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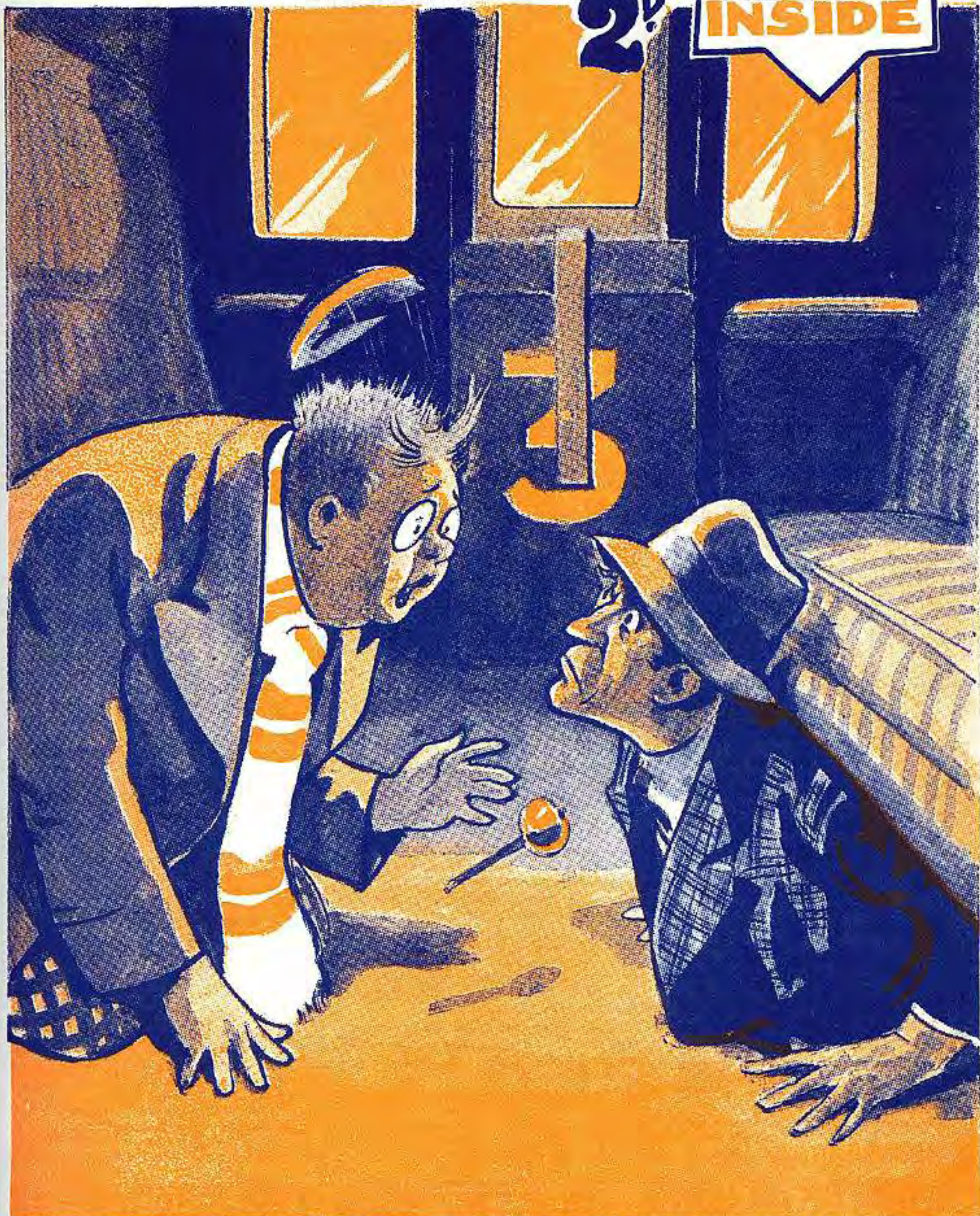
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A startling incident from "BILLY BUNTER'S DIAMOND!"—this week's grand school yarn.



Billy Bunter's Diamond

BY FRANK RICHARDS

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Bunter's Baggage!

"**W**ALK!" ejaculated Billy Bunter.

He blinked at Harry Wharton through his big spectacles.

"Did you say walk?" he exclaimed.

"Yes; walk!"

"Well, my hat!"

Bunter seemed as surprised as if Harry Wharton had suggested that he should fly.

"Walk?" he repeated. "Well, I like that! Walk?"

"Well, if you like it, all right!" remarked Bob Cherry. "Let's get going."

Snort, from Billy Bunter.

Evidently his statement that he "liked" it, had been in sarcastic vein. His meaning was that he didn't like it! Not a little bit!

Walking, in fact, was not much in Billy Bunter's line. He had such a lot to carry along with him. Bunter was not one of those active, strenuous fellows, always on the go. Both his circumference and his diameter were against it.

"Walk!" said Bunter, with a snort of scorn.

"The walkfulness," remarked Hurree Janset Ram Singh, "is an excellent and execrable form of ridiculous exercise. And a little absurd exercise may help to bring downfully your terrific fatfulness, my esteemed Bunter."

"You shut up, Inky! Now, look here, Wharton!" said the Owl of Greyfriars. "I can't walk to Wimford! That's that!"

"Only a mile and a half!" said Frank Nugent.

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"And we're all coming with you to see you off!" said Bob Cherry.

"A real pleasure to see you off, Bunter!" remarked Johnny Bull.

"The pleasure will be terrific!"

Snort!

This little discussion was taking place in Harry Wharton's "den," at his home, Wharton Lodge, in Surrey.

The captain of the Greyfriars Remove was home for the holidays, and his friends were with him. So was Billy Bunter!

Now the Famous Five were going on to Johnny Bull's place for the rest of the "hols." Bunter wasn't!

Bunter had no objection to going. But Johnny Bull had! And Johnny had stated his objection so emphatically and unmistakably, that there was no getting away from it.

So Billy Bunter was catching his train on the home-trail that afternoon. He was not in the best of tempers. And the suggestion that he should walk to the station put the lid on, so to speak.

"When I have a guest at Bunter Court," said the fat Owl, with a scornful blink at Wharton, "I send him to the station in the car. I mean, in one of the cars. I know you've got only one car here—a Ford, isn't it?—but—"

"You fat, frabjous ass—"

"If that's how you talk to a guest, Wharton—"

"I—I—I mean, don't be a goat, Bunter! The road's too thick with frozen snow for a car. I've asked my uncle, and he says 'No.'"

"Just like him!" said Bunter. "Your uncle's manners are the limit, Wharton. Blessed if I know how I've stood him all this time. I suppose you can phone to the station for a taxi?"

"They won't come, owing to the state of the roads."

Snort!

"Like me to wheel you, in a wheelbarrow?" suggested Bob Cherry.

Snort!

"Or shall we up-end you, and roll you along like a barrel?" asked Johnny Bull.

"That's not a bad idea."

Snort!

Harry Wharton glanced at his watch. Speeding the parting guest was not an exactly agreeable occupation. But Bunter really had to catch his train. And there was no doubt that it would be a pleasure to see him off. It was always a pleasure to see the last of William George Bunter.

"Well," said Billy Bunter, in a tone of finality, "I'm not going to walk a mile and a half! That's that!"

Wharton picked up a time-table. "There's a train from the village station," he said. "That's only half a mile. But it goes only as far as Woodgate—you'd have to change there."

Wharton did not add that it was a slow local train, and that there would be a long wait at Woodgate. He did not want to discourage Bunter.

"Well, that's better!" grunted the Owl of the Remove. "If your stuffy old uncle won't let the car go out, and if you're too jolly mean to get me a taxi, I—"

"Ready?"

"But somebody will have to carry my bag!" said Bunter. "If you think I'm going to fag along through snow and ice carrying a heavy suitcase, you're jolly well mistaken, see?"

"Your bag!" repeated Harry blankly.

"My bag!" said Bunter firmly.

The Famous Five gazed at the Owl of the Remove. Bunter had arrived at

Wharton Lodge not only without a bag, but without any baggage at all. That was rather his custom, when paying visits. Like the freebooters of olden times, he lived on the country he invaded.

"Whose bag?" snorted Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull—"

"If it's mine—" began Johnny, in a voice like that of the Great Huge Bear.

"I shouldn't care to borrow your shabby old bag, Bull, when I'm going to a place like Mauleverer Towers," said Bunter. "I've borrowed one of your bags, Wharton, to carry my things. I suppose you don't want me to walk out of the place carrying shirts and pyjamas under my arm?"

"Whose shirts?" asked Frank Nugent.

"Whose pyjamas?" inquired Bob Cherry.

"The whosefulness is terrific!" grinned Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"I say, you fellows, if this talk is going to turn into a sordid discussion about a few things I've borrowed during my stay here, it had better cease," said Bunter, with dignity. "As I'm going to give old Mauly a look-in, I've no time to go home for my own things. I don't want to arrive at Mauleverer Towers without even a suitcase. They rather keep up style there! A bit different from your show here, Wharton!"

"Oh!"

There was a tap at the door of the den, and Thomas, the page, looked in.

"I've strapped your bag, Master Bunter, sir," he said. "Shall I carry it down, sir?"

"Yes!" grunted Bunter.

"No!" hooted Johnny Bull.

"Look here, Bull, you beast—" roared Bunter.

"Bring that bag in here, Thomas!" said Johnny Bull determinedly. "Shove it over this way! You can cut—that's all right!"

Johnny Bull took the suitcase, pushed he surprised Thomas out, and closed the door on him. Then he started unstrapping the bag.

"Johnny, old bean—" murmured Wharton.

"You can lend him your bag, if you like," said Johnny Bull. "But I want to know how many of my shirts are in it before Bunter clears!"

"Beast!" roared Bunter. "If you're going to make a fuss about a few shirts, I—"

"I jolly well am!"

"They're not yours, either! They're Nugent's!"

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Nugent.

"As for the pyjamas," said Bunter scornfully, "they may be yours—I didn't notice when I put them in. And the socks—"

The suitcase—quite a large one—was well filled.

The chums of the Remove stared at the overflowing contents. Apparently Bunter had made rather considerable preparations for his stay with Lord Mauleverer, at Mauleverer Towers. He had been rather a long time packing that morning, while Harry Wharton & Co. were out skating. He had packed not wisely, but too well!

Johnny Bull, breathing hard, jerked a couple of suits of pyjamas from the bag, and laid them aside. Frank Nugent picked out three very nice shirts. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, after staring blankly into the extensive assortment of apparel, selected socks, ties, and a number of other things.

Harry Wharton, with a quite peculiar expression on his face, lifted out his best evening suit. Bob Cherry selected a jacket and a waistcoat and a cap. Then

there was quite a scramble for boots and shoes.

"I say, you fellows!" protested Bunter.

But Bunter was not heeded.

Each member of the famous Co. appropriated the articles that belonged to him. The result was that the suitcase was left empty. Billy Bunter blinked at the Famous Five.

"Look here, you beasts—"

Four members of the Co. walked out of the den heavy laden. Harry Wharton was left alone with his peculiar guest.

"If you want to borrow the bag, Bunter—" murmured Wharton.

Bunter did not want to borrow the bag. He did not want to start on his travels with an empty suitcase.

"Well, look here, come on. We've got to walk to the village, you know."

Four members of the Co. had disappeared, and they stayed disappeared. They seemed to have had enough of Bunter; which, perhaps, was not surprising. Harry Wharton had the pleasure—or otherwise—wholly to himself of walking to the village station with his guest.

The biggest bargain Billy Bunter ever drove was when he bought a hundred pound diamond tiepin for one shilling! But Bunter, in his ignorance, thought it was only an imitation diamond!

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Bunter's Farewell!

"HOLD my arm!" grunted Bunter.

Harry Wharton held his arm.

The road was thick with frozen snow, practically impassable to traffic, and not easy for walking. Except for that drawback it was a delightful day for a walk—clear, bright, keen, frosty January weather. Frost was hard on trees and hedges; the ice like iron in the ditches. No vehicle of any kind was to be seen, except that, to his surprise, Wharton spotted a cyclist coming from the direction of the town of Wimford. He was a keen cyclist himself, but he certainly would not have liked to take his machine out on the glassy roads that freezing afternoon. Looking towards the distant rider, he expected to see him skid and shoot into the hedges any second. But he was not given leisure to take much heed of the man coming from Wimford. Bunter claimed his attention.

Bunter slipped and nearly fell. After which Harry Wharton held on to a fat arm to help him navigate the slippery road.

"Beastly weather!" growled Bunter.

"Jolly healthy!" remarked Wharton.

"Silly idiot!"

Harry Wharton smiled. Bunter had been under his roof as a guest of sorts, and he was, therefore, extremely unwilling to kick him. He had made a resolve—a sort of New Year's resolution—not to kick Bunter before he left, if he could possibly help it. Patience was wearing rather thin, but he was manfully resolved to hold out till the happy

moment when he saw Bunter off in his train.

From the Wimford road they turned into the lane that led to the village and the local station. Bunter grunted and groused at every step. It was undoubtedly rather an exertion to get through frozen snow. Bunter had never liked exertion. Elmdale—the village where there was a railway station—was only a half-mile from Wharton Lodge, but the fat Owl of the Remove was puffing and blowing before he had done a tenth of that distance. He threw a great deal of weight on Wharton's arm, which the captain of the Remove bore with manly fortitude.

A sound of swishing in the snow behind caused Wharton to glance round. The cyclist he had seen coming from Wimford had turned into the lane and was coming on after them. Now that he was close at hand Harry looked at him rather curiously. Difficult as it was to ride on such a road, he was putting on some speed, evidently exerting himself to the uttermost. And he was not an athletic fellow to look at. He was short and slightly built, with a thin, narrow face and pale red eyebrows and eyelashes. His exertions were telling on him, judging by the beads of perspiration that ran down his sallow cheeks in spite of the bitter cold.

He buzzed his bell impatiently as he drew near the two schoolboys, who were walking in the middle of the narrow lane. Wharton jerked at Billy Bunter's fat arm.

"Stoppit!" hooted Bunter. "Beast! You nearly made me slip! Wharrer you dragging at a fellow for, you beast?"

"Get aside, old fat bean!"

"Shan't!"

"There's a bike behind!"

"He can go round us, can't he?" snorted Bunter.

"You silly ass, get out of the man's way!" roared Wharton.

"Beast!"

Buzz, buzz, buzz! came angrily on the bell behind. The cyclist was close now, and Wharton had already noted that the man was, for some reason of his own, in hot haste.

The lane was narrow, and going round the fellows walking in the middle of it meant going among deep cart-ruts ridged with frozen snow, at the imminent peril of a crash.

"Hi!" yelled the man with the ginger eyebrows. "Hi! Get out of the way! Hi! Have you bought this road? Hi!"

"Bunter, you ass—"

"Beast!"

Harry Wharton tugged at a fat arm. Bunter was dragged out of the way by main force. With a snort of wrath, the Owl of the Remove wrenched his arm from Wharton's grasp. He staggered as he got it loose, slipped on icy snow, and spun.

"Yaroooh!" roared Bunter, as he went.

He rolled over, fairly in the way of the oncoming bicycle. The rider had just time to twist aside and avoid him, or certainly he and his machine would have been heaped on the sprawling Owl.

But that sudden twist of the bike on a slippery road did the trick. The wheels ceased to grip, the machine shot away in a skid, and the next moment it was crashing into a hedge.

Crash! Smash! Bump!

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Wharton.

"Yarooop!" roared Bunter, struggling in snow. "Whoop! Help me gerrup! Oh crikey! Oh lor'! Beast! Help!"

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But Wharton did not heed him. He ran across to the overturned cyclist, who was much more in need of help.

The bicycle was jammed in the hedge, and looked as if it was tied in a sailor's knot. Obviously that jigger was badly damaged. Its rider was damaged, too, apparently. He sat up in the snow, clasping an ankle with both hands, and gasping and spluttering. Harry Wharton reached him swiftly.

"Hurt?" he panted.

"Hang you! Yes, I'm hurt!" howled the man with the ginger eyebrows. "You cheeky young scoundrel, why couldn't you clear the road?"

"Not my fault! I——"

"Hang you!"

Harry Wharton stepped back, his eyes glinting. He was wholly blameless in the matter. Bunter was rather to blame, but the fact that the sandy man had been riding fast on a frozen road was the chief cause of the accident.

The man staggered to his feet.

He did not give Wharton another look. He glanced back quickly in the direction of the Wimford road. Then he gave a look at the wrecked bike, muttered something between his teeth, and started to walk.

Wharton stared after him.

"Leaving your jigger there?" he called out.

"Mind your own business!"

"Oh, all right! Go and eat coke!" retorted Wharton, sorry that he had wasted any time or trouble on the unmannerly fellow.

The man hurried on. He was limping with his left leg; it was clear that his ankle had had a hard knock, and that he was hurt. But he covered the ground pretty quickly all the same. Evidently he was sorely pressed for time, as he had abandoned his machine where it had fallen and was going on as fast as he could move in spite of a damaged leg. And Wharton, who had noticed his quick, backward glance towards the Wimford road, glanced back also, wondering whether the man had some cause for hurry that he would not have cared to explain. But if he was pursued, there was no sign of a pursuer on the road.

Billy Bunter had succeeded in righting himself now. He was perpendicular once more, gasping and gurgling for breath. Harry Wharton rejoined him.

"Beast!" gasped Bunter. "Wharrer you push me over for?"

"You blithering owl!" snapped Wharton. "Look what you've done to that chap's bike!"

"Blow his bike!"

"He's gone trotting on with a game leg!"

"Blow his leg!"

"Oh, come on!" said Harry, and once more he took the fat arm and navigated Billy Bunter onwards.

He was feeling that if he did not say good-bye to Bunter soon his resolution would fail, and he would kick him before they parted. And he was still trying hard to get through without that.

Bunter rolled and plunged and skidded and slid and grunted and groused for the remainder of the half-mile. But Elmdale was reached at last, and the railway station there. They learned that the local train for Woodgate was in the station, and had been in the station for some time. Matters moved on easy and leisurely lines at Elmdale. Harry Wharton bought Bunter's ticket—an indispensable preliminary to the journey—and walked him on to the platform.

The train was there; but hardly a person was to be seen on the platform.

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Puffing vapour from the engine announced that it was getting ready to go. Harry Wharton opened the door of a carriage.

"Here you are, old fat bean!"

Bunter clambered in.

"All right now!" said Harry, glad that he had, after all, got through without kicking Bunter.

"No, rotten!" answered Bunter.

"You might have lent me a rug! And a hot-water bottle!" But, of course, you were too jolly slack to carry them!"

"Good-bye, Bunter!"

"Hold on—the train's not going yet. What about my fare from Woodgate? You'd better lend me a pound or two!"

"Oh!"

"I shall have to get a snack at Woodgate, too, before I go on. I can manage on a couple of pounds——"

"Not on less?" asked Wharton, with deep sarcasm.

"You needn't be afraid I shan't square!" sneered Bunter. "I told you, last term at school, that I was expecting some postal orders——"

"Oh, my hat!"

"They never came to Greyfriars——"

"Go hon!"

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"So I expect they've accumulated over the holidays. I shall be in funds. I'll send you back the two pounds as soon as I get my money."

"Ten bob wouldn't be any use?"

"None at all!"

"Then I won't offer it to you. Good-bye!"

"Hold on!" yelled Bunter, as Wharton was turning away from the carriage. "I dare say I could manage on ten bob. I'll try."

The captain of the Remove turned back. Two half-crowns, four shillings, and two sixpences were transferred to Bunter's fat paw. He slipped the coins carelessly into his pocket, as if ten shillings wasn't much to him. No doubt it wasn't—it was more to the fellow who parted with it! But that did not worry Bunter.

"Hold on, Wharton——"

"Train's going," said Harry, and he shut the door.

"Hold on a minute," said Bunter, leaning from the window.

"Oh, all right!"

"Just a word before I go," said the Owl of the Remove.

"Buck up, then," said Harry, wondering what was coming. Some departing guests might have expressed something

in the way of thanks or acknowledgments; but that was hardly to be expected from William George Bunter. However, Wharton, still glad that he had succeeded in resisting the temptation to kick Bunter, was more than willing to part on as amicable terms as possible. So he remained at the carriage door.

Bunter blinked down at him through his big spectacles.

"I've had a rotten time at your place, Wharton," he said. "I might have expected it, knowing you as I do! I dare say it's my own fault letting pushing fellows rush me into staying at their miserable places. Your stuffy old uncle is the limit! Your frumpy old aunt is a corker! Your pals are a set of hooligans, and you're the worst of the lot. Yah!"

Harry Wharton gasped.

There was a shriek from the engine; just in time to save Bunter from the kicking he had, several times, narrowly escaped. Wharton, grasping the door handle, let it go again.

Bunter roached out with a fat paw from the window, snatched Wharton's cap, and threw it along the platform.

"You fat rotter! Why, I'll burst you!" roared Wharton.

"He, he, he!" gurgled Bunter.

The train was moving. Harry Wharton rushed after his cap retrieved it, and glared after the gliding carriage, his feelings too deep for words. The fat face of the Owl of the Remove, safe out of danger, grinned back at him.

"He, he, he!" floated back from the train.

And Billy Bunter was gone!

Harry Wharton banged the dust out of his cap, and replaced it on his head. Then he walked out of the station, to return to Wharton Lodge and his friends—deeply regretting, after all, that he hadn't kicked Billy Bunter while there was still time!

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Snatched!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! That jolly old sportsman looks excited!"

"The excitement seems terrific!"

"Had a tumble in the snow, perhaps!" remarked Frank Nugent.

The Co. had strolled down the drive to the gates of Wharton Lodge, after the departure of Harry Wharton and Bunter. Being quite fed-up with Billy Bunter, they had left it to his host to see him off at the station; but they thought of walking out and meeting Harry on his way back from Elmdale. As they came out on the Wimford road, their attention was drawn to a stout gentleman coming from the direction of the town. They really could not help giving him a second glance, and then a third.

He was a rather short, plump gentleman, and looked all the plumper in an immense fur-collared coat. It was a very expensive coat, and still more striking than expensive. A shining silk hat on his head reflected the rays of the winter sun. His face was fat, of a rather dark complexion, and adorned by a prominent nose rather like an eagle's beak. Something, it was plain, had occurred to annoy the fur-coated gentleman. His fat face was crimson with wrath, his black eyes glittered, and he gripped a gold-headed umbrella as if with the desire to use it as a weapon of offence. And as he came rolling along the snowy road he stared, or rather, glared, to right and left as if in search

of someone. He looked as if he might prove quite dangerous if he spotted that someone; but there was nobody to be seen on the road, except the four schoolboys who had just come out.

Spotting them, the fur-collared gentleman accelerated, and shouted to them as he drew nearer.

"Have you seen him?"

"Whom, sir?" asked Bob Cherry politely.

"That scoundrel!" roared the fur-collared gentleman.

"Eh?"

"That rascal!"

"He can't mean Bunter, I suppose!" remarked Johnny Bull. "And we haven't seen any other scoundrel or rascal."

"That thief!" roared the stout gentleman. "He was on a bicycle."

"Sorry, sir, we haven't seen anybody,"

is the place. You can telephone to the police from here, and very likely they'll bag him before he can get clear. A man won't get far on a bike on roads like this."

"Goot! Yeth, yeth!" said the stout gentleman, who seemed to be slightly afflicted with a lisp. "It is not ten minutes since he ropped me. He cannot be far away—he must have passed here—he came in this direction. So thith is Wharton Lodge, what, what?"

"Yes, sir—straight up to the house—Colonel Wharton is at home—"

The stout gentleman hurried in at the gateway and trotted up to the house, panting. The four juniors went on their way towards Elmdale.

"Might keep an eye open for that pickpocket," remarked Johnny Bull.

"He must have turned into this lane, I think—"

"In which case, my dear Watson," said Bob, in playful imitation of the celebrated Sherlock Holmes, "I deduce that he will hoof it for the nearest railway station."

"Bound to," said Johnny Bull.

"And that's Elmdale," said Bob. "And here's the jolly old tracks in the snow leading right on."

The chums of the Remo were all Scouts, and the "sign" was plain enough for any Scout to read. The footprints left by Wharton and Bunter were clear. At this spot a third set of footprints started from where the fallen bike lay—evidently those of the cyclist who had abandoned his wrecked jigger. The track went on towards Elmdale, and Bob, whose eyes were very keen, even noted that the track of one foot was lighter than the other, which looked as if the man had been hurt by



"Yaroooh!" Billy Bunter slipped on the icy snow and rolled over, fairly in the way of the oncoming cyclist. The rider tried to avoid a collision, but in so doing, his bike skidded and went crashing into the hedge. Crash! Smash! Bump!

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Wharton.

said Bob. "Only just come down from the house."

"A shrimp of a man with a sandy complexion! He was on a bicycle! He snatched my tiepin and jumped on his machine and got away! By Chove, he has got away with a diamond worth a hundred pounds."

"Oh, my hat!"

The juniors suppressed their desire to smile. The stout gentleman, with his magnificent fur collar, looked as if he might have had a diamond tiepin worth a hundred pounds. Probably his fur-trimmed gloves concealed rings of even greater value.

"The rascal! The villain!" spluttered the stout gentleman. "I stopped him to ask the way to Wharton Lodge, by Chove! And he got off his machine to point out the way, by Chove—at least, I thought so—and then he snatched my tiepin—the rascal—the scoundrel—!" He gurgled with wrath. "You are sure you have not then him?"

"Sorry, sir, no," said Bob. "But if you're looking for Wharton Lodge, this

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Look!"

Bob Cherry pointed to a wrecked bicycle, jammed in the hedge. The juniors stopped and stared at it. Someone, evidently, had come to grief there, and bikes were few and far between on the frozen roads. Anyone riding fast on that frozen surface was likely to come to grief; and a pickpocket getting away with a diamond pin worth a hundred pounds was likely to have put on all the speed he could. In fact, there could scarcely be a doubt that this bike was the thief's machine. It was not a valuable bike—a second-hand dealer might have hesitated to give a pound for it. Still, it was extremely unusual for a cyclist to desert his machine and leave it abandoned by the roadside, unless he had very pressing reasons for haste.

"Ten to one that's the sportsman's jigger!" said Bob. "He came a cropper here—what?"

"A hundred to one!" said Nugent. "In fact, it's pretty certain. The man's on foot now."

his fall, and was limping as he went. The juniors stared up the road.

"Might catch the blighter, if we raced for it," said Bob. "From what that old Johnny said, we can't be more than twenty minutes behind him."

"Better get back and tell the old bean," said Frank. "He can tip the police station on the phone."

"Yes; let's."

The juniors ran back, and up the drive to Wharton Lodge. The big door stood open, and the fur-collared gentleman was in the hall. Colonel Wharton was there, also. And Wells, the butler, had taken the fur-collared coat, and Thomas had taken the shining, silk topper.

"My dear Mr. Isaacs," the colonel was saying, "what—what—!" The fur-collared man had only just got in.

"Ropped!" he panted. "Ropped of my diamond pin! A scoundrel on a bicycle! Where is the telephone? What is the number of the police station—what?"

"This way!" said the colonel.
 "Hold on, sir!" exclaimed Bob Cherry breathlessly. "We've got something for you to tell the police."
 The stout man spun round at him. There was a flash of precious stones on his fat fingers, now that his gloves were off. Evidently he was a very expensive gentleman in the jewellery line.

"What?" he exclaimed. "You have then the rascal?"

"No, sir; but I'm pretty sure we've spotted his bike," said Bob; and he hurriedly explained.

"Good!" exclaimed Mr. Isaacs, when Bob had finished. "Very good, my boy! A very observant lad, by Chove! If the rascal makes for a railway station, he will be caught with the diamond on him, by Chove! If I may use your telephone, sir—"

"This way!" said Colonel Wharton; and he led the stout gentleman to the telephone cabinet.

A minute more and Inspector Stacey, at Wimford Police Station, knew all about it, and had promised to take instant and adequate measures.

Meanwhile, Bob Cherry and his friends restarted to walk down to Elmdale. The deserted bike still lay in the hedge when they passed the spot again. They followed the track of the limping man in the thick snow. It led directly onward, and there was little, or rather no doubt, that he had gone on to the village on foot after deserting his machine. Having lost his machine he had little choice but to take to the railway to get away from the vicinity with his plunder. He could hardly have hoped to escape on foot—especially if he had a "game" leg. Probably he had caught the same train as Billy Bunter at Elmdale.

Half-way to the village they sighted Harry Wharton, and hurried on to join him, curious to know whether he had seen anything of the man who had got away with a hundred pound diamond belonging to his uncle's visitor.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

The Man Under the Seat!

BILLY BUNTER grinned as he sat down.

He was feeling rather bucked. It was some satisfaction to have told that beast Wharton what he thought of him, of his relatives, and of his friends. It was a still greater satisfaction to have snatched off Wharton's cap, and thrown it along the platform, and got away safely after that performance. And Bunter had still more solid causes of satisfaction—in the shape of various refreshments that he now proceeded to turn out of his overcoat pockets. He had a nice packet of sandwiches prepared by Miss Amy Wharton herself, in blissful ignorance of the fact that Billy Bunter regarded her as an old frump and a "corker." He had a box of chocolates that he had picked up in Wharton's den; a packet of toffee that he had found in Bob Cherry's room; a bag of bullseyes that Johnny Bull had missed; some toffee-apples that Frank Nugent had bought in Wimford, and two or three other rather nice things which their legitimate owners were never likely to see again.

And though Bunter had been so heartlessly and unfeelingly deprived of his baggage, he had on Johnny Bull's warmest pair of socks, Hurree Singh's

warm, wool muffler, and a collar and tie for which Harry Wharton was likely to hunt in vain. And Bob Cherry's pullover under his coat kept him nice and warm. And as the handkerchief that stuck out of his pocket was clean, it was obviously not Bunter's own.

Altogether Bunter had not done so badly over the Christmas holidays. And if he succeeded in "sticking" Lord Mauleverer for the rest of the vacation, he felt that it would be all right. As a last resource there was home. His people had now returned from their Christmas visit to relations, and home, sweet home was once more available. But Bunter was not tightly keen on home, sweet home. He preferred to roam from Dan to Beersheba.

If Mauly failed him—and Mauly, like nearly everybody else, except Bunter, was a beast—there was Smithy; he might give Herbert Vernon-Smith a look in, with a wary eye open, of course, for Smithy's boot.

He sat and grinned over his farewell to Wharton, and finished the sandwiches, and then chewed chocolates with great satisfaction. The train was slow; but he had plenty to occupy him till he reached Woodgate. He had not started on the toffee, or the toffee-apples yet. There was no stop till Woodgate, which was the terminus of the little local line, so Bunter had the carriage to himself. At least, he naturally supposed that he had, as he was the only passenger sitting in it. But there was a surprise in store for Bunter.

A toffee-apple slipped from his fat fingers, and rolled on the floor. He stooped to pick it up.

Then he gave a startled squeak.

"Ow! Oh crikey!"
 He remained stooping, transfixed with astonishment and alarm, his little, round eyes almost popping through his big, round spectacles, at a face that stared at him from under the carriage seat.

He was not alone in the carriage. A slim, slightly built man with sandy eyebrows was stretched under the seat, and would probably have remained there undiscovered, had not Bunter dropped that toffee-apple.

His narrow eyes glittered at Bunter. Evidently he was not pleased at being discovered.

"Oh lor'!" gasped Bunter. "Wha-a-are you doing there?"

The man crawled out from under the seat.

Although it was clear that he had desired to remain there undiscovered, it was a relief to him to stretch his cramped limbs in freedom now that his presence was known.

Bunter blinked at him, recognising the man now.

It was the man who had tumbled over on the snowy road when the bike skidded. Evidently he had headed for Elmdale Railway Station, and had caught the same train as Bunter. Billy Bunter gave him a very severe blink. He fancied that he could guess why the fellow had been hidden under the seat.

Bunter had travelled under the seat of a railway carriage himself more than once when he was minus a ticket.

On the present occasion, however, Bunter was travelling like an honest citizen, with a ticket, bought and paid for, in his pocket.

So he was very contemptuous of "bilks."

He sat down in his corner again. The sandy man gave a quick glance from the window. Only a snowy landscape and leafless trees met his eyes; the train was

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nowhere near Woodgate yet. He sat down opposite Bunter.

Bunter regarded him with scornful indifference, and chewed toffee-apples. The man watched his fat face intently as he chewed. No doubt he recognised Bunter as the fat fellow who had helped to cause that spill on his bike. But if he was feeling resentment, he did not show it. His face was deeply clouded with thought.

"How long before we get to Woodgate, sir?" he asked, breaking the silence and speaking very civilly.

Bunter thawed. The man addressed him as "sir," and was very civil, indeed, respectful. That pleased Bunter.

"Nother ten minutes," he answered with his mouth full. "You'd better jolly well look out when we get there, too!"

The man gave a start.

"What do you mean?" he exclaimed sharply. "Have you seen—?" He broke off. "What do you mean?"

Bunter gave him a fat wink.

"They collect tickets there," he said. "It's the terminus."

"Tickets!" repeated the sandy man blankly.

"Think I don't know why you were travelling under the seat?" grinned Bunter. "I've been there myself—I mean, I jolly well know that you're bilking the company."

"Oh! I—I see!" The sandy man smiled. "Exactly! You are a very keen young gentleman, sir."

Bunter smiled.

"I know my way about," he remarked complacently.

Any fellow less obtuse than Bunter might have guessed, from the man's look and tone, that whatever might have been his reason for travelling under the seat, it was not because he was bilking the railway company. But the Owl of the Remove had no doubt.

"I believe they're rather sharp on this line," added Bunter, with an amiable desire to make his fellow-passenger feel uneasy. "They'll nail you at Woodgate all right."

"Think so, sir?"

"Sure of it!" said Bunter cheerfully.

The man sat silent again, his brows wrinkled with thought. The train crawled and rattled on its slow way. The sandy man spoke again.

"Trade's pretty bad, sir, and a man may be short of money."

Bunter blinked at him sternly. If this fellow was thinking of "touching" Bunter for the price of his railway ticket, he had to think again! Bunter's worldly wealth amounted to exactly ten shillings; and he was not going to part with any of it if he knew it.

"I think I've seen you before, sir!" went on the sandy man, eyeing Bunter keenly and furtively. "Your name's Montague, I think, sir?"

"No, it isn't; it's Bunter."

It did not even occur to Bunter's mind that the man was "pumping" him, and had some reason for wanting to know his name.

"Going back to school, sir?"

"Eh! Not till the end of the hols," answered Bunter. "We don't go back to Greyfriars for a couple of weeks yet."

"Greyfriars!" repeated the sandy man.

"That's my school!" said Bunter loftily.

The sandy man nodded and smiled. He knew now Bunter's name, and where he was to be found again, if that was what he wanted to know. He was silent again, thinking hard, though the mental problem he was wrestling with had nothing to do with a railway ticket, as Bunter supposed.

"Look here, sir," he went on, after a pause. "I'm hard up, as you've guessed. If you'd like—"

"I never lend anything!" said Bunter. Which was true. Borrowing was Bunter's long suit.

"I didn't mean that, sir! If you like to buy something—" The man slid his hand into an inner pocket. "To tell you the truth, sir, I'm a dealer in artificial jewellery, and I've got a diamond pin—"

"Catch me wearing paste jewellery!" said Bunter, with a sniff. "Not our style at Greyfriars, I can assure you."

"It's rather decent, sir, and even an expert could hardly tell it from the genuine article," said the sandy man.

"Anybody looking at it would think it was a real diamond worth a hundred pounds. I'll let you have it for—for enough to pay for my railway ticket."

"That's only a bob from Elmdale," said Bunter. "But I'm not buying any rubbish, thanks!"

"Well, just look at it, sir!" said the sandy man, and he drew his hand from his pocket.

Billy Bunter looked, and fairly jumped at the sight of the gleaming, glittering diamond that lay in the man's palm.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

A Bargain for Bunter!

"PHEW!" gasped Bunter.

He blinked at the diamond tiepin.

Bunter knew little or nothing about precious stones and their value. But even Bunter could see that this was a magnificent stone. If it was an imitation, even Bunter could see that it was a wonderful imitation of the genuine article.

"Not bad, sir, for an imitation diamond!" remarked the sandy man, with furtive eyes on Bunter's fat face.

"Jolly good!" said Bunter. "Blessed if I shouldn't have thought it was real."

"Wonderful things they make nowadays, sir," said the sandy man. "I usually get ten shillings for these, sir,"—he coughed—"but in the present circumstances, sir, if you'd make it a bob—"

Bunter blinked at the glittering diamond.

"Well, of course, I can see it's not real," he remarked, on second thoughts, as it were. Bunter was not going to admit that he could possibly be taken in. "I can see that all right."

"Can you really, sir?" asked the sandy man, with quite a peculiar intonation in his voice.

"Oh, yes!" said Bunter carelessly. "You see, I've a good many diamond pins and things at home. I'm rather used to expensive things. Still, it's a jolly good imitation—I don't mind saying that."

"Just the price of my railway ticket, sir!" murmured the sandy man.

Bunter's eyes gleamed behind his big spectacles.

At Greyfriars, it was true, fellows did not sport diamond pins; such adornments were considered bad form. But the Bounder had one or two, which he sometimes wore, and other "dressy" fellows had such things, which they put on, on occasion. Billy Bunter, certainly, would have been very pleased indeed to display an expensive pin like the Bounder's.

Obvious paste even Bunter would not have worn. But this imitation diamond looked wonderfully real. It looked as real as Smithy's, that was certain. Bunter undoubtedly would have taken it for a real one. Indeed, he would have

believed now that it was real, but for the fact that the sandy man offered it to him for a shilling!

With that gleaming diamond in his tie, Billy Bunter saw himself making quite a sensation in the Rag at Greyfriars!

Nobody would dream that he had bought it for a shilling! It looked absolutely the genuine article.

Little did the fat and fatuous junior guess that it was, in fact, the genuine article, and that he was getting landed with stolen goods!

Neither did it occur to him that his ownership of the diamond pin was intended to be merely temporary.

Had the sandy man got away on his bicycle, Mr. Isaacs' big diamond would have gone with him, and he would never have been seen again till it reached a receiver of stolen goods.

But the spill in the snow had put the stopper on that. The sandy man had got to Elmdale with his "game" leg, and got into the train—carefully ensconcing himself under the seat to avoid the public eye! But he was well aware that the telephone would be at work before this. The man he had robbed was not likely to lose time.

On his bike he might have put a safe distance between himself and the scene of the snatching. But he had had to take to the railway. And at every railway station there was a telephone.

The police, no doubt, would be looking for a man on a bike! But they would hardly overlook the fact that he might dodge into a train, especially as the roads were in an almost impassable state.

It seemed only too probable to the sandy man that some obnoxious official at Wimford Police Station had already phoned through to all the railway stations in the district, and that some disagreeable man in a blue uniform might be watching at Woodgate, and elsewhere, for a sandy man of his description.

In which case, the sandy man did not want to have Mr. Isaacs' diamond in his pocket when he was tapped on the shoulder.

Neither did he want to pitch it out of the train window, after all his trouble and risk.

Since Bunter had discovered him in the carriage, the sandy man had been putting in some hard thinking—though not, as Bunter supposed, on the subject of the lack of a railway ticket.

Bunter, in fact, had turned up quite luckily for him—if only he was obtuse enough to believe that that gleaming diamond was a sham, and to take it off the snatcher's hands temporarily.

After which, the sandy man would be able to step out at Woodgate easy in his mind.

If he was tapped on the shoulder there, the diamond was out of his hands; and even if he went to the "stone jug," there would be a prospect of recovering it later from Master Bunter, of Greyfriars School.

On the other hand, if he was not stopped at Woodgate, the recovery of that diamond would not be long postponed. He had only to follow Bunter, and do another "snatching" trick! That was easy enough.

Little dreaming of what was in the rascal's mind, Billy Bunter blinked at the diamond, and felt in his pocket for one of Wharton's shillings!

He had no doubt that the diamond was a sham! But even as a sham it was a bargain at a "bob." Bunter had seen sham diamonds before—but never one that looked so real as this!

He extracted a shilling from his

pocket, and passed it across to the man, and received the diamond pin in exchange.

He stood up and adjusted it in his tie in the little glass over the carriage seat.

"Looks real now I've got it on!" he remarked, with satisfaction. "What?"

"Quite, sir!" said the sandy man. "Most fellows don't know so much about diamonds as I do," remarked Bunter. "I fancy it will pass all right."

The sandy man smiled. Bunter sat down again. The train, slow as it was, was very near Woodgate now.

The sandy man eyed the gleaming diamond in Bunter's tie rather uneasily. He would have preferred the fat Owl to put it in his pocket. Still, it was not likely that suspicious eyes would be turned on a fat schoolboy. If a man in blue was waiting for that train at Woodgate, he was watching for a small, thin, weedy, sandy-coloured man, not for a fat schoolboy with cheeks like ripe apples.

"Here's the station," grinned Bunter at last. "You'll be able to pay your fare now—what?"

"Yes, sir, thanks to your kindness!" said the sandy man.

"Oh, not at all!" said Bunter benevolently.

The sandy man, keeping his cap low over his eyes, peered from the window anxiously as the train ran into Woodgate station. His thin lips came hard together at the sight of a portly police-constable on the platform, in talk with a man who was plainly the station-master. Two or three porters loitered about, with unusually keen eyes on the incoming train.

The sandy man knew what it meant. From the bottom of his rascally heart he was glad that he had landed Mr. Isaacs' pin on Bunter! Its recovery later was probable; but that was not of so much importance as getting rid of it at the present moment.

As the train stopped, the sandy man opened the carriage door and jumped out. He walked quickly down the platform before the train had quite stopped.

He was a dozen yards from the window where Bunter was when the stationmaster, the police-constable, and a couple of porters gathered round him.

He was politely requested to accompany the constable to the stationmaster's office; and as it was clear that the man in blue would take no denial, the sandy man did so with the best grace possible in the distressing circumstances.

Of that little scene Billy Bunter saw nothing.

He was busy packing into his overcoat pockets the remnants of tuck that he had not guzzled on the journey.

When he stepped out of the carriage the sandy man was already gone from the platform, and Billy Bunter did not give him a thought.

He rolled away to the bridge over the lines, where he had to change trains; and five minutes later was seated in an express, finishing what remained of the tuck, and absolutely forgetful of the sandy man.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Where?

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! Seen him?" asked Bob Cherry.

Harry Wharton laughed. "Whom?" he asked. "I've seen several people since I left you. Best of all, I've seen the last of Bunter. The fat scoundrel snatched off my cap and threw it along the platform at the last minute—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "I'll jolly well kick him first day of the new term!" said Harry.

"The kickfulness is the proper caper," agreed Hurree Janset Ram Singh. "But have you seen the esteemed and disgusting pickpocket?"

"Eh, what?" Wharton stared. "Not many pickpockets in these parts, old black bean! Somebody lifted your watch?"

"Sandy man, small build, recently spilled off a bike!" said Bob Cherry. "He's pinched a jolly old diamond from a gent of the name of Isaacs, who's visiting your nunky."

Wharton gave a start. "My hat! That must be the blighter who was pitched off his bike when that fat idiot Bunter got in his way! I wondered at the time if there was somebody after him," he said. "He seemed in a frightful hurry. But how did you know, Bob?"

Bob winked at his comrades. "Deduction, my dear Watson," he said, again in playful imitation of Sherlock Holmes. "We found the bike lying in the hedge, looking as if it had been under a lorry, and deduced that there had been an accident."

"Not a fearfully difficult deduction," said Harry, laughing. "But how do you know about the man on it?"

"From the brand of the tyres, my dear Watson, I deduce that the rider had a sandy complexion—"

"Wha-at?" "And, from the make of the mudguards, I deduce that he was a small size in sportsmen—in fact, a shrimp of a man."

Harry Wharton stared blankly at his chum. Certainly, Bob had described the cyclist accurately. But he was not likely to believe that Bob had made those "deductions" in the well-known manner of Sherlock Holmes.

"And how did you know he had pinched a diamond?" he asked.

"From the size of his boots, traced by his footprints in the snow," said Bob gravely. "To the trained eye of a detective, my dear Watson—"

"And how the thump did you know that a man named Isaacs was coming to see my uncle to-day?"

"I deduced that, my dear Watson, from the fact that I heard Colonel Wharton address him as Mr. Isaacs."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, you've seen the man, then?" exclaimed Harry.

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"Yes, old bean! I dare say Sherlock Holmes could have deduced his name, age, form, and starting price from the bicycle-tracks or the pickpocket's sandy complexion—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But the fact is we ran into him when we started after you, and he told us that a small-sized blighter on a bike, with a sandy chivvy, had snatched

his jolly old diamond tiepin," said Bob, laughing. "Quite simple when I explain it, my dear Watson—what?"

"That was the man, then," said Harry. "He damaged his leg tumbling off the bike, but he went on pretty quickly, and I lost sight of him. I suppose he went to Elmdale."

"You didn't see him there, at the station?"

"No; I only walked as fast as Bunter—which is about as fast as a snail on its last legs. He had lots of time to catch the train if he wanted to. Poor old Isaacs!" said Harry. "He's lost his diamond, then."

"Well, he seems to have lots," said Bob. "Never saw such a decorated merchant; he will hardly miss one. But he seemed fearfully excited about it, all the same. Who is the sportsman?"

"Uncle mentioned him to me this morning—a City man coming down to see him about mining shares, or something," said Harry. "The car would have been sent for him if it had been possible. Look here, ten to one that thief got a train at Elmdale, and if they telephone—"

"That's done already," said Nugent. "We left Mr. Isaacs doing a solo on the phone when we came out. So it was Bunter that upset Mr. Sandyman?"

"Yes, there was only one bike on the road, and Bunter had to get in the way of it. Rather lucky, as it turns out, if the man was a thief!"

The Famous Five walked back to Wharton Lodge. When they arrived there Mr. Isaacs was shut up in the library with the colonel; doubtless having dismissed the affair of the "snatcher" from his mind, for the time, and reverted to the business on which he had come to Wharton Lodge. The chums of the Remove had their packing to do, and they proceeded to get it done, as they were leaving after tea, to take the train from Wimford for Johnny Bull's home.

At tea, however, they had the pleasure of seeing Mr. Isaacs. He proved to be quite a genial and pleasant gentleman, though his taste in jewellery was on the expansive side. Whenever he moved there was a glitter and a sparkle from some part of his person. He seemed to have recovered from the excitement and wrath caused by the loss of his big diamond pin, and the juniors rather liked him, dazzling as he was.

Just as tea was over Wells brought in the news that Mr. Isaacs was wanted on the telephone. When he came out of the telephone cabinet he was smiling and rubbing his hands.

"Good news. I hope, sir?" said Colonel Wharton, with a smile.

"I think so," said Mr. Isaacs. "A man answering the description I gave the police has been detained at Woodgate. He arrived by the train from the village close by here. His name, it seems, is Sniggerson, and he has a doubtful reputation. I have no doubt he is the man. I shall have to go over and identify him."

Harry Wharton & Co. had to leave for their train soon afterwards, so they did not learn the result of Mr. Isaacs' visit to Woodgate.

That visit, in point of fact, was rather a disappointment to Mr. Isaacs.

Certainly, he identified the sandy man who had snatched his tiepin, and Mr. Sniggerson, who had hitherto been detained on suspicion, was now detained to go before the magistrates.

But a search of Mr. Sniggerson failed to reveal the diamond pin.

That he had snatched it and got away with it was assured; but that it was no longer in his possession was equally certain.

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As the train began to move, Bunter thrust a fat paw out of the window, snatched Wharton's cap, and threw it along the platform. "You fat rotter!" yelled Wharton. "Why, I'll burst you!" "He, he, he!" floated back from the train.

What he had done with it, Mr. Sniggerson declined to state; indeed, he maintained stolidly that it was a case of mistaken identity, and that he had never seen Mr. Isaacs before.

That he had passed it on to some confederate seemed possible.

But that he had passed it on to a fat and fatuous youth named Billy Bunter, who was going to take it back to school with him for purposes of "swank," no one was likely to guess!

Mr. Sniggerson was not likely to mention that.

Whether he would escape "chokey," as the stolen goods had not been found on him, or whether he would get the three months' "hard" that he richly deserved, Mr. Sniggerson did not yet know.

But he knew that, sooner or later, he was going to interview the fat schoolboy named Bunter, at the school called Greyfriars, and get that diamond pin away from him again.

That prospect was a consolation to the sandy man in his present time of trouble.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

A Happy Meeting!

"MAULY!" yelled Billy Bunter. It was real luck!
"The shades of night were falling fast," as a poet has already remarked.

Billy Bunter had alighted at the station for Mauleverer Towers, in Hampshire, many a long mile from Wharton Lodge.

Mauleverer Towers was his destination now.

Having expended the whole of Wharton's ten shillings on the purchase of a diamond pin, railway tickets, and a

little refreshment, Billy Bunter was minus the necessary sum to hire a taxi to Mauly's stately abode.

It was rather a long walk, and Bunter was not keen on walking.

During the afternoon the sun had come out very brightly, and there had been a thaw. The roads were fearfully sloppy, and, apart from his rooted objection to exertion, Bunter did not want to tramp through melted snow and sloppy mire and arrive at Mauleverer Towers in a mud-bespattered state.

He was by no means certain of what kind of welcome he would receive there, anyhow, as Mauly did not know that he was coming, and could not—by the widest stretch of imagination—be supposed to want him there.

Still, now that Wharton Lodge had, as it were, dried up, Bunter had to land himself somewhere, and he was going to land himself on Mauly if he could.

At such a place as Mauleverer Towers, Bunter would have preferred to arrive in decent style. But the unfeeling selfishness of the Famous Five had prevented him from arriving there with a well-packed suitcase. Still, he could avoid arriving in a muddy and spattered state by taking a taxi—if only he could be sure that Mauly would pay for the taxi! Even Bunter realised that it was a little "thick" for an uninvited guest to land himself on a disconcerted host and ask, first of all, for that host to pay his taxi-fare! On the other hand, the roads, though dreadfully sloppy, were now safe for wheels, and there were taxis to be had at the station.

Bunter was debating that knotty point in his fat mind when a big car glided along, and, in surprise and satisfaction, he recognised a rather slim and well-dressed youth who was sitting in it.

It was something like luck!

He did not want a taxi now! He fairly bounded into the road, waved a fat hand, and roared:

"Mauly!"

The liveried chauffeur who drove Lord Mauleverer's handsome car stared at him. So did Lord Mauleverer.

"Oh gad!" ejaculated the schoolboy earl; and even Billy Bunter could not imagine that he looked delighted.

"Stop, old chap!" yelled Bunter.

Mauly signed to the chauffeur to halt. He would have preferred to tell him to stamp on the gas. But the schoolboy earl of Greyfriars was always good-natured and easy-going.

Bunter hooked open the door.

"Fancy meeting you, old chap!" he beamed.

"Yaas."

"Going home?"

"Yaas."

"Give me a lift."

"Where?"

Bunter coughed.

"Well, the fact is, Mauly, I—I've got to put up for the night somewhere—just for the night, you know. The fact is, I'm going to stay with Smithy—he's been so pressing that I haven't felt able to refuse. But just for to-night, I dare say you could give a fellow a bed?"

Lord Mauleverer gazed at him.

He knew his Bunter!

If William George Bunter was landed at Mauleverer Towers for the night, nothing short of a boot, applied vigorously to his tight trousers, would get him out of Mauleverer Towers again.

Mauly seemed rather at a loss.

Perhaps his aristocratic brain did not work swiftly. Bunter's, however, did! While Mauly gazed at him, Bunter clambered into the car.

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"You can drive on!" he said to the chauffeur.

"Oh gad!" said Lord Mauleverer.

"Jolly to meet like this—what, old chap?" said Bunter affably. "Sheer chance, you know. Hadn't an idea I was within miles of you."

"Oh!"

"Your chauffeur seems deaf. Tell him to get a move on! To tell you the truth, old chap, I'm rather hungry!"

Lord Mauleverer still gazed at him. He seemed to be thinking something out. Finally he spoke.

"Did you say you were hungry, Bunter?"

"Yes, old chap! Frightfully!"

"There's a pastry-cook's next to the station—"

"I noticed that!" said Bunter. The Owl of the Remove had an eye for such establishments.

"What about gettin' a cake?" asked Lord Mauleverer.

Bunter beamed.

"Dear old chap!" he said affectionately. "If those rotters at Wharton Lodge were more like you, I wouldn't have turned them down! But I had to, you know! I simply had to! 'No, old fellow,' I said to Wharton; 'I can stand you, and even your dashed old uncle, but I'm not coming on to Bull's place with you! You can't expect it! My very words. Bull was rather cut up, but—'"

"Well, hop out and get that cake!"

"Like a bird!" said Bunter. "By the way, though, I lent Wharton my last banknote—"

"Oh gad!"

"The fact is, I'm absolutely stony! You'd hardly believe it, but—"

"Yaas, I can sort of believe it," said Lord Mauleverer. "Any objection to me lendin' you half-a-crown?"

"None at all, old fellow! I never borrow, as a rule; but from a pal like you—"

Bunter stepped out of the car, with the half-crown in his fat hand, and scudded into the pastry-cook's. He was gone three minutes. During those three minutes Lord Mauleverer talked to his chauffeur.

A faint grin dawned for a moment on the chauffeur's face as Lord Mauleverer talked.

"You understand, Robinson?" asked Mauly.

"Yes, my lord! Quite!"

Lord Mauleverer sank back in his seat as Billy Bunter came scudding back to the car with a cake under his arm. The fat Owl of the Remove clambered in. The door banged and the car moved on.

Bunter unwrapped the cake.

"Have some, Mauly?"

"Hem! No, thanks! Pile in, old fat man!"

"It's a jolly good cake," said Bunter with his mouth full. "Happy thought of yours, Mauly!" He blinked out of the car. "I say, your man isn't going on to the Towers—he's taking another road—"

"I'm going for a drive," said Lord Mauleverer.

"I thought you said you were going home?"

"So I was."

"Changed your mind?" asked Bunter, puzzled.

"Sort of feel I'd like to have a long drive now you're in the car, Bunter!" answered Lord Mauleverer blandly.

"My dear chap, all right!" Bunter beamed. "I say, though, the roads are filthy for a long drive. Couldn't get a car out at all early this afternoon, or I should be in the pater's Rolls now. Still, if you want a drive, old fellow, I'm
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agreeable. Sure you won't have some of this cake?"

"Quite, thanks!"

"Then I'll finish it!" said Bunter.

And he did, without undue delay.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Home, Sweet Home!

Lord MAULEVERER leaned back in the cushioned seat in the soft, shaded light in the car.

Darkness had fallen now, and the big Rolls was going at a good speed through deep gloom and shadows. The roads, as Bunter had declared, were filthy; thawed snow and mud splashed from the revolving wheels. A light drizzle was falling, too. But inside the car all was comfortable and cosy; and Billy Bunter's fat face expressed satisfaction. Mauly's expressed nothing. It seemed that Mauly had taken a fancy to a rather long drive, for mile after mile ran under the wheels. Bunter did not mind, so long as he arrived at the Towers by the time he was hungry again after the cake. A half-crown cake formed a fairly good "snack," even for Bunter; and for the moment he was not hungry.

But he was a little puzzled. Lord Mauleverer, he gathered, had run out in the car after tea, and had been going back to his home when Bunter had spotted him by the railway station. Now, because Bunter was in the car, he had decided on a long—a very long—drive! If this was because Bunter's company in the car was so very pleasant, it was rather flattering. But was it?

The weather was not really agreeable for motoring. Darkness, road lamps, glimmering village lights, floated by the car; drizzle wetted the panes. And still the car ran on and on and on.

Billy Bunter leaned back, closed his eyes behind his spectacles, and dozed! He was tired after his travels.

He was soon snoring!

A deep snore mingled with the hum of the car. Lord Mauleverer glanced at him once or twice.

Mauly was not exactly an observant fellow. He never noticed what anybody wore! But he could not help catching the glitter of Bunter's magnificent diamond pin.

The fat junior started into wakefulness at last. Inward premonitions warned him that it was time for another meal.

He rubbed his eyes, blinked, set his spectacles on his fat little nose again, and looked round. The car was still eating up the miles through the January dark and drizzle.

"I say, Mauly—"

"Yaas?"

"What time do you dine at the Towers?"

"Eight!"

"Isn't it eight yet?"

"Yaas!"

"Then you'll be late for dinner?"

"Yaas!"

"I say, old chap, you shouldn't be late for meals," said Bunter anxiously. "I'm not thinking about myself—I never do, you know—"

"Eh?"

"But you have to consider your health, old fellow! It's frightfully bad for the health to be late for meals. Better tell your man to buck up." Bunter blinked from the window into the winter gloom. "Are we far from the Towers now?"

"Yaas."

"Well, you're rather an ass, old chap!"

"Yaas!"

Billy Bunter suppressed his irritation. But it was not easy! He was getting

hungry—seriously hungry! What was the use of rushing about in a car after dark, in a dismal drizzle of wet, when a fellow might be sitting down to a solid, substantial meal? Bunter thought it simply idiotic!

But Lord Mauleverer gave no sign; and the car sped on.

"Shall we be long getting in now, Mauly?" asked Bunter at length.

"Yaas! I mean, no!"

"Well, the sooner, the better!" granted Bunter.

"Yaas!"

"Like my diamond pin, Mauly?" asked Bunter, remembering that adornment. "Rather neat, what?"

"Yaas."

"It's an heirloom, really," said Bunter. "Been in the family hundreds of years. But I had rather a fancy for having it made up into a tiepin, you know! What are you grinning at, Mauly?"

"W-w-was I grinnin', dear boy?"

"Rather a decent stone, what?" said Bunter, fingering the pin. "I don't mind telling you that it cost a cool couple of hundred, Mauly!"

"Oh gad!" said Mauly.

"Two-fifty, to be exact!" said Bunter airily, and apparently forgetful of his statement that it had been in the family hundreds of years. "Rather extravagant, do you think? Still, when a fellow has tons of money, why not spend it, what?"

"Oh! Yaas!"

"Hallo, your man's stopping!" said Bunter, blinking round. "We're not at the Towers, are we?"

"No!"

"What's he getting down for, then?"

"Askin' the way, perhaps!"

"Doesn't he know the way?" yapped Bunter, who was getting very impatient. "If one of our chauffeurs couldn't find his way, Mauly, we should sack him!"

"Yaas."

"The fact is, I'm hungry!" said Bunter.

"Yaas."

The car was at a standstill by the roadside, the engine still running. The chauffeur seemed to have disappeared in the gloom. Bunter blinked round with growing impatience and annoyance. He really failed to understand all this! It was odd, to say the least, that Mauleverer had suddenly decided on a very long drive as soon as Bunter was in the car. And the drive was not only very long, but very long indeed! After all this time they were apparently so far from home that the chauffeur had to inquire his way! It was all very puzzling and irritating to a fellow who wanted a solid meal.

But the man came back at last, re-mounted into the driving-seat, and ran the car on. Another mile glided under the wheels.

Then there was another halt.

The chauffeur dismounted and opened the door. Bunter, with a grunt of relief, rose to his feet. It seemed, after all, that they had not been far from their destination. All was dense darkness, with a drizzle of rain and a blurring of mist. But there was a faint glimmer of light from some window at a distance.

Bunter stepped from the car and blinked round him.

"Step straight on, sir!" said the chauffeur.

"Come on, Mauly!" said Bunter over a fat shoulder.

He stepped on, anxious to get out of the dark and drizzle. He was not bothering much about Mauly.

There was a buzz of the car behind him. It was in motion again, and Bunter supposed that it was going round to the garage.

But he blinked about him in annoyed

puzzlement. There was a gate in front of him, dim in the dark, but there was no sign of the lofty portals of Mauleverer Towers. Why the thump had the car stopped there instead of driving up to the mansion?

"I say, Mauly!"
 Bunter blinked round.
 There was no answer.
 "Mauly!" roared Bunter.
 No reply.

Either Mauly had lost himself in the darkness, or he had remained in the car. And the car was gone!

"Mauly!" yelled Bunter.
 But only echo replied from the rain. More and more puzzled, more and more irritated, Bunter stamped on to the gate and opened it. If this was one of the entrances to Mauleverer Towers, it was utterly unlike any that he had seen on a previous visit to that palatial abode. But what else could it be? The chauffeur could hardly have stopped at the wrong house!

Bunter tramped up a woody, gravel path. Before him loomed a double-fronted villa, which even in the gloom had a familiar aspect somehow. But it was nothing whatever like Mauleverer Towers. Blinds were drawn at the windows; lights glimmered dimly through. Where was he?

Was it possible—barely possible—that Mauly had been pulling his leg? Had he arrived at Mauleverer Towers at all? If not, where had he arrived? More and more the aspect of the place seemed familiar.

He groped to the door and rang the bell. That was the only way of discovering where he was.

A small maid opened the door.
 Bunter blinked at her.
 "Sarah!" he ejaculated.

A fat face with a large pair of spectacles, remarkably like Billy Bunter's own visage, looked out of a door on the hall. It was the face of Sammy Bunter—William George's young brother.

Billy Bunter blinked at him.
 "Sa-a—Sammy!" he stuttered.
 Sammy grinned.

"Hallo, Billy! Home again, fatty? Couldn't they stand you any longer?"

"Home!" said Bunter faintly.

He staggered in.
 The dreadful truth rushed on his mind now.

He knew why Mauly had suddenly decided on that long, long drive. He knew why the car had shot away with Mauly in it after landing him. He was nowhere near Mauleverer Towers; he was a hundred miles from Mauleverer Towers. He was home again!

And Billy Bunter's feelings could not have been expressed in any known language as he tottered into Bunter Villa!

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Unexpected!

HERBERT VERNON-SMITH, the Bounder of Greyfriars, scowled. Smithy did not seem in a good temper that morning.

He had come down late. He had had an interview with his father, Mr. Samuel Vernon-Smith. To judge by his looks, he had not enjoyed the interview.

He had had no breakfast, late as it was. But he did not want any breakfast. Larkin, the butler in Mr. Samuel Vernon-Smith's mansion, in Courtman Square, London, brought him coffee and biscuits, receiving a grunt and a scowl by way of acknowledgment.

Smithy drank the coffee and munched half a dry biscuit. He was feeling rotten. His face was pasty in colour;

there were dark shadows under his eyes. He had what he would have described as a "next-dayish" feeling, and wished that he had not stayed quite so late last night at that delightful resort, the Pink Pelican night-club. He rather wished, too, that he had devoted less attention to that absorbing game, *chemin-de-fer*. He had left his last "bean" at the Pink Pelican.

"Oh, you!" grunted Smithy, as the door opened and Tom Redwing came in.

Redwing's bright and healthy face was a startling contrast to Smithy's. He had been in bed at ten, and up at seven.

Tom Redwing was staying with his chum for a week in the holidays. But it was on rather odd lines.

His tastes and Smithy's were so utterly different that hardly any fellow at Greyfriars could understand why they had ever become friends at all.

IT'S WORTH YOUR WHILE
 to
 RAISE A SMILE!

Ronald Andrews, of 175, Dover Road, Folkestone, Kent, has done the trick and wins a penknife for his trouble.
 Here's his winning effort:



Mr. Quelch. "Give me what you have in your mouth, Bunter!"
 The Owl of the Remove: "I wish I could, sir. It's a gum-boil!"

NOTE.—All jokes and Greyfriars limericks should be sent to: "Limericks and Jokes" Editor, c/o The MAGNET, 5, Carmelite Street, London, E.C.4.

Still, they were friends—great friends. They liked to be together. Yet Redwing saw very little of his host and chum while he stayed at Courtman Square. Certainly Redwing never accompanied Smithy to the Pink Pelican, or any such place. Neither did Smithy want him to. Tom would have been the heaviest of wet blankets at such a place.

While he stayed with Smithy, Tom was thrown very much on his own resources. He did not mind. A walk in the park, a ride on or of a bus, or a visit to the British Museum, seemed enjoyable to the sailorman's son. He thoroughly enjoyed every "show" to which Mr. Vernon-Smith took the two juniors. But the millionaire financier had little time to give them. He left his son to look after his guest, and his son left his guest to look after himself.

Redwing's bright face clouded a little

as he glanced at the Bounder's tired, pasty, scowling visage.

"Been out?" grunted Smithy.
 "Yes, old chap. It's a beautiful morning," said Tom. "I called you, but you didn't hear, so I thought I'd let you sleep. I suppose you were in rather late."

"Two o'clock."
 "That's rather thick, isn't it, Smithy?" said Tom gravely.

"The pater thinks so. He's taken away my latchkey."

"Well, it's about time he did, I think, Smithy," said Redwing. "You're not looking very fit, old fellow."

"I'm not feelin' very fit. Of course, you're feelin' as fit as a fiddle, as usual!" sneered the Bounder.

Tom made no answer to that. Smithy was the fellow to "row" even with a guest when his temper was bad. And Redwing did not want to row. He walked across to the window and stood looking out into the square.

Herbert Vernon-Smith scowled at his back.

"I've had rather a row with the pater," he remarked, after a long silence.

"I'm sorry, Smithy."
 "I don't see that it's my fault," argued the Bounder. "I've always been indulged. And who's indulged me, I'd like to know? But the pater had a shock when I was turfed out of Greyfriars last term, Reddy. He fixed it up all right, and the Head let me go back. But it gave him a shock."

"No wonder!" said Redwing. "He couldn't fix it up again, Smithy. If you get the boot again it will be for good. I can understand your father feeling anxious."

Grunt—from the Bounder.

"Well, I'm going to be careful next term at Greyfriars," he said. "I'm not going to give Quelch or the Beak any chance at me. But I don't see why a fellow shouldn't cut loose a bit in the hols. The pater's never kicked up a row about it before."

"He's anxious about you now."
 "I'm in a hole! I'm stony broke, and haven't a bean; and the pater's absolutely refused to let me have sixpence. Last hols I had only to ask him for a tonner, or a pony, if I wanted it. It's rather a change."

Again Redwing made no reply. He could not help thinking that it was high time that that change had occurred, and that it was for Smithy's good. But it was no use saying so to the Bounder.

"What am I goin' to do the rest of the hols?" grunted Vernon-Smith. "Like me to come to some dashed museum with you, or go to see them changing the guard! My hat!"

Redwing smiled.

"Or shall we go to a concert?" asked the Bounder, with bitter sarcasm.

"There's some jolly good concerts in—"

"Oh, chuck it!"
 There was silence while the Bounder crumbled a biscuit.

"Can't you say anything?" inquired Vernon-Smith at last.

"Like me to make a suggestion?" asked Tom, with a smile.

"Yes—bother you!"
 "Right-ho! You've been playing the goat, Smithy: you're a silly ass! Now, you've got to chuck it if the money's run out. I've been with you a week. Now come and stay with me a week at Hawkscliff."

"Wha-a-at?"
 "My father's away at sea," said Redwing. "We shall have the cottage to

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ourselves. We can do our own cooking, make our own beds, sail the old boat on fine days, and clamber over the cliffs."

"Oh gad!"
"And it will pull you round, and make you clean and wholesome again after your fooleries—"

"You cheeky ass!"
Redwing laughed. The Bounder stared at him blankly. But slowly his expression changed, and he smiled.

As a matter of fact, the blackguardism in Smithy's nature was largely superficial; there was good stuff underneath. The change from the millionaire's mansion in Courtman Square to the humble cottage perched over the chalk cliffs at Hawkscliff was rather a startling one. Yet at the bottom of his heart the Bounder despised a fellow who needed servants to wait on him hand and foot, and had all a healthy boy's pleasure in fending for himself. Redwing had made his suggestion in jest, but the Bounder took it in earnest.

"Reddy," he said slowly, "you're a blithering idiot, old chap, but you talk sense sometimes. We'll go."

"My dear chap, think first!" said Tom, laughing. "It will be like caravanning; there isn't a servant of any sort within miles of Hawkscliff—"

"Do you think I have to have my hair combed for me, like that ass Mauleverer?" grunted the Bounder.

"There isn't a French cook—"

"Don't be an ass!"

"You'd have to clean your own shoes, Smithy!"

"Think I can't?"
"If you mean it, Smithy," Redwing's face brightened. "I say, old chap, we could really have some good times in the boat—risky in this weather, but you'd like it all the better for that."

"It's a go! The pater will be pleased, too," added Smithy, with a half-sneer. "He was down on you when I first palled with you, because you're not up to your neck in money; but he's frightfully keen on you now—thinks you're a good influence for me."

"Oh, my hat!" exclaimed Redwing suddenly, staring from the window at a fat figure that was mounting the steps.

"What—?"
"Bunter! Have you asked him here, Smithy?"

"Not that I know of." Vernon-Smith rose and joined his chum at the window. He stared out blankly at a fat face adorned by a big pair of spectacles. "Great pip! Has that cheeky porpoise really got the nerve to barge in here? I thought he was sticking Wharton for the hols. Wharton's the kind of silly ass to let him."

Billy Bunter rang the bell.
"Well, my hat!" said the Bounder. "Let him come in; he will go out again so fast that it will make his head swim!"

Then the Bounder burst into a laugh. A new idea had come into his mind—an idea that appealed to his sardonic nature.

"Ha, ha, ha!" he roared. "What a lark!"

"I don't see—"
"You will!" grinned the Bounder. "Don't you say anything; leave it to me. Hallo, what is it, Larkin?"

"A young gentleman of the name of Bunter, sir," said the butler.

"Show him in here," said the Bounder.

And Billy Bunter rolled in, with his most ingratiating grin on his fat face, but an extremely wary look in his little round eyes behind his big, round spectacles.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Bamboozling Bunter!

"I SAY, you fellows—"
"It's dear old Bunter!" said the Bounder cordially.

Bunter blinked; Redwing stared. Bunter had hoped, but hardly expected, to hear such a greeting from the Bounder.

"Fancy seein' you here!" went on the Bounder. "Whom are you doin' in London? I mean, of course, what are you doin', old fat bean?"

"The—the fact is—"
"Makin' a round of the West End, callin' on your titled friends and relations, after the rush of the house-parties at Bunter Court?" asked Vernon-Smith, with owl-like gravity.

"Eh? Oh, yes! Exactly!" stammered Bunter.

"And you've found time to give me a look-in!" continued Vernon-Smith. "I take that very kindly, Bunter! It's decent of you."

Billy Bunter blinked at him, as if he could hardly believe his fat ears. In his most hopeful moments he had hardly hoped for this. But Bunter was the fellow to rise, like a fat gudgeon, to any bait. The Bounder's face was serious, and he seemed to be speaking seriously. So the fat and fatuous Owl of the Remove rose to it guilelessly.

"Well, I had a few minutes, Smithy," he said affably. "I remembered your address by sheer chance. Most of the

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addresses I call at are rather farther West. He, he, he!"

That was Bunter all over! Immediately he found that he was not to be kicked out, he started to swell.

Redwing glanced rather curiously at his chum. Courtman Square was West End; but not awfully West End, as it were. But the Bounder took that remark from Bunter without turning a hair.

"Too bad, that you've got only a few minutes, Bunter," he remarked.

"Well, old chap, I could stretch it a bit," said Bunter. "I could manage to stay to lunch. In fact—"

"Couldn't give us a few days?" asked Smithy.

Bunter again could scarcely believe his fat ears. This was rather better than that beast Wharton, or that other beast Mauly!

"Well, look here, Smithy, if you'll let me use your phone, I'll put some people off and fix it," he said. "Look here, I'll make it a few days—"

"What about a week?" asked the Bounder.

"Well, dash it all, I might manage a week! Yes, I'll manage a week, somehow. I've half promised that chap D'Arcy, of St. Jim's; and there's Mauly, you know, keeps on reminding me that I haven't seen him for a long time; but look here, Smithy, I'll cut them both off. Say a week, old chap."

"Done!" said the Bounder. "If you're free to-day—"

"Oh, quite! I mean, I shall have to wash out one or two engagements in the West End. But that's all right; rely on me."

"Well, this couldn't have happened better, could it, Reddy?" said the Bounder heartily. "Just when we're going to start, Bunter blows in like this, and can come with us!"

"Oh!" ejaculated Redwing, and he suppressed a laugh. He was beginning to see the Bounder's drift now.

"Going away?" asked Bunter, his fat face falling a little. Bunter preferred the millionaire's mansion, and a round of gaieties in the West End, if he could contrive it.

"Off in an hour," said the Bounder. "Just time to pack, in fact. Only just settled it, you see! Of course, where we're going is hardly what you're used to, Bunter, at Bunter Court. I understand that you have dukes by the dozen and princes by the peck. But in our humbler way we're going to have rather a good time, ain't we, Reddy?"

"I hope so," said Tom, smiling.

"Well, I'll come," said Bunter. "But look here, would you be able to lend me a few things, Smithy? My baggage got left behind at Wharton Lodge the other day, and you know Wharton—he's never taken the trouble to send it on. And—"

"Leave that to me!" said Vernon-Smith. "Come in what you stand up in, old bean! It's you we want, not your baggage."

Bunter beamed.

"Just squat down and wait a tick while we pack," said the Bounder. "The pater's in the city; he'll be frightfully disappointed at not seeing you, but we're not waiting for him. Come on, Reddy!"

"I—I say," began Redwing.

"Come on, I tell you."

"Oh, all right!"
Redwing followed the Bounder from the room. Billy Bunter sat down to wait for them. His fat face was wreathed in smiles.

Never had he dreamed of a welcome like this from a hard nut like Herbert Vernon-Smith! But there it was; there was no doubt about it. Where the Bounder was going for the rest of the vac, Bunter did not know; but he knew that Smithy generally did everything in great style and a most expensive fashion, and he had no doubt that his destination was one of Vernon-Smith's country residences, or something equally attractive. Anyhow, a holiday with a millionaire's son, who spent money so recklessly and lavishly as the Bounder, was exactly what Bunter wanted. Bunter did not care much where he went, so long as it was comfortable, and there was plenty to eat, and some other fellow footed all the bills.

Smithy and Redwing came back under half an hour. Each of them had a packed bag in his hand.

"Come on, Bunter!" said the Bounder.

Bunter blinked at the bags. At the millionaire's mansion he would have expected to see liveried menials carry much larger bags to a magnificent car. Instead of which, the two juniors walked out, bag in hand, and there was no sign of a car.

Vernon-Smith left a message with Larkin for his father, and walked down the steps. Quite another side of the Bounder's character seemed to be uppermost now. His face was bright and cheerful, and he was evidently looking forward to the trip to Hawkscliff. Bunter, looking forward to something very different, rolled after him.

"Where's the car?" asked Bunter, rather pointedly.

"Catch it at the corner!" said Smithy. "This way!"

The car they caught at the corner was a motor-bus. Bunter clambered on it, puzzled and not pleased. Staying with



Bob Cherry released the handle of the carriage door and reached through the open window. Before Vernon-Smith knew what was happening, his rather prominent nose was gripped between a finger and thumb, and tweaked. "Gurrrrgh!" gasped the Bounder. "Urrrgh! Led do! Wurrgh!"

a millionaire's son did not mean travelling on buses, according to Bunter's idea. However, a bus it was, and it landed them at Charing Cross.

Tom Redwing took the tickets, and Bunter was further puzzled and further displeased to find himself landed in a third-class carriage.

"Are we travelling third?" he asked.

"Looks like it," said Smithy.

"But why?"

"Because there isn't any fourth," explained Smithy.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

Still more perplexed was Bunter when they got out of the train at Courtfield, a couple of miles from Greyfriars School. Smithy, certainly, couldn't be going to Greyfriars in holiday-time; but Bunter began to wonder where the dickens he was going.

"Here's a taxi, Smithy!" he called out.

"This way!" answered Smithy.

He walked down the High Street, with Redwing, and Bunter followed.

"You do the shopping, Reddy!" said the Bounder. "You can do it better than I can—besides you've got all the tin!"

Redwing laughed, and went into a shop. He went into two or three more shops, Smithy and Bunter waiting outside.

Finally, he had a shopping-bag packed fairly full when the three walked out of Courtfield. More and more puzzled, Bunter rolled on with them. On the Redoliffe road they caught a motor-bus, which carried them miles on their way. But no bus or any other conveyance went within a couple of miles of Hawkscliff; and the last two miles had to be walked.

In the clear, frosty air Smithy and Redwing enjoyed the walk—the keen sea-winds blew away the dismal reminiscences of the Pink Pelican from Smithy's mind. But Bunter did not enjoy the walk. He was not only puzzled and perplexed, but he was growing extremely irritable. He did not understand this at all.

"I say, you fellows, I'm tired!" he gasped.

"Oh, put it on!" said Smithy.

"Come on, Reddy!"

"Look here, where are we going?" demanded Bunter.

"Another mile, and you'll see."

"But, I say—"

"If you don't want this holiday with us, old fat man you can turn back. Lots of time to catch any train you like at Courtfield."

"My dear chap, I'm not really tired—that's all right! Don't mind me!" gasped Bunter. "Don't worry about me, old fellow!"

Vernon-Smith did not need telling that. He was not worrying about Bunter in the least.

"Look here, Smithy, hadn't you better tell him—" murmured Redwing.

"Shut up, Reddy!"

They tramped on and up into the rugged, irregular street of the little village of Hawkscliff, perched on the chalk cliffs over the sea. Billy Bunter blinked round.

"I say, you fellows, isn't this Hawkscliff, where Redwing used to live before he came to Greyfriars?" he exclaimed.

"Just that!"

"Then—where are we going?" gasped Bunter. "There ain't any hotels in this

place—not even an inn—or a house—only cottages!"

"Here we are!" said the Bounder, stopping at the neat little cottage that belonged to John Redwing, now away at sea. "Got the key, I hope, Reddy?"

"Yes, rather."

Redwing unlocked the door. The Bounder went in with him. Billy Bunter stood in the doorway, blinking at them, as they opened doors and windows to air the cottage. The Bounder glanced round at him.

"Get your coat off, Bunter! Bring in some firewood—there's a stack in the shed at the back!"

"Wha-a-t?"

"Make yourself useful, old bean! No servants here, you know—none of the pampered flunkies of Bunter Court! You don't keep a butler here, do you, Reddy?"

"Hardly!" said Redwing laughing.

"We—we—we're going to—to—to stay here?" gurgled Bunter.

"That's the big idea!"

"But—" gasped Bunter.

"Buck up with that firewood. We're roughing it here, you know—every man's got to lend a hand! You're not going to slack round doing nothing, as you did when you were hiking with Wharton's crowd in the summer! Get some wood chopped—sharp!"

"Beast!" roared Bunter.

"Eh! Anything the matter?"

"You—you—you—" gurgled Bunter. "Think I'm going to rough it in a blinking fisherman's cottage chopping wood and lighting fires?"

"It's quite good fun—"

(Continued on page 16.)



(Continued from page 13.)

"Beast!"

"Don't waste time, old fat man! You've got to get your bedclothes out, and aired—"

"Beast!"

"And then fill the lamps—there's no electric light here, you know, not even gas—"

"Rotter!" roared Bunter.

"Bunter seems dissatisfied about something, Reddy!" said the Bounder. "Do you know what's the matter with him?"

"Oh, you rotter!" gasped Bunter.

"Pulling my leg—"

"He seemed quite keen on coming with us," said the Bounder. "He washed out a lot of engagements in the West End, and all that, to come. Now he seems dissatisfied. What's the matter, Bunter?"

"Beast!"

"Look here, buck up with that fire-wood—"

"Shan't!" howled Bunter.

"And fill this kettle at the pump! If the pump's frozen—"

Billy Bunter gave the Bounder a glare that nearly cracked his spectacles. Then he turned on his heel and stalked away.

"It's too bad, Smithy!" said Redwing, laughing.

The Bounder stepped to the door.

"Bunter!" he roared.

"Beast!" floated over Bunter's fat shoulder.

"Where are you going?"

"Yah!"

"Aren't you staying with us a week here?"

Billy Bunter did not trouble to answer that question. He rolled away, only anxious to reach the road, where it was possible to pick up a motor-bus for the station!

Chopping wood, making fires, wrestling with frozen pumps was not Bunter's idea of a holiday—not in the least! Bunter Court was better than that! And William George Bunter lost no time in getting back to Bunter Court, otherwise Bunter Villa; and Smithy and Redwing were left at Hawkscliff without his fascinating society! Which, probably, they did not miss very much!

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Pon is Playful!

C ECIL PONSONBY, of the Fourth Form at Highcliffe School, stared.

Then he shaded his eyes with his hand, as if dazzled.

His friends, Gadsby and Monson, grinned.

There was a crowd on the platform of Lantham Junction.

It was the first day of the new term; and as both Greyfriars and Highcliffe started the term on the same day, there were plenty of both Greyfriars fellows and Highcliffians about.

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Pon & Co. were walking along the crowded platform, with their noses in the air, and their usual supercilious looks when they sighted Billy Bunter.

Bunter was blinking round him through his big spectacles, apparently looking for somebody, and did not observe Pon & Co.

But Pon & Co. observed him.

They observed, too, the dazzling glitter of a diamond in Billy Bunter's tie. It was a big diamond—quite a big diamond—and it caught the wintry sunshine and flashed and glittered in great style.

Hence Pon's playful action. He shaded his eyes as if Bunter's big diamond dazzled him like the sun at noonday.

Not, of course, that Pon fancied for a moment that it was a real diamond. If it was real, it was worth a good hundred pounds. A hundred pence was nearer Bunter's mark.

"Jovver see anything like that, you men?" asked Pon.

"Hardly ever!" grinned Gadsby.

"Must have bought it by the ounce."

"By the pound!" said Monson.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter blinked round at the sound of laughter. He blinked at the grinning Highcliffians.

"I say, you fellows, seen Wharton?" he asked. "I spotted him a minute ago, but he seems to have got lost in the crowd."

"Can't see anybody or anythin'," answered Ponsonby shaking his head.

"Eh! Why can't you?" asked Bunter.

"Too dazzled!" explained Ponsonby.

"Ha, ha, ha!" chortled Gadsby and Monson.

"Oh, really, Ponsonby—"

"Do you buy your diamonds by the pound?" asked Pon. "If you gave a penny a pound for that one, it must have cost you a lot."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yah!" retorted Bunter, and he turned his back on the dandy of Highcliffe, and blinked round through his spectacles for Harry Wharton who had—perhaps—accidentally disappeared in the crowd.

Pon winked at his friends.

"Watch me!" he murmured.

He tiptoed behind Bunter. The Highcliffe fellow was taller than the fat Owl of Greyfriars. Bunter was tall sideways! Pon, watched by his grinning friends, reached over Bunter's podgy shoulder and coolly jerked the pin from his tie.

Had Pon believed, for a moment, that it was a real diamond, certainly he would not have played foolish tricks with it. But it never occurred to him for a moment that it was a genuine stone. He had no doubt whatever that Bunter had picked it up for sixpence or a shilling and that it was a particularly glaring sham.

Holding the glittering diamond aloft, the playful Pon jumped back. There was a startled yell from Bunter.

He spun round like a fat humming-top!

"Beast! Gimme my tiepin!" he roared.

Ponsonby held it up out of reach. Billy Bunter grabbed up at it in vain! He could not get anywhere near it. Gadsby and Monson roared, and a dozen Highcliffe fellows gathered round, laughing, too. Billy Bunter was the centre of a merry circle.

"Gentlemen what offers for this gorgeous diamond?" sang out Pon. "A specimen of the famous Bunter collection—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Warranted of the purest water, and worth—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gimme my pin!" shrieked Bunter, clutching wildly. "You beast, that stone's worth twenty pounds."

"Not twenty thousand?" roared Gadsby.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you lose it, I'll make you pay for it!" howled Bunter. "Give it to me, you beast! My diamond pin—"

"Some diamond!" chortled Monson.

"What offers?" called out Ponsonby. "Going—going—going—what offers for this magnificent Bunter diamond, best paste—"

"Twopence!" said Gadsby.

"Threepence!" said Monson.

"Going at threepence!" shouted Ponsonby, in the style of an auctioneer. "Going—going—this gorgeous diamond is going at threepence! What offers over threepence for this magnificent gem? No gem equal to this can be got for less than sixpence at the bazaar—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You beast, I gave thirty pounds for that diamond pin!" roared Bunter.

"Then you were done out of twenty-nine pounds nineteen-and-six!" said Gadsby.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beast! Rotter! Gimme my diamond!" shrieked Bunter. Since that diamond had come into his possession Bunter had swanked with it considerably, and had stated so often that it was real, that he had almost come to believe so himself.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's the jolly old row?" asked the cheery voice of Bob Cherry as he came along with Johnny Bull and Frank Nugent.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Dear old Bunter! Fat as ever!" said Bob. "Hallo, hallo, hallo, what's Pon waving his diamonds about for?" Bob stared at the flashing, glittering gem in Pon's uplifted hand.

"It's mine!" yelled Bunter.

"Eh? Yours! Rats!" said Bob.

"I tell you it's mine—a Christmas present from my Uncle George!" yelled Bunter. "My diamond tiepin! Make him hand it back to me, Bob! You can lick that Highcliffe cad."

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"If it's yours, old bean, it can't be worth a lot," remarked Bob. "Let him have it for the tanner it cost."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I tell you it's real," roared Bunter. "It's the best New Year's gift I've had from my Uncle William—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Any advance on threepence?" chortled Ponsonby. "This gorgeous Bunter diamond going at threepence—worth sixpence of any man's money—"

"Look here, if it's Bunter's, hand it over, Pon!" said Bob Cherry. "I suppose it's only paste, but a fellow's property is his property."

"Mind your own bizney!" retorted Ponsonby. "Who's asked you to bargo in?"

"Well, Bunter has!" said Bob good-temperedly. "A joke's a joke; but let him have it back."

"Rats! Gentlemen, what offers—"

"Gimme my diamond, you beast, or I'll hack your shins!" yelled Billy Bunter, in great wrath and excitement.

"There'll be a burst porpoise lying about soon afterwards, if you do," grinned Ponsonby. "I—why—what—varoooh— Whoop!" roared Pon, as Bunter suited the action to the word and hacked.

Pon's hand, clenching the diamond pin in it, descended on Bunter, and there was a roar from the Owl of the Remove. Bunter sat down suddenly on Lantham platform.

"Oh crikey! Wow!" roared Bunter.

"There's your rubbish, you fat fool!" snarled Ponsonby, and he flung the diamond pin at Bunter, and it missed him and rolled on the planks.

"Owl! Beast! Wow!"

Frank Nugent picked up the pin. Pon, who had a pain where Bunter had hacked, reached out with his foot to give the fat Owl a lunge in the ribs as he sat gasping.

Bob Cherry pushed him back.

"Chuck that, Pon!" he said quietly.

"Stand back, you Greyfriars cad!" yelled Pon.

"Rats to you, you Highcliffe cad!" retorted Bob.

"Take that, then!"

Smack!

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bob as he staggered back from that sudden smack, which landed with all Pon's force on his ruddy face. "Ow!"

"Here, let's get out of this!" muttered Gadsby uneasily, and Pon & Co. pushed hastily through the crowd and ran for the train.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Smithy Asks For It!

HERBERT VERNON-SMITH, standing at the open doorway of a carriage, waved a hand to three fellows who came hastily along the train. Tom Redwing, who was looking out of the window, touched him on the arm.

"Keep the places for Greyfriars men, Smithy," he said. "We don't want those Highcliffe outsiders in here."

"I do!" said the Bounder coolly.

"Well, why?" demanded Tom rather sharply.

(Continued on next page.)



Post your Soccer queries to "Linesman," c/o The MAGNET, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. It's his job and his pleasure to answer knotty problems from readers.

PREPARING FOR THE BIG BATTLE!

THIS is the period of the football season when we hear a lot about special training; of the members of this or that football side being taken away to the seaside, or to some inland resort, to make extra preparations for a Cup-tie. This special training business is, really, nothing of the sort. If you visualise, by the words "special training," intensive preparation; more running exercises, more skipping, more ball practice, then I have to say that you are all wrong.

The sole objective of taking players away to the seaside in preparation for an important Cup-tie is that the men shall have a rest and a change of air.

I'll tell you a story connected with the so-called special training of Huddersfield Town for the Cup Final of 1922. The members of the team went off to Blackpool to "get ready." I pictured them out and about working schemes for the downfall of their opponents in the Cup Final. You know the sort of thing—deep-laid plans of attack and defence being practised. Actually, I got a shock. One day I went to the special training quarters of the Huddersfield Town team and asked the manager if I could take a few pictures of the players in action, passing the ball to each other, and that sort of thing.

The manager was very polite, and willing to help. But he couldn't do much to assist because, as he told me, "If you want to take photographs of our footballers playing with a football, you will have to buy them a football. They haven't brought one with them." It seems strange to imagine a football team preparing for a big football Cup Final without a football, but that was an actual fact so far as the Huddersfield Town team of that year was concerned.

When I remember these days, I wonder what I shall say to the correspondent who asks me what is the most common form of training for efficiency at football. The trouble is that there is no accepted system. My Oldham reader will find that he really does not need a lot of training provided that he is ordinarily fit. A few laps round some ground one or two evenings a week, a little ball practice and some exercise in the gymnasium.

The simple fact of this training matter is, of course, that once a player is thoroughly fit he does not need a lot of training. Indeed, too much training is as bad as too little.

More teams have lost the championship, and lost the Cup, because of too much training rather than because of too little. Too much training results in stale footballers—players who are not eager for the fray. So my advice to my Oldham friend is to get fit, and then the minimum training will keep you going.

A STRANGE COINCIDENCE!

A CORRESPONDENT signing himself "Footballer" is clearly interested in the doings of the Manchester City club past and present, and I think the answers to his questions may be sufficiently interesting to be given here. For instance, he wants to know how many times Manchester City have won the Cup. The reply to that question is that Manchester City have only won the Cup once, according to the records. That was in 1904.

I guarantee, however, that I could introduce my correspondent to people who would tell him that Manchester City have never really won the Cup.

On the one occasion on which Manchester City were returned victorious there was a big to-do. The goal which won the match was scored by Billy Meredith, the fellow who played in fifty international matches for Wales. The players of Bolton Wanderers, the opponents of Manchester City on that day, contended that when Meredith scored the goal which counted he was in an offside position. Whether Meredith was offside or not doesn't matter now, of course. The referee said he was not offside, and he is the fellow with the deciding "vote." But I shall never forget travelling back to Lancashire after that 1904 final with the players and officials of the Bolton Wanderers team. From the appearance of the railway compartment in which we travelled you would have imagined that we had been holding a paper chase. The compartment was full of bits of paper on which the travellers had sketched their ideas of the position of Meredith when he scored the winning goal.

Since then, Manchester City have been in two Cup Finals. In 1926 they were beaten by Bolton Wanderers, who thus got revenge for that 1904 affair, and last season Manchester City were beaten by Everton at Wembley. Isn't it a strange coincidence, by the way, that on the three occasions on which Manchester City have been in the Cup Final they have met opponents from Lancashire.

One man who tried desperately hard to prevent Manchester City being beaten in their last Cup Final was Eric Brook, the outside-left. He has since played regularly for England, and before joining Manchester City was associated first with Mexborough and then with Barnsley. This will answer another question from my Manchester friend.

THE ONLY ALTERNATIVE!

AN interesting story may be told concerning the transfer of Brook from Barnsley to Manchester. The officials of the two teams had agreed on the terms, but Brook was nowhere to be found. Eventually information came to the officials of the clubs that he was in a local cinema, so a notice was put on the screen at the cinema asking for Brook to come outside. This winger duly came outside, agreed to the transfer from Barnsley to Manchester City, and then went back to see the finish of the film.

It frequently happens that the goalkeeper of a football team falls on the ball, and there is then a scramble in the hope of getting it from him. What should the referee do in these circumstances? That is a question which is put to me.

In reply I have to say that the goalkeeper, like other footballers, can only be charged legitimately. If he is charged other than by the shoulder, then the punishment is a free-kick.

Now it is obviously difficult to charge a man who is lying on the ground with the ball beneath his body. What usually happens in these cases is that the referee decides that somebody has fouled the goalkeeper, and a free kick is given. If the goalkeeper does not rise with the ball and is not fouled, then the only thing the referee can do is to blow the whistle and drop the ball.

A Marlborough reader is disturbed because a free kick was recently given against him when the ball struck his hand. If this is so, then the referee made a mistake. The rule distinctly says that a free kick must only be given for intentional hands. Therefore, if a player who is running with his hand by his side finds the ball kicked against his hand his side should not be penalised.

Rugby football is not my strong point, but even on this head I am able to reply to a correspondent, and say that Salford won the Rugby League Cup in 1914 and 1933, and that Risman plays for Salford.

"LINESMAN."

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"It's nearly half an hour's run to Courtfield—it will be a bit more lively with Pon & Co.—"

"You're not friends with them." "That makes no difference! This way, Pon!" shouted the Bounder.

Redwing rose from his seat. That week at the cottage up at Hawkscliff had been quite a success. It had certainly done the Bounder good. But after it was over he had gone back to London, and Tom had not seen him again until to-day, when they met at Lantham. And even in a few minutes he had already observed that his wayward chum was in one of his reckless and wilful moods.

"If they're coming in here, Smithy—" said Redwing.

"They are!" "That means cards, I suppose——"

"You can shut your eyes!" grinned the Bounder.

"I'd rather get out."

"Nobody's stoppin' you."

Redwing, compressing his lips, stepped out and walked along the train. Ponsonby and Gadsby and Monson came up to the carriage door a moment later, rather breathless. After smacking Bob Cherry's face, Pon was rather anxious to get on the train, out of reach.

"Hop in!" said the Bounder amicably.

And the three Highcliffians hopped in. Drury and Vavasour, also of the Highcliffe Fourth, followed them in, and then the Bounder shut the door. They eyed Smithy rather curiously. The Bounder of Greyfriars was sometimes on friendly terms with the black sheep of Highcliffe—sometimes the reverse. Now, apparently, he was willing to be friendly, and Pon had no objection. He was more than ready for a little game while the train ran on to Courtfield, and hoped to extract profit therefrom, if Smithy was, as usual, in funds.

"Had good hols. old bean?" asked Pon, quite affably.

"Oh, rippin'." said the Bounder. He grasped the doorhandle as it was grasped from without. "No room!" he said through the window, with a grin at Bob Cherry's flushed and wrathful face.

"Pon's in there!" panted Bob. "I saw him get in."

"What about it?" "He smacked my face!" roared Bob. "I'm going to knock his features through the back of his head. Let go the door, Smithy."

"Keep that hooligan out, Smithy," said Ponsonby. "What a blighter he is for kickin' up rows!"

"Absolutely!" said Vavasour. Bob wrenched the doorhandle. The Bounder, with a mocking grin, held it fast on the inside.

"Hook it, old bean," he said. "Pon's travellin' with me! Run away and play."

"Let go that door, you rotter!" roared Bob.

"Bow-wow!" "Smithy, you cad, let me in! Are you standing up for that Highcliffe rotter? I tell you I'm going to whop him!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Will you let go that handle?"

"My dear man——"

"Let go!" bellowed Bob.

The Bounder grinned from the window. He seemed to find Bob's crimson and wildly excited face amusing. Pon & Co. laughed. They found it amusing also—so long as Bob could not get to close quarters. And he couldn't so long as the Bounder held the door.

Johnny Bull and Frank Nugent joined Bob. Nugent caught his arm.

"Time to get in, old man. Wharton's got a carriage farther on."

"Pon's in here, and I'm going to wallop him!" hooted Bob. "I'm not having my face smacked by a Highcliffe cad!"

"Well, the train will be starting——" said Johnny Bull.

"Blow the train!" Bob did not seem disposed to listen to reason.

From a door along the train Harry Wharton was waving his hand, and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh's dusky face looked out.

"This way, you men!" shouted Wharton. "I've got your seats!"

"Buck upfully, my esteemed and absurd fatheads!" yelled the Nabob of Bhanipur. "Otherwise the losefulness of the train will be a *sino qua non*!"

"Come on, Bob!" urged Nugent.

"Rats!"

"Pon can wait——"

"Rubbish!"

"Look here——" growled Johnny Bull.

"Let go this door, Smithy!" roared Bob, in almost frenzied tones. "You cheeky rotter, I'll punch your head for this!"

The Bounder laughed. It was chiefly from sheer mischief that he was opposing Bob's entry into the carriage. Though, as he had decided to travel with Pon, it was true that he did not want a shindy in the carriage between a Greyfriars man and the dandy of Highcliffe. Anyhow, he was not going to give way. Having taken his line, for whatever reason, the Bounder was not the fellow to back down. With both hands gripped on the door-handle, he kept the door shut, and Bob raged in vain.

Doors were slamming now along the train. There was no more time to lose, if Bob was not to be left behind at Lantham.

"Will you let go?" he panted.

"No!" answered the Bounder coolly.

"I won't!"

"Come on, Bob!" urged Nugent.

Bob released the outside handle. He reached through the open window, and grabbed at the Bounder's nose.

Smithy's grinning face was within reach, and that sudden change of tactics took him by surprise. Before Smithy knew what was happening, his rather prominent nose was gripped between a finger and thumb, and tweaked.

"Gurrurrgh!" gasped the Bounder.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Ponsonby.

"Urrrgh! Led do— Wurrgh!"

Bob let go, and let his friends rush him away along the train. They bundled into Harry Wharton's carriage barely in time.

The Bounder clasped his crimson nose, which had a distinct pain in it, panting with rage.

"By gad!" he gasped. "I—I—I—I—I'll——"

He tore open the door he had lately been holding shut.

"Hold on!" exclaimed Ponsonby.

"You'll lose your train!"

"It's just startin'!" exclaimed Gadsby.

The Bounder did not heed. He was as keen to get at Bob, as Bob had been to get at Pon. He leaped from the carriage, stared round for Bob Cherry, and ran along the train. The door was slammed the next moment by a porter, and the train was moving.

Vernon-Smith ran along, glaring at window after window. He grabbed the handle of the door that had closed on Bob and his friends. But the train was in motion, and a Lantham porter grabbed him by the shoulder and jerked him back.

"Too late, sir!"

"You fool, let go!" howled the Bounder.

"Stand back!"

"You meddlin' idiot——"

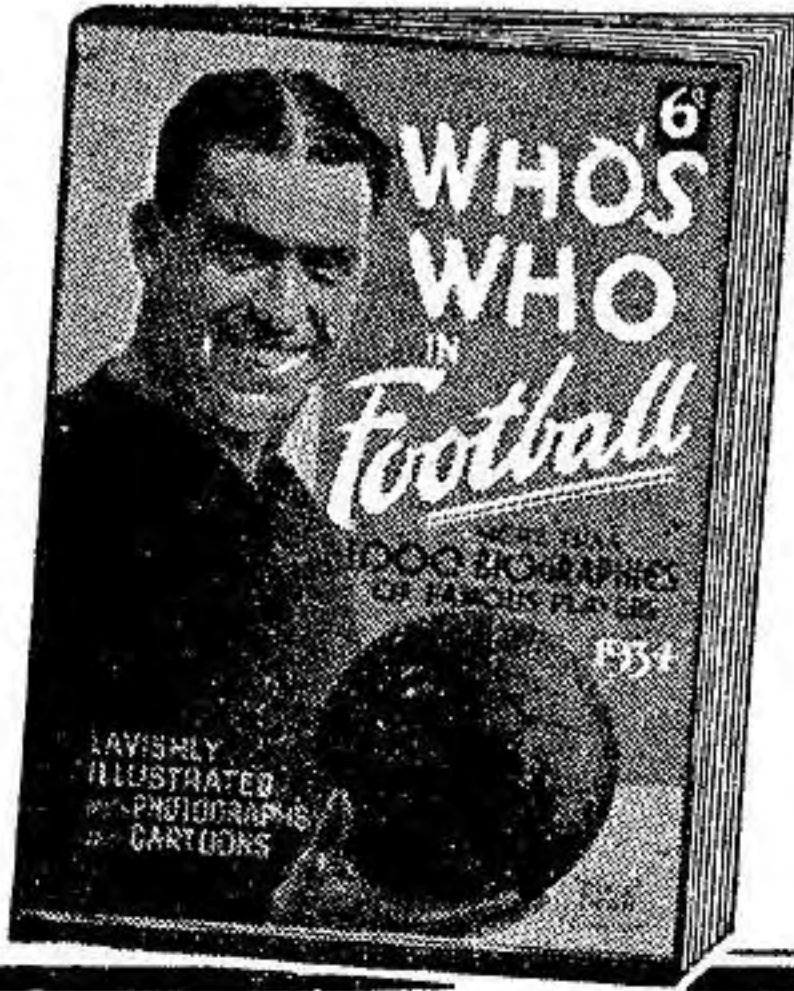
"Get back there!"

And the porter, who perhaps did not like being addressed as a fool and a meddling idiot, gave the Bounder a push, which caused him to "get back" so suddenly that he sat down on the platform.

Panting with rage, the Bounder sat and saw the train glide by. From one carriage window, Pon & Co. smiled at him—apparently amused. From another, Bob Cherry grinned cheerily, and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh waved a dusky hand. From another, the fat face of Billy Bunter grinned, and he squeaked:

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With a sudden movement, Billy Bunter twisted out of the jacket. "Come!" boomed Prout, jerking at the collar, and unconsciously helping the fat junior off with his jacket. "Why—what—Bunter—what—impertinent young rascal—good gad—what——" He broke off suddenly as the fat junior scudded wildly away.

"He, he, he!"

Then the train was gone, and the Bounder was left behind at Lantham to wait for the next.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Wild Adventures of W. G. Bunter!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

"Just the man I want to see!" said Harry Wharton.

"Oh, good!" said Bunter.

"Is it a study supper?"

"Not at all!"

"Then what?"

"You grabbed my cap and threw it along the platform when I saw you off at Elmdale in the hols——"

Bunter jumped back.

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"One good turn deserves another!" said the captain of the Remove. "Keep your head steady!"

Bunter made another backward jump. The Co. chuckled.

They did not, perhaps, want to be bothered by William George Bunter on the first day of term. And certainly Wharton had to pay Bunter back for snatching off his chap. So it seemed quite a good idea to pay that debt.

To Bunter, however, it did not seem a good idea at all. Perhaps he did not believe in paying debts. Certainly he seldom paid any. He backed away, blinking warily through his big spectacles.

"I say, you fellows, no larks! I say, have you heard the news? I was going to say—— Keep off, you beast!"

Bunter backed away again, and Harry Wharton followed him up, and the grinning Co. followed Wharton.

"Quelch——" said Bunter.

"Oh, Quelch!" said Bob Cherry. "I

haven't seen the old bean yet! What about Quelch?"

"He's not back!" said Bunter. "I hear that he's not coming back yet—may not be back this term at all—got a cold in the hols, or something—and, I say—keep off!"

Another backward jump.

The juniors had already discovered that their Form-master, Mr. Quelch, was not in evidence, and wondered what had become of him.

"I say, you fellows, if he's got a cold, it may turn to pneumonia, or something, and he may not come back at all!" said Bunter brightly.

"Oh, my hat! You fat villain——"

"Oh, really, Cherry! If we get another beak, he could hardly be worse than Quelch!" argued Bunter. "He had a bad cold last term, you know, and it was rather ripping while he was in sanny! Think of getting shut of him for a whole term! I say—keep off, Wharton, you beast!"

Harry Wharton reached out towards Bunter's cap. The Owl of the Remove made another rapid backward jump.

Then there was a sudden yelp.

Bunter, naturally, had no eyes in the back of his head! Jumping back, he could not see what was behind him.

It was rather unfortunate that Mr. Prout, the master of the Fifth, was bustling by.

Bunter landed on one of Mr. Prout's feet, and, still more unfortunately, on a favourite corn that adorned that foot.

Mr. Prout's sudden yelp was full of anguish.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter, spinning round. "Who—what——"

"Oooogh!" spluttered the Fifth Form master, hopping on one leg. "Ow! Ooooh! Woooogh! Upon my—grooogh—word! Whoooh!"

Harry Wharton & Co. faded away

across the misty quad. Billy Bunter would gladly have done the same. But a finger and thumb closed like a vice on Bunter's fat ear.

"You young rascal!" roared Prout.

"Ow! Leggo! It wasn't me!" gasped Bunter. "I mean—I didn't see you—ow!"

"How dare you jump on my foot! Ow! How dare you! I shall take you to your—ow!—Form-master—wow! Come with me!"

"I—I—I say, sir——" gasped Bunter.

"Come!" boomed Prout.

Keeping hold of Bunter's fat ear, Prout led him to the House. Had he let go that fat ear Bunter would have vanished as suddenly and swiftly as a Hunter of the Snark on beholding a Boojum. Prout's finger and thumb held on like a steel vice. Bunter was led to Masters' Passage, and with his free hand Prout tapped on the door of Mr. Quelch's study, and opened it.

"Quelch!" he barked.

The master of the Remove was not there. The study was unlighted. There was not even a fire. Prout blinked round.

"I—I say, sir!" gasped Bunter. "Quelch ain't back, sir!"

"What?" boomed Prout.

"Mr. Quelch hasn't come back, sir!"

"Oh!" said Prout.

He released Bunter's ear, but he stood between him and the doorway. Bunter blinked longingly at the doorway, past Prout's portly form.

"If your Form-master is not here, Bunter, I cannot report you to him!" boomed Prout.

"I—I don't mind, sir!" gasped Bunter.

"What?"

"I—I really don't mind, sir—not in

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the least. I—I—I'd prefer to—to let the matter drop," stammered Bunter.

"As I cannot report you to Mr. Quelch for punishment, Bunter, I have no resource but to take the matter into my own hands."

"Oh lor'!"

"I do not see a cane here."

Mr. Prout stared round the deserted study. Bunter was rather glad that he could not see a cane there.

But it booted not, as a poet would say.

"You will come to my study, Bunter."

"I—I say, sir, I—I've got to see the Head," gasped Bunter. "I—I haven't seen him yet, sir, and he told me to come to his study at once."

"What? If you have not yet seen Dr. Locke, how could he have told you to come to his study at once?" boomed Prout.

"I—I mean——"

"Come with me!"

Prout took hold of Bunter's collar this time. He led him from Quelch's study, and along the passage to his own. There was a cane there. Prout, with fearful shooting pains in his corn, was anxious to get hold of that cane. He was keen to put in some work with that cane.

But all the keenness was on Prout's side. Billy Bunter had no desire whatever to establish contact with that cane.

Prout's grip was on his jacket collar. It was quite a firm grip; but the jacket, if not the grip, was detachable.

When that grip had been on Bunter's ear the case was hopeless. Bunter could not part with his ear, leaving it in Prout's grip. The thing was impossible.

But he could part with his jacket, leaving it in Prout's grip—and he did. With a sudden movement Bunter twisted out of the jacket, and darted down the passage in his shirtsleeves.

It was rather a desperate proceeding; but then the case was desperate.

"Come!" boomed Prout, jerking at the collar, and unconsciously helping Bunter off with the jacket. "Why, what—Bunter—what an impertinent young rascal! Good gad! What——"

Prout stared at the unoccupied jacket in his hand. He stared at a fat figure in shirtsleeves that scudded wildly away.

"Bunter!" he roared.

He rushed in fierce pursuit.

Bunter turned the corner.

Crash!

It was one of the many gifts of Horace Coker of the Fifth Form at Greyfriars that he was always in the wrong place at the wrong moment. If there was, at any given moment, any place where it was better for Coker not to be, Coker of the Fifth was sure to be there.

Thus it was at the present moment.

Coker of the Fifth was coming along with his hands in his trousers pockets, when Bunter came round the corner.

What happened next Coker hardly knew.

Something that might have been a battering-ram, or a runaway rhinoceros, smote Coker of the Fifth where he had lately parked his tea.

Coker rolled.

With his hands in his pockets he could not even clutch at Bunter, or at the wall to save himself. He just rolled.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

He staggered from the shock; but he flew on. He did not stop to ask Coker whether he was hurt. It was indeed unnecessary—he knew that he was. Bunter, going strong, vanished into space.

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Coker sprawled and rolled and roared.

And Prout, in fierce pursuit of Bunter, came round the corner like another runaway rhinoceros.

What happened next was regrettable, but inevitable.

When a stout gentleman, going at full speed, ran into a fellow sprawling at full length on the floor, he was bound to come a purler.

Prout came a fearful purler.

His feet caught in Coker, and Coker, wildly clutching, captured Prout's knees. Prout rolled over Coker.

"Oooooogh!" gasped Coker, as the wind was driven out of him. "Urrggh! Wurrgh!"

"Oh! Ah! Ow! What?" gurgled Prout.

He sat up dazedly.

For the moment he was unaware that he was sitting on Coker. It seemed to Prout that an earthquake was going on—that the floor heaved and rocked under him. But it was not the floor—it was Coker!

"What—what—where—who—which—what!" stuttered Prout.

"Urrggh! Gerroff!"

"Bless my soul! Who—what——" Prout got off, and stared down at the breathless, gasping Coker.

Bunter's jacket was still in his hand. He hurled it aside, and concentrated on Coker. He flamed with wrath.

"Is—is—is it you, Coker?" stuttered Prout. "You—you—you incredibly stupid boy! You—you idiot!"

"Yurrrgh!"

"Lying down in the passage to trip up people. I have never heard of such amazing stupidity! What do you mean by it?"

"Wurrrgh!"

"Take five hundred lines, Coker!" roared Prout.

"Urrgh! I say—Gurrgh!"

"Pah!"

Prout stalked away. He was too bumped and shaken to give any further thought to the vanished Owl. He tottered back to his study, gasping and spluttering, and sank, gurgling, into an armchair. Coker, in a dazed and dizzy state, limped off the scene.

Ten minutes later a fat junior in shirtsleeves peered cautiously along the passage, through a pair of big spectacles, whipped up a jacket, and vanished again. Once more fully clad, Billy Bunter put on his cap and rolled out into the quad in search of the Famous Five, to learn whether there would be a study supper going. He found them, but he did not learn anything about a study supper.

His bullet head was tapped hard against the school wall instead, and the five juniors walked on, chuckling.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Just Like Smithy!

"SMITHY'S keeping it up," remarked Skinner, after last roll-call in Hall.

On the first day of term, fellows coming from the four quarters of the kingdom arrived by widely different trains, and at widely different times. But there was a calling-over at nine o'clock, by which time the last and latest Greyfriars man was expected to have put in an appearance, barring accidents. Herbert Vernon-Smith, of the Remove, was the only junior who hadn't.

Great men of the Sixth Form might come in later. Such tremendous big guns as prefects of the Sixth did what was right in their own eyes.

It was different with the small fry.

Loder and Carno of the Sixth, as a matter of fact, had not turned up yet, and fellows who knew them well wondered whether they had stopped on the way to renew old acquaintances at the Cross Keys. But Loder and Carno were prefects. Vernon-Smith was a Remove junior, and when the Head marked him absent at roll, the Head was observed to frown.

It was like the reckless Bounder to begin the new term, after all his trouble in the old term, with a cool disregard of authority. Skinner was rather amused; Tom Redwing was rather anxious.

Bed-time for the Remove was half-past nine, and the juniors speculated with keen interest whether the Bounder would "keep it up" till dawn. He was reckless enough to keep it up still later.

"He lost the train at Lantham," said Bob Cherry. "But there's been six or seven trains since then."

"I wish I knew where he was," muttered Redwing.

"You can use Quelch's phone," suggested Skinner. "Give him a ring!"

Redwing stared.

"How can I get him on the phone, fathead?" he asked.

"Easy enough. The Three Fishers number will be in the book!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a chortle from the Removites; but Tom Redwing turned away with a frowning and troubled brow. He knew that it was only too likely that the Bounder had dropped in at the Three Fishers instead of coming on to the school—it was a forbidden resort for Greyfriars fellows, and therefore a favourite one for Smithy when his blackguardly mood was uppermost.

And Redwing was well aware that his chum could not afford to take chances this term. He had had the narrowest possible escape from expulsion once, and the eye of suspicion was upon him.

But that was not the worst. His father had been alarmed and angered by that narrow escape, and it was not only the Head's anger but his father's that Smithy had to fear if he came another cropper.

The commonest of common sense should have led the Bounder to be careful, for a time at least. But this was how he was beginning.

It was twenty minutes past nine, and first night's supper in Hall was finishing when Billy Bunter's squeak was heard:

"I say, you fellows, here's Smithy!"

Many eyes were turned on the Bounder as he strolled in.

He was quite cool and unconcerned.

He nodded to fellows at the Remove table cheerfully, only bestowing a scowl on Bob Cherry, doubtless from a recollection of the nose-pulling episode at Lantham.

"Oh, here you are, Smithy!" said Redwing, in great relief.

The Bounder had not kept it up till dawn, at all events.

"Yes, here I am," yawned Smithy.

"Make room for a fellow."

"Seen the Head?"

"Not yet."

"Hadn't you better?"

"Oh, lots of time! Has Quelch been inquiring after me?"

"Quelch hasn't come back," said Peter Todd. "They say he got a cold in the holidays and won't be back yet."

"What splendid luck!" drawled the Bounder. "I'm not sure that Quelch

would have believed that I walked from Lantham and lost my way—"

"Oh, my hat!"
 "But it's good enough for the Head!"
 "Not so jolly sure of that!" grinned Skinner. "The old bean's got a wary eye on you, Smithy."

"Lost your way, old chap?" said Lord Mauleverer sympathetically. "Was it foggy round by Lantham? I didn't notice it in the train."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Oh, fearfully foggy," said the Bounder gravely. "That's how it was. I've walked about for hours and hours—"

"Hard cheese, old bean," said his unsuspecting lordship.

"Yes, wasn't it?"
 "Are you going to tell the Beak that?" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Why not?"
 "Oh, lots of reasons why not, though I don't suppose you would understand any of them," said Bob, with a grunt.

"He, he, he!" chortled Billy Bunter. "Fancy Smithy walking about in this weather for hours and hours, without even making his boots muddy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "By Jove!" said Lord Mauleverer.

"That's quite queer, Smithy. How did you keep your boots so jolly clean in those muddy lanes? Oh gad!" A light broke on Mauly's noble mind. "You never lost your way at all!"

"Go hon!" said the Bounder. "Are you gettin' suspicious in your old age, Mauly? I hope the Head won't catch it from you."

"Vernon-Smith!" came Wingate's deep voice from the high table where the prefects sat.

"Yes, Wingate."
 "You're to go to the Head at once."

"Mayn't I have a bite of supper first, Wingate?" asked the Bounder meekly. "I'm fearfully hungry after a long, long walk—"

"You may do exactly as you're told, if you don't want to start the term with a whopping!" growled the Greyfriars captain.

"Oh, all right!"

The Bounder lounged carelessly out of the Hall, followed by a good many glances—amused, concerned, some of them admiring. *Fellows who approved least of the Bounder's wild ways could not help admiring his nerve.

He was not seen again till dorm.

He joined the Remove on their way to the dormitory, and his look showed that he had not found trouble in the Head's study.

No doubt it was fortunate for the Bounder that Mr. Quelch was not there to call him to account. Quelch certainly would not have been likely to believe that the Bounder, having lost his train at Lantham, had walked, and got lost in foggy lanes

Perhaps Dr. Locke did not quite believe it, but was willing to give the scapegrace of Greyfriars the benefit of such doubt as there was.

Anyhow, Vernon-Smith had escaped scot-free, and he was grinning as he came into the Remove dormitory.

"Not licked?" asked Skinner.
 "Do I look licked?" drawled the Bounder.

"Well, you jolly well ought to be, Smithy," said Lord Mauleverer.

"We don't all get what we ought to get, old bean," said the Bounder.

"F'rinstance, you ought to get a ticket of admission to a home for idiots. But you're still outside."

"I jolly well think—" growled Johnny Bull.
 "Gammon!" said the Bounder.
 "You've nothing to do it with."

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"I say, Smithy!" squeaked Billy Bunter. "Was Pon with you at the Three Fishers?"

"Shut up, you fat owl!" hissed Bob Cherry, as Wingate of the Sixth looked in at the doorway.

"Oh, really, Cherry! I was only saying— Yaroooooh! Stop stamping on my foot, you beast! Yooooop!"

"Now, then, turn in—lights out, you know!" said Wingate; and the Bounder, with all his nerve, was glad that Wingate appeared to take no note of Bunter's words, which he had certainly heard. The captain of Greyfriars gave Smithy one keen, expressive look, but that was all, and the lights were turned out, and the Remove left to themselves.

"But I've forgiven you, old chap—"
 "Oh, don't!" said Lord Mauleverer anxiously. "I'd rather you didn't, if you don't mind, Bunter! I'd rather you cut me."

It was a day or two after the opening of the new term, and Billy Bunter had cornered Lord Mauleverer in the quad. During that day or two the fat Owl of the Remove had treated his lordship to distant, withering, and scornful looks. Mauly, Bunter felt, deserved it after the rotten way he had let Bunter down in the hols.

But the more distant, withering and scornful Bunter was, the better Mauly liked it. He seemed to like it much less when Billy Bunter cornered him, and was no longer distant, withering, or scornful. The fact was that in Billy Bunter's case distance lent enchantment to the view. Absence undoubtedly made the heart grow fonder.

"Oh, really, Mauly," said the fat Owl, blinking at him through his big spectacles. "I mean it! And look here—I'm going to do you a good turn. You've noticed my diamond?"

Lord Mauleverer grinned.
 Nearly all Greyfriars had noticed
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THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Unsold!

YOU let me down, Mauly!"
 "Yaas."
 "It was a rotten trick!"
 "Yaas."
 "Not the sort of thing I'd do!"
 "Yaas."

Billy Bunter's diamond by that time. Nobody, of course, supposed that it was a real one. But they could not help noticing it. It flashed and it glittered—it almost glared—and a blind man could hardly have escaped noticing it.

"Well, would you like it?" asked Bunter.

"Eh!" ejaculated Mauleverer in astonishment.

"The fact is I'm not really a dressy chap," explained Bunter. "I don't care for jewellery, really! I'll let you have it, Mauly. You've got pearl studs and things, and a diamond will go well with them. See?"

"My dear man, I really couldn't accept such a gift," said Lord Mauleverer, shaking his head.

He did not want to be ungrateful, but, really, Mauly would not have been found dead with a diamond that size! But he had slightly misapprehended Bunter's meaning.

"Eh? Who's talking about a gift?" asked Bunter. "I mean I'll let you have it for twenty-five pounds. See?"

"Oh!" gasped Mauleverer.

"A diamond this size is worth a hundred pounds," said Bunter.

"Yaas—a diamond!" assented Mauly.

"If you think this isn't a genuine stone, Mauly——"

"If!" gasped Mauly. "Oh gad!"

"My Uncle Robert would hardly be likely to give me a dud stone for a Christmas present, Mauly," said the Owl of the Remove, with dignity. "I don't know how much he gave for it——"

"Ninepence?" suggested Mauly.

"Beast! I mean, look here, old chap, what about a tenner?"

"Nothin' about a tenner, old fat bean."

"Dash it all, I'll take a fiver from a pal!" said Bunter, in a burst of generosity. "There!"

"Will you, really?" asked Lord Mauleverer.

"Yes, old chap! I mean it!"

"Then my advice is, go and look for a pal, and make him the offer!" said Lord Mauleverer, and he dodged Bunter and walked away.

"Beast!" roared Bunter.

Lord Mauleverer disappeared in the distance.

Billy Bunter snorted.

Bunter, thus early in the term, was in the state he had often, often known before—the state of the seed in the parable, which fell in a stony place! A number of postal orders that he had been expecting had not arrived.

It was natural that Bunter, desiring to raise the wind, should think of his diamond tiepin. To do the fat Owl justice, he had asserted so often, by this time, that it was a real, genuine diamond, that he had almost come to believe so. Every fellow who saw it agreed that it was the best imitation he had ever seen—indeed, it looked so real that only the fact that it belonged to Bunter made them believe that it was an imitation at all!

Bunter, at the bottom of his heart, could hardly believe that it was a genuine stone when he had bought it for a shilling from a shabby man in a railway train. But Bunter had a wonderful way of believing, or at least believing that he believed, just what he wanted to.

If a wealthy fellow, like Mauly or the Bounder, sported a diamond like that it would certainly be accepted as genuine. That was near enough for Bunter.

But Mauly, it seemed, was not taking any! So Billy Bunter looked round for the Bounder.

He rolled up to the Remove passage. A sound of voices from Study No. 4 told that Smithy and Redwing were at home. The voices were rather raised, as if a warm argument was going on.

That did not bother Bunter. He pushed the door open and blinked in. Redwing's face was flushed, and Smithy's scowling.

"You've had rows enough with Pon & Co.!" Redwing was saying. "Why can't you leave that crew alone?"

"I shall do exactly as I jolly well please!" retorted the Bounder.

"I know that; and it's no credit to you!" snapped Redwing. He stared round at the opening door. "Oh, get out, Bunter!"

"You shut up, Redwing! I want to speak to Smithy! I say, Smithy, old chap——"

"Get out, you fat fool!"

"It's rather important!" said Bunter. "Look here, I want to sell my diamond——"

"Fathead! Ask a pedlar to give you a penny for it, then."

"It cost my Uncle Philip twenty pounds——"

"Shut the door after you!"

"I'm going to let you have it cheap!" urged Bunter. "You've got lots of money, but you're stingy with it——"

"What?"

"So I'll let you have it at a bargain. It will suit you," urged Bunter. "You like sporting jewellery, and showing off——"

The Bounder gazed at him.

"Mauly thinks it's a bit too prominent for him to wear, you know; but you wouldn't mind that! Otherwise, Mauly would have jumped at it. But you like sticking on jewellery to show fellows what tons of money you've got, don't you, Smithy? That's why I've come to you!"

"For goodness' sake, Bunter, buzz off!" exclaimed Redwing, quite alarmed for the fat Owl.

"You shut up while I'm talking to Smithy! I say, Smithy, I'm letting this splendid diamond tiepin go for a fiver! What about it?"

Vernon-Smith rose and stepped towards Billy Bunter. Bunter blinked at him hopefully, and took the tiepin from his tie. He held it out to the Bounder.

"Take it, old chap, and look at it!"

Vernon-Smith took it.

But he did not look at it! Taking the tiepin in his right hand, he took Bunter's collar in his left.

With a swift jerk he slewed Bunter round.

Then he jabbed with the pin.

The gold pin was quite sharp! Nobody in the Remove believed that that pin was genuine gold. But, gold or not, it was undoubtedly sharp at the end.

Bunter found it so!

A fearful yell rang the length of the Remove passage.

"Yooooooooop!"

Bunter made a bound for the doorway. Smithy followed him up, jabbing again with the pin.

"Yaroooooooooh!"

Bunter leaped desperately into the passage. Two jabs with that sharp pin were enough for Bunter—he did not want a third.

Vernon-Smith flung the tiepin after him, went back into Study No. 4, and slammed the door.

"Ow, ow! Wow!" roared Bunter, clasping the places where the pin had jabbed with both fat hands. "Wow! Ow! Wow! Beast! Wow!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" Bob Cherry came along the passage. "What——"

"Look out—don't tread on my tiepin!" howled Bunter. "If you tread on

it, you'll have to pay its value, you ass!"

"Oh soissors! That will take my last twopence!" said Bob.

"Beast!"

Billy Bunter fielded his diamond pin, stuck it in his tie again, and rolled disconsolately away. He headed for Study No. 14, where Fisher T. Fish, the business man of the Remove, had his den. Fishy, who was busy at accounts—Fishy always had accounts on hand—waved an impatient pen at him.

"Absquatulate!" he snapped.

"I'm going to sell my diamond pin——" said Bunter.

"Found a jay?" asked Fisher T. Fish.

"I'm going to sell it to you, old chap——"

"Guess again!"

"It's worth pounds and pounds," said Bunter. "My Uncle Herbert gave at least twenty pounds for it——"

"He didn't get it for fourpence from a rag-and-bone dealer?" asked Fisher T. Fish.

"No!" roared Bunter. "He didn't! Look at it, Fishy—you can take my word for it that it's a diamond of the purest water, about thirty or forty carats——"

"Oh, Jerusalem crickets!"

"I'm letting it go for a pound, Fishy!"

"Not in this study!" grinned Fisher T. Fish.

"What about ten bob?" asked Bunter desperately.

"Nunk!"

"Five bob——"

"Nix!"

"Look here, you mean skinflint, what will you give me for it?" yelled Bunter.

"Threepence!"

"Why, you—you—you beast, I gave a shilling for it myself!" howled Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Fisher T. Fish.

"Yah!"

Bunter rolled away. He was hard up; but he was not going to part with his diamond pin for threepence! Fisher T. Fish chortled, little guessing, reckoning, or calculating that he had refused to give five shillings for a diamond of which the market value, in point of fact, was a hundred pounds!

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter's Diamond Has a Narrow Escape!

"SHADE your eyes!" said Bob Cherry.

"Eh—why?"

"Here comes Bunter's diamond!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a flash and a sparkle in the wintry sunshine. It announced Bunter and his tiepin.

It was the first half-holiday of the term, and the Famous Five had turned out for a ramble. Bob Cherry was rather in hopes of falling in with Ponsonby, of Highcliffe—having a snack in store for Pon's aristocratic features when they met. The chums of the Remove had stopped to sit on a stile, and dispose of the contents of a packet of toffee, when that gorgeous tiepin glittered on their sight.

Billy Bunter was rolling up the road, easily recognisable at a distance, not only by his unusual circumference, but by the flash of his diamond, which he wore as prominently as it was possible to wear a diamond. Genuine or not, Bunter liked it to be seen.

Harry Wharton & Co. regarded him with smiling faces as he approached. Bunter was still at a little distance when a small, slim, slight man stepped



Billy Bunter did not stop to see whether Coker was hurt, but fled down the passage like a hare. Mr Prout, unaware of the "obstacle" round the corner, came panting on, in fierce pursuit of Bunter!

out of the hedge and stood looking at him. The man was about half-way between Bunter and the Famous Five, but he was looking towards the fat junior, and evidently had not observed the juniors sitting on the stile.

They saw his profile for a few moments, and then his back was turned to them as he stood watching Bunter rolling up.

Harry Wharton stared hard at the man.

There was something familiar in the meagre, bony figure, in the narrow, rat-like eyes and sandy eyebrows, he had glimpsed. He had seen that fellow before somewhere.

"My hat!" he ejaculated suddenly.

He remembered!

"See that sportsman?" he exclaimed. "I've seen him before—at home in the hols. That's the man on the bike."

"The which?" asked Bob. He had forgotten about Mr. Isaacs and his adventure with the man on the bike.

"You remember—the sandy fellow who robbed that City Johnny who came down to see my uncle!" exclaimed Wharton. "The Woodgate police got him, and Mr. Isaacs went over to identify him."

"Oh, I remember!" Bob nodded.

"I heard afterwards that he'd got off for want of evidence or something after being remanded," said Harry. "But there isn't any doubt that he snatched Mr. Isaacs' tiepin. I don't know whether it was ever got back again. The man's a pickpocket, and— Look at him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Bob. "He's got an eye on Bunter's pin. He doesn't know it's a dud! What a sell for him if he got it and found that it had cost a bob!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That's its jolly old value!" chuckled

Nugent. "He let out to Fishy that he bought it for a bob."

The chums of the Remove chortled. The sandy man—whose name, they remembered, was Sniggerson—was watching Bunter like a cat as he came up the road. They could hardly doubt that the glitter of the diamond had caught his eye, and that the rascally pickpocket was thinking of repeating his performance on Mr. Isaacs. Certainly it was not likely to occur to them that it was the same diamond pin, entrusted to the fatuous Owl to keep it safe from the police, and that Mr. Sniggerson had been hanging about Greyfriars for days watching for a chance to get at Bunter.

Harry Wharton slipped from the stile.

"Look here, Bunter's spoof diamond isn't worth anything, but we're not going to see him robbed," he said.

"No fear!" agreed Nugent.

"The no-fearfulness is terrific!" said Hurree Janset Ram Singh. "But we can hardly collar the esteemed and disgusting scoundrel on suspicion, my absurd chum."

"No; but if he grabs Bunter's paste diamond, we'll jolly well grab him before he gets clear with it!" said the captain of the Remove. "Keep behind these trees, and keep an eye on the rotter!"

"Right as rain!" agreed Bob.

The Famous Five watched curiously. Billy Bunter had almost reached the spot where the sandy man stood. Mr. Sniggerson was lighting a cigarette, or affecting to light one, with his head bent and his hands up before his face; so the fat Owl would not have recognised him, even if he had looked at him, which he did not. Bunter was thinking of a very important matter—whether he would catch Lord Mauleverer at the bunshop at Courtfield. With that important matter on his fat mind, he was not likely to bestow any attention

on a shabby man lighting a cigarette by the wayside.

But the Famous Five, at a little distance, were bestowing very keen attention on Mr. Sniggerson! They had no right to touch him so long as he had not done anything. But if he touched Bunter's diamond pin, they were going to touch him—promptly.

When it happened, it happened swiftly. The sandy man dropped his cigarette, made a spring, and then bolted up the road. The tiepin, neatly and swiftly snatched, was concealed in his palm as he ran.

Bunter staggered.

"Ow!" he gasped. "Why—what— Oh crikey!" His fat hand went over his tie, no longer adorned by a glittering diamond. "Oh lor'! Stop thief!"

Bunter yelled.

"Beast! Stop thief! Oh lor'!"

The sandy man ran like the wind. Undoubtedly he would have got clear with his prize had he had only Bunter to deal with. But as he ran he passed the clump of trees by the stile where the Famous Five stood, and like one man they rushed out to him.

"Collar him!" bawled Bob Cherry.

"Bag him!" roared Johnny Bull.

The sandy man, panting, stopped, swerved, dodged, and leaped, crashing through a frosty hedge, with the outstretched fingers of the Removites almost touching him. He was taken by surprise as they came whooping at him, but no doubt his peculiar line of business caused him to be quick on the uptake. Certainly he acted with great promptness.

Bursting through the hedge, he scudded away at desperate speed across a snowy field.

"I say, you fellows"—Billy Bunter

(Continued on page 28.)

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WHEN the GREAT APES CAME!

By STUART MARTIN.



HOW THE STORY STARTED.

GERRY LAMBERT and BILLY MURCHIE, two young airmen, are brought down in the African jungle by an army of apes—led by Big Ling, a giant ape-man—reared to crush civilisation by a renegade called Stein. Gerry escapes, but Billy is taken prisoner and forced to accompany Big Ling's army, which, after laying waste villages and towns, makes for London headed by a stolen Zeppelin. Flying back to London, Gerry, assisted by Lieut. Huskin, succeeds in bringing down the Zep in Hyde Park. As a counter-attack, Big Ling lets loose the animals at the Zoo, while his armies spread devastation in all directions. Re-united once more, Gerry and Billy eventually track the enemy down in the Tower of London. Peering through a heavy curtain into the ancient Tower chapel, the boys see Big Ling and Stein surrounded by ape-men armed with weapons raided from the armoury.

(Now read on.)

A Narrow Escape.

AS the boys peered through the curtains they saw Big Ling rise from his chair and raise a hand in which he held a spear. Then he gave vent to his roar of triumph which had so often echoed through the forests of Africa. From the throats of his "court" an answering roar issued that made the apartment ring.

"I am king!"

"You are king!"

Billy raised his revolver, which had been fitted with a silencer, and took careful aim. Gerry did likewise. Both guns spoke at once with the faint "plop" peculiar to silenced firearms.

Both bullets struck Big Ling squarely in the chest.

The boys saw him stagger under the double blow. But he did not fall. It

was the bullets that fell. They dropped to the floor at his feet as if they had been hailstones.

Big Ling's hand clutched at his chest and pulled open the robe he had slung about him, to reveal a coat of mail tied around his body, covering his heart.

Up went the revolvers of both boys like one. This time they aimed at Big Ling's head; but Stein's quick eye had seen the movement of the curtain. His hands jerked up the machine-gun, and a stream of lead poured forth.

Billy and Gerry jerked themselves back just in time, and the bullets beat a tattoo on the opposite wall. Then a shower of spears came through the doorway, tearing down the curtain.

"This way, Gerry!"

Billy had been in the Tower often enough to know the lay-out of the premises. Along the passage the boys dashed, and down the staircase, where they were faced with an ape-man on guard. Their guns spoke their message, and the ape-man fell, writhing. Then out into the courtyard they sped.

Apes big and small prowled about the grounds, squatting on the grass and crouching in groups in corners. On the lawn here was a heap of what looked like stores covered with a tarpaulin, but in the darkness it was difficult to see it clearly. A faint light glowed in the keeper's house; but at the door stood another ape-man.

He heard the tumult, and advanced in giant strides; but the boys were too quick for him. As he launched his spear they dodged, and Billy's gun plopped.

The ape-man coughed, went down on his knees; but was up again in a moment.

He caught at Gerry as the two reached the door of the house.

Billy fired again and again at the monster, but the latter paid no heed. He had one of them, and he staggered towards the parapet, holding Gerry high above his head. One heave, and he would have thrown the boy into the moat to death; but Billy snatched up the fallen spear and drove it with all his strength into the ape-man's side.

A groan, and the giant sank down, his hand plucking at the haft of the weapon in nervous spasms.

But the fight had occupied precious time, and now the other ape-men were swarming through the doorway into the courtyard. The shelter of the keeper's house—if shelter was there—had been cut off. The boys lay under the shadow of the parapet, gaining their breath.

In a moment or so they must be found and killed, for Stein's voice was ringing out with orders and commands in a dialect that only the apes understood. And towering amid the dark forms was Big Ling, immense and frightful.

"We'd better slide over, Billy."

Cautiously they reared themselves, and dropped over between the raised portions of the parapet, hanging on to the stone and digging their feet into the old wall for support.

Again Stein's voice spoke quite near to them, and the gigantic form of Ling stood within a yard of their precarious perch.

"Who was it, Ling?" asked Stein.

"Did you see?"

"No. It could not be the prisoners. They are still behind that door. It must have been the mutineer—Tree Climber. I suspected him of mutiny."

"Could it not have been those boys of England?"

Ling's reply could not be heard; but presently Stein spoke again.

"We have changed our plans once because of those boys. We cannot wait here until dawn, or we will be hemmed in. Our army is marching on the Great West Road towards London. They need us. Our ships have escaped from the soldiers on the bridge. We must go."

"Very well. I am king!"

Orders cracked out sharp and swift. Already the streaks of dawn were showing in the east, the roofs of the city were becoming blurred in the misty rising of the new day.

Hanging to the wall, Billy and Gerry saw, as they peered over, ape-men throw the cover off the heap in the centre of the lawn. Then the apes were assembled and driven, by whips and shouts, across the courtyard, and could be heard swarming down the passage towards Traitor's Gate. When all had gone except for a few ape-men and Stein and Ling, the group gathered round the stores and began to work feverishly.

A moment later the meaning of these stores became clear. They were harnesses fitted with the helium gas for lifting the invaders.

Up into the air went one ape-man after another, the bladders slung between their shoulders. Then up went Big Ling, followed by Stein. And as they rose into the dimness of the early morning fog, Billy and Gerry climbed back to safety and stood beside the parapet, gaining their breath.

From above them, although they could not see it, they heard the drone of a plane that became loud and roaring; its great shadow seemed to sweep over the Tower. It passed, and again

came another drone, another roar as a second plane rushed overhead. And then a softer whirring sound—a plane cruising, sailing with engine subdued.

Another sound then burst on the boys' ears, and a minor explosion shook the dwelling-houses of the courtyard. From a window came the glare of flames, the rush of smoke. These spread until the whole square seemed alive with flame.

The Tower of London was on fire, and the boys were hommed in by a circle of death!

It was not the thought of death, however, that made them both leap towards the tarpaulin that lay on the ground in front of them. The same thought had struck both boys at the same moment. They tore the tarpaulin aside, to reveal two sets of harness, two envelopes of helium gas, and two folded parachutes. They were the gear intended for the ape-men whom they had slain.

In a moment Billy and Gerry had buckled on the harness, unfastening the straps that bound it to an iron ring in the ground.

Up above the rising mist they might yet chase Stein and Big Ling.

"Ready?" asked Billy.

"You bet!" said Gerry.

Up they went, drawn like toy balloons, the earth dropping from their feet, up into the mist side by side, and in the hands of each boy was a spear lifted from the litter on the ground.

Bad Luck for Billy!

IN a matter of minutes Billy and Gerry were floating gently five hundred feet or so above the Thames.

They would have separated in the gentle current of air that was moving the topmost layer of fog had they not been hand-in-hand; and as they cast their eyes around they saw clearly for a considerable distance.

They could feel the heat of the fire that was blazing in the Tower below them. It had a queer look, that fire—a red, leaping furnace dimmed by a veil of mist.

The sound of a Moth plane approaching from the other side of the river caused the boys to look southward.

"Look down there, Billy!" cried Gerry, pointing to the river over which they were floating.

A large ship was passing under Tower Bridge. Billy, staring down, saw what had attracted the attention of his pal.

The ship was churning her way downstream. On her bridge stood an officer, his hand on the telegraph. Beside the officer stood a huge figure pressing something that glinted against the man's side.

There was no mistaking this huge figure. It was one of Big Ling's ape-men, and he was compelling the officer, at the point of a gun, to take the ship out.

The next moment the attention of the boys was drawn to the Moth plane that was circling the turrets of the bridge. It was fitted with floats as well as wheels for landing. But the pilot made no attempt to land, nor was he taking note of the ship. He was signalling to the boys, flagging in quick gestures, his arm moving up and down spasmodically.

He was flagging them to drop.

Manipulating the cords of the harness, the boys descended slowly towards the river. The ship was now some distance downstream. As they came down, the Moth's engine ceased to throb, and the

plane descended in a long dive and settled on the surface of the water.

The boys reached the water almost at the same instant, and the plane taxied forward and came to rest on its floats.

"Come aboard, lads!" hailed the pilot. "We haven't got any time to waste!"

The boys scrambled aboard and were soon tucked into the seating accommodation, which was barely enough to give them room. The engine was started again, and the plane was soon moving ahead.

"Commander Walsh," grinned the pilot. "That's my name. I'm doing scout duty—been at it all night. I was after the enemy when I saw you two bob up from the fire, so I came back."

"Where has Stein gone?" asked Billy. "And Ling?"

"They separated forces," replied the pilot. "I came on the scene by chance when they were having their air-barges dragged off. They've got two of the finest planes in existence. Stolen, I hear. Absolutely the latest. Autogyro."

He thrust his head forward and began to speak into the wireless instrument in answer to signals from headquarters.

"Hallo, hallo! Walsh speaking. I'm over South London, pursuing enemy plane with barge. Another has gone due west. A ship has gone down the Thames from Tower Bridge, and I have suspicions it is in enemy hands. Very good!"

He turned to Billy and Gerry.

"That was headquarters calling. They'll be keeping up a conversation now. I've already reported the fire at the Tower, and I've told them I have you two on board."

He peered forward, and then, pulling back the joystick, sent the plane up to a great height. Having done this, he handed a pair of field-glasses to Billy.

The later focused the glasses ahead and made out a speck to the right.

"I don't think we can catch it," cried Walsh, "but we'll hang on to its tail! Have you any idea where it is making for? My petrol-tank isn't full, by any means."

"I can guess," said Billy. "There is an army of apes doing damage at Southampton—or were last night—"

"That's the place. I had a message through not long ago that an army of apes had left the town. Here's another message."

The instrument in front of him gurgled, then a voice came distinctly:

"Hallo, hallo! Commander Walsh? Thank you! One-three-one speaking. Your report received. O.K.! Orders are that you are not to make for Southampton. Gorillas have left the town and are moving south-west. Search and report movement. Repeat."

Walsh repeated. The voice went on: "Troops being sent from Salisbury and other depots. Have you used any bombs? O.K.!"

Billy, looking on the floor of the carriage, saw the apparatus for releasing bombs, and counted three deadly missiles ready for emergencies.

The Moth flew straight on, keeping the fugitive plane in view and gaining ground gradually.

"It's a huge plane," said Walsh. "I was on my way back to go off duty when I spotted it. Where's he heading for now?"

The big plane suddenly turned, and in a moment was enveloped in a black cloud.

"They've seen us chasing them, and turned into the raincloud instead of rising above it!" cried Gerry. "Look out; we're in it, too!"

They were in it without a doubt. Blackness closed upon the machine, and for some time they were flying blind in what seemed to be a cavern of wetness.

Commander Walsh suddenly banked and dived, and the movement came with such unexpectedness that Billy and Gerry were dashed to the floor of the cockpit. As they lay there their ears were deafened by the mighty roar of a passing engine. The enemy machine had missed them by inches, and the whirl of its wash sent the Moth staggering like a stricken thing.

Walsh brought the plane up to a level keel with supreme effort, and swung round in the enemy's wake.

"They tried to wreck us!" he roared, in the gale. "Did you see the bomb they dropped?"

Through the cloud they charged, dripping and smoking. But there was no sign of the enemy plane—not even a sound of her propellers. The cloud stretched for miles, deep and black.

"Look below!" yelled Gerry suddenly.

"What's that?"

Billy and the pilot looked in the direction indicated, and saw the great plane swimming gracefully towards an anchorage, slanting like an arrow as it glided forward to a green patch. Behind it trailed a barge, with its covering of gusbag billowing out in the breeze.

For miles on either side of the green patch lay the waving tops of trees, intersected by what appeared to be long, white ribbons of moving objects.

"The New Forest!" cried Gerry.

"Military lorries on the roads!"

"Get ready to release a bomb!" cried Walsh. "I'm diving!"

Down went the Moth in a wide sweep, and when it was in the required position Walsh roared again:

"Now!"

Billy pulled the lever and released a bomb. As he did so, however, the enemy plane rose again like an enormous gull, skimmed the trees, and launched itself northward. The bomb fell on the green patch, sending up a shower of earth, and bringing down trees like ninepins.

Up rose the Moth again, keeping up the pursuit until the enemy came to rest at a crossroads. The Moth swooped down again, and another bomb was released. But the giant plane missed the missile by the same manoeuvre. The bomb, however, fell on its tracks and lifted the crossroads in a cloud of earth.

There was only one bomb left now, and this time there must be no mistake, if such it could be called. The enemy did not rise high this time, but swung round, heading for a track of glimmering roadway. Along the track it ran, hovering, then came to rest, with its wings cracking and smashing against the trees on either side.

Down came the Moth for the third time. The boys saw the occupants of the big plane scrambling out. Among them was Big Ling. His arms were waving directions when Gerry pulled the lever for the release of the last missile.

There was no mistake this time. Looking back, the occupants of the Moth saw the enemy plane distinctly for a second, and then it was lost in a cloud of smoke and dust.

Half a mile or so farther on the Moth landed on the road, and Walsh and the two boys leaped out. The petrol tank was empty.

Not a sound in the forest. A strange quietness was in the air. The giant plane was burning out on the road.

"Whoever piloted that plane had brains!" exclaimed Walsh. "He has brains!"

caught us nicely! The troops are cut off!"

It was true. The manoeuvres of the enemy plane had been deliberate ruses to get the Moth to drop her bombs at certain spots, and these spots were strategic ones. The broken roads had stopped the military from advancing.

Armed with guns, as well as the spears Billy and Gerry carried, the trio ran into the forest for cover. As they did so the silence was broken by a din that sent their blood leaping through their veins.

First came the howl of Big Ling, then the deep roaring of gorillas.

There was no time to climb the trees; there was death in the branches had they climbed. Dark forms could be seen swinging from limb to limb, swarms of apes, while the tall forms of ape-men could be seen breaking their way through the shrubbery.

Led by Big Ling, the army of beasts were coming towards the Moth.

Diving into the thick shrubbery, the three crawled under cover, pulling trailers and leaves over them. Holding their weapons ready, they waited.

The ground shook with the stamping beasts. Wave after wave of gorillas swept past, some on all-fours, some erect, beating their breasts, snarling, and howling. And above the racket the voice of Ling sounded, curt and sharp.

The huge ape-man stopped suddenly, and they heard him snuffing like a hound. His great hand fell on the covering above them, shaking it gently. Then he passed on.

From the distance came the rattle of machine-guns. The troops had opened fire. The Battle of the New Forest had begun. Shells burst among the trees, uprooting and smashing in every direction.

For half an hour the barrage continued, pouring high explosive and shrapnel into the forest. It ceased as suddenly as it began, and the three crawled out of their cover.

Devastation lay around them. The bodies of several wild ponies were stretched on the ground, while others stood trembling beside fallen trees. In the distance men's voices were cheering. The advance had started.

There was not a sign of gorillas to be seen, and Billy, Gerry, and the pilot pressed forward until they found themselves on the edge of the woods. In front was a deep valley, one of the many in the New Forest, sheltered by thick shrubbery and bushes several feet high. The spires of the village of Ringwood rose in the distance.

Towards the end of this valley moving men could be seen. They were the advancing troops thrusting their way onward, rifles held high above their heads.

"They're driving the apes into the valley!" cried Walsh. "Look down there!"

Sure enough, the lurking, stealthy forms of gorillas were to be seen hastening into the depths.

"There's Ling!" cried Billy, as he pointed across the slope.

The tall figure of Ling had risen from the shrubbery, and stood like a statue watching the movements of the troops. Bullets whistled in his direction, but he never moved. He seemed to be intent on something else. He raised his hand to his mouth, and a long whistle shrilled in the air.

"It's a trap! Look—look!"

Gerry had mounted a tree, and waved to his companions to climb up. In a

moment they were by his side, and what they saw took their breath away.

The advancing soldiers were walking right into a snare set by that monster criminal.

The gorillas in the valley, seemingly retreating, were all small animals; but, circling in a wide sweep, so as to take the troops in the rear, were others, the main force. They were invisible to the soldiers and the officers who led them, but from their position in the high tree the three boys could see clearly.

As the soldiers advanced, throwing bombs at intervals, so the massive brutes circled behind them. Ape-men were guiding them, and Big Ling was directing the entire manoeuvre.

"We must get word through to them!" cried Billy, as he dropped from the tree. "Listen, you two! I'm going to carry word to the battery on the road!"

"How?"

"This way!"

He pointed to where a sturdy wild pony was standing on the edge of the wood, apparently the leader of a small group of smaller animals.

As Billy advanced, the animal started, but before he could make a getaway Billy had seized his mane and leaped on his back, driving his knees into the pony's sides.

With a bound he was away, and the other animals scattered.

Bending over the pony's neck, Billy urged it towards the roadway. The thought of the massacre that would occur if the troops fell into the trap made him shudder.

Leaping and dodging the swaying branches and broken trees and torn ground, he gained the roadway, forced the pony on to the stretch, and raced as he had never raced before.

It was a main road, and the pony's hoofs hardly touched it in its wild career. There were no obstacles except a pit some distance ahead, beyond which the troops had drawn up with their guns and trucks.

Billy had not gone far, however, when he encountered a new danger. Stones were being thrown at him and his mount from the forest edge. He glanced round and saw the faces of gorillas, ape-men, and monkeys. They were following him side by side, racing as fast as his pony, hurling rocks, sticks, anything they could pick up.

Some distance ahead a tree crashed down across the road. The pony cleared it in a bound, slid on the hard, concrete surface, regained its feet again, and clattered on. A stone struck Billy, and another struck the pony; then a gorilla leaped from the forest edge.

The impact of its body sent the pony slithering, but the gorilla was thrown off.

Crack, crack! went Billy's revolver. Two more apes went down. But more stones were being thrown. More apes were taking up the chase. A massive brute could be seen twenty yards in front, balancing itself on the branch of a tree stretched across the road, ready for a spring.

Up went Billy's weapon again, and he took a flying shot. The bullet struck the gorilla, but it did not stop his spring. His weight fell on the pony's neck, and Billy was pitched to the hard road, where he lay still.

Through a dark mist he saw an ape-man bending over him, and heard a guttural voice say:

"Take him to Big Ling. Throw the pony to the beasts!"

Big Ling's Headquarters I

LATE that afternoon Big Ling strode through the forest with head erect, flushed with victory. His plan had been carried out. His snare had caught the troops. Deep in the valley lay the bodies of several hundred British soldiers, killed by the apes.

There had been casualties on the beasts' side, too. The shrubbery was strewn with dead apes, shattered by hand grenades, shot by rifles, or stabbed by bayonets. But the guns had been silenced, and those who had escaped that massacre of the New Forest had gone to carry the news to amazed commanders.

Ling strode among his battered forces with the air of a conqueror. Perched on his head was the crown he had stolen from the Tower of London. He still wore the chain armour, and carried his club. He was under no misapprehension as to what would follow. More troops would come, heavier guns would belch their messages of death. But he had his plans for meeting them, and for the moment dismissed the thought from his mind.

The battle had been fought in surroundings which suited him and his forces. The forest was their natural home, and trees were their natural cover and protection. Civilised soldiers were hampered by that confusion of nature, while the apes revelled in it; and Ling had the further advantage that his beasts went to their deaths without thought. To them fighting was nature.

There was much of the boast in Ling himself, and although he was tired, the lust of killing had whetted his appetite for more. The day was not far advanced; the story of his victory in the New Forest must not stay his hand. He had learned from Stein, the Master, that to strike was but a reason for striking again. To conquer he must spread dismay and fear. It was the law of the jungle, and he was a child of the jungle.

Big Ling gathered together his remaining forces and led them, growling and savage, their lips tinged with the blood of their victims, to his headquarters in the forest. Here were a number of uprooted trees, so placed as to form a gigantic wigwam.

He strode into the peculiar abode, flushed with victory, ready for more conquests. His lieutenants were gathered about the enclosure, armed with spears and rifles taken from the soldiers who lay dead in the shrubbery of the valley.

He saw the form of Billy Murchie lying on the ground, roped hand and foot.

"You did well to bring him," he said sharply. "After to-day's work he will be handed over to the beasts. We will make a sacrifice of him. Find his companions."

Taking a chart from his shirt of mail, Big Ling sat down on the ground and began to study it, while he ate food that was placed before him. He seemed to have forgotten everything but his ambition. The ape-men waited in silence.

"Is there any news of the Master?" asked Big Ling, addressing one of his lieutenants.

"No, king!"

"Marshal the beasts, then! We are marching now!"

"Yes, king!"

"Have you secured the lorries of the enemy?"

"Yes, king!"

"Good! Then you will drive them. I travel in the first. You lead the army. Bombs. Ammunition. Forward!"

He rose and marched out of the wig-wam and gave his howl of command. The forest echoed with the answering roar.

Swinging round, Ling selected another ape-man.

"You take a party in that direction." He pointed south, towards Southampton. "Wreck! Spread death! Lead the enemy that way."

The ape-man stiffened, and his head bowed.

"Why me, king? Have I not led enough such parties and yet returned?"

Ling's eyes snapped at his subordinate. The ape-man was fifteen feet high, but he seemed small compared with Ling.

Up went Ling's club in a great stroke.

It descended on the ape-man's head with a crash, and the subordinate fell like a tree before the axe of the lumberman.

Billy Murchie felt the ground shiver under that fall. He guessed why the ape-man had protested. Ling was conducting his campaign with all the cunning of an animal brain linked to a human one. He had sent out batches of his beasts to mislead the British troops while he himself struck at other points.

He had done it in every attack he had made; and by consigning these scare-raising parties to certain death, he had gained the vulnerable points. What was a sacrifice of a handful of gorillas and an ape-man to this self-constituted king?

"You!" he roared, lifting a finger and pointing to another ape-man.

The monster indicated stepped forward and raised his spear in salute.

"I go, king!"

A sign from Ling, and the gathering broke up. Then Ling stood looking down on Billy with a sneer on his brutish face.

"There were three of you," he said in his deep, broken English. "I saw you from across the valley. It was I who tempted your plane to bomb mine. But for the Master's wish to torture you in his own way, I would stamp the life out of you now!"

He raised his foot as if tempted to crush Billy under it. His face was the picture of frightful savagery.

(Look out for further thrilling chapters of this popular adventure story in next week's free gift number of the MAGNET.)

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., The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. A stamped, addressed envelope will ensure a reply.

HALLO, chums, are you pleased with this week's set of topping coloured pictures? I thought you would be! Next week's MAGNET will contain the tenth and last set of coloured pictures, so don't spoil your album through failing to get hold of next Saturday's MAGNET.

Now for some more news of the next batch of

GREAT FREE GIFTS,

about which I made a brief mention last week. These take the novel form of delicious toffee, and the first "give away" will be made with the MAGNET in a fortnight's time—that is, immediately after our present series of free gifts pictures come to a close. How's that for a big surprise? Are you cheering? I'll say you are! Now listen in closely: For four weeks—commencing, remember, with our issue dated January 27th—every reader of the MAGNET will receive

A BAR OF WALTERS' DELICIOUS "PALM" TOFFEE!

This toffee is the real goods, boys! I've had some and, like the celebrated Oliver Twist, I asked for more! Each of the four bars to be presented with MAGNET is of a different flavour; and each bar is calculated to "tickle the palate" of any average boy.

Don't forget, chums, the first of these delightful Free Gifts will be found in the MAGNET in a fortnight's time, so be sure and give your newsagent an order for the MAGNET without delay. That done, please do me the favour of passing on the good news to your pals. I feel only too sure that they will want to share in this stupendous treat.

ONE of my readers asks me this question:

DOES THE SEA-SERPENT ACTUALLY EXIST?

I think there have been more arguments caused in scientific circles by that question than by any other! Most people "pooh-pooh" the suggestion of there being vast marine monsters, but on the other hand the number of people who

claim to have seen what they call "the sea-serpent" is considerable.

Certain scientists claim that it is quite possible that entirely unknown monsters may lurk in the depths of the sea in places where it has been impossible to obtain any data regarding what is to be found on the floor of the ocean. Even in the last few years certain forms of life have been discovered in the ocean of which, until their discovery, everyone was ignorant. This is held to be proof that we know nothing about what may be in the lower depths of the sea, and therefore we should keep an open mind as to whether sea-serpents exist or not.

In fact, some people go so far as to say that great prehistoric animals of the kind which have been "faked" in films may possibly still roam the earth in places where, even to-day, explorers have never penetrated!

Talking about real life beating the films, here's a case of

A REAL-LIFE HOUDINI

who puts the exploits of stage and screen "prison-breakers" well in the shade. Up to the present he has escaped from prison fifteen times. After his fifth escape they decided to put him in the "Chain Gang," where, with shackles riveted on his legs, they thought he would be safe. A few days later he had vanished! The next time he fell into the hands of the law they not only shackled his legs, but made him sleep in an iron cage in the middle of a camp, with bloodhounds sleeping just outside the cage, and a guard calling on him at intervals during the night. But, believe it or not, he got out of that cage and made a "getaway" without disturbing either the dogs or the guard!

Once, when it seemed likely that a pardon would be granted to him, this amazing prisoner broke out of gaol once more, and turned up amongst his friends, who persuaded him to go back at once. Dawn found him at the prison gates, asking the guards if he could go back to his cell!

At the present time, with his accumulated sentences, this "prison-breaker" has to serve no less than 110 years! But the prison guards are getting a bit "fed up" with him, and there is a movement on foot to get him a pardon, in the hope that he may go straight.

HOW often have some of you fellows wanted to be cowboys? It sounds a pretty good life, doesn't it, but, believe me,

TRAINING FOR A COWBOY

is a most arduous job! I've just been reading about the "pleasant" little tricks the old hands play on youngsters new to the ranch. An old cowboy has just been telling about his earliest experiences on a ranch.

The crowd had camped for the night in a spot where they were surrounded by coyotes. The boy was told to go to a nearby creek for water, and when he said he felt ill, the old hands reckoned he was scared of coyotes. Taking him out of camp, they tied his hands and feet to a stake, built a bonfire to attract all the coyotes for miles around, and left him there until the morning!

Next night the new hand went for the water! Coyotes were howling all around him, and he whistled to keep up his spirits. When he got back the old hands told him to go once more, and threatened to stake him out again if he whistled! The new hand didn't whistle the next time! After that he thought no more of coyotes than of tame kittens! So you fellows know what to expect if you want to become a cowboy.

IHAVEN'T much space left, chums, so I'd better let you know what there is in store for you next week. Topping the bill is:

"THE PROFITEER OF THE REMOVE!"

By Frank Richards.

The title of this long complete yarn of the chums of Greyfriars suggests that Fisher T. Fish is playing a star role, and that is sufficient to let you know that you are in for a feast of fun and thrills. When Frank Richards gets going on yarns of this description there isn't another boys' author to touch him. So look out, chums, and don't run the risk of being told that your favourite paper is "sold out."

Next time you write to me let me know what you think of our thrilling adventure yarn: "When the Great Apes Came!" There will, of course, be another quick-fire, full-of-thrills instalment in next week's issue, and when you have finished it, you can turn to our "Greyfriars Herald" supplement, and loosen your waistcoat buttons, because you're in for a good laugh. If there's any truth in the saying, "laugh and grow fat," you'd better watch out, or you'll all be turning into Billy Bunters! Of course, I must not forget "Linesman's" interesting Soccer replies, and our final set of stunning free coloured pictures.

And roll, bowl, or pitch your queries in to me, chums! I'm here to be shot at!

YOUR EDITOR.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,352.

BILLY BUNTER'S DIAMOND!

(Continued from page 23.)

spotted the Famous Five—"I say, I've been robbed! I say, get hold of that pickpocket! I say—"

But Harry Wharton & Co. did not stop to listen to Bunter. They crashed through the hedge after the sandy man.

He was running hard; but all the five were good at sprinting. They put it on vigorously.

"After him!" panted Harry Wharton. "We'll get him all right!" chuckled Bob Cherry breathlessly. "Put it on, my infants! Tally-ho!"

The sandy man glanced back over his shoulder. Five juniors, in a row, were coming on hard and fast. All of them were keeping pace, and Bob Cherry and Harry Wharton were drawing ahead. Mr. Sniggerson panted, and tore on, bounding over a fence, and getting to the open common. After him, leaping the fence in their turn, went the Famous Five, and the chase was taken up across the wide expanse of Courtfield Common.

Billy Bunter was left far behind. He was anxious about his diamond—but he could not have put up a race like that for all the diamonds that ever came out of South Africa.

Mr. Sniggerson put on a desperate burst of speed. Harder and harder he ran, his feet seeming scarcely to touch the ground.

But Bob Cherry and Harry Wharton did not lose an inch, though their comrades were dropping a little behind.

"We've got him!" breathed Bob, his ruddy face crimson with exertion. "He doesn't seem to know this country—he's heading straight for the pond—he will have to lose ground going round when he spots it—"

"Good!" gasped Wharton.

It was some minutes later that the running pickpocket spotted the gleam of water through the leafless trees ahead of him. He paused, swerved, and cut off to the left to avoid the pond that lay in his way.

"Stop, you rotter!" bawled Bob Cherry. "We've jolly well got you! Chuck it!"

But the sandy man ran desperately on. Slowly and surely the juniors were gaining now, and they were close on him. Breathless, panting, he stumbled, and as he rose again, Bob Cherry's grasp landed on his back.

The sandy man spun round, panting with rage, and struck. Bob gave a roar as a set of bony knuckles crashed on his nose and he went over.

The next moment Harry Wharton's fist crashed on the sandy man's jaw, and he rolled over beside Bob.

Before he could attempt to struggle up, the captain of the Remove leaped on him and pinned him down.

"Got him!" panted Wharton. "Bear a hand, Bob!"

"What-ho!" Bob struggled up breathlessly and bore a hand. The sandy man was struggling; but he gave in as soon as two pairs of hands were on him. The two juniors held him fast while Nugent and Johnny Bull and Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh came panting up.

"Now for Bunter's jolly old diamond!" grinned Bob, and he grasped the man's wrist and forced open his clenched hand.

The sandy man gritted his teeth with rage, spitting like a cat.

"Hang you!" he panted. "I—"

"That's enough from you!" said Bob cheerfully. "My hat! Wouldn't anybody believe that was a real diamond?" he added, as the sparkling gem, when the clenched hand was forced open, glittered and flashed in the sun.

"The rotten pickpocket thinks so!" grinned Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors laughed breathlessly. Bob Cherry took the diamond pin and slipped it into his pocket, the sandy man's rat-like eyes following it hungrily and greedily.

trouble to march you down to the police station for pinching a worthless diamond; but you're going to have a lesson, all the same! Chuck him into the pond, you fellows!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Look here!" gasped the sandy man, beginning to struggle again. "I—"

Oh—ah—yah—gurrgrgh!"

Splash!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The sandy man sprawled in shallow water and mud. He emerged gasping and gurgling, streaming mud from head to foot.

"That's a tip to keep your hands from picking and stealing, old bean!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "You're lucky not to be run in! Have another?"

Evidently the sandy man did not want another! He shook a muddy and furious fist at the Greyfriars fellows and started at a run across the common. In a few moments he had vanished.

"Now we'd better find Bunter and hand over the glittering bob's worth!" remarked Bob Cherry.

The Famous Five walked back to the road. They spotted Billy Bunter in the distance and bore down on him.

"I say, you fellows!" gasped Bunter, as they came up with smiling faces. "I say, somebody's robbed me—a man on the road—you saw him—he got away with my diamond pin—did you get hold of him?"

"We did!"

"The didfulness was terrific, my esteemed Bunter!"

"Oh, good!" gasped Bunter. "Did you get the diamond from him?"

"He hadn't any diamond on him!"

said Bob Cherry, shaking his head. "All we got from him was this!"

He drew the tiepin from his pocket and held it up.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you silly ass!" gasped Bunter. "That's my diamond, ain't it? Gimme my diamond!" Bunter grabbed it. "I say, you fellows! As you've got my diamond back for me I'll let you have it if you like—what about a pound?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! Just to show you that I'm grateful for the trouble you've taken, I'll let you have that diamond for a pound—look here, say ten shillings—I say, you fellows, don't walk away while a fellow's talking to you!" roared Bunter.

But the Famous Five did walk away, chuckling as they went. Billy Bunter snorted and rolled on to Courtfield, with his precious diamond sticking in his tie—still unsold!

THE END.

(Now look out for next week's MAGNET and another rollicking fine yarn of Greyfriars, entitled: "THE PROFITEER OF THE REMOVE!" And don't forget that this issue will contain our tenth and final set of free coloured pictures. Be sure to add them to your collection!)

14 MORE SUPERB COLOURED PICTURES to complete your Album.

Watch Out For Them in NEXT WEEK'S MAGNET

Boys, you'll have a treasure of a collection when you've completed your Album!

"You young 'ounds—" he muttered between his teeth.

"You rascally thief!" said Harry Wharton contemptuously. "You're the man who robbed Mr. Isaacs weeks ago in Surrey, though you seem to have got off!"

"I never—" he began.

"Oh, chuck it! I know you!" said the captain of the Remove. "You ought to be jolly well handed over to the police for this, though this time you've only bagged a dud diamond worth about a bob—"

"You fool!"

"It's you that's the fool, old bean!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "That jolly old diamond you snatched is a dud."

"But a thief's a thief!" said Harry Wharton. "You fancied that it was a real diamond when you snatched it from Bunter. We're not taking the

300 STAMPS FOR 6d. (Abroad 1/-), including Airpost, Barbados, Old India, Nigeria, New South Wales, Gold Coast, etc.—**W. A. WHITE, Dept. H, Engine Lane, LYE, Stourbridge.**

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"SPUR" BILLIARD TABLES.
A Perfect Reproduction of a Full-size Table. Leather-covered Pockets, Rubber Cushions, Adjustable Rubber-covered Feet to ensure a Perfect Level Surface. Complete with Two Cues, Three Turned Balls guaranteed Unbreakable, Mahogany-finished Marking Board, Spirit Level, Rules, and Chalk. Send for Complete List.

Size	Deposit	Monthly payments	Cash
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3 ft. 8 ins. X 1 ft. 11 ins.	5/-	5/9	25/-
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"NEWFOUNDLAND" PACKET FREE. Includes Set 3 Newfoundland, large Canada, Kenya, Jamaica, Travancore, Charkari, and large unissued Caymans Centenary. British Colonials only. All free. Send 2d. postage, requesting approvals.—Lisburn & Townsend (U.J.S.), Liverpool.

BE TALL Your Height Increased in 14 days or Money Back. Amazing Course, 5/-. Send STAMP NOW for free book.—**STEBBING SYSTEM, 28, Dean Road, LONDON, N.W.2.**

INCREASED my own height to 6ft. 3 1/2 ins. !! T. H., age 16 1/2, to 6ft. 1 T. F., age 21, from 5ft. 5 to 5ft. 10! Ross System is Genuine. Enrol and Watch Yourself Grow! Fee £2 2s. Particulars 2/6 stamp.—**P. ROSS, Height Specialist, Scarborough**

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HEIGHT INCREASED IN 30 DAYS 5/- COMPLETE COURSE

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STAMMERING! Cure yourself as I did. Particulars Free.—**FRANK B. HUGHES, 7, SOUTHAMPTON ROW, LONDON, W.O.1.**



WILL ARCTIC EXPLORER—

Experienced in eating boots, leggings etc., kindly give advice on eating hats. Advertiser said he'd eat his hat if Coker kept up on the ice for five minutes without coming a cropper—and Coker's done it!—Write, C. POTTER, c/o "GREYFRIARS HERALD."

MY WORST AND BEST EXPERIENCE

By DICKY NUGENT

My very worst experience, dear readers, happened one tea-time, in the study of the Skool's most notorious booby and tirant—Loder, of the Sixth!

Smirking under a thousand misuses, I had made up my mind to have a tribul reveng on this teen-dish fag-forcherer. So when Loder ordered me to prepare tea for 4, I prepared one or 2 surprises for him at the same time. I put plaster of Paris in the kream bins, mustard in the apricot jam, soot in the sardines, and salt and pepper in the tea. I couldn't help laughing heartily when I looked at the teatable. Judging by appearances, there was a jolly good feed in store for Loder and his guests. But appearances were deceptive: the grub I had given them to DIGEST would be almost enuff to make them "die jest" as soon as they'd touched it. (Jook!)

Ere the echo of my harty laugh had died away, Loder walked in, followed by Carmo and Walker.

"Ah! This looks jolly good to me!" he eggsalaimed.

Then Walker said something that made me jump.

"I should think it will give the Head quite an appetite!" was his remark.

"D—d—did you say anything about the Head?" I cried, in dismay.

"Yes; I should have told you to make this tea extra-special, as the Head is honnering us with his presence," said Loder carelessly. "However, you haven't done badly; stand by in case we need you!"

Dear readers, I tried to tell them of my garstly mistake. But, somehow, my tongue clave to the roof of my mouth, and I couldn't!

Let me draw a vale over the Head. Let see that followed after the Head came in! I can only say that after he had tried sandwiches, sardines, apricot jam, kream buns and my speehal tea, his fize was more forushus without any delay, old bean!

Porpoise in Pilot-Tester



Bunter's Hair-raising Awakening

Billy Bunter called on Smithy, the other day. Bunter said he'd wait and asked to be provided with a light snack. After a series of light snacks, sufficient to keep a fair-sized manager for about a fortnight, Bunter looked around for a comfy chair where he could have a nice, quiet snooze. He found what seemed to be just what he wanted in the Bunder's miniature private gymnasium. It was a queer-looking chair, suspended in the middle of a complicated framework of steel; but it was nicely sprung and it was tilted at just that angle Bunter needed to send him right off to sleep!

How long Bunter slept, he never knew. It didn't matter, anyway. The only thing that did matter was that he awoke to such a horrid experience that it was a long time before he could realise it was anything else but a ghastly nightmare.

He seemed to be strapped to a chair which had become possessed of an evil spirit, and started performing the most extraordinary convolutions imaginable!

First it would whirl round like a spinning-top about a hundred times. Then it would stop dead and whirl around in the opposite direction. Then it would turn a dozen or so high-speed somers-

PETER TODD PREFERS COLD After Hot Night

You all know what a lean streak Peter Todd is. Well, knowing that, it won't surprise you to learn that Peter always finds it hard to get warm in bed.

But he thought he'd solved the difficulty, this vac. When he stayed with Tom Dutton for a few days, he found that Dutton's mater had provided electric blankets to be used in her house.

Peter went to bed with the juice turned full on, happy in the knowledge that he'd be warm all through the night.

But he didn't realise how warm he'd get before the night was through. In his innocence, Peter imagined he had to leave the juco turned on all the time, instead of switching off before going to sleep!

What awakened him at about 3 a.m. was the clouds of choking smoke and leaping lines of flame around his body! The bed was alight!

Peter gave one yell and did a jump that carried him clean out of bed. In another instant he was rushing to the bath-room for water.

We're glad to be able to say that the fire was quickly extinguished without doing much damage.

But Peter Todd's attitude to cold beds has changed.

Before this vac he was never heard to complain of excessive heat in bed. But now, he gently but firmly declines all offers of electric blankets. He's had enough!

BROWN'S ECONOMICAL CAR

"Cheaper Than Fretwork"

"Motoring nowadays is such a thrast-provoking within the reach of all," that he felt morally obliged to remark Tom Brown to a "Greyfriars Herald" representative last Wednesday.

Brown was just setting out for Fegg to fetch a second-hand car he had arranged to purchase. Bulstrove and Hazeldene and about a dozen other Remove chops were going with him.

"Take this bus I'm buying to-day, for instance," Brown went on, as we all trumped along the frostbound high-roads.

"I'm paying thirty shillings for it. Why, it's cheaper than fretwork!"

"What's the petrol consumption?" the "Greyfriars Herald" man asked.

"A mere nothing," was Brown's reply. "It does a hundred miles to the gallon, provided it's running downhill."

"What about uphill work?"

"Oh, you have to push it uphill; that's why I'm taking these fellows along with me."

"Then it doesn't go at all, really?" our representative grinned.

"Exactly!" nodded Brown. "That's what makes running costs so low, you see; no licence or insurance is needed. All it costs me is thirty shillings—plus, of course, one or two minor incidental expenses."

Of course, the incidental expenses have to be considered.

Brown found that on the way home, he had to get anyone to take it from first hill turned out to be him!

"NO MORE WAR!"

Coker Advocates Peace

There was a full attendance of Removites in the Fifth Form-room to hear Coker lecture on "No More War." This was probably accounted for by the fact that things had been so quiet for a couple of days. The only occurrence of note in that period had been a sale of cast-iron wrist-watches in Fish's study, and the fellows had consequently found time hanging rather heavily on their hands.

Coker woke things up with a vengeance! In a voice vibrant with passion, he declared that this grand old country of ours stood, as she always had stood, for peace.

"Why?" asked Coker, "should we plunge the youth of this land into the horrors of war? Nobody wants war. I don't want war myself and I'm quite prepared to give a sock on the jaw to anyone who does want war!"

Coker admitted that he was a pacifist. He added that how proud he was for the peace, and he was quite prepared to give a punch on the nose to anyone who disagreed with him over it.

It wasn't right—it wasn't sportsmanlike—it wasn't English—to want to fight our brothers across the seas. In defence of peace, he was quite prepared to fight anyone who wanted to break the peace.

"I stand here as an unqualified supporter of peace," said Coker. "And I'll jolly well mop up the floor with anyone who doesn't support my plea for peace. Who wants war?"

"WE DO!" yelled forty members of the Remove Form.

That yell was all that Coker needed! Tearing off his jacket, he jumped off the rostrum and plunged into the fray.

The last impression we got of the apostle of peace was a whirling windmill of arms and legs, as he fought furiously under a crowd of Removites. Unquestionably, the cause of peace had found a great fighting ally!

ANSWER TO CORRESPONDENT

"REGRETFUL REMOVE!"

"I tattooed myself during the vac, and it won't come off. Do you think I should tell my patter about it?"

We advise you to get it off your chest without any delay, old bean!

When the Second accepted a challenge to run a relay race against a prep school last term, we all took it as a joke till our Form-master told us Eosop's fable about the hare and the tortoise. But, after that, we went into stult training and just won the race. Surprizing, but true—a worth-while lesson was taught us by a tortoise!

WOULD YOU BELIEVE IT?

When W. G. Bunter appeared in the quad, he was resplendent in a heated argument. He was wearing, Manly's famous double-topped, Smithy's suit, and Johnny Bull's shoes! The owners swiftly claimed their belongings—and left Bunter a wreck!

GREYFRIARS FACTS WHILE YOU WAIT!

Old Mimble, the Head's gardener, won first prize at the Cour-field Show last summer with a giant narrow Dicky Nugent says Mimble sat up all night with it more than once—believe it or not!

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WHO'LL HELP BUNTER?

Subscriptions wanted to enable Sammy Bunter to return to Greyfriars First Class instead of Third. Slight increase in waist-line after holiday celebrations makes it practically impossible for him to squeeze through a Third Class doorway!—Write, Secy., The "Help Bunter" Fund, c/o "GREYFRIARS HERALD."

THAT'S HOW IT TASTES

We hear that a contractor in Friardale is offering a penny a gallon for muddly rain-water.

Presumably he hopes to make a profit by selling it to the School authorities for next term's tea in Hall!

DICKY NUGENT'S WEEKLY WISDOM

When the Second accepted a challenge to run a relay race against a prep school last term, we all took it as a joke till our Form-master told us Eosop's fable about the hare and the tortoise. But, after that, we went into stult training and just won the race. Surprizing, but true—a worth-while lesson was taught us by a tortoise!

FOR TO-NIGHT'S SUPPER—

We strongly advise you to go along to the Upper Fourth Debating Society. The speakers will supply you with enough "tripe" to last you for the rest of the month!

"SOLELY" HIS OWN FAULT!

Trebucc admits that he made a shocking mess of it when he tried to mend his own footer books last week.

Yet he strongly resented it when someone body accused him of being an awful snob!

Wot I Says Is This 'ERE

Thank'oo kindly, one an' all, for your inquiries re my 'oliday illness. Which it was caused by a gent pouring me out a glass of lemonado—after he'd ask me to 'ave a DRINK! Which it was a very severe shock to my nervous cistern. But wot I says is this 'ere, it's wonderful 'ow a man can pull through, an' I 'ope to be my old self by the New Term!

(Signed) WM. GOSLING, School Porter.



THE NEW Greyfriars Herald

