a mimit! I haven't finished giving you your free feed yet!" yelled General Crackpott.

Evvidently the Head had had enuff—more than enuff—of his host's free feed.

However, General Crackpott made up for the absence of his guest by inviting the crowd of fellows in instead. And as they had the feed of their lives everything turned out for the best.

At the conclouosion of the feast the general handed over the gold cup—not to his son, but to Jack Jolly. And while the Head sat up in his studdy nashing his teeth at the thought of the froots of victory he had missed, the merry juniors of St. Sam's toasted General Crackpott and his cup in flowing jinjer-pop!

THE END.

(Look out for the first of another rollicking fine series of St. Sam's yarns next week, chums, entitled: "Dr. Birchmall's Legacy!" It's a real winner!)



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