

Like a Well-Filled Christmas Stocking—Packed with Good Things!

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The MAGNET

EVERY SATURDAY.

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BILLY BUNTER'S CHRISTMAS!

THRILLS—AND SPILLS—FOR BUNTER!

(See the grand holiday yarn of Harry Wharton & Co.—inside.)



Come Into the Office, Boys!

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

NOTE.—All Jokes and Limericks should be sent to
c/o "Magnet," 5, Carmelite Street, London, E.C.4 (Comp.).

ONE of my North Wales readers brings forward a question this week which has caused a great deal of controversy at various times. He wants to know

WHO INVENTED ELECTRIC LIGHT?

He has always been led to understand that Edison did, and he says that he saw that stated in a newspaper some while ago. Now a friend of his tells him that it wasn't Edison who invented it. His friend is quite right! Edison improved on electric light, but he did not invent it. As far back as 1800, Humphry Davy produced electric light with carbon points, and it was an Englishman named Swan who invented the metal filament electric light which Edison improved upon. Unfortunately, we in England are sometimes inclined to under-estimate the pioneer work of our own people—which sometimes means that Americans get credit for doing many things which were previously done by our own countrymen!

As an instance of this, I came across a fellow the other day who imagined that Lindbergh was the first man to fly the Atlantic! Actually Lindbergh was the sixty-seventh man to achieve this feat! The first two men to cross in an aeroplane were two of our own countrymen—Sir John Alcock and Sir Arthur Whitten Brown. After them came the dirigible R 34, which carried a crew of thirty-one people, and the Los Angeles, which carried thirty-one. But—credit where credit is due—Lindbergh was the first man to fly across single-handed!

And, talking about crossing the ocean, do you know that two men once

ROWED ACROSS THE ATLANTIC?

This was thirty years ago, and the two men were Norwegians. The boat was an open clinker-built boat only 18 feet long, and it took these two fellows 62 days to complete the trip. Some journey, what?

I feel just in the mood to answer all sorts of queries this morning, so

LET 'EM ALL COME!

Here's the first: When was duelling stopped in England? It was checked in the army in 1792, and shortly afterwards was abolished in the country through the force of public opinion. It is interesting to note that in 1679 there was a proclamation issued to the effect that one who killed another in a duel should not be pardoned. A writer of the time looked up the records of 172 duels, in which 63 people were killed and 96 wounded. In three cases both the combatants were killed in the duels, and eighteen of the survivors from the duels suffered the penalty of the law.

German students still fight duels—but they are well covered with pads which protect the vital spots. Therefore, no one is killed, but nearly every German student

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bears the scars of such encounters. Curiously enough, they seem to be proud of these scars. To my mind it seems that the better duellist is the person who guards himself well enough to avoid scars! Next question?

WHAT WAS EL DORADO?

The name really means "The Gilded Man." When the Spaniards had conquered Mexico and Peru they heard of a golden city ruled by a king who was smeared in oil and rolled in gold dust. They fitted out many expeditions in order to discover this city—and so did Sir Walter Raleigh. But the city was never found. As a matter of fact, the custom of smearing their ruler in gold dust was practised annually by the Indians of the interior, and the "golden city" merely existed in imagination.

George Barron, of Sandwich, wants to know if I can tell him King George's full title. I can! Here it is—in full! "His Most Excellent Majesty George the Fifth, by the Grace of God, of Great Britain, Ireland and the British Dominions beyond the seas, King, Defender of the Faith, Emperor of India."

And if George would like to know the Prince of Wales' titles, here they are: Prince of Wales, Earl of Chester, Duke of Cornwall, Duke of Rothesay, Earl of Carrick, Baron of Renfrew, Lord of the Isles, and Grand Steward of Scotland, High Steward of Windsor. His full name is Edward Albert Christian George Andrew Patrick David.

Before I delve deeper into the pile of letters on my desk this morning, let us first have a chuckle at this yarn, which well deserves the MAGNET Penknife which has been sent to Oscar Vis, of 36, Ongar Road, Fulham, S.W.6.



Customer (to shopwalker): "I want a pair of sporn-himmed recticles—I mean peccirrimmed hornicles—confound—I mean heck-spimmed rornicles."

Shopwalker: "I know what you mean, sir. Jones, show this gentleman a pair of rim-sporned hectacles!"

Here is a selection of

BRIEF REPLIES

to many of my readers' queries:

How many people have swum the Channel? Sixteen: ten men and six women.

What is the record attendance at a football match? Over 126,000, the number who paid for admission at Wembley the first time the Cup Final was played there. But it is estimated that at least another 50,000 people rushed the turnstiles!

Why are artificial legs called "cork" legs? Because they were invented by a Dr. Cork. Needless to say, there is no cork in them!

Now, while I am having a breather after answering all those questions, have a laugh at this Greyfriars limerick, for which John Nicholl, of Church Street, Asthall, near Burford, Oxford, gets one of our fine leather pocket wallets:

Said Bunter to Fish: "My P.O.

Will soon be along, don't you know.

Please lend me five bob!"

Said Fishy: "You swab!"

And advanced him instead his big toe!

If I were to ask if any of you fellows were interested in mathematics, I should probably be able to hear the cry of "No!" that would go

up. I used to hate maths myself, but my dislike of them is not shared by Mr. "X," who has just shown me a very interesting mathematical catch. He came into my den just now and laid a piece of paper on my desk. The paper contained the following figures:

526,315,789,473,684,210.

"Well, what about it?" I asked.

"Try multiplying that by any number you like," he said. "You'll find that whatever number you multiply it by, the original figures will always reappear in the result!"

Well, I have tried it, and I find that the numbers always appear in the same order—with the addition of a final 0. Don't ask me how it happens—I doubt if even "Mr. X" could tell that. Still, it's an interesting catch, and if you feel like trying it, you're welcome to do so!

Here is a query from Harry Sexton, of Balham. He wants to know—

WHAT A REIS IS

This is a Portuguese and Brazilian coin of no value, being only the thousandth part of a Milreis.

FORWARD THE BLACK BOOK!

Let's see what there is in store for next week's issue. Another bumper number—you can count on that! "Top of the bill," as they say in theatrical circles, comes Frank Richards' usual top-notch yarn. It's called:

"BUNTER COMES TO STAY!"

and you can look forward to a really exciting—and humorous—yarn, which is written in Mr. Richards' finest style. All your favourite characters appear in it—not forgetting the egregious William George! But there—have you ever known a Greyfriars yarn that wasn't a real top-notch? I certainly haven't!

Now that you have got well into it, what's your opinion of

"PETER FRAZER—IRONMASTER"?

Good stuff, eh? I told you this yarn was going to prove a great hit, and, judging by the many congratulatory letters I have received about it, my prediction has come true. Well, you'll be even more pleased with it when you read next week's rattling good instalment.

I mustn't forget Dicky Nugent's contribution! Dicky has covered himself with glory—and plenty of ink splashes—in writing next week's rib-tickler, entitled:

"CLEARING HIS NAME!"

Topping programme for next week, eh? I thought you'd agree! There's also another interesting "footer" talk, and, of course, my usual invitation to "Come into the Office, Boys!"

YOUR EDITOR.

HERE'S ANOTHER SEASONABLE SCHOOLBOY YARN, BOYS!

BILLY BUNTER'S CHRISTMAS



Dealing with the Exciting Christmas Adventures of Harry Wharton & Co., the popular chums of Greyfriars. By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Left!

"BEASTS!" Billy Bunter made that remark.

He made it with considerable emphasis.

Bunter was standing on the platform of Courtfield Station, gazing after the express that had vanished down the line.

His little round eyes gleamed with wrath behind his big, round spectacles.

"Of all the beasts—" said Bunter.

The express was gone. The chums of the Remove had gone in it—home for Christmas. Bunter was left.

It was no wonder that Bunter was wrathful.

Greyfriars School had broken up for the Christmas holidays. Greyfriars fellows had scattered north, south, east, and west. Only Bunter hadn't scattered. Bunter wasn't particular whether he went north, south, east, or west, so long as he went where the Christmas fare was good and ample. But from no point of the compass was a Yuletide welcome extended to William George Bunter. It was inexplicable, considering what a fascinating fellow Bunter knew himself to be. But there it was!

Bunter was left!

He had been, perhaps, a little careless. Having settled that he was going home with Lord Mauleverer, Bunter

had left it at that. Unfortunately, while Bunter had settled that he was going home with Mauly, Mauly had settled that he wasn't. Mauly had disappeared quite early that day—without Bunter. So the fat junior had had to change his plans at the last moment and decide to go home with Harry Wharton. Now Harry Wharton had disappeared in the express, and Billy Bunter stood on the station platform and confided to the December winds what he thought of Wharton.

"The awful rotter!" said Bunter.

WHAT OFFERS?

Who wants Billy Bunter?

Nobody!

Yet somebody's got to have him for the Christmas Holidays!

Who's the "lucky" fellow?

Slowly the Owl of the Remove turned away and rolled along the platform to the exit.

It was useless to linger there. But what he was going to do was rather a problem to Bunter.

Something had to be done—or, more correctly, somebody had to be done. The question was whom?

Other fellows, naturally, went home for Christmas. But that magnificent residence, Bunter Court, did not attract Billy Bunter in the holidays. Mr. Bunter's detached villa in Surrey, which Bunter talked of in the Remove as Bunter

Court, did not offer what Bunter wanted in the festive season. Besides, his sister Bessie would be home from Cliff House School, and his brother Sammy from Greyfriars. Family affection was not strongly developed in the Bunter clan. The less he saw of Bessie and Sammy the more he liked it; and Bessie and Sammy felt exactly the same. Bunter Court was a last resource, only if it became a case of any port in a storm.

Bunter rolled out of the station.

Most, if not all, of the Greyfriars fellows would be gone by this time. But if any lingered, Bunter was prepared to see what could be done with them. He remembered that Peter Todd had got out of the school bus to pack some forgotten article. He might catch Peter yet. Toddy, certainly, was not the fellow he would have selected to go home with for Christmas. But Mauly had dodged him, Wharton had left him stranded; most of the other fellows were far away—and something had to be done. If nothing better turned up Bunter felt that he would have to stand Toddy. Whether Toddy could stand him was a trifling detail he did not pause to consider.

Outside the station the Head's car was waiting, with Barnes, the Head's chauffeur, standing beside it. The car was there to meet some visitor for Greyfriars, but the visitor, apparently, had not yet arrived. Bunter rolled across the slushy pavement to the car. Bunter

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did not think much of Barnes, the Head's chauffeur. Barnes was a very quiet, reserved, well-behaved young man—a very superior young man indeed. But Bunter suspected him of being cheeky, and of not feeling a proper respect for a Public School man, and a gentleman—like Bunter.

Barnes, standing like a uniformed statue, was looking straight towards Bunter, but did not seem to see him. His unseeing gaze appeared to pass right through Bunter. This was the sort of thing that Bunter considered cheek, and very unbecoming in a chauffeur.

"Barnes!" snapped Bunter.

The Head's chauffeur, thus apprised of Bunter's important presence, touched his cap.

"I'm going back to the school, Barnes."

"Indeed, sir?" said Barnes.

"I'd like a lift in the car, Barnes."

"I am afraid, sir—"

"You're here to meet a train?"

"Yes, sir."

"Some blinking visitor for the Head, I suppose?" grunted Bunter.

"A visitor for the Head, certainly, sir," said Barnes. "Whether blinking or not I cannot say, as I have never seen the gentleman."

Bunter gave him a look.

This was some more of Barnes' cheek.

Bunter's look was one of lofty, disdainful rebuke. But it did not seem to produce any effect on Barnes. He stood with a face as expressionless as that of a graven image.

"Well, when do you expect the train in, Barnes?" demanded Bunter.

"It is due already, sir. But the trains are late to-day."

"Well, look here, Barnes," said the Owl of the Remove, "it won't take you long to run me back to Greyfriars; and you can come back for your passenger. See? He can wait a bit, if his train comes in. I'll tip you a bob."

"You are very kind, sir," said Barnes.

"I'm always kind to servants," said Bunter patronisingly. "That's all right! Start up!"

"But I am afraid I cannot take you to the school, sir, as I have the Head's instructions to wait for the train," pursued Barnes calmly.

Bunter breathed hard.

"Look here, Barnes, I don't want any cheek!" he said.

"Oh, sir!"

"You can run me back to the school, quick. I'll make it half a crown," said the Owl of the Remove. "Now then!"

"Sorry, sir; it's quite impossible!" said Barnes.

"I've got to get back to Greyfriars," explained Bunter. "My friends will all be gone if I lose time. It's important!"

"A taxi, sir—" suggested Barnes.

Bunter snorted.

A taxicab, certainly, would have answered his purpose; and there were taxis outside the station. But there was a lion in the path, in the shape of the taxi-man's fare. Bunter had no time, when he reached the school, for sordid recriminations with a taxi-driver who did not want to be bilked.

"Look here, Barnes, I'm quite sure the Head wouldn't mind you giving me a lift, in the circumstances," he said. "If he were here he would say so. You can take my word for it."

"Perhaps you would like me to ring up Dr. Locke on the station telephone and tell him what you say, sir?" suggested Barnes. "If the Head gives his permission—"

"Nothing of the sort!" said Bunter hastily.

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A faint grin dawned on Barnes' face for a moment.

"There's no time to waste," said Bunter. "Look here, Barnes, I'll tip you five bob. There!"

"A taxi would take you to the school for five shillings, sir."

Another snort from Bunter.

He did not feel disposed to explain that while that promised tip to Barnes could be left over indefinitely, a taxi-man's fare couldn't.

He frowned at Barnes.

"Look here, my man, one good turn deserves another," he said.

Barnes raised his eyebrows slightly.

"I do not quite follow you, sir."

"Don't you?" sneered Bunter.

"Well, a few days ago, when I got back late from a trip to Folkestone, with Wharton, you let me in—"

"I remember."

"It was nearly two o'clock in the morning," said Bunter.

"I believe so, sir."

"And you were out!" said Bunter.

"You came in while we were trying to wake you up to let us in."

"Quite so, sir."

"Well, if the Head knew that his chauffeur was trapesing about the country in the middle of the night you'd get the push," said Bunter.

"Do you think so, sir?"

"I jolly well do!" said Bunter. "Now, I've never mentioned it. I'm always considerate to servants. But, as I said, one good turn deserves another. See?"

There was quite a curious expression on Barnes' face for a few moments as he regarded Bunter steadily. Then, without replying, he turned away and moved to the other end of the car.

Bunter blinked after him.

"Barnes!"

No answer from Barnes.

Bunter rolled after him.

"Look here, Barnes, are you going to

give me that lift to the school?" hooted Bunter.

"No, sir."

"You cheeky beast! Then I'll jolly well tell the Head—"

"I have no objection to my employer knowing that I lost my train that night, sir, and had to walk home," said Barnes. "Please do not hesitate to mention it, sir, next time you are having a conversation with Dr. Locke."

This, of course, was more of Barnes' cheek. Billy Bunter, of the Lower Fourth, naturally never had any conversations with his headmaster, as Barnes was well aware.

"You're a cheeky beast, Barnes!" said Bunter.

"Thank you, sir."

"And an ungrateful rotter!"

"You are very good, sir," said Barnes, unmoved.

"And I jolly well shan't give you a Christmas tip!" said Bunter.

"Then I shan't be able to buy myself a motor-car," said Barnes, with gentle regret.

With feelings too deep for words Bunter turned away. Leaving Barnes with a faint grin on his clean-shaven face, the Owl of the Remove started to walk to Greyfriars.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Toddy is Not Taking Any!

"DEAR old Peter—"

"My only hat!" ejaculated Peter Todd.

Peter was walking to the station when the motor-bus from Courtfield came along. There had been a recent fall of snow, and the road was thick with slush, which the wheels of the motor-bus scattered far and wide. Peter was backing out of the way when a fat face looked down on him from the bus, and an affectionate voice hailed him.

Luck had befriended Bunter. That cheeky and ungrateful beast Barnes had refused to give him a lift in the Head's car, but the fat junior had caught the motor-bus in Courtfield High Street, and it bore him swiftly towards Greyfriars. As the bus passed within a short distance of the school, Bunter was saved that long and weary walk; but it was doubtful whether he would reach Greyfriars in time to catch Toddy. So a cheery grin irradiated his fat face at the sight of Peter in the road.

"Wait for me, old chap!" called out Bunter.

Peter Todd seemed deaf.

In spite of that affectionate appeal—or, perhaps, because of it—he walked on.

"Peter!" yelled Bunter.

Peter, like Felix, kept walking.

Bunter scrambled down from the bus. There was no time to get it to stop if he was to catch Peter. It was slowing down for him; but Bunter did not wait till it came to a halt. He leaped off.

Bunter, who would have told anyone that he was the most lithe, active, and agile fellow in the Remove, had no doubt that he could leap successfully from a motor-bus in motion.

He intended to land lightly in the road and dash after Peter Todd.

He did not expect the solid earth to make a sudden jump and hit him in the middle of the back.

As a matter of fact, it didn't; but to Bunter it seemed as if it did.

Exactly what happened was not clear to Bunter.

The motor-bus rolled on its way, many interested and smiling faces looking back at Bunter.

Bunter also rolled on his way.

THE TERROR OF THE FROZEN NORTH!



THE FIRST OF A NEW SERIES OF

Detective-Thrillers

Featuring **FERRERS LOCKE** and

JACK DRAKE, starts in

THE POPULAR

THIS WEEK!

The solid globe having jumped up and hit him in the back, Bunter sprawled over, roaring. The road had a rather steep camber, and Bunter rolled down the slope. Snow was piled there, and Bunter plunged into it. The roar of William George Bunter almost drowned the roar of the motor-bus.

"Yaroooh! Help! Oh crumbs! Help! I'm killed! Yoooh! Help!" Peter Todd looked back.

His intention had been to accelerate when he saw Bunter. But a kind impulse led him back to give the fat junior a helping hand. Bunter, spluttering and yelling, was dragged from the snow.

"Hurt?" asked Peter cheerily.

"Yow-ow-ow! You silly idiot, of course I'm hurt!" howled Bunter. "Do you think a fellow could bang on the ground like that without getting hurt, you fathead? Why didn't you stop, you ass? Ow! I've a jolly good mind not to come home with you now! Wow!"

"Stick to that!" said Peter.

"Oh, really, Toddy—"

"Good-bye! I've got a train to catch. I've lost one," said Toddy.

"Hold on!" gasped Bunter.

Injured as he was, the Owl of the Remove was not too severely injured to jump after Toddy and clutch him by the arm.

"Well, what is it?" asked Toddy. "I'm in rather a hurry."

"That's all right, old chap; I'm coming," said Bunter.

"Wait a minute till I get my breath! Toddy, old man, I've decided not to go home with Mauly. He's not a bad chap, in his way, but a frightful bore. I've turned him down."

"Poor old Mauly!" said Peter Todd. "Do you think he's crying in the train?"

"Oh, really, Peter—"

"Did Wharton get away, too?" asked Toddy.

"I refused to go home with Wharton! He begged me, with tears in his eyes, but I said it couldn't be done," explained Bunter. "I can't stand his uncle, that stuffy old colonel; or his aunt, that stuffy old lady! Simply can't! I told him plainly it was too much to expect of a fellow. Besides, I'd settled that I was sticking to my best pal."

"Who's that?" asked Peter, with interest.

"You, old chap," said Bunter, with reproachful affection.

"Not guilty, my lord!" said Toddy.

"He, he, he!" Bunter decided to take that remark as a joke. "The fact is, Peter, old fellow, I'm sticking to you this Christmas. There are plenty of wealthy homes where I should be welcomed with open arms, as you know, but I'm sticking to you. Friendship comes first."

"Does it?" said Peter doubtfully.

"Yes, old fellow! You know what Shakespeare says—who steals my purse steals trash; but a friend in need is the noblest work of Caesar!" said Bunter.

"My hat! Did Shakespeare say that?" ejaculated Toddy in astonishment.

"Well, something like it," said Bunter. "Anyhow, never mind Shakespeare. I'm coming with you, Toddy! Don't be bashful about it, old man; I know you're not used to visitors of my class in your poor little home—"

"Eh?"

"But I'm no snob," said Bunter. "I've always been friendly with you at school, Peter, haven't I? And never

had it up against you that your father was a measly solicitor. Never looked down on you, and all that. The fact is, Peter, I like you, and when I like a chap I don't care a button whether he's of my own class or not."

"Ye gods!" said Peter.

"So don't you worry," said Bunter encouragingly. "Your place won't be the sort of thing I'm accustomed to. I know that. Your people's manners may get on my nerves a bit. Never mind; I can stand it. You live in Bloomsbury. Fancy anybody living in Bloomsbury!"

Without waiting for the bus to come to a halt, Billy Bunter leaped off. The next moment, he had plunged head-first into a pile of snow, by the side of the road!



He, he, he! But, my dear man, I can stand Bloomsbury, at a pinch."

"Think you can?" gasped Peter.

"Well, I'll try," said Bunter generously. "If I find that I really can't stand your place and your people, Peter, I'll tell you so and go. But I'm going to do my best, for friendship's sake, you know. Of course, I know I shall be meeting rather a low lot—"

"Oh! You know that?" articulated Peter.

"Well, yes; but rely on me to treat them in the right way," said Bunter. "I've got tact."

"Oh!" gasped Peter. "You've got tact? Yes; you seem to have a lot of tact—tons of it!"

"My dear fellow, I've got a tactful way with my social inferiors that puts them at their ease at once," said Bunter. "That will be all right. Now let's get on, old bean. We don't want to lose that train."

Why Peter Todd acted as he did the next moment Bunter never knew. Peter seemed to be annoyed about something, though Bunter did not know what it was.

A shove on Bunter's well-filled waistcoat landed him, again, in the snow from which Peter had dragged him.

Bunter sat down with a gasp.

Then Peter—still for reasons absolutely inexplicable to Bunter—seized him by the collar, and rubbed his head in the snow.

Wild howls and gurgles came from Bunter.

"Yaroooh! Groooh! Goooh! Ooooh Gug-gug-gug! Urrrggggh!"

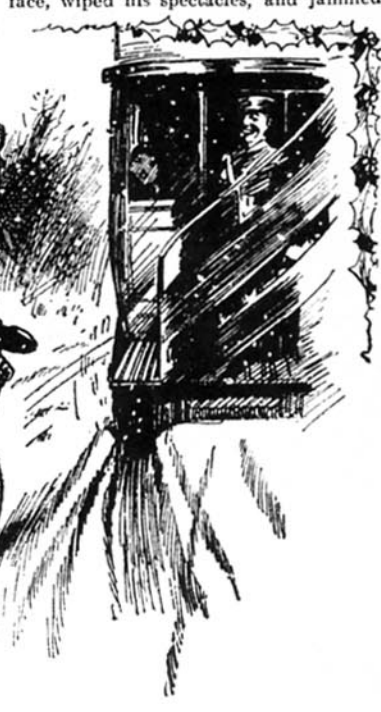
Peter Todd, a little breathless, but with satisfaction in his face, walked on up the road to Courtfield.

Bunter was left, sitting in the snow,

dripping with snow, smothered with snow, and gasping and gasping as if he never would leave off gasping.

When the Owl of the Remove struggled up at last, Peter Todd was out of sight. He had gone to catch his train—a train that Bunter was destined never to catch.

"Ooooh! Ooooh! Ooooh!" gasped Bunter. He clawed snow away from his face, wiped his spectacles, and jammed



them again on his fat little nose. "Ow! Ooooh! Beast! Groooh!"

A gasping and gurgling Bunter rolled on, spluttering, towards Greyfriars. Once more Billy Bunter had been let down, and his plans for Christmas were still in a nebulous state.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The Last Hope!

GOSLING, the porter, gave William George Bunter a stare that expressed surprise, but no pleasure. Gosling had not expected to see William George again, after he had departed on breaking-up day, till next term, and he did not look forward with any real delight to seeing him the next term. Now he saw him rolling in, unexpectedly, and gave him a stare. If Bunter had come back to tip Gosling—which he had omitted to do when he departed—it was all right, of course. In that case, Gosling was prepared to be glad to see him. But it was improbable. Still, Gosling's crusty face relaxed as Bunter rolled up to the door of the lodge where Gosling stood. A genial smile, appropriate to Christmas-tide, cost nothing, and you never could tell!

"Lost your train, sir?" asked Gosling. "No! Yes! Exactly!" answered Bunter. "I say, are all the fellows gone, Gosling?"

"Yessir; 'cept one or two, I think, sir."

"Any Remove left?" asked Bunter eagerly. If any Remove man was still within the walls of Greyfriars Bunter was ready to land himself on that

Remove man, if he could. Beast after beast had let him down; but hope springs eternal in the human breast.

Gosling shook his head.

"All the Lower School gone, I think, sir. But I believe I see some of the young gentlemen of the Fifth—"

"Oh!" said Bunter.

"I think Mr. Coker ain't gone yet, sir."

Gosling knew that Coker of the Fifth was not gone, because he had not yet been tipped by Coker. Horace Coker lavished tips at all times, and at Christmas-time he simply exuded them.

"What's Coker hanging on for, Gosling?"

"I believe there's some trouble about the motor-bike, sir," said Gosling. "I card him speaking to his friends, sir."

"Is the silly ass going on his motor-bike?" asked Bunter. He grinned. "The roads are in a lovely state for motor-biking! If Coker goes on his motor-bike, we shan't see him here next term."

Gosling grunted. Bunter had made no motion to hand out a Christmas tip, and so Gosling was losing all interest in Bunter. He stepped back into his lodge.

Bunter started for the House.

Greyfriars, with all the fellows gone, had a dismal and deserted look. A taxi went grinding down the drive with Capper and Hacker in it, and a pile of baggage on top. The two masters glanced at Bunter, apparently surprised to see him still there. Bunter went into the House. He was looking for Coker of the Fifth.

The chance of a Lower Fourth junior being asked home for Christmas by a Fifth Form man was absolutely nil. And of all the Fifth Form of Greyfriars, Horace Coker was the most "Fifth-Formy," so to speak.

But Bunter had a hopeful nature.

If Coker of the Fifth was the only Greyfriars man still remaining on the premises, evidently Coker of the Fifth was Bunter's last hope. Coker's leg, at least, was easy to pull. Coker was amenable to flattery, and Bunter was

prepared to hand out flattery, like pine-apple, in chunks. There was, at least, a sporting chance. At the very worst, Coker could do no more than kick him. And Bunter had been kicked often enough to have got used to it.

Coker was not seen in the silent, deserted passages, or in any of the rooms Bunter blinked into, and the fat junior went up to the Fifth Form games study. A maid was busy there with a broom; but there was no one else. But as Bunter went along the passage he heard a sound of voices from Coker's own study. Coker was there, and apparently his study-mates and chums, Potter and Greene, were with him.

Bunter's hopes, already faint, sank to zero. If Potter and Greene were sticking to Coker, there was no chance for a rival. They were the kind of fellows, Bunter bitterly reflected, to stick on to a fellow at Christmas-time, and stick him for an invitation, and stick to him whether he liked it or not.

"Rot!" Coker's voice boomed into the passage as the Owl of the Remove drew nearer to the open study door. "Utter rot, Potter! You're a fool, old chap!"

"You see—" said Potter.

"I don't!" contradicted Coker.

"You see—" said Greene.

"I don't!" repeated Coker.

Bunter paused to listen. If they were going to have a row, there might be a chance for him yet.

"I'm going on the jigger," said Coker. "Snow on the road? What about it? Think I'm afraid of a little snow on the road? Rot!"

"But—" said Potter.

"The question is, which of you is riding pillion?" said Coker. "I thought you'd both be keen on it."

"D-d-d-did you?"

"Better than a stuffy railway-train, I suppose!" snorted Coker. "You get the air—and a ripping run! I'm going at a good speed—all out, in fact! You know what my jigger can do when I get her going. What?"

Bunter grinned. Coker, when he got

going on his motor-bike, was a dangerous man to meet. His career on that jigger was a series of hair-breadth escapes, for himself and everybody else on the road. He rode that stink-bike like Death on a Pale Horse. Dogs and cats he slew; poultry he massacred. It was a standing amazement at Greyfriars that Coker had never yet been "had up" for manslaughter. It surprised his friends that he was still in one piece. Obviously, there was such a thing as fool's luck, and Coker had a lavish share of it.

In the innocence of his heart, Coker had supposed that there would be keen rivalry between his chums for a seat on the pillion. One—the unlucky one—had to go by railway. He said regretfully that he couldn't very well take both. It seemed to be the view of Potter and Greene that he jolly well couldn't take either. Probably they disliked the idea of funerals at Christmas-time.

"You make me tired," Coker went on. "I've been tuning up the jigger! She's at her top-notch now. I'm going to make the fur fly on the way home. I can tell you! I'm going to let her rip! Now, which of you is coming with me, and which is going by rail? The man who goes by railway will be in later, of course."

"Better late than never!" said Potter flippantly.

"If that means that you think my bike isn't safe, Potter—"

"Well, is it?" said Potter.

"I've no use for a funk," said Coker disdainfully. "You can go by rail, Potter, and be blown to you! I dare say there will be a railway accident—railways are always having accidents at this time of year—and when you're pinned under the wreckage you'll wish you'd come on my bike. You're the man, Greene!"

"But—I say—" stammered Greene.

"You funky, too?" jeered Coker.

"You—you see—"

"My hat! What a pair of funks!" said Coker. "Perhaps you haven't confidence in my driving! Is that it?"

An answer in the affirmative would doubtless have cost Coker's chums their holiday at Coker Lodge.

Potter and Greene were silent.

"A splendid jigger, and the best driver in the county—though I say it!" said Coker. "This is rather sickening! Well, you don't trust me! You think I can't drive a motor-bike! That's what you call pally, is it? Well, I'll go alone. Sorry to see the last of you—"

"I—I say, Coker—"

"We—we shall be with you later."

"You won't!" said Coker. "If you insult me, the less I see of you the better. You say I can't drive a motor-bike—"

"Nunno! But—"

"Will you sit on the pillion?"

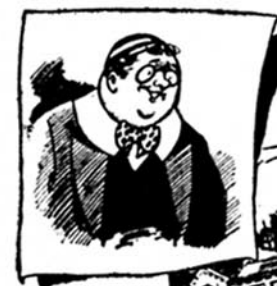
"Nunno! But—"

"That does it!" said Coker. "I'm fed-up with you! Go and eat coke! You'd trust yourself in a taxi—and you won't trust yourselves on my bike! Well, that only shows what silly fools you are! Good-bye!"

Coker strode to the door.

"Coker, old chap—" called out Potter and Greene together, in dismay.

Coker did not heed. He was deeply offended. A fellow who hinted that Coker couldn't drive a motor-bike might as well have hinted that he couldn't play football. Potter and Greene never told Coker what they thought of his football. But they really had to tell him what they thought of his motor driving. Life was sweet.



An Ideal Christmas Gift!

A book for the manly boy. True to life stories of school and sport, also thrilling adventure tales. Colour plates.

THERE IS ONLY ONE
BILLY
BUNTER
at Greyfriars School,
but there is a lot
about him
IN THE NEW
HOLIDAY
ANNUAL
FOR 1930!



Coker stamped out of the study. He almost ran into Billy Bunter outside the door.

"What are you doing here, you fat idiot?" he snapped.

"I—I say, Coker—" gasped Bunter.

"Scat!"

"Will you give me a lift on your motor-bike?"

"What?"

"I know it's rather a cheek to ask you, Coker, you being a Fifth Form man; but, you see, it's because you're the best motor-cyclist going, and I should feel so perfectly safe with you!" explained Bunter.

Coker stared at him.

His rugged brow relaxed.

"Well, you're talking sense, at any rate," he said. "More sense than I get from the Fifth! If you're going my way, Bunter, I'll give you a lift with pleasure. It's like your cheek to ask, you being a measly fag; still, I'll give you a lift if you like."

"Thanks!" gasped Bunter.

"How far do you want to go?" asked Coker.

"All—all the way."

"Eh? Aren't you going home?"

"Nunno! I—"

"Mean that you're passing Christmas somewhere near my place?"

"That's it!" gasped Bunter.

Coker had not got the preposition right. Bunter was not passing Christmas "near" Coker's place, but "at" Coker's place—if he could wangle it. But the fag junior sagely decided to let Coker learn that gradually.

Once he was started on the homeward way with Coker, it would come easier.

"Oh, all right, then!" said Coker. He looked back into the study and surveyed Potter and Greene with contempt. "You hear that, you men? Here's a Lower Fourth fag keen on riding pillion on my bike! He's got more pluck than the pair of you! Not that it needs pluck; it's safe as houses! Safer than a railway train, I imagine!"

"What an imagination!" murmured Potter.

"Eh? What did you say, Potter?"

"I said we should miss you awfully this Christmas, Coker—"

"Frightfully!" said Greene.

"Oh, that's all right!" said Coker.

"You come along to my place, as we arranged—that's all right. I was a bit wary; a fellow doesn't like a pair of silly idiots to say he can't drive a motor-bike when he's a past-master at it. Fact is, I'd like you to be there, to see that I get Bunter home safe. If Bunter gets killed—"

"Ow!"

Coker stared round.

"Did you speak, Bunter?"

"Nunno!" gasped Bunter.

"If Bunter gets killed, I'll admit that you were right," said Coker. "You can see for yourselves when you get to my place. Now you'd better get off; you'll be a long time on that frowsy old railway."

He stepped out of the study again.

"Come on, Bunter!"

Potter and Greene looked at one another as Bunter followed Coker's mighty strides down the passage.

"Better get off," murmured Potter.

"If Bunter funks it, after all, that born idiot will want to manslaughter one of us instead."

"Buck up!" said Greene briskly.

And Potter and Greene got off—

satisfied with the frowsy old railway—and willing—more than willing—to leave that glorious ride on the pillion to William George Bunter.

GREYFRIARS CELEBRITIES.

Here's another snappy poem dealing with the popular schoolboy characters of Greyfriars.

No. 2.—BOB CHERRY.



BOB CHERRY, of the laughing eyes

And sunny disposition,
Would surely take the premier prize

In any competition
Between the boys of Greyfriars School,
To test their popularity;
For Bob is bursting, as a rule,
With joy and jocularity!

"A merry heart goes all the day,"
Is Bob's unfailing maxim;
He drives the Imps of Care away,
And troubles rarely tax him.
For when the skies are drear and dark
And Fortune's frowns are riling,
Bob shows the blitheness of a lark—
Gaily he comes up smiling!

Some fellows seem to squeal and squirm
For scarcely any reason;
Thus making every Greyfriars term
A sort of "grousing" season!
Discussing school-life's ups and downs
They say "Our luck is chronic!"
But Cherry's face is free from frowns,
His sunny smile's a tonic!

Cold mornings he's the first to rise,
Heedless of frost and icicle;
And round and round the Close he flies
Breathless, upon his bicycle.
For Bob believes in exercise,
Physical jerks and fitness;
His rosy cheeks, his sparkling eyes,
To Bob's good health bear witness.

Never a schoolboy, I declare,
Could love a jape more dearly;
He makes his victims tear their hair
And burst with wrath—or nearly!
And when Bob's called before the Head
For "handers" or for "benders,"
No yells are heard, no tears are shed;
His courage ne'er surrenders!

Greyfriars a gloomier place would be
Without Bob's cheery presence;
Of happy, healthy schoolboy glee
Bob is the soul and essence!
No finer fellow could be found,
For he's not merely skittish;
But through the Empire is renowned
As brave, true-blue, and British!

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Beastly for Bunter!

BILLY BUNTER shuddered. It is said that fools rush in where angels fear to tread.

Potter and Greene of the Fifth were not angels, but they certainly feared to tread where Bunter had rushed in.

It was Bunter's last hope—his last chance. It was Coker, or Bunter Court! In that extremity, Bunter had taken his courage in both hands, so to speak, and plumped for the motor-bike. Only by flattering Coker, by pulling his gregarious leg, was it possible to wangle a Christmas with Coker. And a display of confidence in Coker's powers as a driver was the surest way to bring the smile of friendly toleration to Horace's rugged brow. Bunter would have preferred any other way, but this was the only way open to him.

But as Coker propped his motor-bike in the road and proceeded to argue with it—for the bike seemed a little obstinate—Bunter's fat heart almost failed him. Christmas with Coker was all right—Coker Lodge was a land flowing with milk and honey. But if Bunter arrived at Coker Lodge in several detached fragments, obviously it would not be an enjoyable Christmas. The goodliest and ampest Yuletide fare could not compensate for that. And if Bunter was left strewn along the road, in a detached or semi-detached state, he would not reach Coker Lodge at all. Dark doubts assailed Bunter as he watched Coker tuning up the bike.

Of course, Coker might carry him safely. Coker's own escapes had been phenomenal; and he might escape again, and Bunter with him. While there was life there was hope!

But had Hurree Jamset Ram Singh been present he would have remarked justly that the butfulness was terrific.

Bunter shuddered at the prospect before him. Better the Bunter villa, better the company of Bessie and Sammy and the whole Bunter tribe, than the scattering of his own fat person in various directions.

Coker seemed rather a long time tuning up the bike. He had given quite a lot of time to it that day, but it still seemed rather out of tune. Bunter began to feel more hopeful. If the bike—like the donkey in the song—wouldn't go, they would have to go by train. Bunter brightened up.

"Won't it go, Coker?" he ventured at last.

A red and excited face was turned on Bunter.

"If you can't talk sense don't talk at all, Bunter!"

"Oh, really, Coker—"

"Shut up!"

Bunter shut up. Coker looked rather dangerous; he always did when that motor-bike jibbed.

The minutes passed. They lengthened into half an hour. Potter and Greene had long gone. Still the motor-bike jibbed. But at last there came from it a cheery chugging, delightful to Coker's ears, if not to Bunter's.

"Squat on!" said Coker.

"I—I say, Coker—"

"Are you coming?"

"Y-e-e-es. But—"

"Then squat on—and shut up!"

For a brief moment Bunter hesitated. But the winter dusk was falling now, and Greyfriars was shut up, and all the fellows were gone. It was Coker's bike or Bunter Court; and again the hapless Owl of the Remove took his courage in both hands and made the plunge. He took his seat in fear and trembling—but he took it.

Anyhow, he was going to Coker Lodge. They would have to take Bunter in. That would give him time. Given time, he would wangle a night's shelter into a Christmas holiday. Bunter had skill in these matters. If only he got to Coker Lodge in one piece—

It was too late to think of that now. Coker was in the saddle, and the motor-bike was going. Bunter could only hold on and hope for the best.

Coker had no doubts. He never had! He had said that he was going to let that bike out—and he let it out. He fairly flew.

They negotiated the lane that led to the Redclyffe road, at a pace that made Bunter's head swim.

Trees and hedges flew past.

Coker shaved a market-cart by six inches. He shaved a homeward-bound labourer by three inches. He shaved a wandering cow by half an inch. Had Coker been a barber, he would have distinguished himself by his close shaves. When the bike skidded, and rocketed along the lane for a considerable distance before Coker regained control, Bunter gave himself up for lost. But fool's luck stood Coker in good stead. He came out on the Redclyffe road with a rush—on the wrong side, of course—missed a motor-bus by three inches, and sped on towards Redclyffe.

"Stop!" articulated Bunter.

Coker glanced round cheerily.

"Fine—what?" he asked.

"Look where you're going!" gasped Bunter.

Coker whizzed round a car, leaving a pale-faced chauffeur jamming on his brakes. He flew merrily on.

"Oh dear!" gasped Bunter.

Bunter Court was better than this. It was ever so much better. With the wind whistling and shrieking by, Coker could not even hear Bunter's voice. He would not have heeded it, had he heard. Bunter wanted him to stop. All Bunter's earthly desires, at that moment, were concentrated into one wild yearning—that Coker would stop, and let him tumble off that fearful bike. It seemed probable that he would tumble off anyway, whether Coker stopped or not. Coker roared on. Bunter yelled to him to stop. He shrieked to him to stop. He raved to him to stop. Coker roared on.

Coker, probably, would not have stopped till he reached home, but for the natural penalty that attached to his system of driving. Fool's luck was all very well, but it could not be expected to last indefinitely. It didn't.

Just outside Redclyffe Coker shaved a motor-car by a foot, a charabanc by an inch, skidded, and did not shave the hedge at all. He hit the hedge.

His carcer as a close shaver was at an end.

What happened Bunter hardly knew. It seemed like an earthquake.

Bunter woke up, as it were, to find himself reposing in a bank of snow on the field side of the hedge.

How he had got there was not clear to him. But he was there. Fortunately, the snow had broken his fall. He sat up in the snow, and spluttered.

"Blow it! Bother it! Bless it!"

It was Coker's voice.

Coker, apparently, was unhurt. But the bike seemed to have suffered. Strange sounds of complaint proceeded from it as it lay sticking in the hedge. Coker stood and regarded it with dismay.

"Ow!" gasped Bunter. "Wow! Ow! Ow!" He scrambled up. "I—I say, Coker, c-c-can't you get it going?"

"It's a smash!" said Coker gloomily.

"Oh, good!" gasped Bunter.

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"What?"

"I—I mean—"

"Shut up! I shall have to walk into Redclyffe, and get some garage to send for it," said Coker glumly. "I fancy it was your weight did it, Bunter. You're too fat to ride pillion on a motor-bike."

"Oh, really, Coker—"

"Well, I'm off," said Coker. "Sorry I can't give you that lift after all, Bunter; but you can get a train at Redclyffe. All the Courtfield trains stop there, so you've lost no time."

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

Leaving the dismantled bike in the hedge, Coker started with long strides for the town. Bunter hurried after him, his fat, little legs going like clockwork to keep pace with Coker's mighty strides.

"I—I say, Coker!" he gasped. "Are

SMILE, BOYS, SMILE at this amusing joke which has been sent in by:

K. D. Abercrombie, of 17, White Horse Street, Hereford.



A GOOD TURN!

Little Frank, who had been smiling gleefully over his breakfast, suddenly turned to his father and said:

"I've done my good turn for to-day."

"What! Already?!" inquired his father.

"Yes," answered the youngster, "I was at the gate, and I heard Mrs. Jones and her daughter say that they were doubtful whether they would catch the eight-fifteen train, so I sent the bulldog after them, and they arrived just in time!"

A "Magnet" pocket-knife has been dispatched to the sender of the above winning effort.

you taking the train home from Redclyffe?"

"After I've seen to the bike—yes."

"I'll wait for you, old chap."

Coker glanced at him.

"I don't want to punch you at Christmas-time, Bunter," he said. "But if you call me old chap again, you'll get a binge on the beezor."

"I—I mean—"

"And you needn't wait for me," added Coker. "I don't want your company."

"The—the fact is—"

"Shut up!"

Coker quickened his pace.

Bunter accelerated also.

If Coker escaped him now, all was up. Coker did not even know yet that Bunter was coming home with him for Christmas.

"I—I say, Coker—" gasped Bunter.

Coker strode on regardless. Bunter broke into a run. The December weather was cold; the wind from the sea sharp and bitter. But the fat junior's face streamed with perspira-

tion. Coker covered the ground at a great rate. He had to see to the safe disposal of the wrecked bike before he caught a train home. And he had no time to waste—least of all on Bunter. The Owl of the Remove had to sprint.

"I—I say, Coker, don't hurry!" he spluttered. "I say—"

"I'm in a hurry."

"But I say—"

"Oh, dry up!"

Coker strode onward, faster than before. Bunter, gasping for breath, pursued him. But he dropped behind. Bunter couldn't keep up the pace, and he dropped farther and farther behind.

By the time they reached Redclyffe Coker was far ahead, and he disappeared into a busy street.

Bunter panted into Redclyffe High Street; but he looked round for Coker in vain.

"Oh dear!" gasped Bunter, as he mopped his streaming brow. "Oh dear! Beast! Oh, lor!"

Coker had disappeared. No doubt he was somewhere making arrangements for the disposal of his hapless bike. Bunter rolled on to the railway station. Coker would have to turn up there, sooner or later.

It was more than an hour before Coker turned up. When he turned up he was looking cross.

"I—I say, Coker—"

Coker gave him a glare.

"You still here, you fat freak? It was your fault the bike skidded. You don't know how to place your weight. You dragged it over. That's the only way of accounting for it."

"Oh, really, Coker—"

"Oh, cut off!"

Coker strode into the railway station. Bunter's hopes were almost down to zero now; but he rolled in after Coker. He rolled on the platform after Coker with a platform ticket. If he was going home with Coker, it was up to Coker to pay his fare. Bunter had a constitutional dislike to paying his own fare.

The train came in, and Coker took a seat. He gave Bunter a concentrated glare as the fat junior put his head and a foot into the carriage. That was all of Bunter that entered, for Coker's foot barred further ingress.

"Get out!" said Coker.

"Oh, really, Coker—"

"I don't like fags travelling in my carriage! Get out!"

"Look here, you beast—"

Coker's heavy foot shoved, and Bunter got out and sat down. He was still sitting on the platform when the train moved out of the station. He picked himself up, with feelings that could have been expressed in no known language. Once more he had been let down. Coker was gone. His last hope had failed him. It had been a doubtful hope, at best, and it had failed.

Bunter's feelings as he paid for a ticket with his own money were deep. He took his ticket for Reigate. And when at long last he was landed at Reigate he did not head for home. He headed for a telephone box, and rang up Wharton Lodge.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Neck or Nothing!

COLONEL WHARTON lighted his after-dinner cigar with the slow and methodical care of a middle-aged gentleman who, from a proper respect for the well-being of his internal organisation, allowed himself only one cigar a day. Miss Amy Wharton, silver-haired, but erect in her high-backed chair, knitted. Harry Wharton and Hurree Jamset

Ram Singh, home that day from Greyfriars School, sat on a settee that was drawn near the crackling, log fire on the ancient, wide hearth of the library at Wharton Lodge. Outside the wind howled round the chimney-pots, and light flakes of snow fluttered against the window-panes. All four faces, in the glow of the firelight, were cheery and contented. The colonel and his sister were glad to have their nephew home again. Harry was glad to find himself at home. And Hurree Singh's dusky face expressed a comfortable satisfaction.

The other members of the famous Co.—Bob Cherry and Frank Nugent and Johnny Bull—were coming along later. At present they were at their own homes. But Hurree Singh, whose home was in far-off Bhanipur, in North-West India, had come with Harry, as he generally did when Greyfriars broke up for holidays.

Wharton was telling his uncle and aunt about the term at Greyfriars. Both were deeply interested. Colonel Wharton, an old Greyfriars man himself, liked to hear about his old school, and Miss Wharton liked to hear about anything or anywhere that concerned her nephew. Football matches, and scraps in the Remove passage, were fought over again; and the story told of the attempted burglary at Greyfriars, which had happened shortly before the school broke up for Christmas. Wharton related how Billy Bunter, going down from the dormitory at night to bag a Fifth Form man's cake from his study, had run into the cracksman, and roused the House, frightened out of his fat wits by the encounter.

"I have read of this in the papers," said the colonel, with a nod. "More than half a dozen burglaries have been reported in the neighbourhood of Greyfriars in the last month or two. It appears that some extremely skilful cracksman has located himself in that neighbourhood, and the police have not been able to deal with him so far."

"He seems to be a clever rascal," said Harry. "Popper Court, and Hogben Grange, and several other places, have been robbed, and it seems clear that it was the same man every time. It's supposed to be the same man who got in at Greyfriars. If Bunter hadn't gone down for Coker's cake, he would have robbed Greyfriars, too."

"Was Bunter able to describe the man?"

Harry Wharton laughed. "Bunter was too scared to think of anything but yelling. But he saw him only in the dark, however."

"The scarefulness of the esteemed Bunter was terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "His yellfulness was preposterous."



Billy Bunter groped along the railings to a gate. On the gate was a name, and he struck a match to read it. The name was : BUNTER VILLA.

The colonel smiled.

"The poor boy must have been very frightened," said Miss Wharton's placid voice. "It must have been dreadful."

"And he never got the cake," said Harry. "That was what hit Bunter hardest. He got the cracksman instead of the cake."

A faint, distant buzz was audible.

It was the telephone-bell.

There was a tap at the door.

"Master Harry is wanted on the telephone!" said the butler.

Wharton rose.

"Some of your school friends, I suppose, my dear," said Miss Wharton. And Wharton went to take the call.

He expected to hear the voice of Bob Cherry, or Nugent, or Johnny Bull when he took up the receiver. But it was quite another voice that came through.

"Is that you, Harry, old chap?"

"Bunter!" ejaculated Wharton.

"I've been a jolly long time getting through, old fellow," said the fat voice over the wires. "Get home all right?"

"Yes, thanks."

"Good! I've been rather anxious about you, dear old fellow."

"Have you?" asked Wharton, in surprise. "Why?"

"Well, this foggy weather, and snow, and all that, and so on," said Bunter.

"And I wasn't with you to look after you, you know."

"Oh, my hat!"

"So I'm jolly glad you got home safe, old boy."

"Thanks," said Wharton, with a touch of sarcasm. "I've travelled on the railway before, you know, without accidents happening. Quite a lot, in fact."

"Oh! Yes! Well, I'm glad you're all right. Everybody well at home?"

"Yes, thanks. You at home?"

"Nunno! I'm speaking from Reigate. I've just got in."

"You'll be jolly late home, won't you?"

There was a fat cough over the wires. "The fact is, old chap—"

Wharton had a premonition of what was coming.

"Well?" he rapped.

"The fact is, dear old chap, I'm not going home. Coker asked me to go home with him for the hols—"

"Coker did?" ejaculated Wharton.

"Yes; he was rather keen on it—"

"Well, I hope you'll have a good time with Coker, old fat bean. Good-bye, and a merry Christmas!"

"Hold on! Don't ring off yet, old chap! I haven't finished! The fact is, I got fed-up with Coker! I went with him as far as Redclyffe, but I left him there. I told him that it couldn't be done. I was sorry, and said so, but on second thoughts I felt that I had to see my old pals this Christmas. Coker took it rather hard—he had counted on me. But dash it all, old fellow, a fellow's pals come first, don't they?"

Wharton made no reply to that.

"Well, here I am at Reigate," said Bunter. "Are you sending the car for me, Harry?"

"No!" said Wharton grimly.

"Hem! I believe your place is about eight or nine miles from Reigate, isn't it? Better send the car."

"Rats!"

"Eh?"

"Rats!" repeated Wharton.

"He, he, he!"

Bunter's fat cachinnation, coming over the wires, showed that Bunter was taking that reply as a joke.

"Well, look here, if it's a lot of
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trouble, I won't bother you to send the car," said Bunter genially. "I'll take a taxi. The difficulty is, that I haven't any money. I was disappointed about a postal-order just before break-up—"

"Are you finished?"

"No. I'll take a taxi. And, look here old chap, you can settle for it, and I'll square when my Christmas tips come in. I get a lot of Christmas tips from my titled relations, as you know."

"You fat idiot!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

Harry. "Think of the distinguished company at Bunter Court that you told us about. Didn't you tell us that there would be the cream of the peerage, and a prince or two?"

"Oh, yes; but—"

"Well, you don't want to miss all that."

"The fact is, old fellow, I do!" said Bunter. "I'm fed-up with all this high society, and all that. My tastes are simple. I'd really prefer to pass my Christmas in your humble home."

"Oh, crumbs!"

"That being settled—"

"But it isn't settled."

"Yes, it is, old chap! That's all right! I suppose you wouldn't mind settling for the taxi when I get in?"

"I jolly well should!"

"Are you going to be mean, Wharton?"

"Yes; horribly."

"He, ho, he! Well, I dare say your uncle will settle for it. He won't want a cheeky taxi-man kicking up a shindy at his front door, will he?"

"Why, you—you—you—"

"Still, it might be better to send the car. It will save the money. When you've got a car, why not use it? Make the shover earn his wages! I don't believe in letting servants loaf about with their hands in their pockets. Let 'em earn their keep—what?"

"Good-bye, Bunter!"

"Well, I'll come along in a taxi, then. If you prefer it," said Bunter. "Expect me in about an hour, old chap."

Wharton, about to hang up the receiver, paused. He glared at the telephone as if that harmless and necessary instrument had given him offence.

Bunter was coming.

Anything like a refusal was only taken as a jest by the Owl of the Remove! He was coming!

Certainly, it would have been quite easy to kick him out when he came, and Wharton had no objection, on principle, to kicking Bunter. He had kicked him often enough at Greyfriars, and was prepared to kick him again, to any extent that was necessary. But it was awkward.

Kicking Bunter in the Remove passage at Greyfriars was one thing. Kicking him out of Wharton Lodge, late at night, was another.

Colonel Wharton, perhaps, might be amused; Miss Amy Wharton would certainly be surprised and shocked. Quite often Billy Bunter carried his point by sheer "neck." Nature had not been kind to Bunter in the matter of brains, but she had endowed him with unlimited cheek. Wharton paused, rather at a loss.

"I dare say the man will only want about a pound," came Bunter's voice. "Of course, I shall settle later. Still, if you'd rather send the car—"

Wharton drew a deep breath. A glimmer came into his eyes.

"I'll send the car, Bunter!" he said.

"That's right, old chap! Save the money, you know. In fact, you can lend me the pound, instead of paying for the taxi. See? I happen to be

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short of ready money at the present moment—"

"Wait for the car, Bunter."

"Yes, rather!" chuckled Bunter.

Harry Wharton rang off, and returned to the library, to ask his uncle's permission to send the car for a Greyfriars fellow who was hung up at Reigate Station. He received permission at once, and went out to the garage to speak to Brown, the colonel's chauffeur.

He was quite a long time in consultation with Brown; and when he returned to the House, there was a smile on his face—and there was a grin on Brown's face when he drove the car away.

The car was going to pick up Bunter; and Bunter naturally expected it to land him safely at Wharton Lodge. But if Bunter arrived at Wharton Lodge that night the most surprised fellow in the County of Surrey would be Harry Wharton.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Home, Sweet Home!

BILLY BUNTER grunted.

It was cold.

Light flakes of snow were falling.

Bunter was hungry.

The hour was growing late.

A long drive was before him, when the car arrived to take him to Wharton Lodge; and the car had not arrived yet.

More than an hour had elapsed since he had rung up the Lodge. Plenty of time, Bunter considered, for the car to arrive. But it had not come yet.

Very likely, Wharton was not hurrying himself in the matter. It would be like the beast! Very likely, the colonel's chauffeur was dawdling. Chauffeurs generally were a cheeky lot—Barnes, for instance, at Greyfriars.

But for Barnes' cheek in refusing to drive Bunter in the Head's car, he might have caught some late-goer at Greyfriars, and landed on him for Christmas. Now another cheeky chauffeur was keeping him waiting, in a windy street outside a chilly railway station.

Still, the car must be coming! Wharton had said that he would send it, and he was a fellow of his word. Bunter grunted, and grumbled, and groused, and waited, and blinked at every car that passed. And at last a car drew up, a chauffeur stepped down, and looked Bunter over carefully, and apparently recognising him from a description he had received, touched his cap to the fat junior.

"Mr. Bunter?" he asked.

"Yes," gasped Bunter. "You from Wharton Lodge?"

"Yes, sir," answered Brown.

"You've kept me waiting!" grunted Bunter. "Look here, put it on, and get me to the Lodge as quick as you can—see?"

Brown opened the door of the car.

"Please step in, sir."

Bunter stepped in, and the chauffeur closed the door on him, and remounted to his seat. The car hummed away.

Billy Bunter settled down comfortably in a cushioned corner, and drew a rug over his fat legs. A cheery grin illumined his podgy visage.

He was off at last!

Seven or eight miles in a good car. And then Wharton Lodge and supper! "Neck" had done it. By sheer cheek Bunter had landed himself at the Lodge for the Christmas holidays. It was a case of neck or nothing—and

Bunter, fortunately, had plenty of "neck."

He grinned serenely as the car rushed on through the shadowy, wintry night.

This was better than sitting behind Coker on a buck-jumping motor-bike! This was better than taking a taxi home to the Bunter villa—with the taxi-man to pay at the end.

Bunter felt that he had managed well—some fellows would have hesitated to do as Bunter was doing. Bunter, fortunately, was not thin-skinned. Besides, Bunter knew that he was an acquisition to any Christmas party. His tact, his affable manners, his fund of wit and humour, his good looks, his distinguished appearance, all made him valuable at any social gathering.

If the Wharton Lodge people could stand fellows like Bob Cherry, and Nugent, and Johnny Bull, and Inky, surely they would be delighted to have a fellow like Bunter. If they weren't, they ought to be. Anyhow, they were going to have Bunter. That was settled—at least, Bunter was certain that it was.

The car glided on by snowy, windy roads.

Miles flew under the revolving wheels.

Bunter was hungry; but the prospect of supper cheered him. That stuffy old colonel and his stuffy old sister were hospitable, at least. Bunter did not think much of them; but he thought a lot of their fare. His mouth watered at the thought of a well-spread supper-table.

But it seemed to him, at last, that the journey was rather long. The Lodge was not ten miles from Reigate, at the most. It seemed to Bunter that the car had already covered more than ten miles, yet there was no sign of the Lodge in the wintry landscape.

Brown was driving on steadily, like a man who knew the way. He could not have missed his road. That was impossible. Yet it was odd that they had not arrived at the Lodge by this time.

After a couple more miles Bunter spoke to the chauffeur.

"Look here, you're a jolly long time getting to the Lodge! Wharton will be anxious about me. Get on with it."

"Yes, sir."

"You haven't lost your way, I suppose?"

"No, sir."

"Well, we ought to be at the Lodge by this time."

"I'll let her out, sir."

"Do!" grunted Bunter; and he sank back into his seat, and hugged the rug round his fat person.

Brown let the car out.

The speed was all that could be desired. They flew past hedges and leafless trees. They passed through several villages. They wound up and down long lanes, and whizzed along roads. It seemed to the astonished Bunter that Brown was taking him for a joy-ride all over Surrey, instead of heading direct for Wharton Lodge—just as if the cheeky beast, for some unknown reason, was merely filling up time, in order to land Bunter late at his destination! Perhaps he was!

"Look here, what does this mean?" Bunter hooted at last. "You're not taking the direct road for Wharton Lodge."

"No, sir."

"Why not?" hooted Bunter.

"Master Harry's orders, sir."

"What?" gasped Bunter. "Mean to say Wharton told you to take me a long way round?"

(Continued on page 12.)

INSIDE INFORMATION!



By "The OLD REF."

At nearly every "footer" match, discussions arise concerning decisions given by the "man with the whistle." If YOU are in doubt on any footer matter, write to "Old Ref," c/o the Editor, about it. The more intricate the problem, the better he likes it.

SOMETIMES, when we are in an argumentative mood, we sit down and try to define what we mean by the use of the words—in relation to a human being—"a good sport." You will hear somebody say of this or that player—"He's a true sportsman."

As a rough-and-ready definition, I think we could go much farther and fare much worse than this—a real sportsman is a fellow who can take a beating in the same way as he takes success—with a smile on his face, and a ready acknowledgment of the superiority of the opposition.

But while this is all right, we bump against big problems connected with this question of what a sportsman should or should not do on the "footer" field—a fellow, that is, who likes to retain a reputation for being a good sport. The question has just cropped up again.

During a recent match—it was the International game between Ireland and England—a hard-rising shot was sent in at Elisha Scott, the Irish goalkeeper. Scott just touched the ball, and it went over the bar for what should have been, of course, a corner-kick to England.

Apparently, however, the referee did not notice the goalkeeper touch the ball, and he gave a goal-kick. After the match, Elisha Scott put this question to me:

"Should I have gone to the referee and told him that I had touched the ball, and that consequently it was a corner-kick and not a goal-kick?"

Such a question seems an easy one to answer at first thought, and I was just on the point of saying to Scott: "Of course you should have told the referee." And then I had a "second think," and decided that the question was not so easy after all. This was the way I began to reason it out, and when I give my reasoning I think you will agree that there are different ways in which even a "good sport" would look at an incident of this kind.

In the first place, if the goalkeeper had gone to the referee and told him that it was a corner-kick and not a goal-kick, and the referee had changed his decision, all the people on the ground would have known that the referee had made a mistake. And to this extent the watchers might have lost confidence in the referee.

AGAIN, suppose that the referee had changed his decision over this incident; accepted the goalkeeper's word for it that it was a corner-kick? A few minutes later the goalkeeper might have had a penalty kick given against him for what the referee thought was a foul. But the goalkeeper, knowing that he had not been guilty of a foul, might have gone up to the referee and told him so. Now it is arguable that a referee who had changed his decision once, because of something the goalkeeper had told him, would have had to accept the goalkeeper's version of the second incident.

If referees in general were to accept the view of each player over football-field incidents, there would be trouble without end.

The safest line the ideal sportsman should take concerning this sort of case is always to accept the decision of the presiding

official—the referee—whether he is right or wrong. This line of conduct is actually laid down in the football rules, for the players are told that they are not expected to dispute the decisions of the referee, or to show, by word or action, that they are not satisfied.

If a player is in any doubt as to why he has been penalised, then he is entitled to ask the referee, in a gentlemanly sort of way, what the free kick, say, was awarded for. And the referee is supposed to explain.

In some football matches there is quite a lot of shouting by the players—"Hold the ball!" "Let it come!" "Right!" and all that sort of thing. A reader asks how much of this can be done with impunity, or when the referee should intervene to put a stop to it.

The answer is comparatively easy. The referee should stop the game when he is convinced that, by shouting in the course of play, one man puts an opponent off from doing the thing he meant to do.

Let us imagine a case.

The ball is kicked high in the air. Two or three players get to the position at which it is expected to drop. As the ball drops, one of the players shouts: "Right!" Another player—a member of the opposing side—thinking it is one of his pals who has shouted, draves back and makes no attempt to play the ball.

Clearly, the shout of "Right!" in such a case has put a player off his game. In such cases, the referee should stop the play, caution the player who has shouted and tell him that if he keeps on doing it, he will be sent off for ungentlemanly conduct.

I ONCE saw a referee get into hot water, so far as the spectators were concerned, over an incident similar to that which I have imagined in the previous paragraph. A forward and a full-back went for the ball together. The forward got it, and was dashing on towards goal when the referee's whistle went, and a free kick was given to the defending side. How the spectators yelled! From their view-point they immediately decided that the referee had blown for offside, and they also decided that a palpable mistake had been made by the referee, as the player could not possibly have been offside.

From that moment to the end of the game the referee was soundly hooted. The spectators did not know—probably don't know now unless they happen to read these notes—that the referee did not blow for offside, but because the forward, just as he was about to get the ball, shouted "Right!" and put the full-back off his tackle.

In the foregoing there is, perhaps, a little lesson, the moral of which is obvious. Things are not always what they seem to the good folk who are watching a match. In other words, don't jump to conclusions. Rather remember the story of the fellow who jumped at the conclusion of a boat. He missed it!

So when you are watching a match don't assume that you know everything that is happening on the field. And when you are playing, take the decisions of the referee with a good grace. In other words, don't "shoot" him—he's doing his best.

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BILLY BUNTER'S CHRISTMAS!

(Continued from page 10.)

"Yes, sir."

"What for?" roared Bunter.

"Master Harry said you would understand when you arrived, sir."

"Well, I don't understand!" snarled Bunter.

"You haven't arrived, sir."

"Well, when are we going to arrive?" booted Bunter.

"Twelve o'clock, sir."

Bunter gasped.

"Mean to say Wharton told you to get me in at midnight?"

"Yes, sir."

"Why?" shrieked Bunter.

"Master Harry said you would understand when you got in, sir."

"Wharton's a fool, and you are another!" howled Bunter. "Take me to Wharton Lodge directly! Do you hear?"

"I hear, sir."

"Well, get on with it, you silly chump!"

Bunter hugged the rug again and waited. The car flew on. He blinked at his watch. It was half-past eleven. Nice time for a fellow to get in, when he had been hungry-famished—for hours! Why Harry Wharton had given the chauffeur those extraordinary orders was past Bunter's comprehension. He resolved to tell Wharton what he thought of him when he arrived at the Lodge.

But he had not arrived yet.

Long, shadowy lanes, leafless trees, and snowy hedges continued to glide past the car. Evidently the chauffeur was still obeying Master Harry's orders, not Bunter's. But it was no good talking to the cheeky beast—Bunter realised that. He had to wait for midnight to reach his destination, as Wharton had so mysteriously instructed the colonel's chauffeur.

Something familiar in the aspect of the landscape struck Bunter at last, as he blinked from the windows. But it was so dark and shadowy that he could not be sure.

The car slowed down at last. Bunter sat up and took notice. Brown stepped down, halting the car, and Bunter saw him in talk with a policeman at the corner of a road.

Obviously, the chauffeur was asking his way, as if seeking a destination known only to him by description. It was more and more amazing, for surely Colonel Wharton's chauffeur knew how to find his way to the colonel's house! Bunter concluded that he had driven so far afield, that he was uncertain of his way back. Yet Bunter was sure that there was something familiar in his surroundings now. He, if not Brown, had driven over these roads before, he was certain of that!

"Don't you know your way?" he asked angrily, when Brown came back to the car.

"Yes, now, sir."

"You had to ask it!" snapped Bunter.

"Yes, sir."

"I wonder Colonel Wharton doesn't sack you," growled Bunter. "I shall advise him to. For goodness' sake get on, now you know the way—if you're sure of it now!" he added sarcastically.

"Quite sure now, sir."

"Then get on, and don't jaw."

Bunter's temper was suffering, and his manners always suffered when his temper suffered. But Brown did not seem to mind; indeed, there was a smile on his face as he resumed driving.

The car whizzed on again.

Bunter looked at his watch. It wanted

a few minutes to midnight. He was due to arrive now. Yet the aspect of the roads, as he blinked from the windows, though somehow familiar, did not strike him as resembling the surroundings of Wharton Lodge. He was more and more perplexed.

The car stopped at last.

Brown jumped down and opened the door.

"Here you are, sir."

"About time, too!" grumbled Bunter. He uncurling himself from the rug and rose. "Look here, why haven't you driven up to the house?"

"Master Harry's orders, sir."

"Mean to say I'm to walk up to the house?"

"Yes, sir, if you don't mind, sir."

"I do mind!" snarled Bunter. "Drive right up to the house—do you hear?"

"Master Harry's orders, sir—"

"Will you drive right up to Wharton Lodge, or won't you?" demanded Bunter, in a concentrated voice.

"No, sir! Master Harry—"

"Blow Master Harry!" roared Bunter. "And blow you! I never heard of such cheek! Blow the lot of you!"

Brown held the door open. Bunter stepped out. The chauffeur immediately shut the door and slid into his seat, and started.

Bunter blinked round him in the darkness.

The car slid into motion.

"Look here—" began Bunter.

Brown did not look there. He was looking ahead of him as he drove away. Bunter blinked after the vanishing tail-light of the car.

"Beast! What did he rush off like that for?" muttered the Owl of the Remove. "He hasn't even taken me up the drive. Where's the gates? Blessed if I can see anything in this beastly dark. What—where—"

Bunter blinked round in amazement.

Wharton Lodge lay by the side of a high road, with big gates opening on a drive. But Bunter, as he blinked about him in the dimness and the falling flakes, saw no sign of gates, or of a park wall, or towering trees. The road in which he stood was a suburban road—evidently not far from a town. He could dimly make out railings and a row of laurel bushes at a little distance. Beyond them was the dim shape of a house—not a large house. Even in the dimness there was something familiar in the look of that detached villa.

"My hat!" Bunter breathed deep. "That idiot has landed me at the wrong place and gone off! My hat! He ought to be sacked—he ought to be boiled! I—I—I wonder where I am!"

He groped across the dimness to the railing; he groped along to a gate. On the gate was a name.

Bunter struck a match. He was puzzled and perplexed, and anxious to learn where that idiot of a chauffeur had landed him. He realised by this time that he could be nowhere near Wharton Lodge.

The wind blew the match out immediately, but not before Bunter had read the name on the gate. And the name was:

BUNTER VILLA.

William George Bunter stood rooted to the ground. From somewhere in the distance came the chime of midnight.

Bunter Villa!

He was standing outside his own home!

It was at Bunter Villa—glorified, at Greyfriars, into Bunter Court—that the car had landed him—and driven away!

It was gone—even the red rearlight had vanished now.

Bunter stood transfixed.

Slowly understanding filtered into his fat brain. He understood at last the mysterious instructions the chauffeur had received from Master Harry! The chauffeur had been instructed to pick up Bunter at Reigate, drive him about till it was too late for Bunter to make a fresh start that night, and leave him at his own home. And he had left him! Bunter stood and blinked at Bunter Villa.

There was no light burning there—the Bunter family had gone to bed.

"Oh, crikey!" said Bunter at last.

It was all clear to him now.

"Beast!" gasped Bunter.

The chilly wind caught Bunter, and scattered snowflakes over him.

"Oh lor!"

There was only one thing for Billy Bunter to do—and he did it. He opened the gate, tramped up the path to Bunter Villa, and banged on the door. It was a case of any port in a storm, and there was nothing for Bunter but "home, sweet home!"

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

In Ambush!

"THE Head!" murmured Harry Wharton.

"The esteemed and ridiculous Beak!" murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"I am sure," said Miss Wharton, with her gentle smile and placid voice, "that it will be very agreeable to you to see your headmaster during the holidays."

"Oh!" said Harry. "Hem! Awfully!"

"The awfulness is terrific."

"And no doubt the Head will be equally pleased," said Miss Wharton.

"About equally, I think," murmured Harry.

"It will be very nice indeed all round," concluded the kind old lady. "I am very glad, Harry, that Dr. Locke was able to accept your uncle's invitation to pass a few days here before Christmas."

"Um!" said Harry.

"Dr. Locke will arrive this afternoon," went on Miss Wharton. "He will stay over to-morrow, and probably leave the next day. Mrs. Locke, I understand, is visiting some relatives, and your uncle's old headmaster has taken the opportunity to come here. Your uncle is very much attached to his old headmaster, Harry, as, of course, you are."

"Oh, frightfully!" said Harry.

"The attentiveness, gracious madam, is terrific and absurd," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh solemnly.

Miss Wharton smiled her sweet smile.

The two juniors went out into the winter sunshine, leaving the good old soul busy with Christmas decorations. Outside, they exchanged glances.

"Ripping, isn't it, Inky?" said Harry.

"The ripfulness is preposterous," assented Inky.

And the two juniors grinned.

There was no limit to the respect that the Greyfriars fellows felt for their headmaster, Herbert Henry Locke, Doctor of Divinity.

That respect was mingled with liking, but more with awe. And agreeable as Aunt Amy supposed it would be for the schoolboys to see their headmaster in the holidays, they would have been perfectly satisfied not to see him till Greyfriars opened for the following term. Even if they had not seen him then, they could have borne it with fortitude.



Honk, honk, honk ! Billy Bunter did not move as the car swept towards him. There was a jamming of brakes, and the car slowed down.

Headmasters, as a matter of fact, were rather out of the picture in holiday-time.

True, Dr. Locke was not likely to "come the Beak" while he was a guest at Wharton Lodge; but his mere presence was rather unnerving to Lower Fourth juniors. On the rare occasions when juniors tea'd with the Head they tea'd in a state of serious and solemn self-consciousness. Even Bunter, on such an occasion, did not devote his whole and sole attention to his food. Fortunately, such occasions were rare. But to have the headmaster in the house, on holiday, was something like the limit. "Well, it can't be helped, old bean," said Harry.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh nodded. "What cannot be cured must go longest to the well," he remarked. "We can stand it," said Harry. "After all, it's only a couple of days. And the Head, after all, doesn't bite." "The esteemed barkfulness is worse than the absurd bifffulness," agreed the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"But—" said Harry. "The butfulness is terrific." "Well, it's all in the day's work," said the captain of the Remove. "We've had the Head here before, and lived to tell the tale. No good thinking about it till it happens, anyhow."

"No good meeting a preposterous trouble half-way!" assented Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "And it will be over before our worthy and ridiculous friends arrive, so they will get out of the honourable infliction."

"Anyhow, we're not getting Bunter. Even the Head's rather better than Bunter."

"The ratherfulness is terrific." There was comfort in that reflection. Nothing had been heard at Wharton Lodge of the Owl of the Remove since he had been landed—unexpectedly—at home!

Two days had passed, and Bunter apparently was making the best of home, sweet home. Wharton congratulated himself on the result of that stroke of strategy. There had not even been a ring on the telephone, so there was a happy prospect of not hearing any more from William George Bunter till next term. Which alone was enough to make a holiday a success!

In a few days the other members of the Co. were to arrive at the Lodge, which certainly was likely to give the juniors more pleasure than the advent of the Head, deep as was their respect for that stately gentleman. In the meanwhile, the two juniors were enjoying their holiday, looking up old familiar places and acquaintances, skating on the frozen lake, snowballing in the park, and driving out sometimes in the car with Colonel Wharton.

"Here comes the esteemed and absurd colonel," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, as James Wharton came out of the house and glanced about him.

"Looking for us, uncle?" asked Harry.

"Yes. I've just had a message on the phone," said the colonel. "It was really you who were wanted; but as you were out of doors I took Bunter's message for you."

"Bunter!" "Yes. You did not mention that you had asked Bunter here for Christmas, Harry—"

"I—I—"

"It does not matter, of course—you are welcome to bring all your school friends, and the more the merrier," said the colonel, with a smile. "Bunter says he finds he will be able to come, after all—"

"Oh! D-d-does he?"

"And he will be along this afternoon."

"Oh!"

"He is coming by train to the

village, and he suggests that you may like to walk and meet him," said Colonel Wharton. "As a matter of fact, I was going to take you with me on a visit this afternoon to Sankey Hall. General Sankey is home from India, and he has brought home with him a collection of Oriental jewels which I think you boys would like to see. However, if you would rather meet your friend Bunter, do so by all means."

Wharton and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh exchanged an eloquent glance.

"You can let me know at lunch," added the colonel; and he went back into the house.

"The fat villain—" murmured Wharton.

"The esteemed fat rotter—"

"I—I don't want to explain to uncle how the matter stands," said Harry. "But—but we're going to put paid to Bunter somehow."

"But the howfulness—"

"There's only one train at Wharton Magnus this afternoon. Bunter will have to come by that. We'll meet on the way—"

"The meetfulness of the esteemed Bunter will not be the boonful blessing, my absurd chum."

"And snowball him—"

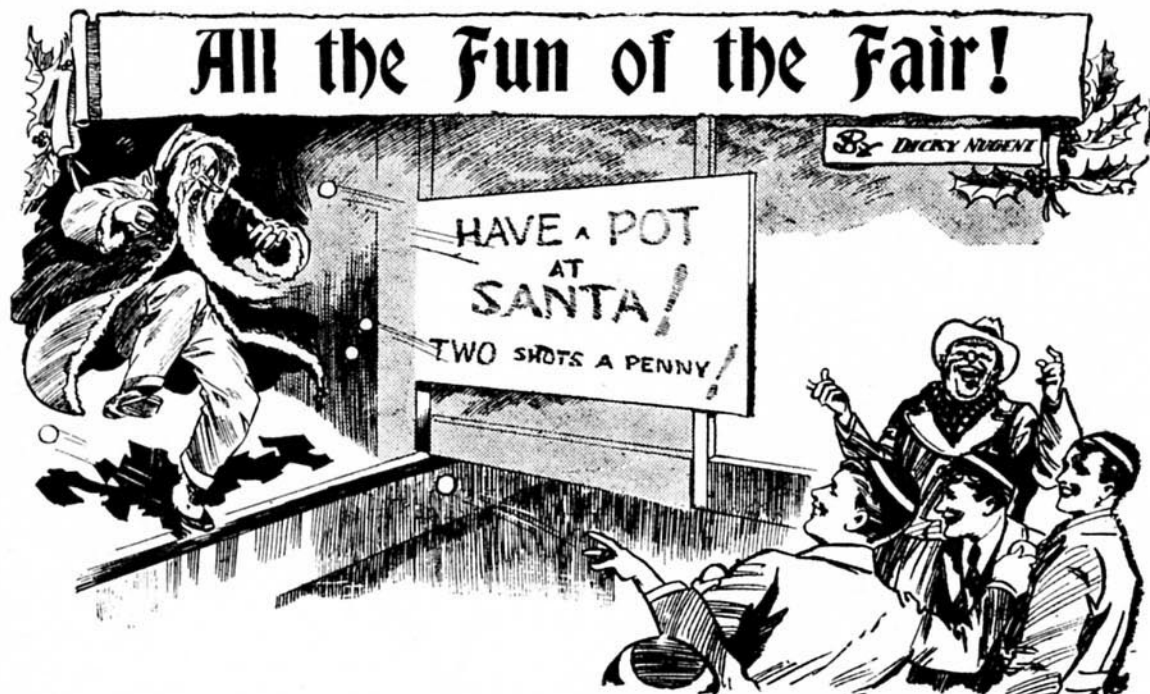
"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And keep it up till he clears," said Harry. "We don't want anything to happen here. But if we meet him half-way from the village we can give him an high old time, and make him glad to take the next train home. What?"

"It is a wheezy good idea," agreed the nabob. "We will pelt the esteemed fat Bunter with ridiculous snowballs all the way to the railway station, and pitch him into the first train that goes—no matterfulness where it goes! As

(Continued on page 16.)

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It's customary for Santa Claus to give presents, but in this case the old chap receives them—thick and heavy!

THIS is the life!" Jack Jolly of the Fourth Form at St. Sam's grinned all over his dille with contentment as he spoke. His chums, Frank Fearless and Merry and Bright, responded with a harty:

"Hear, hear!"

Jack Jolly & Co. were having an awfully good time in London. They were staying with Fearless at his pater's palatial rezidence in the most eggclusive part of Mayfair. Natchurally, at such a house munny flowed like water. There was unlimited tuck available at any hour of the day, and in the event of guests getting tired of feeding their faces they could always adjurn to one of the luxurious salons and amewse themselves at the bejewelled bagatelle-tables or diamond-studded dart-boards.

At present our heroes were sitting in the royal box at the circus. It was the Christmas Eve matinee, and gaiety and jollity were in the air. Outside it rained cats and dogs, but in the circus the only thing that rained was the good old Christmas spirit.

Jack Jolly & Co. applauded frekwently and loudly. It was a good show. There were lion-tamers and tiger-tamers and jugglers and conjurers and trapeze artists and trick cyklists, and the chums of the Fourth were kompelled to admit that they couldn't have done better themselves.

They all felt sorry when the last turn came. Forchunily, that wasn't the end of the day's fun. In the same grate building where the circus was running there was also a fun fair. Immedately the strains of "God Save the King" had died away in the circus, Jack Jolly & Co. hopped out of the royal box and cantered away to enjoy the fun of the fair.

Little dreeming what a surprise they were shortly going to receive, our heroes went round all the side-shows,

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enjoying themselves as only schoolboys can. Their skill at cokernut-shies and skee-ball and rifle-shooting drew gasps of amazement from the speektators. They would have needed a pantecnickon to carry home all the prizes they won, but they jennerously decided to give the trophies to a poor old homeless beggar who was in the fun city sheltering from the rain.

The old fellow seemed quite surprised when our heroes presented him with six cokernuts, a bag of nuts, a cupple of Flor de Firework cigars, a golliwog, a set of egg-cups, and other assorted valuables.

"Well, I vote we get back home now, you fellows," said Frank Fearless, after this little incident. "The pater has arranged a fifteen-course dinner for us to-nite, and we shall have to change into evening dress for such an important meal."

"Yes, rather!"

"What about going to see Father Christmas before we go?" suggested Jack Jolly, with a merry twinkle in his eye.

As he spoke, the captin of the Fourth jerked his thumb in the direction of a side-show where a gentleman disguised as Santa Claws was offering himself as a target to passers-by. For a penny the patrons were entitled to shy a cupple of rubber "snowballs" at him, and every person who succeeded in hitting him on the nose received a bar of chocklit.

"My hat! This is too good to miss!" grinned Frank Fearless, when he had got the idea. "We must all have a pot at Santa!"

The Co. trotted over and bought a few duzen snowballs, and in a very short time they were giving poor Santa Claws a fast and furious peppering.

Needless to say, eggspert bowlers like Jack Jolly & Co. found no difficulty whatever in hitting the mark. One after the other their snowballs landed on Santa's nasal organ. Crowds gathered round and nearly bust themselves with larfter at the comical site.

Soon the place was fairly echoing with cheers, while the human target hopped and danced about like a bearded cat on hot briz.

"Whooooop! Yarooooo!" he yelled, as he jumped about. "Look here—" "On the ball!" shouted Jack Jolly.

"Yes, rather!"

"Yarooooo!" Lemme alone, I tell you—yoooooooop!"

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

How long the bombardment mite have continued, it is impossible to say. As things happened, it didn't continue for long. Before our heroes had even contemplated packing up, something happened to put a stop to their larx.

Father Christmas, evidently fed up with the treatment he was receiving, suddenly made a rush at his persektors!

Jack Jolly & Co.'s cheery roars of larfter suddenly gave place to roars of pain as the furious Santa Claws came down on them like a ton of briz and knocked their heads together.

"Yarooo! What are you doing?" asked Jack Jolly indignantly. "This isn't according to the rules of the game, is it?"

"Quite right, my lad, it isn't!" cried a silk-hatted gentleman, rushing up and seizing Santa's arm. "What is the meaning of this, my man? Don't I pay you half-a-crown a day to stand up and meet all comers with a smiling fizz?"

He was the proprietor of the show! At the sound of his voice Santa Claws turned vizzibly pail.

"I—I—" he stuttered.

"You can save your breth, my man! Eggsuses will avail you nothing; you're sacked!"

"Oh, erikey!" muttered Santa Claws in tones of dismay.

"Hand over that costume and buzz off!" roared the proprietor fiercely. "Here's one-and-threepence for you—half a day's pay! It's more than you deserve!"

Santa Claws pocketed the one-and-threepence, then, with a very worried

look on his dile, took off his coat and hood. As he did so there was a gasp of sheer amazement from the St. Sam's juniors.

For beneath the scarlet garments of Father Christmas were revealed the black gown and mortar-board of a school master! And when the undisguised human target turned round and faced them they found themselves staring at teachers that were very familiar indeed to them.

It was Dr. Alfred Birchmall, the headmaster of St. Sam's!

II
"THE—the Head!" stuttered Frank Fearless.

Dr. Birchmall snorted.

"So you can reckonise me now, can you? Pity you didn't do so before!"

"But—but what are you doing in a fun fair disguised as Santa Claws?" asked Jack Jolly, wondering.

"Hiding from the perlice, of course!" hist Dr. Birchmall, glansing over his shoulder with a terrified glarnse. "You remember how I had to fly from St. Sam's when the collector called for the Christmas-card munny?"

"Yes, rather!" corussed Jack Jolly & Co., grinning at the recollection of the Head's hurried flight on the back of a passing motor-car.

"Well, I hung on to that car till we got to London," gasped the Head. "I knew it was no good eggsplaining to the collector fellow that the munny was simply missing. It was ten to one in doennuts he wouldn't beleieve me—these bizzness people are so suspishus, you know!"

"Hem! Eggsactly!"

"So to London I came. And in London I have stopped ever since. To-day, my boys, I am a fugitive from justiss—a despised outcast, with every man's hand against me! Awfully ruff, isn't it?"

Jack Jolly & Co. had to admit that it was.

"When I got this job as Santa Claws I really thought I was in clover," said the Head sadly. "In my disguys I was safe from the prying eyes of perlice-officers and Scotland Yard slooths. It

was an unplezzant sort of job, but it had distinkt advantages for me. And now you've gone and spoiled the whole thing by making me lose my temper and konsekvently my job!"

"Sorry, sir!"

"Sorry ratts! That won't save me from arrest—and it duzzent lessen the dammdige you've cawsed to my beak!" added the Head, caressing his nasal organ with grate tenderness. "If I had a birchrod here, I'd birch you all black-and-blue. As nothing of that sort is available, however, I will content myself by nocking your silly nuts together!"

So saying, Dr. Birchmall reached forward with the amiable intention of hurting Jack Jolly & Co.'s unoffending nappers.

Before he could carry out his base desines, however, something happened to cawse him to change his mind in a hurry.

That "something" was an eggsited roar from the crowd of people standing near.

"Look out! It's coming!"

"It's a tiger—an escaped tiger from the circus!"

"Yarooooo!"

Instantly all was pannick and confusion. People fled madly in all directions. In the space of two seconds Jack Jolly & Co. and the Head were left alone in the middle of the Fun Fair.

It was then that they suddenly realised that a fierce man-eating tiger was bounding towards them, snarling and baring its fangs in a most unplezzant manner.

Our heroes were not one whit dismayed. They were boys of the bulldog breed who larfed in the face of danjer and skorned to show the white feather. The thought of running away from a meer man-eating tiger was forrin to their British natures.

Of course, it was rather different with Dr. Birchmall, who was an awful cowerd at hart. As soon as he saw the tiger he gave one yell of fear and bolted for dear life.

The tiger, evidently realising that he had a cowerd to deal with, licked his chops and farely flung himself at the Head. The Head just mannigded

to spring out of the savviage creature's path in time. An instant later, he was running round the Fun Fair with the man-eater chasing after him.

"Help! Murder! Perlice!" shrieked the Head as he hurtled along. "If I'm eaten up, I'll jolly well sue the circus for dammdiges afterwards! Save me!"

But the jeneral public didn't seem at all anxious to save Dr. Birchmall. They were all too bizzzy scrambling into places of concealment to bother about him just then.

Forchunittly, Jack Jolly & Co. were at hand.

"I think this is where we step in, you fellows!" remarked Jack Jolly, taking in the situation at a glarnse. "It's not often we get the chance of a scrap with a tiger."

"Ha, ha, ha! No!"

At the word of command the St. Sam's juniors leaped into the fray. Four pairs of hands grabbed at the animal's tail, and the man-eater's rapid career round the Fun Fair came to a sudden stop.

"Got him!" cried Jack Jolly triumphantly. "Now get him down and hold him till the keepers come!"

Fearless and Merry and Bright obeyed their leader's instructions. The astonished tiger found himself flung over on his back and held down in a vice-like grip.

Within a couple of minnits keepers from the circus came on the scen with nets and an empty cage, and then it was all over bar shouting.

Needless to say, there was plenty of that. The crowds emerged once more from their hiding-places, looking very releaved, and they cheered the plucky quartette with loud and prolonged cheers. Jack Jolly & Co. bore their honours with becoming modesty, and turned their attention to the Head, who was just getting back his breth after his unaccustomed exercise.

"Feel all right, sir?" asked Jack Jolly.

"Groooooo! Quite all right, Jolly, thank you!" gasped Dr. Birchmall. "I must eggspress my gratitude to you all for saving me, boys. It was a very plucky action—just the sort of thing (Continued on page 21.)



"Got him!" cried Jack Jolly triumphantly.



(Continued from page 13.)

the esteemed proverb remarks, desperate diseases require a desperate pitcher to go longest to the well."

Harry Wharton chuckled.

"Even Bunter will be fed up with that!" he said.

"Perhapsfully."

And when Colonel Wharton left that afternoon in the car to visit his old military acquaintance and inspect his collection of jewels from India's coral strand, he was not accompanied by the two juniors.

They preferred to meet Bunter.

Certainly the colonel had no idea of their intentions in meeting that fat and fatuous youth. That was a little matter that was better kept to themselves.

Later in the afternoon the chums of the Remove started for the village.

The early December dusk had fallen when they started, and it was quite dark when they were half-way to Wharton Magnus.

There they halted to wait for Bunter, and filled in the time of waiting by manufacturing a pile of snowballs all ready for the Owl of the Remove.

Desperate diseases required desperate remedies, and really there seemed no other way of dealing with W. G. Bunter.

In the December darkness, with light snowflakes falling on them through leafless branches overhead, Harry Wharton and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh waited—and watched the road for Bunter.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Lucky for Bunter!

"BEASTLY!" That was Billy Bunter's opinion of the weather, and of the universe generally.

It was dark! It was cold! It was windy! It was snowy! It was, in fact, beastly! The universe, as usual, was not run according to the requirements of W. G. Bunter.

Bunter had had a couple of days at home. He had determined to treat Wharton with the contempt he deserved. He was going to ignore the fellow.

But kinder thoughts prevailed.

Two days at home were enough for Bunter—probably enough for the other Bunters. Mr. Bunter had asked him, rather sharply, how it was that he was not, as he had stated, spending the holidays with Lord Mauleverer. Sammy Bunter had asked him whether their wasn't a single fellow at Greyfriars upon whom he could have landed himself. Bessie Bunter had asked him for half-a-crown he had owed her since last holidays, and she asked him, not once, but many times, till Bunter was sick of the subject. He could have got rid of the subject, certainly, by handing over the half-a-crown; but that idea did not seem to occur to Bunter.

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At all events, he did not hand it over, and Bessie kept to the subject with a wearisome iteration and reiteration.

Bunter could not help feeling that he was not properly valued in his own home. Such unsisterliness from Bessie and unbrotherliness from Sammy shocked a fellow who was himself a model brother.

Christmas-time, after all, was a time for forgiveness, and Bunter felt that it was up to him to forgive Wharton that beastly trick. He would not only forgive him, but would shed the light of his fat countenance on him. Hence his telephone message which had been taken by Colonel Wharton. This time Bunter did not ask for the car to be sent for him. He had a suspicion that if Brown picked him up in the car his destination might turn out not to be Wharton Lodge at the end of the drive.

And so, when Bunter rolled out of the little village station late in the December afternoon, he started to walk. The beasts might have come and met him and walked to the Lodge with him, but they hadn't. That was only to be expected of such beasts, however.

Cold and darkness and wind and snow did not please Bunter. He grunted and groused as he left the village behind and plunged into the dense darkness flickering with snowflakes.

Really, it was frightfully dark. Even with the aid of his big spectacles Bunter could hardly see his way.

He was hungry and in a hurry. Perhaps he would not have been in such a hurry had he known what was waiting for him half-way to the Lodge. Fortunately, he did not know.

"Beastly!" groaned Bunter. "Oh dear! Oh, rotten! Oh!"

He stopped and blinked about him. He knew the way to Wharton Lodge—in the daylight, at least. But this beastly darkness and snow puzzled a fellow.

He stopped at a cross-roads, and blinked round him dimly.

If those rotters had met him at the station—but they hadn't! The question was, which of these beastly roads was a fellow to take?

There was a signpost. But what was the use of a signpost when the darkness was as black as the inside of a hat?

Bunter could barely see the post; and he could not see the board above at all. He struck a match, which the wind instantly blew out.

"Oh dear!" groaned Bunter.

Like Moses of old, he looked this way and that way. But, like Moses again, he saw no man. There was no one of whom he could ask his way.

He had four roads to choose from—for after a little while he was no longer certain of the road by which he had come to the corner. All the beastly roads looked the same in the beastly darkness. One of them was the right road, one of them led back to the village, and two of them were hopelessly wrong, and might lead Bunter to anywhere in Surrey.

"Beasts!" snorted Bunter.

A car passed him, with a flare of lights; and Bunter yelled to it, to stop it and ask his way of the driver. But the car sped on, and left him snorting.

Something had to be done. He could not remain where he was all through the winter night. But the chances were three to one against his taking the right road.

"Oh lor!" groaned Bunter.

Even home, sweet home, had attractions for him now, as he stood in darkness and wind and snow, and blinked hopelessly round him. Even the unending melody of Bessie's voice, inquiring after the half-a-crown, was

better than this. He was lost in Cimmerian gloom; and literally did not know which way to turn.

The lights of a car winked in the distance, coming down one of the roads to the corner.

Bunter jumped into the middle of the road.

If he stood there, and held up his hand, the chauffeur would be bound to stop; he would be clearly visible in the headlights, and the beast wouldn't dare to run over him. Besides, the beast would think the road was up, or something. Once he had stopped the car he would inquire his way. If the people in the car didn't like it they could lump it. Bunter was not worrying about them.

There was a loud hooting on a motor-horn, as the car swept nearer. The headlights dazzled Bunter; and certainly they showed up his fat figure to the eyes of the chauffeur.

Honk, honk, honk!

Bunter desperately stood where he was. He knew that the beast could see him, and must stop.

There was a jamming of brakes, and the car slowed down.

Bunter, his fat heart failing him, was about to leap aside, when the car slowed and stopped, a safe distance short of him.

"What do you want? What are you stopping me for?" called out the driver, in sharp tones.

Bunter started.

The voice was familiar.

"Oh, crumbs!" he ejaculated. "Barnes!"

He rolled on to the car.

"Is that you, Barnes? I say, is the Head in the car?"

Barnes gave the fat junior a far from amiable look.

"Yes," he said curtly. "What did you stop me for? Is the road up, or what, Master Bunter?"

"Oh, no!"

"Bless my soul!" came a voice from the interior of the car. "It is a Greyfriars boy! Is that Bunter?"

"Yes, sir!" Bunter approached the door of the car, and drew it open. "So glad to see you, sir! It's such a pleasure to a fellow, sir, to see his headmaster in holiday time."

"Dear me!" said Dr. Locke, blinking at him. "Why did you stop my car, Bunter? I am somewhat in a hurry—we have been delayed by snow on the road!"

"I've lost my way, sir!" explained Bunter.

There was satisfaction in his fat face now. He remembered that it had been mentioned at Greyfriars that the Head was to visit Wharton Lodge during the Christmas holidays. Evidently this was the visit! It could not have happened better—for Bunter.

Bunter considered that this was lucky—and he would have considered it still more lucky had he known what was awaiting him a little farther up the road.

"I'm going to Wharton Lodge, sir," went on Bunter. "Wharton's expecting me there, and he will be frightfully anxious about me."

"Bless my soul!" said the Head. "Then it is very fortunate that we met, my boy, as I also am going to Wharton Lodge. You may step into the car, Bunter."

"Thank you, sir."

Bunter stepped into the car.

He sat down.

"Please proceed, Barnes!" said the Head.

Barnes proceeded.

Ten minutes later the flashing headlights of the car rushed past two

shadowy figures that lurked under the trees by the wayside, by the side of a heap of snowballs. The car rushed on, too swiftly for those lurking figures to recognise anybody in it. Harry Wharton and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh were still waiting for Bunter when Barnes drove the Head's car up to the door of Wharton Lodge.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Makes Himself at Home!

BRIGHT and cheerful light streamed from the wide-open doorway of Wharton Lodge, as the Head's car stopped at the steps. Colonel Wharton came out to greet his distinguished visitor. Barnes had stepped down to open the door of the car, and the stately Head of Greyfriars emerged, and shook hands warmly with the "Old Boy," who had once been captain of Greyfriars School. After him rolled Billy Bunter.

The colonel's eye fell on the fat junior, while he was exchanging greetings with his old headmaster. He raised his eyebrows in surprise.

"Is that Bunter?" he asked.

"Yes," said Dr. Locke. "The boy appears to have lost his way coming here, but fortunately I found him on the road and gave him a lift."

"That is very singular," said the colonel, "as my nephew and his friend have gone to the village to meet his train."

"The beasts never turned up," said Bunter.

"Eh?"

"I mean, the dear old fellows never turned up," said Bunter hastily.

"Oh!"

"They'll be awfully sick at missing me," said Bunter. "I dare say Harry's

told you what bosom pals we are at Greyfriars."

"He has not mentioned it," said Harry's uncle.

"Inseparable, sir," said Bunter. "Damon and Pythias, and all that! You see, I stood by Wharton when he first came, when he was so unpopular that nobody would speak a word to him."

"You had better go in, Bunter," said Colonel Wharton. "No doubt Harry will come back soon, when he finds that he has missed you. Pray come in, Dr. Locke! Your chauffeur will take the car round to the garage. Good gad!" ejaculated the colonel, breaking off suddenly as he was about to direct Barnes to the garage.

He stood staring blankly at Barnes' immovable face.

"You!" he almost stuttered.

"Yes, sir," said Barnes.

Dr. Locke looked astonished.

"I did not know you had seen my chauffeur, Barnes, Colonel Wharton!" he said. "Barnes has been with me only three months."

"Barnes?" repeated the colonel.

He pulled himself together quickly. Billy Bunter, instead of going into the house, was blinking at him curiously.

The sight of the schoolmaster's chauffeur had obviously given Colonel Wharton a shock; why, Bunter could not imagine, but it excited his curiosity. It was Bunter's way to be deeply interested in matters that did not concern him.

Barnes' face expressed nothing.

The colonel gave him one long look, and then conducted his distinguished visitor into the house. Bunter lingered, with a curious blink at Barnes.

"I say, Barnes, have you seen the old boy before?" he asked.

Barnes seemed deaf.

"He hasn't been to Greyfriars since the Head took you on, I know that," said Bunter. "I say, he seemed quite startled to see you, Barnes."

"Do you think so, sir?" said Barnes smoothly.

"Well, it was plain enough," said Bunter. "Fairly flabbergasted. Did you ever drive for the old josses?"

"I am afraid, sir, that I cannot listen to you if you describe Colonel Wharton as an old josses," said Barnes.

"Oh, don't be an ass!" said Bunter. "I say, did he sack you?"

"Perhaps you will kindly make your inquiries of Colonel Wharton himself, sir?" suggested Barnes.

Bunter blinked at him and rolled into the house. Colonel Wharton was occupied with his distinguished visitor, and seemed somehow to have forgotten the existence of that much more distinguished visitor, William George Bunter.

But Aunt Amy took heed of the fat junior, in some surprise. She was aware that her nephew and Hurree Singh had gone to the village in time to meet Bunter's train, and could not guess how they had missed him. As it appeared, however, that they had, Miss Wharton remarked placidly that it was very fortunate that he had met the Head's car on its way to the Lodge, and observed that Harry would be very much relieved to learn, when he came in, that Bunter had arrived safely.

The unsuspecting old lady gave Bunter a placid but cordial welcome, as one of Harry's friends at school, and a servant took him to the room that was prepared for him. There was no baggage to be taken to Bunter's room. Bunter relied on borrowing what he wanted from his friends, and baggage was unnecessary. On occasions like this Bunter was accustomed to travelling

(Continued on next page.)

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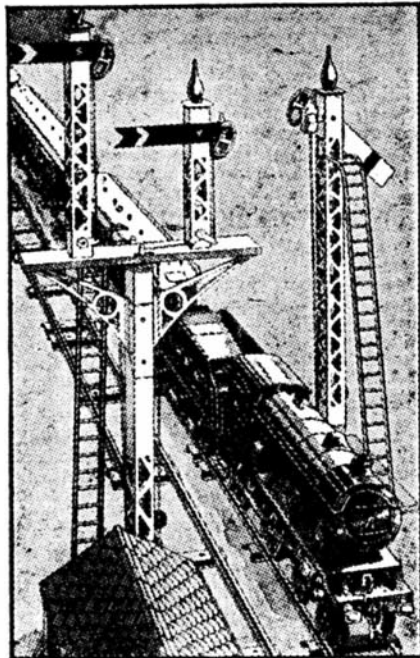
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light. Moreover, Bunter had not been absolutely certain of butting successfully into the Lodge, and had he failed, baggage would have been superfluous. Certainly a suitcase would have been rather in the way had Wharton and Hurree Singh carried out the intention with which they were still watching in ambush on the road.

Billy Bunter had stayed at Wharton Lodge before, and he knew his way about. On the whole, he was not sorry that Wharton and Hurree Singh were absent. How the silly asses had missed him at the station was a mystery; but it did not matter, as he had arrived safely, and they were welcome, so far as Bunter was concerned, to wait as long as they liked in the December wind.

In fact, the longer they waited the better; it gave Bunter a chance to borrow, without a lot of beastly argument, the things a fellow needed when he travelled without baggage.

Bunter was wet and muddy and considerably draggled, and he needed a considerable change. Naturally, a fellow wanted to look decent at dinner in the presence of his hosts and of his headmaster.

A very slight wash was enough for Bunter; extravagant in many matters, Bunter never wasted soap.

After that he left his room and proceeded to Wharton's. Undoubtedly it was just as well that Wharton was out.

Turning on the light in Wharton's room, Billy Bunter proceeded to look for what he wanted.

Wharton, fortunately, was well provided with clothes.

It was unfortunate that he did not possess Bunter's handsome, well-developed figure; all his things were much too limited in circumference for Bunter. But that, after all, was a difficulty that could be overcome. Where there was a will, there was a way.

A waistcoat, for instance, could be slit up the back with a penknife. This process did not improve the waistcoat considered as a garment. But it made it meet round Bunter, which was the chief thing. The buttonhole of a collar could be extended with the same penknife, to make it meet round Bunter's fat neck. Shoes fitted fairly well, and the socks were all right. Trousers and jacket were rather tight; but, after all, a fellow who took pot luck couldn't be too particular about small matters.

By the time Bunter was arrayed in Harry Wharton's best clothes, he was fairly satisfied with the result.

He surveyed himself in a mirror, and nodded with satisfaction. The clothes were good, if not an exact fit, and they were set off to advantage by the graceful, well-developed figure inside them. Certainly they had never before been so well filled.

A few odds and ends, such as a necktie and some pearl studs, were borrowed from Hurree Singh's room. In these matters Bunter was impartial.

Feeling much better now, though frightfully hungry, Bunter descended the stairs.

Wells, the butler, was in the hall, and his eyes fell on Bunter with a slightly startled look as he appeared. Possibly Wells recognised the garments that graced Bunter's podgy person. Possibly he had been surprised at a visitor arriving for the Christmas holidays without even a small bag. Bunter's methods were those of the soldiers of olden time, who carried no supplies, but lived on the country they ravaged.

Bunter gave him an amiable grin. "Have my pals come in yet?" he asked.

"Master Harry is not in yet, sir," said Wells.

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Bunter chuckled.

"I fancy they're finding it jolly cold," he remarked. "Must have been silly owls to miss me—what? Where's the old bird?"

"The—the what, sir?"

"The Beak," said Bunter.

"The Beak?" repeated Wells.

"Old Locke!" said Bunter impatiently.

"If you refer to Dr. Locke, sir, he is now in the library with the master!" said Wells frigidly.

"Then I'll jolly well give the library a miss!" said Bunter. "I get enough of the old josses at Greyfriars—see? Bit thick having him landed on a fellow for the Christmas holidays! Wharton might really have given his uncle the tip that it wouldn't do! But he always was a silly ass!"

"Oh!" gasped Wells.

"Where's the old lady?" went on Bunter.

"What old lady, sir?" asked Wells icily.

"Wharton's aunt, I mean. I suppose there's not a lot of old ladies about the place?"

"Miss Wharton is in the drawing-room, sir."

"Anybody else about—I mean, any more visitors?"

"No, sir."

"It's going to be rather dull and dismal, I can see," said Bunter. "But I suppose I can stand it. I'm used to something a bit more lively in holiday-time, Wells."

"Indeed, sir!"

"I've left a big crowd at Bunter Court. This place seems pretty dismal after home. Still, a fellow makes the best of things. I don't expect much when I come to stay with Wharton. Don't go, Wells! I haven't finished yet! Look here, I'm hungry!"

"Dinner will be served at seven, sir."

"I said I'm hungry," said Bunter. "I want you to get me a snack to go on with. Nothing much—a cold chicken would do, and a pie or so, and a few mince-pies. Merely a snack to keep me going."

"Oh!" gasped Wells. "Certainly, sir!"

Billy Bunter was provided with a snack to keep him going. Nobody, looking at Bunter when he disposed of it, would have supposed that it was simply a snack. It seemed to Wells that he was laying in provisions for the whole vacation.

Having taken the keen edge off his appetite, Bunter rolled along to the drawing-room.

Any company was better than that of his headmaster and a stuffy old colonel, and so Miss Wharton was honoured with Bunter's fascinating society.

The kind old lady was placidly cordial, but the gentle smile gradually faded off her face under the charms of Bunter's conversation.

Bunter described the glorious things that were going on at Bunter Court, from which he had torn himself simply on account of his friendship with Wharton—a sacrifice on the altar of friendship, as it were. He glided to the subject of Greyfriars, touched on his popularity in his Form, and described how useful his friendship was to Wharton in the Remove, where nobody liked him.

Then he came to the subject of the attempted burglary at the school, and his description of that episode differed greatly from the one Miss Wharton had already heard from her nephew.

From Bunter's account—from which Coker's cake was entirely missing—it seemed that he had gone down to look for burglars, that he had collared the cracksmen and held on to him and

shouted for help, and that, had the other fellows backed him up, the man would have been captured; but everybody excepting Bunter had shown rotten funk, especially Wharton.

Having thus delighted the old lady with his brilliant powers as a conversationalist, Bunter drifted away to the billiard-room to knock the balls about till dinner. He left Miss Wharton with an extraordinary expression on her face.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Sticks!

"BETTER chuck it!" Hurree Jamset Ram Singh shivered.

"The chuckfulness is the proper caper," he agreed.

"The fat idiot must have lost his train."

"Or his way," suggested the nabob.

"One of the two," agreed Wharton.

"Anyhow, we can't wait here any longer for the fat boulder. We shall be frozen."

"The freezefulness is already terrific, my esteemed chum!" murmured the Nabob of Bhanipur, through his chattering teeth.

"Come on!" said Harry.

The two juniors turned back towards Wharton Lodge. They had waited long, but there had been no sign of Billy Bunter on the road. That he had arrived at Wharton Lodge more than an hour ago they were as yet unaware.

"After all, if he's lost his train, it's all right," said Harry. "He may not have had the neck to start, after all."

"The neckfulness of the esteemed Bunter is equal to anything."

"He may have lost his way coming from the village," said Harry. "He's fathead enough for anything. Still, I suppose, if he has, he will arrive somewhere."

"Probably," grinned the nabob.

"It doesn't matter much where, so long as it's not the Lodge."

"Exactly!"

"Anyhow, we ought to get in. Dr. Locke will be there before this. He's coming down by car. One of the cars that passed us may have been his. And we want to be civil to the Beak."

Through the sharp December wind and the falling flakes the two juniors tramped back to Wharton Lodge.

The ambush for Bunter had been a frost. Still, there was comfort in the knowledge that he wasn't coming, after all. That comfort, however, only lasted till the chums of the Remove reached home.

Wells came to help them off with their coats. In the doorway of the billiard-room, which opened at the end of the hall, a fat figure appeared, with a cue in a fat hand, and a grin on a fat face.

"I say, you fellows!"

Harry Wharton jumped.

"Wha-a-at—" he ejaculated.

"The esteemed and idiotic Bunter!" gasped Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

The two juniors stared blankly at Bunter.

Bunter grinned.

"I say, you fellows, you look chilly!" he remarked. "Had a good time hanging about in the snow—what? He, he, he!"

"Bunter!" repeated Wharton blankly. "The Bunterfulness is terrific!" murmured the nabob.

"You fat villain—"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"How did you get here?" demanded the captain of the Remove. "We've been waiting for you—"

"At the station?" grinned Bunter.

"Nunno! Not at the station. On the road—"

"That accounts for it," said Bunter. "I wondered how even a pair of silly asses like you fellows could have missed me at the station. You see, I started to walk, and the Head came along and gave me a lift in his car—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"And you went on waiting!" chuckled Bunter. "He, he, he! Didn't you find it a bit parky?"

Harry Wharton breathed hard and deep.

"I've been in quite a long time, you fellows," said Bunter cheerily. "I've had time to change. You didn't mind my borrowing a few of your things, did you, Harry, old chap?"

"I—I— You—you—" gasped Wharton.

He recognised the garments in which William George Bunter was arrayed.

"I know you wouldn't mind," said Bunter. "I say, the Beak's here. He's chin-wagging in the library with the other old josser—"

"What?"

"I'm giving them a miss. I've been talking to your aunt, Wharton. Nice old soul, though a bit dense. I say, come in and have a hundred up. I'll give you fifty in the hundred, with a liver on the game. What?"

Harry Wharton made a stride towards the happy Bunter. Exactly what he was going to do was not clear; but his look indicated that it was something of a drastic nature. But just then Miss Wharton appeared on the scene. She had heard her nephew and the nabob come in.

"Harry, my dear—"

Wharton stopped suddenly.

Bunter, who had looked alarmed for a moment, grinned. Really, it was impossible to deal with Bunter as he deserved, in the circumstances.

"How very odd that you missed your friend at the station, Harry!" said Miss Wharton. "But how very fortunate that he arrived safely. I am afraid you must be very cold, Harry. There's a fire in your room, my boy—"

Wharton and the nabob went up to their rooms. Billy Bunter resumed knocking the balls about, with a cheery disregard for the cloth he was cutting. Upstairs, Harry and the nabob looked at one another. There was a faint grin on Hurree Singh's face.

"I—I—I'll—" breathed Wharton.

"The esteemed Bunter's neck is truly terrific!"

"I've a jolly good mind—" Wharton paused. "Never mind, we'll take him for a walk to-morrow, and lose him."

The two juniors changed and came down to dinner. They had the honour of dining with their headmaster. Dr. Locke was very kind and gracious, and the chums of the Remove did not find his awful presence so overpowering as they had feared.

The Head, in fact, was one of those rare schoolmasters who ceased to be a schoolmaster when he was outside the walls of the school.

He was, in fact, as Wharton remarked afterwards to Inky, just like a human being!

Billy Bunter enjoyed his dinner.

The snack he had taken made no difference to that. Miss Wharton's eyes dwelt on him once or twice with a little alarm.

Bunter was glad, by the time dinner was over, that he had slit Wharton's waistcoat at the back.

When Miss Wharton left the dining-room the three boys went also, leaving the colonel and his old headmaster to their cigars and their talk over old times. Wharton tapped Bunter on the shoulder.



Harry Wharton's clothes were a tight fit, but Billy Bunter soon made the necessary adjustments. Then he surveyed himself in the mirror with satisfaction!

"What about a walk, Bunter?" he asked.

"Too dark, old chap."

"Like a run in the car?"

Bunter grinned.

Without being unduly suspicious, Bunter had an idea that a run in the car might leave him stranded somewhere at a distance from Wharton Lodge.

"Thanks, old bean, I shouldn't care for it. You see, I'm used to the pater's Rolls; and your uncle's car is a bit uncomfortable, after that."

Wharton breathed hard.

"You fat rotter—" he hissed.

"Eh? What did you say, old fellow?" asked Bunter loudly.

Miss Wharton glanced round.

"Oh, nothing!" gasped Wharton.

Bunter rolled into the drawing-room with Miss Wharton. He felt safer under that kind old lady's wing. There was a dusky grin on Hurree Jamset Ram Singh's face, as if he found something entertaining in the shifts and manoeuvres of the Owl of the Remove. But Wharton did not smile.

Miss Wharton went early to bed. Bunter, who had intended to stay up late, decided to go to bed early, too. There was a look in Harry Wharton's eye that he did not quite like.

He was in his room when the other two juniors, having said good-night to the colonel and their headmaster, came up. Wharton tapped at Bunter's door and turned the handle.

The door did not open.

"Bunter!"

Snore!

"You're not asleep, you fat villain!" said Wharton, through the keyhole. "Let me in, you podgy pirate!"

Snore!

"I'm going to burst you, you fat freak!"

Snore!

"Bunter, you fat rotter!"

Snore!

Wharton gave it up.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

A Page from the Past!

BARNES stepped into the library and closed the door after him.

Colonel Wharton, standing before the log fire, fixed his gaze on Dr. Locke's chauffeur.

The Head of Greyfriars had gone to bed. The whole house was sleeping now, with the exception of the colonel, Barnes, and Wells. And the butler had

been told to go to bed, after bringing Barnes to the colonel's presence.

Barnes, with a cool and expressionless face, crossed the spacious room towards Colonel Wharton, and stood waiting respectfully.

Colonel Wharton seemed in no hurry to speak. His eyes scanned the calm, clean-shaven, respectful face of the Head's chauffeur.

"You desired to speak to me, I think, sir?" said Barnes at last, breaking the silence.

"I did," said the colonel.

"I am at your service, sir."

"It is my duty to inquire what this means, Poynings," said Colonel Wharton, in a deep voice.

"My name is Barnes, sir."

"Your name is Arthur Poynings."

Barnes' calm face did not move a muscle.

"Are you not making a mistake, sir?" he suggested.

"I am making no mistake," said the Colonel, with emphasis, "and not only do I recognise you, but I am convinced that you recognise me and remember our former acquaintance perfectly well. I recognised you the moment my eyes fell on you, Poynings."

"You have a good memory, sir."

"I have—for faces," said Colonel Wharton. "You are older now, Poynings, and you have changed since the war-time. Nevertheless, I knew you at once. Did you not expect to be recognised by me, when you came here with Dr. Locke?"

Barnes was silent for a moment.

But he made no further attempt to deny the identity the colonel attributed to him.

"I thought of it, sir," he said, "but I thought you had probably forgotten my existence. Anyhow, I had no choice in the matter as I am in Dr. Locke's employment, and bound to drive his car. I will admit," continued Barnes calmly, "that when Dr. Locke told me that I was to drive to Wharton Lodge it occurred to me to catch a timely and temporary cold. But—" he shrugged his shoulders. "As I said, I thought you had probably forgotten me, and I intended not to meet your eye more than was unavoidable. And as you are a governor of Greyfriars, where I am employed, the meeting might have come about at any time. So I did not catch that cold."

The colonel scanned the calm, well-cut face of the Head's chauffeur while he was speaking.

"I chanced it, sir," went on Barnes. "I really had no choice. But in case of recognition by you I did not think that I had anything to fear. You are not the man to give an old comrade-in-arms a kick when he is down and trying to struggle up."

"Certainly not," said the colonel. "But—what does this masquerade mean, Poynings? You are playing the part of a chauffeur—"

"I am a chauffeur."

"Under an assumed name—"

"For two reasons," said Barnes. "I did not care to seek employment under my own name, and my own name was somewhat of a handicap after the disaster that happened to me after the War—and of which you are doubtless aware."

"Quite."

There was a short silence.

"In Flanders," said the colonel at last, "you were Lieutenant Arthur Poynings, one of the most recklessly courageous junior officers in the Loamshire Regiment. Your character was

not good, Poynings—you were guilty more than once of conduct that risked your commission, but in those days courage atoned for much. I was not wholly surprised when I heard what became of you after the War.

Barnes smiled faintly.

"I was one of hundreds, or rather, thousands," he said. "The War knocked all my prospects on the head, it left me with expensive tastes, an unsettled disposition, and nothing to do. A grateful country had no particular use for me when there was no longer a demand for cannon fodder. A Public school education had not exactly fitted me to earn my bread by honest labour. There was no easy job for me to slip into. I was nervy, fed-up, reckless—and in that state I wrote another man's

for forgery, and who is bearing an assumed name—" He paused.

"My record is open to inspection, sir," said Barnes. "For eight years I have kept a clean record."

"And during that time there is nothing against you?"

"Nothing."

"Inquiry—"

"Will prove what I say."

The colonel regarded him keenly and dubiously.

"If this is true I am the last man in the world to drag up the past, and spoil your chances, Poynings," he said at last, "but—"

"But you do not believe me?"

"I do not say that. But you were reckless, wild, extravagant when I knew you—it is hard to believe that you have settled down to steady and humdrum work."

"Wisdom comes with years, sir," said Barnes, smiling.

"I paid dearly for the one slip I made. The taint of a gaol-bird is on my own name. I have learned my lesson and profited by it."

"Dr. Locke does not know?"

"Kind as he is, I doubt whether he would have engaged Convict Fifty-five as his chauffeur," said Barnes ironically. "He knows nothing, except that I was an ex-officer after the War. I came to him with good recommendations—I had made a reputable name for myself in my own humble sphere, as Arthur Barnes. I had a spotless record extending over eight years. What went before was blotted out."

There was another silence.

"If you feel it your duty to tell Dr. Locke the facts I must leave his service," said Barnes quietly. "That is for you to decide. I leave it in your hands."

"I must consider," said Colonel Wharton. "If matters are as you state, you have nothing to fear from me. If this change has indeed taken place in your character no one could be more pleased than I. For the present, at least, I shall say nothing, and if I decide to speak I shall give you ample warning before doing so. But if, after looking into your post-War record, I find that it is a clean one, you may rely upon my silence."

"Thank you, sir," said Barnes. "I expected as much from you. I will give you, when you choose, every information you may care to ask—the names of my employers, their addresses—you will find that I have been a good and faithful servant."

There was a tone of ironical bitterness in the man's voice as he concluded that made the colonel give him a sharp look.

"You are not satisfied with your present occupation, Poynings?" he asked.

The chauffeur gave a shrug.

"Something better may be found—abroad, perhaps," suggested the Colonel. "In a new country—and if you require help—"

"Thank you, sir, but I ask no man for help while I am able to fend for myself," said Barnes. "But for the War matters would have been very different—but I earn an honest living, and I like my work, and I long ago learned to put my pride in my pocket. I am not dissatisfied, and if it irks me to call any man my master, at least, I have a master who is kind and courteous. I am satisfied to remain as I am—if you will let me."

"That is a settled thing, if I find your record clean, as you have stated. If I find that you have deceived my old friend and headmaster I am bound to



The following clever Greyfriars Limerick has earned for its author one of this week's useful leather pocket-wallets:

**Fat Bunter's a terrible bore
With a most unmusical snore.
But when not asleep,
Through keyholes he'll peep,
And other chap's secrets explore!**

Sent in by: W. S. Rought, of 25, Gloster Road, Old Woking, Surrey.

name to a cheque—and paid the penalty. My story is the story of many others."

"True," said the colonel slowly.

"After which," said Barnes, "I found that there was one useful thing I could do—I could drive a car. I had driven my own car before the war—after I came out of prison I drove an employer's car. You may remember that I was a good driver, sir."

"I remember!"

The colonel's face softened. There came back into his memory the picture of an episode in the wild War days that now seemed so far off, of a road torn by shell-holes, of roaring bombs, and bullets that fell like rain, of a young man, little more than a boy then, who steered a rocketing car, with a blood-stained bandage across his forehead, and his face below it grinning with sheer reckless delight in danger—cool and steady as if driving on the Brighton road, while death rained round him.

"I worked in a garage for some years," said Barnes. "I became a chauffeur. It was all that I could do—but that, at least, I could do well. Finally, I was lucky enough to obtain my present employment—well-paid, under a kind master. That is the whole history. Since I have followed my present calling I have made no slip—no one has complained of me. Dr. Locke, I believe, is perfectly satisfied. There is only one thing against me—the slip I made in the early days after the War. That is many years ago now—and you, sir, I think, are not the man to drag it up to ruin me."

"Not if you are earning an honest living," said Colonel Wharton. "Not if you are keeping straight, Poynings. But Dr. Locke is my friend—he is my old headmaster—and when I find in his service a man who has been in prison

“Speak. Otherwise, I shall forget that I ever knew you as Arthur Poyninge.”

“Thank you, sir.”

“Good-night—Barnes,” added the colonel after a momentary pause.

“Good-night, sir.”

For some time after the Head's chauffeur had left him Colonel Wharton remained in deep thought.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

The Charming Guest!

BILLY BUNTER was down late to breakfast the next morning. Early to bed did not mean early to rise in Bunter's case.

Everyone else had long since breakfasted when Bunter made his appearance.

That, however, did not worry Bunter.

At breakfast he required no other company than that of a good and ample breakfast. Breakfast was good and ample, so Bunter was satisfied.

After the meal was over, however, Bunter, who was a gregarious fellow, looked round for company.

He rolled out into the hall to look for the fellows. Perhaps Bunter felt by this time that his position at the lodge was safely established. Perhaps he thought that the fellows by this time had realised how nice it was to have him there, and were feeling quite pleased about it. For the Owl of the Remove was clothed in self-satisfaction as in armour of triple steel.

Miss Wharton was in the hall, superintending Christmas decorations. Bunter gave her a blink.

“Good-morning, ma'am!”

“Good-morning!” said Miss Wharton in her gentle voice. “I hope you slept well.”

Bunter grinned. That kind inquiry was needless; Bunter always slept well.

“Yes, thank you,” he said. “Fine! Harry kicked up rather a row at my door after I went to bed, but it didn't wake me.”

“Dear me!” said Miss Wharton. “That was a little thoughtless of dear Harry. But how did you know if it did not wake you?”

“I—I mean—”

“A little higher, I think John,” said Miss Wharton to the buttoned youth who was fixing holly.

“Yes, madam.”

“That is better, I think,” said Miss Wharton placidly.

“Where are the fellows, ma'am?” asked Bunter.

“I think Harry and Hurree Singh have gone out,” said Miss Wharton.

“Might have waited for me!” grunted Bunter. “But it's just like them. I'll look for them.”

Bunter rolled out.

Outside, he ran into Wells, the butler. He beckoned to the butler with a fat finger.

“Seen Wharton or Inky?” he asked.

“I think the young gentlemen have gone down to the village, sir.”

“Leaving a fellow on his own!” snorted Bunter. “I suppose that's what Wharton calls hospitality. We don't treat guests like that at Bunter Court. Don't go, Wells! Where's the old boy?”

“If you refer to the master, sir—”

“You know I do! Where is he?”

“Colonel Wharton has gone to Sankey Hall, sir, with Dr. Locke,” said Wells.

“Well, thank goodness the beak's out of the picture, anyhow,” said Bunter.

“When's Wharton coming in?”

“Master Harry did not tell me, sir.”

“Didn't he leave any word for me?” demanded Bunter indignantly.

“No, sir.”

“Just like the beast!” said Bunter. “And Inky's gone with him?”

“His Highness Hurree Singh is with Master Harry, sir.”

“His Highness be blowed!” said Bunter. “We don't stand on ceremony with Inky at Greyfriars, I can tell you. Don't go, Wells.”

“My duties, sir—”

“I haven't finished yet. The fact is,” said Bunter, coming closer to the butler and speaking in a very confidential tone.

“The fact is, Wells, I left home in rather a hurry yesterday.”

“Indeed, sir.”

“And quite forgot to put my purse in my pocket, Wells. I find that I'm here entirely without money, Wells.”

“Really, sir?”

ALL THE FUN OF THE FAIR!

(Continued from page 15.)

I'd have done myself when I was a lad!”

“It was nothing, sir!” said Frank Fearless modestly.

“Nevertheless, Fearless, I insist that it was an act of grate bravery, and as a reward for your kind behaviour, I will give you a plezzant surprise,” said the Head. “Mite I ask where you boys are staying in London?”

“Certainly, sir. These chaps are staying with me at my pater's Mayfair mansion,” answered Frank Fearless. “How does that affect it?”

“I will explain, my dear Fearless. As you have been so good to me, I will honner you with my company for the rest of the vack! There!”

And the Head beamed on Jack Jolly & Co., as though he had conferred a grate favour on them. Jack Jolly & Co., for a minnit, could only gasp.

“It's a grate idea! The more I think of it, the better I like it!” grinned the Head. “By staying at the house of your respected pater, Fearless, I shall be just as safe from the perlice as I should be here—possibly more so! Come! My mind is made up! We will away!”

And Dr. Birchmall led the way to the egg-sit. Our heroes followed with feelings that were too deep for words.

So Dr. Birchmall's Christmas was a happy one, after all. Mr. Ferdinand Fearless, Frank's pater, felt in a genial Yuletide mood and welcomed the Head with open arms. A State bed-room and a vally were placed at the new-comer's disposal, and no effort was spared to make him comfortable.

Natchurally, the Head was delited to be in refined, luxurious surroundings again. Throughout the Christmas festival, he gorged himself till he nearly bust, and played blind-man's buff, puss - in - the - corner, hunt-the-slipper, and postman's knock with the greatest good-will.

The unplezzant fact that he was still a fugitive from justiss was, of corse, bound to crop up again in the near future. But for the time being the Head decided to forget his troubles and have a rattling good time. Needless to say, he suxxceeded.

THE END.

(Look out for another rousing yarn by Dicky Nugent next week, entitled: “CLEARING HIS NAME!” You'll vote it one of the finest St. Sam's yarns you've ever read!)

“Yes, really! You get a pretty good screw here, I believe, Wells?”

Wells gasped.

“I am quite satisfied, sir.”

“That's right,” said Bunter approvingly. “Servants, as a rule, are a dissatisfied lot. Ungrateful, lazy, and dissatisfied. I've found 'em. Always be satisfied, Wells, and never be cheeky. That's a good rule for people of your sort.”

“Oh, thank you, sir!” gasped Wells. “I will try to profit by your advice, sir. You are really very kind.”

If there was a note of sarcasm in Wells' voice, Bunter did not notice it. Sarcasm was wasted on William George Bunter.

“I'm always kind to servants, Wells,” he said. “You see, a fellow of really good family always is. But to come back to the point—don't go, Wells, I haven't finished yet—to come to the point, I find myself here entirely without cash. I can, of course, phone home.”

“The telephone is at your service, sir.”

“Exactly,” said Bunter. “But in the meantime there are one or two little things—I don't generally borrow money of servants, Wells, but I'm making an exception in your case.”

“Are you, sir?” said Wells doubtfully.

“Yes. I'm going to let you lend me a couple of pounds till I can get some cash from home,” said Bunter.

“You are very kind, sir—”

“I mean to be kind,” said Bunter. “Nothing snobbish about me, I hope. Servants are human, after all. I believe in treating a servant as a friend, so long as he's respectful and knows his place, of course. I should never stand any impudence. You know your place, Wells.”

“I hope so, sir.”

“Now, about that couple of pounds,” said Bunter. “I haven't the slightest objection to borrowing it of you, Wells, regardless of the difference in our positions.”

Wells gazed at Bunter. He made no motion to produce cash. Possibly, although Bunter had no objection to borrowing a couple of pounds from Wells, Wells might have had some objection to lending a couple of pounds to Bunter.

“Well, I'm waiting,” said Bunter briskly.

“I am afraid, sir, that the master would not approve,” said Wells.

“Oh, never mind that old josses,” said Bunter. “I'll bet you don't tell the old scout everything, what?” Bunter winked at the horrified butler. “Lots of your goings-on you don't tell the old fossil, I'll bet! Lend me a couple of pounds, my good fellow—”

“The colonel might object if he knew, sir—”

“That's all right; he won't know.”

“But I should know, sir,” said Wells.

“You!” said Bunter.

“Yes; and I should object—”

“Eh?”

“Very much indeed, sir,” said Wells calmly; and he went into the house, with that, leaving Bunter blinking after him.

“Well, my hat!” ejaculated Bunter. “Cheek! If Wharton thinks I'm going to stay here to be cheeked by badly trained servants, he's jolly well mistaken! I've a jolly good mind to cut the whole show!”

On second thoughts—proverbially the best—Bunter decided not to cut the whole show. As there seemed to be no entertainments provided for this attractive guest at Wharton Lodge, Bunter rolled round to the garage, deciding to take the car out. At the garage he

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ound Barnes, the Head's chauffeur, smoking a cigarette, and blinked at him.

"Where's Brown?" he asked.

"Brown has driven Dr. Locke and Colonel Wharton to Sankey Hall, sir."

"Then the car's out?"

"Yes, sir."

"They keep only one car here," said Bunter, with a curl of his fat lip. "At home, I should have the choice of half a dozen."

"There's no place like home, is there, sir?" said Barnes.

Bunter blinked at him, suspecting check; but Barnes' face was expressionless.

"Well, I suppose the Beak's car is here, as you're here," said Bunter.

"Dr. Locke's car is here, certainly, sir."

"I'll take that out for a run, then," said Bunter. "Fetch it out, Barnes."

Barnes did not stir.

"Do you hear me, Barnes?"

"I am afraid I cannot take out my master's car without my master's instructions, sir," said Barnes.

"You never take it out on joy-rides, on your own, when you think the old jigger won't spot you?" sneered Bunter. "Quite so, sir."

"Gammon!" said Bunter. "Look here, will you fetch that car out, or won't you?"

"No, sir."

"That's check, Barnes."

"Dear me!" said Barnes.

Billy Bunter blinked at him. He blinked first at Barnes' feet, and then allowed his devastating blink to travel up to Barnes' immovable face, then down to Barnes' feet again. This was what Bunter called looking a fellow up and down; and it was supposed to have a terrifying effect.

Barnes, however, did not seem scared. He lighted a fresh cigarette from the old one, unmoved. He seemed quite unconscious that he was being looked up and down.

Bunter breathed hard.

"You're rather too cheeky for your position, Barnes," he said at last.

"Dear me!" said Barnes.

"Smoking Turkish Glory!" said Bunter, noticing the brand of the fat and expensive cigarettes that Barnes was smoking. "Jolly expensive fags for a chauffeur."

"My master pays me quite good wages, sir," said Barnes.

"Quite out of place in a fellow in your position," said Bunter. "Woodbine is more your mark, Barnes."

Barnes rose from the bench on which he was seated, and, to Bunter's great surprise, took hold of him by the collar. He twirled Bunter round, and marched him away from the garage.

Bunter wriggled in amazement and anger.

"You cheeky rotter! Wharrer you up to?" he gasped.

Barnes did not explain what he was up to. No doubt he considered it sufficiently clear without explanation. With a grip of iron on Bunter's collar, he marched him onward.

"Leggo!" howled Bunter.

Barnes did not let go.

"Ow! Cheeky beast! Ow!" roared Bunter.

He struggled; but the grip on his collar was like iron. Barnes was a rather slim, young man; but it was evident that great strength dwelt in his rather graceful figure. Bunter was as helpless as an infant in his grasp.

He struggled and wriggled as he went; but he went. Barnes walked him a good distance, and then, with a twirl of his arm, sat Bunter down into a heap of snow piled beside a path. Then, still without a word, he walked

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back to the garage, and resumed his seat on the bench.

Bunter sat in the snow, and gasped.

"Ow! Ow! Wow!"

He scrambled to his feet at last, and glared back at the garage and the chauffeur, his very spectacles gleaming with wrath. Barnes sat and smoked, with an immovable face.

"You cheeky rotter!" bawled Bunter.

Barnes only gazed at him with unseeing eyes.

"I'll mention this to old Locke!" howled Bunter. "I'll get you the sack see?"

No sign from Barnes.

"For two pins," roared Bunter, "I'd thrash you myself! By gum, I'd give you a jolly good hiding for your cheek, only I won't soil my hands on you."

Barnes rose from the bench.

Bunter hastily retired.

He was fed-up with Barnes.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter's Burglar!

SNORE! Bunter was sleeping.

When Bunter was sleeping nobody within a very wide radius of Bunter could have been left in any doubt about it.

It was afternoon.

The morning had not been a satisfactory one to the fascinating guest at Wharton Lodge. But lunch had been good, and from lunch Billy Bunter drew comfort. Wharton and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh had come in to lunch, and they had looked very merry and bright. Bunter, blinking at them with reproach and disdain, had suspected that something was on, so very cheerful did they look. If the beasts had some scheme in mind for getting rid of Bunter, Bunter was not the fellow to be caught in it. And when Wharton, after lunch, asked him to go for a ramble, Bunter curtly refused.

He suspected that something might happen to him on that ramble. Then Wharton suggested a run into Reigate to see the pictures. Bunter was tempted; but he turned it down. He doubted whether he might not get left at Reigate by some mischance. Besides, he wanted a nap after his lunch. He had done remarkably well at lunch, and he needed a rest.

So he went to his room for a nap, and in a few minutes his deep and resonant snore apprised most of the occupants of the building that he was fast asleep.

When the handle of his door was turned from outside, the door did not open. The guest at Wharton Lodge was taking all the precautions natural to a fellow who was camping in the enemy's country.

"Locked!" murmured Harry Wharton.

"The lockfulness is terrific," agreed the nabob of Bhanipur.

"There's the balcony and the window," said Harry. "I can get along all right from my room."

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh chuckled.

Snore!

Deep and resonant came the slumber song from within.

Bunter slept on happily. He was safe from japes and larks with his door locked—at least, he believed that he was, so he could sleep in peace. He slept and dreamed of Christmas puddings and mince-pies, and a sweet smile wreathed his fat features as he slumbered.

He did not hear the slight sound as his window opened.

He was not dreaming of burglars. Burglars in broad daylight were im-

probable, though the daylight on that dull December day was not very broad; and a heavy mist hung over the park. Had Bunter been awake he would have supposed that some enterprising burglar had taken advantage of the mist. For the face that looked in at his window, when it was opened, was covered by a black mask, and the form that followed it in was enveloped in a long, black cloak that concealed it from head to foot.

The figure in black stepped into the room, and closed the window. Then it stepped towards Bunter's bed.

Snore!

"Wake!" said a deep voice.

Snore!

Shake!

It was a rough shake, and it startled Billy Bunter out of the land of dreams. His eyes opened drowsily.

"Ow! Beast! Lemme alone!" he mumbled. "Tain't rising-bell! Ow! Oh! Help! Yow-ow-ow-ow! Help!"

Bunter jumped up on the bed, blinking in horror at the cloaked figure and masked face.

"Silence! Silence on your life!" hissed the masked intruder.

"Oh lor!" gasped Bunter.

He collapsed on the bed, his little, round eyes distended in terror as he blinked at his awesome visitor.

"Silence!" repeated the deep voice, from behind the black mask. "Utter one cry, and your life pays the forfeit! I am desperate!"

"Ow!"

"These hands are already stained—ha, ha!—with blood! One cry, and you die the death of a dog!"

"Ow! It wasn't me!" gasped Bunter.

"Wha-a-t?"

"I—I mean— It wasn't—I didn't—I—I—I never—" stammered Bunter incoherently. "I—I say—Ow! Oh dear! Wow!"

"Silence!"

"Ow! Yes, all right! I—I won't say a word!" groaned Bunter. "I—I say, you—you've come to the wrong room, you know! The—the safe's in the library! Lots of money in it—tons!"

"Bah! Think you that I seek loot?" demanded the deep voice. "It is vengeance that has brought me here! Ha! Crimmon vengeance!"

"Oh lor!"

"Tell me all you know!" hissed the masked man.

"I—I don't know anything—not a thing! Oh dear—"

"Where is Bunter?"

"B-b-bub-bub-Bunter?"

"Yes, that fat and flabby dastard who betrayed me!" snarled the masked man. "He who seized me that night at Greyfriars School, and baffled me. It is him that I seek. When I find him, blood shall flow!"

"Oh crickey!"

"He baffled me! He that baffles me dies! Where is he? I know that he is in this house. That night at Greyfriars it was too dark to see his face. But you shall guide me to him. You shall point out Bunter, and see him roll in gore at my feet."

Bunter fairly squirmed on the bed.

He knew now that this masked ruffian was the crackman who had broken into Greyfriars School, and who had been baffled by Bunter coming down after Coker's cake. He knew it now. But there was one grain of comfort—the murderous villain did not know him by sight. He knew that it was a fellow named Bunter who had butted into him that night at the school, but that was all. A glimpse of Bunter on that occasion by the flash of a dark lantern had not impressed the fat features on

his memory. That was how it was. He had tracked Bunter to Wharton Lodge for vengeance, but did not know him by sight.

Bunter could understand that quite clearly. If the desperado had known that he was Bunter—

He shuddered at the thought.

"You hear me!" hissed the masked man.

"Ow! Yes."

"Where is Bunter?"

"I—I don't know! I—I think he's gone out—gone for a walk—quite a long distance—a very long distance, I—"

"Ha! 'Tis false! The House has been watched! Bunter is yet within these walls! Hark! A lie costs you your life! Where is Bunter?"

"I—I—I—"

"Are you Bunter?" hissed the masked man.

"Ow! No."

"Who are you? Your name?"

of the building, did not go to the door on the corridor. He stepped to an inner door, which led into a dressing-room attached to Bunter's bed-room. He passed through, and closed the door behind him.

Bunter's chance had come.

It would not take the desperado long to discover that he had gone the wrong way. But Bunter had time to escape.

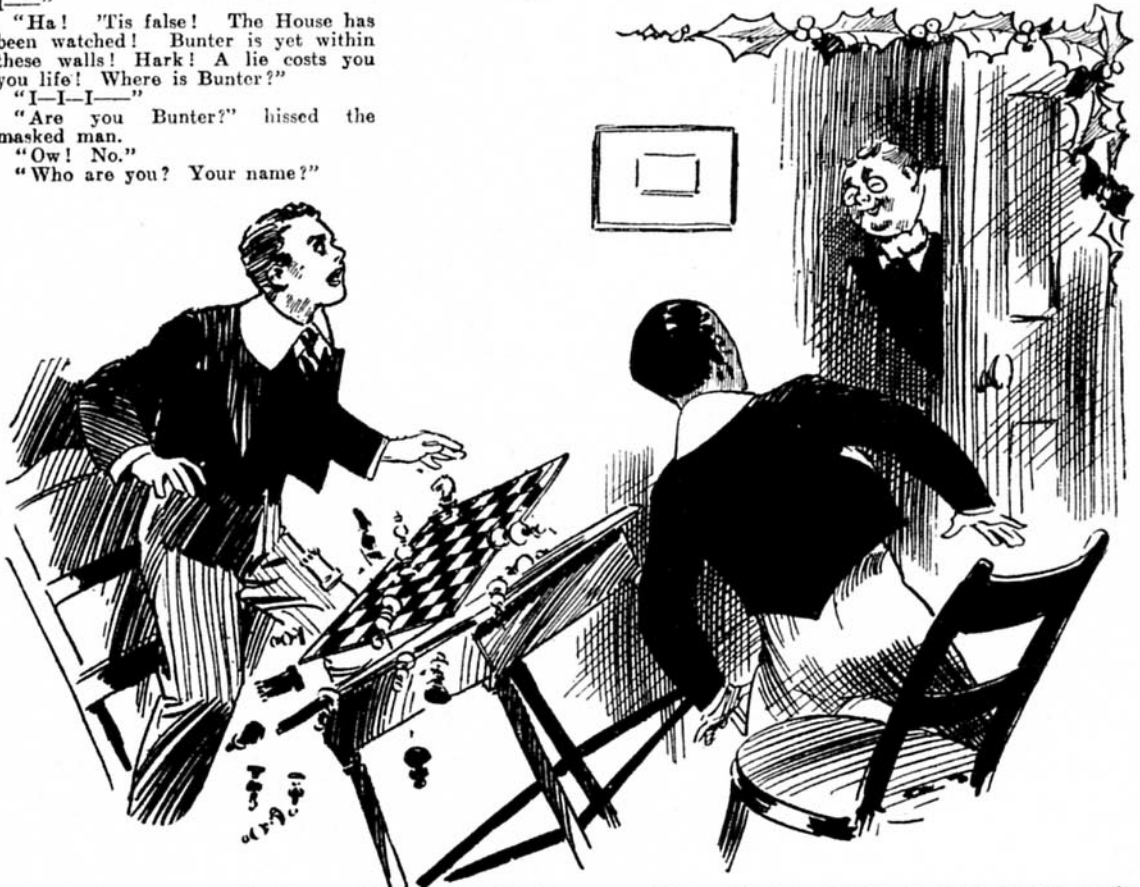
As if moved by a powerful spring, Bunter leaped off the bed.

He reached the bed-room door with a bound, whipped back the key, tore

rang through Wharton Lodge from end to end.

Colonel Wharton and Dr. Locke stepped out of the library in amazement and alarm. Miss Wharton appeared in the offing, greatly agitated. Wells came from one direction, John from another. Wharton and Hurree Singh did not appear. They were rather occupied, just then, in Wharton's room, stripping a masked desperado of his mask and cloak—and revealing Harry Wharton when those terrifying garments were removed.

Bunter came down three steps at a



"I say, you fellows——" It was a fat voice from the doorway, and Harry Wharton and Hurree Singh jumped, sending the chess-table flying. "BUNTER!"

"J-j-jones!" gasped Bunter, with chattering teeth. "Jig-jug-jones!"

"If you were Bunter, your gore would imbrue these hands! You should die the death of a hog—I mean, a dog! Are you sure you are not Bunter?"

"Ow! Yes. I—I swear my—my name's Robinson!" gasped Bunter. "I—I hardly know Bunter! Only—only seen him once or twice in my life! Oh dear!"

"Remain here, without a sound! You hear me? Give the alarm, and you perish like a porker! I go to seek Bunter! When I find him, he dies! He baffled me once, and he that baffles me once dies the death of a baffler! If he is within these walls I shall discover him, and crimson gore shall stain the floor! Silence! On your life!"

The masked man tiptoed away from the bedside.

Bunter watched him in terror.

But the dreadful intruder, as if ignorant of the interior arrangements

open the door, and bolted into the passage.

Behind him there was a hurried footstep, and a deep voice called:

"Stop! On your life! Ha! You die!"

Bunter flew.

In momentary expectation of hearing a revolver bang behind him, or feeling a ferocious grasp on his collar, Bunter travelled down the staircase like a streak of lightning. And as he went he roared:

"Help! Help! Murder! Fire! Help! Yaroooh! Help!"

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Bolts!

"GOOD gad!"

"Bless my soul!"

"Goodness gracious!"

"Yarooogh! Help! Keep him off! Help!"

Bunter came bounding down the stairs into the hall. His frantic yells

time. At every kangaroo-like bound, he let out a roar.

At the foot of the staircase he missed his last jump, and rolled over, and landed in a sprawling heap at the feet of the colonel and his headmaster.

"Yoooooop!"

"What does this mean?" demanded Colonel Wharton.

"Ow! Help!"

"Is the boy insane?" ejaculated the Head.

"Keep him off!" shrieked Bunter.

"The poor boy seems alarmed about something," said Miss Wharton. "I think he has been sleeping; and perhaps he has a nightmare. Indigestion——"

"Wow! Keep him off!"

Colonel Wharton stooped, grasped Bunter by the shoulder, and landed him on his feet. Bunter clung to him in terror.

"I—I say, lemme get behind you!" he gasped. "He's after me!"

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"Who is after you?" gasped the colonel.

"Oh dear! The burglar!"

"A burglar!" ejaculated Dr. Locke.

"A burglar in the daytime! Absurd!"

"Ow! I've been murdered—"

"What?"

"I mean, nearly murdered! Ow! Keep him off! Oh dear! Oh crickey!"

"There is no one following you, my dear boy!" said Miss Wharton soothingly. "You have been dreaming! The mince-pies—"

"He's after me!" howled Bunter. "Ow! I can hear him coming! Help!"

He dodged wildly behind the colonel, holding on desperately to his coat-tails. There were footsteps on the stairs.

"You absurd boy!" exclaimed James Wharton. "It is only Harry—"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

Harry Wharton came in sight on the staircase with the Nabob of Bhanipur following him down.

"Anything wrong?" asked Wharton blandly. "I heard a yell—"

"The yellfulness was terrific!"

"Bunter has been frightened," said Colonel Wharton. "He fancies that a burglar has been in the house. It is, of course, impossible. Have you boys seen anything—"

"Haven't seen a burglar," said Harry. "Have you, Inky?"

"The answer is in the esteemed negative."

"Of course, it is quite impossible," said Dr. Locke. "Bunter has been dreaming. No doubt he has dreamed of one night when he actually came in contact with a burglar at Greyfriars—"

"It was the same man!" gasped Bunter.

"The same man?" repeated Colonel Wharton.

"Oh dear! Yes, he has tracked me down!"

"Nonsense!"

"He is after my blood—"

"Absurd!"

"Because I baffled him—"

"The poor boy is wandering a little in his mind, I think," said Dr. Locke. "I fear that he has visited some exciting and sensational picture-house. Doubtless the effect of some absurd American film—"

"He got in at my window!" yelled Bunter. "He was masked—cloaked—and—he fired at me—"

"Utter nonsense!" rapped the colonel. "Had a shot been fired everyone in the house would have heard it!"

"I—I mean, he was going to fire at me! He clutched me in a deadly clutch!" groaned Bunter. "He didn't know me, or I should have been murdered! He said he was after Bunter—because I had baffled him. He didn't know I was Bunter, and—so I got away! He's still in the House! Ow! I'm not going to stay here to be murdered! Order the car! I'm going home!"

"My dear boy, it was only a nightmare!" said Miss Wharton soothingly. "There is no burglar."

"It wasn't!" shrieked Bunter. "Oh dear! It was that villain who burgled Greyfriars, and he's after me because I baffled him. He said so."

"He used the word baffled?" demanded Colonel Wharton.

"Ow! Yes!"

"Then it was evidently a nightmare, the result of seeing absurd films. The word baffled is only used

on the films, and in plays. Surely, Bunter, you are aware that such an expression is not used in real life."

But Bunter was not to be convinced. He knew that a masked and cloaked desperado had seized him in his room; and that was enough for Bunter.

"Send for the police!" he gasped.

"Nonsense!"

"We shall all be murdered—"

"I think we will take our chance of that," said the colonel, with a smile. "Search the house—"

"Come, come!" said the colonel.

"You have had a nightmare in the daytime, Bunter, that is all. Compose yourself."

"Beast!"

"Wha-a-at!" ejaculated the colonel.

"I'm not going to stay here to be murdered!" shrieked Bunter. "He's in the house! He's been watching the house for me. He knows I'm here! He's on the track of vengeance—"

"Bunter, you must really not be so absurd!" said Dr. Locke.

"I'm in frightful danger! I'm going! Think I'm going to stay in this house to be shot and stabbed and strangled by a burglar? Look here, order the car! I'm going home!"

"But, my dear boy—"

"I'm going home!" yelled Bunter.

"If Bunter wants to go home, uncle, we'd better not keep him here," said Harry Wharton gravely. "If he would feel safer at home—"

"I should jolly well say so!" gasped Bunter. "You can all jolly well be murdered, if you like! I'm not going to be murdered! I absolutely refuse to be murdered to please you! I'm going home!"

"Very well," said the puzzled colonel. "If you desire to go home, Bunter, I will order the car to take you to the station, and look out a train for you. But I assure you—"

"I'm going home!"

"Very well, that is settled, then," said Colonel Wharton, probably not very much displeased by Bunter's decision to shake the dust of Wharton Lodge from his feet. "Harry, you will help Bunter pack as he is in a hurry."

"Certainly, uncle!"

"The packfulness will not be terrific,"

"I—I'm not going upstairs again!"

gasped Bunter. "The villain's still in the house—"

Bunter was right on that point. The "villain" was indeed very near him—looking at him over the banisters—had Bunter only known it. But Harry Wharton kept his own counsel on that subject.

"I'll pack your things, old fat man," said Harry. "You wait here, and I'll bring them down."

Wharton and Hurree Singh went up the stairs again. Out of sight of the rest of the household, they grinned at one another.

"It's worked!" murmured the captain of the Remove.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh chuckled.

"Like a giddy charm!" grinned Wharton.

"The charmfulness is terrific!"

"And—he's going!"

"It seems almost too good to be the esteemed truth, but he is going!" agreed the grinning nabob.

"What luck!"

"The luckfulness is preposterous!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the chums of the Remove went to Bunter's room to pack for him. There was not much to pack—only the clothes in which Billy Bunter had arrived, and which he had discarded in favour of Wharton's best suit.

"The fat villain's got my clobber on," said Harry. "Never mind—so long as he goes. That's the chief thing!"

And Bunter's garments were packed in a small attache-case, which was taken down, by the time the car was at the door. Bunter was already outside—he did not care to remain in a building which contained a baffled burglar thirsting for blood. His farewells were brief, and Brown drove the car down the drive, with Bunter sitting in it—blinking back at the house as he went, with uneasy eyes behind his big spectacles.

Harry Wharton and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh stood on the steps and watched the car disappear.

Bunter was going!

Bunter was gone!

It seemed too good to be true! As a matter of fact, it was!

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Mate in One!

"O H dear!" gasped Bunter. His first feeling, as the car turned out of the gates of Wharton Lodge, was one of great relief.

He was safe away, and there was no sign of a pursuing desperado!

"Let her out!" he gasped to the chauffeur.

"Yes, sir," said Brown.

And the colonel's chauffeur let the car out.

The car flew along the road. Its speed was a comfort to Bunter. He was safe—safe at last—from the vengeance of that baffled burglar!

But—

As the excitement died away, and Bunter's terrors calmed a little, he began to think.

Thinking was not much in Bunter's line. It was quite an unaccustomed exercise for his fat intellect. Indeed, there were fellows in the Remove who did not believe that his intellect was equal to the strain. Nevertheless, though Bunter's fat brain worked like an engine badly in need of lubricating, it worked.

Even Bunter—now that he was calm—could not help realising that it was rather remarkable for a baffled burglar to have gained admittance to Wharton Lodge, unseen, in the daytime.

Still more remarkable was it for him to have entered Bunter's room from the balcony outside the window, as that balcony was thirty feet from the ground, and had a sheer wall under it.

How had that baffled burglar reached the balcony?

It could only be reached from the bed-room windows that opened on it. Wharton's window, and Hurree Singh's window.

The masked villain had reached it that way—while the fellows were downstairs. But Bunter remembered that they hadn't been downstairs. They had been upstairs.

It was truly amazing that they had seen nothing of the masked man!

It was so amazing that even Billy Bunter, obtuse as he was, began to smell a rat!

Brown, the chauffeur, glanced round in surprise, as he heard a sudden, emphatic, and startling ejaculation in the car behind him.

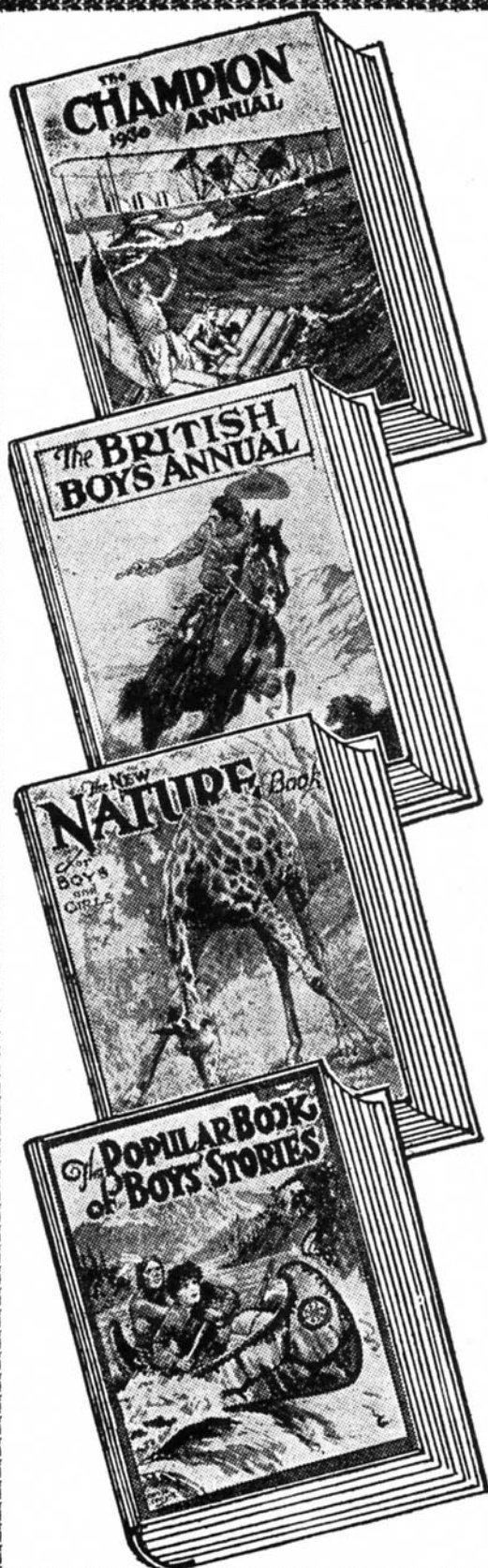
"Beasts!"

He drove on.

"Beasts!" repeated Bunter, his eyes gleaming with wrath behind his spectacles. "Rotters! Oh, the awful beasts!"

He remembered quite a lot of details now that had escaped him in his terror.

(Continued on page 28.)



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CONTINUATION OF OUR POPULAR SERIAL!

PETER FRAZER—IRONMASTER!

By JOHN BREARLEY.

Here they come—the “do-or-die” footer team of Frazer’s Foundry! Give ‘em a cheer, boys!

INTRODUCTION.

It had a sole owner of Frazer’s Iron Foundry, it is a strange prospect that lies before Peter Frazer, a cheery, strapping youngster of eighteen when he arrives in the squalid industrial city of Maxport, to take over the great business left to him by his dead uncle. Peter soon realises that his legacy has brought danger with it, for he is kidnapped on his way to his new home. Luckily, he escapes, but with only one clue to the identity of his unknown enemy; the man is completely bald, with a terrible jagged scar running across the top of his head. At the works, Peter learns from his manager, Mr. Dimmock, that Frazer’s Foundry is on the brink of ruin, owing to the activities of a man named Granger and his gang, and he strikes his first blow against his enemies by knocking out the scoundrelly Granger in a fight, and then sacking him. The gang show their hand again before long, when they make an attempt to blow up the foundry. With iron-nerved courage, Peter foils the plot, and, as a result, gains what he has been striving for since the very first—the friendship and admiration of his men. Cheering wildly, the crowd surges out of the foundry on to the football field, the young ironmaster shoulder high in their midst.

(Now read on.)

“Played—the Works!”

THE hush that followed showed how deeply Peter’s gallant deed was engraved in the minds of his men. They knew better than he what they had escaped, and, rough and wild though most of them were, they realised the suffering the “schoolboy boss” had averted.

As his eyes swept round the ring of beaming faces Peter gained sudden new hope. In a single night he had accomplished that which he had hardly hoped to do in months. And with it came the realisation that Granger’s Gang could no longer show their faces in the foundry—could not, in fact, show themselves anywhere in Maxport!

One great menace was removed. His face broke into his wide, happy grin.

“Thank you!” said Peter simply.

With that they closed in on him once more, and with one long, roaring cheer Peter Frazer was lifted and borne back into his foundry.

“Oh, it’s nice to get up in the morning!” sang Peter, appearing for breakfast the next morning. “Morning, Mr. Dimmock!”

“Good-morning, Peter! Glad you’re feeling so cheerful.”

“I do feel happy, and that’s a fact!” said Peter, sitting down to the breakfast-table and helping himself. “Footer this afternoon. Golly, it seems years since I last played in a match! And what with our unknown pal with the scarred head being dished, and those other blighters cleared out of the works, everything in the garden’s lovely, what!”

“Let us hope so,” replied Mr. Dimmock soberly.

Peter stared through the window at the pleasant sight of the football field, its crisp, green grass, the new white lines and painted goals gleaming in the

winter sun, the new corner-flags rustling in the breeze.

He was hoping fervently that his team would do well in their opening match. True, they were only playing the second eleven of the Hornets, Maxport’s famous amateur club; but then the Hornets celebrated first eleven played pro clubs, and would be too powerful for the works team.

“Think we’ll win, sir?” was Jenkins’ greeting that morning, as he came into the office. The clerk had proved too light for the works first team, but he was very keen, and was to be linesman that afternoon.

“If we lose it won’t be for want of trying, Jenkins!”

“It’s only their second eleven, sir!” urged Jenkins encouragingly.

“That’s so! But, even then, they’re pretty hot. Besides, they’ve already played five matches this season. Still, we’ll do all right!”

Down in the works the men were not quite so optimistic as Peter. The general view seemed to be that they’d do well if they only lost by two goals. Some hoped for a draw. A win seemed to be out of the question entirely! Peter, at that, stated positively that Frazer’s must and should win, whereat Sparrow and the others grinned, but cheered up, nevertheless. Only the two McDonalds went on steadily with their work; but as Peter passed by them once they looked up for a second to give him a solemn wink.

The Hornets arrived by car half an hour before the kick-off. The famous club drew its members chiefly from the ex-public schoolboys and ‘Varsity men who worked in Maxport, and it was the first time most of them had penetrated to this end of the city. Their captain, a cheerful veteran, shook Peter’s hand cordially.

“Just to wish you luck in the new venture!” he smiled. “Let’s hope we have a good game!”

“That’s my hope, too!” said Peter quietly, and went to get changed.

Into the dressing-room rushed Sparrow and gripped his employer’s arm excitedly.

“Bah goom, boss, I think every lad in the works is outside around the field!” he breathed. “Come and look. They’re rooling in yet!”

Peter stuck his head out of the door and whistled. The attendance had proved beyond his wildest hopes. Whether actuated by gratitude or keenness, all around the touchlines mill-hands, furnace men, and wharf-hands; everyone in the works, in fact, seemed to have congregated!

Someone caught sight of Peter and raised a cheer. It spread like a flame round the ground, and he withdrew hastily.

Ten minutes later the roar grew again solidly, as, with a new ball in his hands Peter led his men out on to the field for their first game. They looked fit and well in their new, striped jerseys

and white shorts, as they indulged in a kick-about prior to the commencement of the match.

Peter won the toss and elected to kick with what little wind was blowing; the teams lined up, the Hornets confident, and Frazer’s somewhat apprehensive and on their toes.

Pheep!

“Fray-ay-azers! Play up, the works!”

With the encouraging yells ringing in his ears, Osborne touched the ball swiftly to Hammond, who tried to break through. A heavy Hornet forward hooked it off his toes, then their forward line, well together, swept towards Sparrow in the home goal. Just within shooting distance the inside-right held on to the ball too long, and Peter swept it away from him, tricked a half-back, and sent the speedy left-winger, Baker, off with a fast, low pass. Reaching the Hornets’ right-back, Baker tried to swerve past him instead of passing, and was promptly “grassed.”

The Hornets returned to the attack. Once again Peter repelled them, amid a roar of cheering from the touchlines; but they were beginning to settle down now, and the works defence was kept on the run.

The Hornets played typical Public-school football—hard passing, whirlwind dribbling, and first-time shots at Sparrow whenever the chance came. Also, when they charged a man they did it fairly, but put every single ounce of their beef into it.

Sparrow, in goal, was called upon to save twice in as many seconds, the second shot bringing him flat to earth.

Coolly, Elspeth McDonald got his head to a third shot, and the ball dropped at Peter’s feet. He neatly tricked a Hornet, and sent Osborne, the works centre-forward, away with a nice pass.

This brought relief to the works goal, and vociferous cheers from the supporters.

“Oh, well played, Osborne!” breathed Peter, as the centre, after a brilliant dribble, pushed the ball to Hammond.

“Shoot, Hammond!” roared the crowd, and that player hastily did so, sending the ball wide of an upright.

Followed some mid-field play, and a quick attack by the Hornets, in which their outside-right sent in a fierce drive that whizzed over the bar and into the crowd. While the ball was being retrieved Peter spoke words of encouragement to players near at hand.

So far, as a combination, they had not shone, and he was beginning to fear that the defence would crack under the Hornets’ terrific attacks. The game was much faster than any they had played, and the charging of their opponents was rattling some of them, even though Frazer’s were much the heavier side.

Hector McDonald took the goal-kick, and Frazer’s centre trapped it, and

beating the centre-half, swung the ball out to Baker again.

He raced off, and this time, when challenged, swung the ball accurately into the goal-mouth.

The works supporters roused themselves in a solid bellow that died away in a howl of disappointment as Hammond, dallying too long, was robbed in front of goal.

Back came the Hornets. A long pass swept to the outside-left, who nipped in, tricked Hector beautifully, and centred. The Hornets' centre-forward, jumping swiftly into the air, scored with a header that left Sparrow helpless.

"Goal!"
"Well played, sir!" cried Peter, clapping the Hornet on the back. "Now then, Frazier's. All together, boys!"

Osborne kicked off again, and it was soon evident that that goal had stung the works team to more vigorous efforts.

The foundry began to show some of its form! A lightning run down the wing by Baker, a quick centre, and a lightning drive by Osborne that just scraped the crossbar, brought the crowd to life again. Then, at last, came a really polished attack by Osborne, Hammond, and Haggerty. Starting from the half-way line they streaked through the Hornets' half-backs by a quick exchange of passes. The last found Haggerty out on his own on the right-wing near the corner-flag. He drew the Hornets' left-back, but, before he was tackled, sent in a lovely square centre. There was an "Oh!" from the crowd as Osborne met it fairly with his head, but the ball rebounded from the crossbar.

It came out to Peter, who had followed up the attack, and without hesitation, he let fly, his loosely swinging boot meeting the leather with a

dull crump! Straight as a bullet the ball whistled past the Hornet goalie's outstretched arm and into the top corner of the net with a force that shook the net violently.

The scores were level! The cheering that followed beggars description, and it was only brought to a conclusion by the long blast of the whistle which denoted half-time.

Although there was but a short interval, Peter made the most of it, assisted by Elspeth McDonald, with some sound advice to his players. It was a cheerful, lively team that lined up for the restart, a team that had found itself!

Straight from the kick-off the Hornets set up heavy attacks, but found the works defence as steady as a rock.

Moving with lightning speed, always in position, covering Sparrow, tackling cleanly, and kicking fast and low, the huge McDonalds systematically shook the Hornets' attack to pieces. The half-backs were working with a will, and plyed the forwards with passes that kept them constantly on their toes. Best of all, Peter, free from further anxiety, took charge of the Hornets' tall centre-forward and simply blotted him out!

Thus, eventually, the works attack came into its own. Raid after raid, starting from their slim centre-forward, swept towards the Hornets' goal.

Again and again they overran the hard-worked Hornets' defence, and the iron lungs of the foundrymen kept the cheering to fever pitch that swelled and swelled into a thunderous bellow as Peter, trapping a pass, tore like a hurricane through the bewildered Hornets. He flashed the ball to Osborne, who passed it out to Baker, for the winger to plant it right between the backs in front of goal. And Osborne, taking

the ball at top speed, left the goalkeeper helpless with a scorching shot.

Works leading!

The foundry's superior weight and stamina began to tell. The tiring Hornets' forwards fell back before Peter and the McDonalds like waves from a rocky shore. Rattled by Baker's flashing raids and Haggerty's accurate centres, the Hornets' backs grew flurried, and with every moment Osborne and Hammond grew more daring and dazzling in their dribbling runs.

Ten minutes from the end the Hornets were a beaten side, despite their heroic skipper. Taking a pass at top speed Hammond raced right through them like a comet, finally swerving dizzily past the goalkeeper as he advanced, and scoring the most spectacular goal of the day!

Then came a brief Hornet rally, and their centre-forward went close with a clever shot. But the works defence repelled them, and their forward line got on the move once more, culminating in Osborne scoring his second goal.

Four minutes from the end a slip in defence let the Hornets in to score a goal from a melee; but with almost the last kick of the game another of Peter's long-range shots, a rousing, rising drive, crashed its way just under the crossbar into the net.

The whistle went—and with it came a burly, cheering crowd of men on to the pitch. And for the second time that week Peter was chaired into his foundry to close a glorious afternoon.

(With his men stolidly behind him, Peter's fight to save the foundry is half-won! But his enemies aren't finished with yet! For the continuation of this great sporting serial see next week's MAGNET.)

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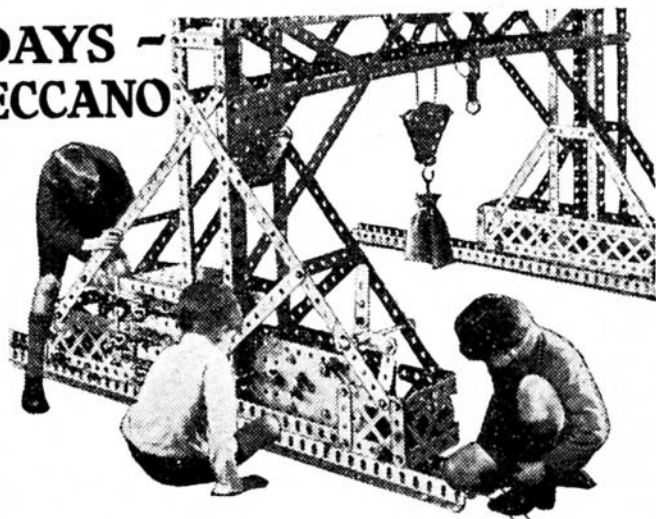
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Billy Bunter's Christmas!

(Continued from page 24.)

The masked burglar had not been very tall, for a burglar—not taller than the average height of a fellow about fifteen—about Wharton's height, in fact. His getting into Bunter's room showed a close acquaintance with the interior arrangements of the house. Yet he had mistaken the door, in going out of the room—giving Bunter a chance to get clear. And Wharton had not come on the scene till Bunter was downstairs—till the beast had had time to get off that cloak and mask! Bunter saw it all now!

He remembered the cheery grin with which Wharton and Hurree Singh had watched the car depart. He understood it now.

"Beasts!" hissed Bunter.

He put his head out of the car.

"Brown!"

"Yes, sir?"

"Drive back to the Lodge."

"Eh?"

"Drive back!" snapped Bunter.

"But the train, sir—"

"Drive back to the Lodge at once!"

"Oh!" said Brown.

He backed the car, turned, and drove back. Bunter settled down again, with a grin on his fat face. The beasts thought he had gone to catch his train. The beasts were going to have a surprise.

Wells let Bunter in. Wells' usually impassive face expressed surprise at the sight of the returning visitor. It did not express pleasure.

Bunter grinned.

"Where's Wharton?" he asked.

"In his room, sir. I think Master Harry is playing chess with his Highness Hurree Singh, sir! But—"

"Right-ho!" said Bunter.

The fat junior disappeared up the stairs. Wells shut the door. There was quite a sad expression on his face.

"Your move, old bean," said Wharton.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh grinned over the chess-board.

The chums of the Remove were whiling away an hour till tea-time with a game of chess. It was very comfortable in Wharton's den, with a log-fire burning, and a shaded electric lamp dispelling the dim December dusk.

"Mate in three, my worthy chum!" murmured the nabob.

Harry Wharton smiled.

"Think so? I've got you mate in two."

Hurree Singh smiled also.

"The proof of the esteemed pudding is in the catfulness," he remarked.

"Look at the board, my esteemed Wharton."

Instead of looking at the board, Harry Wharton looked at the bronze clock over the mantelpiece.

"Bunter's getting into his train!" he remarked.

The nabob chuckled.

"The hopefulness is great that the esteemed and ridiculous Bunter will not lose his train," he observed.

"Brown won't let him," said Wharton confidently. "Brown will see that he's in good time for that train—plenty of time—bags of time! Inky, old black bean, he's really gone."

"The gonefulness is terrific."

The door opened softly.

A fat face and a pair of big spectacles glimmered into the room. A fat grin wreathed the fat face. The two juniors at the chess-board did not observe it for the moment.

"It seems too jolly good to be true!" said Harry. "The fat boulder's actually gone. I couldn't very well kick him out—"

"The kickfulness would not have been the proper caper," agreed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"But he's gone—actually gone!" Wharton chuckled. "The fellows will roar over this when they come and we tell them."

"The roarfulness will be terrific."

"Well, it's your move, Inky; I'm going to mate you in two—"

"I thinkfully opine that I am going to mate you in three—"

"I say, you fellows—"

It was a fat voice from the doorway. Wharton and Hurree Singh gave a simultaneous convulsive jump. The chess-table, caught by four leaping legs

at the same moment, went flying. Chessmen rained on the floor. Whether it was going to be "mate in two, or in three, was a point never to be settled now. It was, in fact, mate in one—and Bunter had given the checkmate

"Bunter!" gasped Wharton.

"Bunter!" articulated Hurree Singh.

The fat junior rolled cheerily in.

"I say, you fellows—"

"BUNTER!" roared Wharton.

"He, he, he!"

"You fat villain—"

"He, he, he!"

"You preposterous porpoise—"

"He, he, he!"

Bunter blinked cheerily at the dismayed pair.

"I say, you fellows, I can take a joke!"

He, he, he! I'll bet you thought I believed that was a real burglar! He, he, he! Of course, I knew it was you all the time, Harry old chap! He, he, he! I just let you run on, you know, to pull your leg! He, he, he!"

"You—you—" gasped Wharton.

"He, he, he!" I played up, you know," grinned Bunter. "I'll bet you thought I was scared. He, he, he!"

"You fat villain, you were scared out of your podgy wits!" roared Wharton.

"He, he, he! Not a bit, old chap! I was just letting you run on! Pulling your leg, old bean! He, he, he!"

Wharton gazed at the Owl of the Remove. Then he grasped a golf club in a corner.

Bunter retired hastily.

A key was heard to turn in a lock.

A few minutes later a cheery snore awoke the echoes of Wharton Lodge. Bunter had resumed his interrupted nap.

Wharton laid down the golf club. The chums of the Remove stared at one another in a silence that was more eloquent than words. The silence was broken by a deep and resonant snore from Bunter's room—the snore of a happy and satisfied Bunter, safely landed in comfortable quarters for his Christmas holiday.

THE END.

(Whatever you do, chums, don't miss the next topping yarn in this series, entitled: "BUNTER COMES TO STAY." You'll enjoy every line of it!)

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