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“Leggo By Dose!”



RUCTIONS IN ROME!

BY FRANK RICHARDS

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Sacked!

JARVISH!"

"Sir!"

"You're sacked!"

Bunter the Billionaire spoke sternly.

He frowned as he spoke.

In fact, like the young Alpine gentleman in the poem, his brow was set, his eye beneath flashed like a falchion from its sheath!

Billy Bunter sat in the passengers' cabin in the magnificent Airways plane, the Kingfisher. James Jarvish, his valet, stood before him in a respectful and deferential attitude, winding his smooth hands together as if he were washing them in invisible soap in imperceptible water.

The plane was approaching Rome. From the cabin windows the Eternal City was in sight. The engines throbbled with a steady, unending drone.

Harry Wharton & Co. were in the cabin. They were looking from the windows, keenly interested in their first view of the Italian capital from the air. It was a glorious day in early September, with hardly a cloud in the sky. Rome was spread before their eyes like a map, and, beyond, Ostia and the azure Mediterranean. The Tiber ran like a silver streak.

The chums of the Remove politely affected to be unaware of what was going on at their elbows. Billy Bunter did not need their assistance in sacking his valet. They approved of that proceeding whole-heartedly.

Seldom, or never, did the Famous Five of Greyfriars see eye to eye with Billy Bunter! But in this matter they were in full agreement with him. They were strongly of opinion that the "sack" was the right and proper fate

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for James Jarvish, incomparable valet as he was!

"Sacked!" repeated Billy Bunter. Ho. wagged a fat and rather grubby forefinger at Jarvish. "Sacked! Got that?"

"Oh, sir!" murmured Jarvish in his sleek tones.

"As soon as we land in Rome you go!" said Bunter. "You can't pull my leg any longer, Jarvish! I've found you out!"

"Really, sir—"

"I've been a good master to you!" said the fat billionaire sternly. "You've been ungrateful, Jarvish."

"I have endeavoured, sir, to give every satisfaction—"

"That's enough! Get out! You're sacked!"

Jarvish did not get out.

He remained where he was, rubbing his smooth, plump hands together. His sly, shifty eyes glanced round at the chums of the Remove. There was a rather vicious gleam in them.

"Master William—"

"You can shut up, Jarvish! I've told you to get out of this cabin!" rapped Bunter.

"If anyone has been traducing me to you, sir—"

"My friends have warned me about your little game, if that's what you mean!" said Billy Bunter. "You're a bad hat, Jarvish, and I don't trust you! You're sacked! Get out!"

"If Master Wharton," said Jarvish viciously, "would speak out before my face instead of behind my back—"

Harry Wharton spun round from the window.

His eyes gleamed at the valet.

"I've said to you already what I've said to Bunter, Jarvish!" he exclaimed. "But I'll say it again if you like! Ever since we started on this holiday trip, that American gangster, Bronx, has been after Bunter, trying to get hold of

him. Why, I don't know; but I'm certain that you know! And you've been trying to betray Bunter into his hands."

"That is quite a mistake, sir—"

"It's nothing of the sort, and you know it! We suspected it in Venice, and when we had that forced landing in Umbria we had proof of it. We've put Bunter on his guard, and he knows now that he won't be safe so long as you are with him."

"I repeat, sir, that you are mistaken—" murmured Jarvish.

"And I repeat that you know I am not!" snapped the captain of the Greyfriars Remove. "And that's enough from you, Jarvish!"

"Or else," went on Jarvish, with cool impudence, "you have your own motives, sir, for desiring to separate my master from a faithful and attached servant."

"What?" roared Wharton.

"Please do not shout at me, sir!" said Jarvish. "I am accustomed to service in the best families, and very unused indeed to raised voices."

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"Kick the cheeky tick!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Indeed," pursued Jarvish, with the same cool, sleek impudence, "it is only my sincere attachment to Master William that has caused me to tolerate the company of a set of unruly, noisy, and obstreperous schoolboys."

"Why, you cheeky worm!" exclaimed Frank Nugent.

"The cheekfulness of the esteemed Jarvish is terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "I thoughtfully opine that the kickfulness is the proper caper."

"Had your manners," continued Jarvish, "been anything like those of my young master I should have been perfectly satisfied. Indeed, I have often

wondered why you did not take him for a model and endeavour to improve yourselves by imitation."

"I say, you fellows, there's something in that!" remarked Billy Bunter. "I must say I've often wondered the same thing myself."

"You fat idiot!"

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"You blithering dummy——"

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"You burbling bandersnatch——"

"Oh, really, Nugent——"

"It has been very painful to me," went on Jarvis, "to see my young master sponged upon by a mob of ill-mannered persons who do not even speak to him with proper respect in return for his generous bounty."

"Sponged upon!" gasped Wharton.

"And I am not surprised that you are anxious to get rid of a faithful servant who watches over his master's interests and endeavours to protect him from designing persons——"

"Us!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"In the circumstances, sir, I feel it my duty to speak out plainly in my master's interests!" said Jarvis calmly.

"And in my presence, sir, I must insist upon your treating my master with the respect that is his due."

"Jarvis is right there!" said Bunter. "You can't say that you're treating me with proper respect."

"You blithering owl——"

"After all I've done for you——"

"Oh, shut up!"

"Look here, you beast——"

"Dry up, fathead!"

"I cannot permit this," said Jarvis. "If my master chooses to dispense with my services I shall leave him with great regret. But so long as I am in his service I shall insist——"

"You're not in his service now," said Harry. "You're sacked! And you're getting out of this cabin! I'm fed-up with you and your impudence."

And the captain of the Remove took Jarvis by his plump shoulders and twirled him along the gangway.

Thump!

That punch, from Jarvis, was rather unexpected.

It landed on Wharton's chest, and he staggered back and sat down on the floor with a bump.

"Oh crikey!" ejaculated Bunter.

Wharton was on his feet in a twinkling, his eyes ablaze. He grasped the valet again, in a grasp that James Jarvis could not resist. With a swing of his arms he sent the sleek manservant spinning out of the cabin.

It was rather unfortunate that the steward was arriving at the same moment with a tray of refreshments for Bunter the Billionaire.

The steward entered as Jarvis left—with the inevitable result that there was a collision and a crash!

"Oh, my eye!" gasped the steward.

"What——"

"Ow!" roared Jarvis, as the tray descended on him. "Ow! Oooogh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Iced drinks and jam tarts mingled and mixed on Jarvis as he sprawled. Lemonade and orangeade washed him like a torrent. A lump of ice slid down his back. A jam tart adhered to his nose, clinging lovingly.

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

Jarvis sat up, dizzy and wet and sticky.

"Oh, my eye!" repeated the steward. "All that lot gone west! What ever do——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

James Jarvis staggered up. He gave the laughing juniors a wet and

sticky glare, and hurried away. The steward began to gather up the ruins; and the Famous Five turned their attention again to the aerial view of Rome.

Billy Bunter sat with a very thoughtful frown on his fat face. He was not quite so sure, after all, that he was going to sack Jarvis!

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Tricked!

"HOTEL SUPERBO!"

Bunter the Billionaire leaned back on soft cushions in the luxurious car that was waiting for him at the aerodrome. He smiled a fat smile of satisfaction as Jarvis gave instructions to the liveried chauffeur. He rather liked the name of the hotel that his valet had selected for him. It sounded imposing—in fact, superb; fitting to the high and palmy state of the Greyfriars' billionaire. The Hotel Superbo was the newest and biggest of all the new and big hotels in Rome. It was therefore good enough, or almost good enough, for William George Bunter.

"Si, signore!" said the magnificent chauffeur.

The klaxon roared. Its note was not precisely musical. But it was terrifically loud, and gratifying to the fat ears

Billy Bunter, with his billions, is a pigeon worth plucking. At least, so think Ponsonby & Co., the cads of Highelife School . . . until "Tiger" Bronx, the American gangster, shows up. Then it's a case of "beating it" while the going's good!

of Billy Bunter. It let nearly all Rome know that Bunter the Billionaire had arrived!

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" called out Bob Cherry. "Where do we come in, Bunter?"

Bunter blinked out of the car through his big spectacles.

"Jarvis!" He seemed to have forgotten for the moment that he had sacked Jarvis!

"Sir!" answered Jarvis. He seemed to have forgotten, also.

"You've got a car for these fellows?"

"Certainly, sir!"

"Put them into it before you come on with the baggage."

"Very good, sir!"

"But——" began Harry Wharton restively.

Bunter did not heed. He leaned back on the cushions again. Jarvis made the chauffeur a sign to proceed, and the big limousine rolled away.

Really, there was room in it for Bunter's travelling companions. It looked almost like a Spanish galleon as it rolled away.

However, it rolled away, and the Famous Five were left. They exchanged rather expressive looks.

"This way to your car, gentlemen!" said Jarvis deferentially.

It was hardly half an hour since Wharton had slung him out of the passengers' cabin in the plane, and he had barged the steward over and collected iced drinks and jam. But he seemed to have forgotten that, as well as that he was "sacked." He was clean and neat and spotless again; the perfect

manservant in perfect clothes and with a perfect manner. He treated the chums of the Remove with as much respect as if he had never dreamed of uttering a word of impudence in his life.

"Very well," said Wharton curtly.

They followed Jarvis to the second car. It was a large and handsome one, though not nearly so magnificent as the limousine in which the fat billionaire had rolled away. The chauffeur, a small dark man, was not in the livery of the Hotel Superbo, like Bunter's driver.

He gave the schoolboys a quick and rather curious look as they piled into the car.

Jarvis stood by him a few moments, speaking in Italian in a low voice. Harry Wharton noticed that a grin glided over the man's dusky face, and he nodded.

Italian was a language of which the chums of the Remove knew only a few words; and Jarvis's tone was too low for them to catch much of what he said, even if they had understood. But Wharton caught the word "mezzanotte," which he knew meant midnight; and he could not help wondering why Bunter's valet used the word. It was an extremely odd word to use in giving a chauffeur directions to drive to an hotel.

However, whatever Jarvis's instructions were, the driver understood them, and he started the car. Jarvis stood back, touching his hat respectfully to his master's friends; but with a peculiar gleam in his shifty eyes that rather belied his respectful salute.

"That tick is up to something!" said Bob Cherry, as the car rolled off, and Jarvis was left to attend to the baggage. "He's wangled it for us not to go along with Bunter. Why?"

"Goodness knows!" said Harry. "We shan't be many minutes after Bunter, anyhow, in this car!"

"The fat ass seems to have forgotten that he's sacked Jarvis!" said Frank Nugent, with a grin.

Wharton frowned.

"That sly rascal knows how to pull his leg! But we've got to make Bunter get shut of him for his own sake. He's not safe with that scheming rascal in tow."

The limousine was out of sight, though the Famous Five had started not many minutes after Bunter. Possibly it was taking a different route. The chums of the Remove kept their eyes open for it as they rolled along, but did not spot it again.

They found plenty to interest them, however, as the car rolled through the city. For some time, after leaving the drome, they did not pay any special attention to the direction they were taking. They had visited Rome before, as it happened, but knew little of the ways of the city; and long as the journey seemed, they only concluded that the Hotel Superbo was at a good distance.

But, after a time, a curious expression came over Harry Wharton's face. The car was rolling along the Corso Umberto, which led from the Piazza del Popolo to the Victor Emanuel monument. It had already rolled along the same Corso from the Monument to the Piazza.

"Look here, what's this game?" exclaimed Wharton. "We've been down this street—and now we are going up it again!"

"I suppose Jarvis didn't tell the driver to take us on a trip round Rome?" grinned Bob.

"Looks to me as if he jolly well did!" growled Wharton. "Anyhow, THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,388.

the man's driving us up and down and round about; and not heading for anywhere in particular."

He leaned over and tapped the chauffeur's shoulder.

The man glanced at him.

"Where are you driving us?" demanded Wharton.

"Non parlo Inglese, signore!"

"Dive andate?" asked Wharton. He had picked up the Italian for "where are you going?"

"Hotel Superbo, signore," grinned the chauffeur.

"Well, buck up, then—I mean, andate in fretta."

"Si, signore."

The man drove on as fast as the traffic would allow. As the juniors were unaware of the precise location of Bunter's Grand Hotel, they could not tell whether he was taking the correct route. But they had a very strong suspicion that he was not.

Hitherto, at least, he seemed to have been driving about the city with no object but to waste time. Wharton remembered Jarvis's low-toned talk with him before the start. He wondered angrily whether this was some trick of Bunter's valet in return for what had happened on the plane.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, that's the Tiber!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, as the car rolled over a bridge.

They crossed that ancient and historic river, and ran on more swiftly than before. Ten minutes later they crossed it again by another bridge. Then the car buzzed through the Porta del Popolo, and ran on at a tremendous speed.

Streets and houses were left, and, to their amazement, the juniors found that they had left Rome behind. A wide country road stretched before them, with a tram clanging over noisy lines. They whizzed by the tram and flew on.

"What the thump!" exclaimed Bob. "Is the man mad?"

Wharton set his lips.

"It's some trick of Jarvis's! He's put the man up to this—goodness knows why! I don't know where the Superbo is, but it's somewhere in Rome—not in the suburbs."

He leaned over again and tapped the chauffeur's shoulder. This time the man did not heed him even with a glance.

With his eyes fixed straight before him, he drove on at a tremendous speed. Wide open spaces shot past the juniors—trees merged into one another.

"Well, my only hat!" ejaculated Frank Nugent. "Look here, we've jolly well got to stop him!"

"Stop!" roared Wharton, in the chauffeur's ear.

The man drove on regardless.

"Fermate!" Wharton put it in Italian. "Fermate!"

Still the man drove on at a reckless speed. The car rocked, and the juniors rocked with it.

Angry as they were, the chums of the Remove hardly knew what to do. To grasp the driver, and stop him by force, was to invite catastrophe, at the speed at which they were travelling.

But to let him carry them off like this was altogether too thick. They were already twenty miles out of Rome, on the road to Tivoli. Wharton remembered the word "mezzanotte" that Jarvis had muttered to the driver. He had no doubt now that this was a trick of the valet's, to keep them out till midnight. It had been easy enough for him to fix it up, with a man in his own pay.

Wharton set his teeth.

"We've got to stop him! We——"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Look out!"

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A car, also driven at a reckless speed, came whizzing out of a side road. For a terrible second the juniors caught their breath. It looked as if an accident was inevitable.

There were three fellows in the other car, schoolboys in straw hats. They yelled together in startled affright.

Harry Wharton & Co. did not yell; but their hearts leaped.

For a long second the crash seemed to be coming. The other car jammed on brakes, and skidded. The juniors' driver wrenched his car round in time—barely in time, ran on two wheels for a second, and pitched over on the bank beside the road.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Old Foes!

"GREYFRIARS cads!"

Those unexpected words, in an unexpectedly familiar voice, fell on the ears of the five juniors in the car.

The car was half on its side, sprawling over on a grassy bank; the juniors in a sprawling heap in the interior.

The engine was shut off; the chauffeur had jumped clear. He stood staring at the car, gasping for breath, for a moment or two, and then got the door open to help the juniors out.

Hip Pip—

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(See announcement on page 7.)

The other car, a blue Itala, had skidded, but had come to a safe stop a dozen yards away. Three fellows descended from it—three very elegantly-dressed youths. One of them walked across to the overturned car, with a black scowl on his face, evidently to tell the owners what he thought of them for driving so wildly and recklessly. As he arrived on the spot, and saw the Famous Five clambering breathlessly out, he uttered that startled ejaculation.

"Greyfriars cads!"

The Famous Five did not heed, for the moment. They were breathless, and severely shaken, though fortunately the damage was no worse than that. They clambered out and stood in the road.

Then they stared at the fellow who had addressed them. They knew him at once.

It was Cecil Ponsonby, of the Fourth Form at Highcliffe. The other two fellows, standing by the Itala car, were Gadsby and Monson.

Pon & Co. apparently were "doing" Rome in the holidays; and had thus unexpectedly fallen in with their old enemies of Greyfriars.

"You!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "Ponsonby!"

"The esteemed and ridiculous Ponsonby!" ejaculated Hurree Jamset Ram Singh

Pon glared at them.

"What the thump do you mean by careering along the road like that?" he

demanded. "You rotten road-hogs, you might have smashed up both cars."

Wharton coloured with vexation. Ponsonby of Highcliffe seldom had the right on his side in a dispute. But he was in the right now. Both cars had been endangered by the juniors' reckless driver.

"You ought to be jolly well run in!" snapped Ponsonby. "By gad, if there were a bobby at hand I'd have you run in."

"Oh, don't be a fool, Pon!" snapped Johnny Bull.

"You rotten, cheeky road-hogs——"

"Not our fault, Ponsonby!" said Harry Wharton, forcing himself to speak civilly. "Our driver——"

"Your driver was doing what you told him, I suppose?"

"As it happens, he wasn't."

"Well, why didn't you stop him?" yapped Ponsonby. "Is your man drunk, or what? Might have guessed there were Greyfriars' cads in the car—going along like a crew of Bank Holiday bounders."

"That will do, Ponsonby!" said Wharton quietly. "We're sorry you've had a fright——"

"Who's had a fright, you cheeky cad?" snarled Ponsonby.

The Famous Five grinned. It was quite clear that Pon had had a fright, and that that was the cause of his savage snarling temper.

"After all, your own car was going pretty fast," said Nugent. "You came round that corner like an arrow."

"If you want to make out that it was our driver's fault——"

"I'm not saying that! Still, you were going jolly fast."

"Anyhow, there's no harm done, on your side, Ponsonby," said Bob Cherry. "Your car's all right—and ours looks rather wrecked."

"Serve you right!" snarled Ponsonby.

"Very well; let it go at that, then!" said Harry Wharton, still quietly. "No need to rag about it—get back to your car, Ponsonby, and leave us alone."

"You rotten road-hog——"

"I've told you that will do!"

"You Greyfriars' hooligan——"

"Are you going to shut up, Ponsonby?" asked Johnny Bull. "If not, you'll get shut up, sharp."

Ponsonby, however, did not shut up. He had come there to tell the Greyfriars' fellows what he thought of them; and he proceeded to do so at considerable length, and still more emphasis.

As their driver was to blame for the narrow escape from a collision, the Famous Five felt that it was up to them to be as patient as possible. So they listened to Pon's tirade for a long minute in silence. But patience had its limits.

"That's enough!" interrupted the captain of the Remove. "Now ring off, and go back to your car!"

"You rotten, cheeky, road-hogging, Greyfriars ruffian——" Pon was beginning again.

He was interrupted. Johnny Bull made a stride at him, grasped him by the shoulders, and sat him down in the road.

Bump!

"Ow!" roared Ponsonby.

Gadsby and Monson had approached the spot, looking rather uneasy.

"I say, Pon——" began Gadsby.

"Let's get out of this, old chap!" said Monson.

Ponsonby did not heed, even if he heard! He leaped to his feet, and made a spring at Johnny Bull.

Johnny had just time to ward the savage blow that came at his face. The next moment they were fighting fiercely.

The two chauffeurs stared at the scene, and exchanged grins. They

seemed to find something amusing in this sudden shindy between two parties of foreign tourists.

"Look here, chuck it, you Greyfriars cads!" exclaimed Monson.

"Better tell Pon that!" said Bob Cherry. "We didn't want a row! Anyhow, you won't have to wait long—Pon won't last many minutes."

"You rotters!" said Gadsby.

Bob made a step towards him.

"Feeling like a scrap yourself?" he inquired. "May as well get going, if you're keen, and keep them company, what?"

Gadsby promptly backed away.

"I don't want a row with you!" he snapped. "Keep your distance."

"Then you'd better keep your tongue between your teeth, or you'll have a row whether you want it or not!" said Bob Cherry.

stood waiting for him to get up, breathing rather hard, but ready for a lot more.

But there was no more to come from Ponsonby. He sat up, pressing his hand to his nose, from which a thin stream of claret was oozing.

Gadsby and Monson came over to him, and lifted him to his feet. Johnny gave him a sarcastic look.

"Want any more?" he inquired.

"Keep off, you rotter!" panted Ponsonby.

"It wasn't worth starting if you're going to chuck it so soon!" said Johnny.

"You've got another round in you, Pon!"

Cecil Ponsonby made no answer to that. Gasping for breath, he staggered into his car, followed by Gadsby and Monson. Johnny Bull shrugged his shoulders contemptuously.

till he turned from his examination of the car.

"Can we go in it?" asked Harry quietly. "Possiamo andare?"

The man shrugged his shoulders.

"No, signore! L'innesto e fuori d'ordine—"

"What the thump—" grunted Johnny Bull.

"I believe the innesto is the clutch," said Harry. "Anyhow, it's pretty clear that the car won't go without repairs. It got rather a bump on the bank. We've got to walk unless we can flag a car and get a lift—not so jolly easy in a foreign country."

"Those Highcliffe cads might have given us a lift instead of kicking up a row!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Not much good if we'd asked that crew."



Harry Wharton, with a swing of his arms, sent Jarvis spinning out of the cabin. The steward was about to enter with a tray of refreshments as the man-servant left, with the inevitable result that there was a collision and a crash. "Oh, my eye!" gasped the steward. "Ow!" roared Jarvis, as the tray descended on him. "Ow! Oooogh!"

Gadsby scowled and was silent.

Meanwhile, Ponsonby and Johnny Bull were scrapping in great style. The Co. looked on. It was man to man; and they could not intervene.

For a minute or two Pon's fury seemed to carry all before it, and Johnny gave ground and received several hefty hits.

But he rallied, in his cool and stolid way, and attacked in his turn; and then Pon's passionate rage was not long in petering out.

Pon could fight a winning fight; but he did not like hard knocks; and one or two from Johnny's heavy fist calmed him down very considerably.

He backed away, and backed farther, no longer attacking, but defending; and evidently repenting that he had started the scrap at all.

There was a sudden crash, as the dandy of Highcliffe went down on his back in the road.

He yelped as he landed there.

Johnny Bull dropped his hands, and

The Itala car roared away into the sunset towards Rome, and the Highcliffians were gone.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Night on the Campagna!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. gathered by the overturned car.

Their driver was examining it, with a rather rueful expression on his dark face. It was clear that he had had Jarvis's instructions to carry them out of Rome, instead of landing them at Bunter's hotel, and to keep them out late. But he had not intended, certainly, to upset the car, and land himself as well as the juniors for a long walk.

The juniors gave him rather grim looks. They were at a halt now, and could deal with the fellow, which was some satisfaction, though in other respects the situation was very far from satisfactory. But they waited in silence

"I'm jolly glad that I've decorated Pon's nose, anyhow!"

"Well, that won't help us now," said Nugent. "The question is, what are we going to do? We must be twenty miles out of Rome."

"I'm going to punch Jarvis's head when we get in!" grunted Johnny.

"We've got to get in first! If that blighter only understood English—"

"Ten to one he does!" growled Johnny. "All these Roman guides and waiters and chauffeurs speak English, more or less. Anyhow, they speak French. We ought to be able to sling it to him in French, after all the lessons we've mugged up at Greyfriars."

Bob Cherry grinned.

"I've noticed that in France they don't seem to understand a lot of Greyfriars French!" he remarked. "May have better luck here, perhaps."

"You've mugged up enough Italian to ask the brute, Wharton! Go it!"

"Non parlate Inglese?" said Harry.

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"No, signore!" answered the chauffeur, with a grin.

"Parlate Francese?"

"No, signore!" said the man, still grinning. "Solamente Italiano."

"Well, if he doesn't speak English, kick him till he does!" suggested Johnny Bull.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The chauffeur gave them a startled look and stepped back. He seemed to be a little alarmed—which was rather odd if he did not understand what Johnny had said.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! He's caught on to that!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Bag the brute, and kick him! He's asked for it, anyhow!"

"Signore!" gasped the Roman chauffeur; and he made a movement to dodge round the car.

In a moment the Greyfriars fellows collared him. They had no doubt now that the man understood English well enough.

"Bump him!" said Bob. "That will be a tip that we mean business!"

"Good egg!"

Bump!

The chauffeur gave a fearful yell as he was swept off the earth in five pairs of hands, and then landed on it again with a heavy concussion.

"Bumping" in Greyfriars style was evidently a new experience to him, and one that he did not like a little bit.

"Now, you rotter," said Bob, "you're going to talk English—see?"

"Non posso, signore!" gasped the Roman.

"You'll posso all right when you've had another bump! Give him another!"

Bump!

"Whooop!" roared the hapless chauffeur. "Oh, signore, strike me not on the earth! I have one pain in a trouser!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Evidently the Roman chauffeur could speak English—of a sort!

"Hold him!" said Harry. "Now, you rascal, how far are we from Rome?"

"Venti—twenty mile, signore."

"Jarvish told you to bring us out here and strand us?"

"That signore tell me to drive you!" groaned the chauffeur. "He say keep going till middle of night."

"And why?"

"Io non so—me know not."

"And why did you do it, you rascal?"

"Cento lire, signore—he pay me one hundred of lire for this to do!" gasped the chauffeur. "He say it is one small joke."

"We'll give the blighter a small joke when we see him again!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Can you get that car going again?" demanded Wharton.

"No, signore! She is broke!"

"How are we to get back to Rome, then?"

The chauffeur shrugged his shoulders. Evidently he regarded that question as a riddle to which he did not know the answer.

Wharton set his lips. The sun was sinking over the distant city, and the dusk of evening falling on the wide Campagna. It was likely to be a very late hour before the juniors got in if they had to walk.

But there seemed nothing else to be done.

"Better make up our minds to it," said Bob. "Bump that rotter again for landing us like this! We'll bump Jarvish when we get in!"

Bump!

"Hear, hear!"

"Signore!" yelled the chauffeur, as he was swept off his feet again. "Owl! Wow! Nobilissimi, signore— Yooop! Woooo-hoooo—hooooop!"

Bump, bump, bump, bump!

"Iddio mio! Whooop!"

"Remember that next time you think of playing a small joke on foreigners!" said Bob.

"Oooooogh! Owl! Ooooh!" groaned the chauffeur.

"Come on!" said Bob. "Andiamo, as they say in this country! We've made that cheeky tick sorry for himself; and we'll make Jarvish sorry when we get in! Hoof it!"

And the Famous Five started on the long walk, leaving the chauffeur sitting by the overturned car, gasping and groaning.

They tramped on steadily in the falling dusk.

The long "via" seemed to stretch endlessly before them. Several times a car passed, with glaring headlights on. But there was no chance of getting a lift for a crowd of five. They kept their eyes open for a village or a wayside albergo, where they would be able to hire some sort of a vehicle; but for several miles the road seemed utterly solitary.

The day had been hot, but after sunset came the usual chilly wind of a southern country. They had no coats; all the baggage had been left to the care of Jarvish. As they tramped wearily on their desire was very keen to see that double-dealing rascal again, and deal with him as they had with the chauffeur, only a little more severely.

And as the dusk deepened into night they remembered tales they had heard of the Campagna—the great stretch of open country round the city of Rome.

Once, and not so very long ago, it had been the haunt of innumerable gangs of banditti and assassins and truculent beggars. Even in modern days wise people did not wander about in the Campagna after dark by lonely roads. When a shadowy figure loomed up from a broken wall by the roadside the juniors felt their hearts beat a little faster, and they drew closer together.

They caught a gleam of glinting black eyes. But if the shadowy figure was that of a roadside thief, he probably decided that the party was too numerous for him to tackle, for he dropped back into the shadows again. The Greyfriars fellows walked on more quickly.

"Anybody getting tired?" asked Bob Cherry presently.

"The tiredness is terrific!" murmured Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh. "But what cannot be cured must go longest to the well, as the English proverb remarkably observes."

"I'll scrag that brute Jarvish!" muttered Nugent.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" Bob Cherry stopped suddenly. "What— Listen!"

From the darkness ahead of them on the road there came a sudden sharp cry. It was followed by a scuffling sound.

Halting, the juniors strained their eyes into the darkness. The scuffling sound was that of a struggle, and it was quite near, though they could see nothing. They looked at one another in the dusk with startled eyes.

"Footpads!" breathed Nugent.

"Somebody in trouble!"

For a moment the juniors hesitated. Then Harry Wharton ran on, and his comrades followed him fast.

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THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

A Good Turn—and Another!

A PANTING voice was crying out as the Greyfriars fellows ran up.

"Oh, signore, miseracordia—compassione—son povero prete—"

Little as they knew of the language of the country, the juniors understood the meaning of that cry: "Mercy, compassion, I am a poor priest!"

That was enough for them.

It was evident that the man who cried out was badly in need of assistance, and little as they wished to be mixed up in a shindy with the outcasts of the Campagna, the Greyfriars fellows were not likely to leave him unaided.

There was a glimmer of starlight on the road, and as they arrived on the spot they could see what was happening.

A man in the garb of a priest was down on his back, with a swarthy ruffian's knee pinning him down, while another bravo was flourishing a knife over his terrified face.

Although he shrieked out that he was a "povero prete"—a poor priest—it was evident that the two "ladri" were satisfied that he was worth the trouble of robbing.

"Silenzio!" snarled the man with the knife. "Zitto!"

Then he turned his head, his black eyes flashing, at the sound of pattering footsteps on the road.

Harry Wharton reached him almost at the same moment.

He hit out as he reached him. It was not a time to stand on ceremony, in dealing with a ferocious ladro with a knife in his dusky hand.

Wharton's fist crashed into the dusky face, and the ruffian went spinning over in the road.

The man who was kneeling on the priest leaped to his feet with a startled howl, and leaped away just in time to elude a crashing right-hander from Bob Cherry.

The priest, breathless and amazed, sat up, panting. Johnny Bull and Nugent helped him to his feet, and he stood unsteadily, shaking from head to foot, and gulping in breath.

The man with the knife scrambled up, spitting out imprecations in Italian. The other man had drawn a knife also.

They stood back from the group of juniors, glaring up and down the shadowy road, as if to ascertain whether others were coming.

"Stick together, you men!" breathed Wharton. "We're for it now!"

A few moments were enough to satisfy the ladri that the schoolboys were there alone. And then, with half-crouching steps, they came towards the Greyfriars fellows, their eyes glinting under their black brows, the knives gleaming in their hands.

There was greed, as well as rage, in their looks. The priest, poor or not, was small game compared with five well-dressed foreign tourists, who were so reckless as to be wandering about the Campagna by night.

The juniors stood together, with clenched hands, their hearts beating fast, in the middle of the road. They were strong and sturdy, and they had plenty of pluck; but they were unarmed, and had little chance in a struggle with armed bravos, if the rascals used their weapons. And it was clear enough that the ladri were prepared to use them to carry out their robbery.

Honk! Honk! Honk!

Never had the sound of a motor-horn been so musical to the ears of the Greyfriars fellows.

Up the road came a sudden glare of

flashing headlights, from the direction in which the juniors had come.

Almost in a second, as a big car came rushing out of the night, the blaze of light falling on the group in the middle of the road.

It was as light, almost, as day.

Honk! Honk!

There was a crashing of brakes as a car slid to a halt within a few yards of the Greyfriars group.

The two bravos blinked in the light, exchanged a growling, muttered word, and dashed away through the trees beside the road.

They vanished swiftly from sight. The sudden arrival of the car was enough to scare them from their prey.

Harry Wharton panted with relief. How the fight would have gone he did not know, and hardly cared to think. But the danger was over, with startling suddenness.

"Thank goodness!" breathed Frank Nugent.

"The thankfulness is terrific!" gasped the Nabob of Bhanipur.

The chauffeur of the big car was staring at the group. A window opened and a head was put out.

"Che cosa e?" asked a rather highly-pitched voice.

Harry Wharton stepped to the side of the car, raising his hat politely. The man in the car was old, with silvery hair escaping from a little black velvet cap. His face was brown and wrinkled, but very kindly in expression. His little, twinkling black eyes almost disappeared in an ocean of tiny wrinkles; but they were very sharp and keen, and had taken in the scene on the road at a single glance.

"Jolly glad you came up in your car, sir!" said Harry. "If you speak English—"

"Si, signorino!" The wrinkled old face broke into a smile. "You are English. Yes, I speak your language! You have been attacked by thieves of the Campagna. It is unwise for foreigners, especially boys, to wander in the Campagna at night."

"Stranded—breakdown in a car—"

"I understand." The old gentleman nodded. "It is fortunate that I arrived; you might have fared badly."

"Not much doubt about that, as the brutes had knives," said Harry.

The old man's eyes fell on the priest. He made him a sign to approach, and the "prete" came up to the door, with a manner of the deepest respect. Apparently, he knew who the old man was, and his manner indicated that he regarded him as a very big gun indeed.

There was an interchange of Italian, which the Greyfriars fellows were quite unable to follow.

When it was over the priest stepped back, with an air of the greatest respect and humility. He turned to the juniors.

"Grazie, grazie, signore!" he said, which, they were aware, was Italian for "Thanks."

"Not at all!" said Wharton, with a smile.

The priest faded away into the darkness of the road. The juniors would have stepped back for the car to proceed, but the old man within made them a sign to stop.

"So I learn that you came to the aid of Brother Antonio, and so placed yourselves in danger from the knives of the ladri!" he said.

"We could hardly leave him to it, sir!" said Bob.

"Certo! But it was very brave, very kind. You are walking back to the city? It is many miles yet. What is your destination?"

"The Hotel Superbo!" answered Harry.

The old Italian smiled.

"Yes, the grand hotel of the rich English. Yes. I think you say, in your language, that one good turn deserves another, is it not so? You have helped my poor brother—"

"Your brother, sir!" Wharton could not help ejaculating.

The old man in the car was plainly dressed, but the car was a magnificent one, and it seemed incredible that the poor, shabby priest was his brother. The old Italian smiled again.

"My brother in the Church," he explained.

"Oh! I—I see! You are a priest, too, sir?"

"I am the Cardinal Colonna!"

Harry Wharton & Co. had never heard of the Cardinal Colonna, but they knew that Colonna was one of the greatest names in Rome, and that a cardinal was a tremendous big gun.

"You will honour me by entering my car!" said the cardinal. "I am going now to Rome, and I shall have great pleasure in dropping you at your hotel, my young English friends."

"You are awfully good, sir," said Wharton gratefully. "We're jolly tired

being quite incapable of pulling on a silk sock or jamming a stud into a collar unaided. Aristocratic helplessness had distinguished Bunter ever since he had become a billionaire.

A magnificent manager, whom Bunter at first mistook for a Roman prince, had received the billionaire on his arrival. A gold-laced head porter had taken his hat. A wonderful lift shot him up to his wonderful suite.

The Hotel Superbo was the last word in tremendous hotels. The bills, no doubt, were in proportion.

That, however, was a matter that Billy Bunter disdained to regard. All such trifling things were left to his man.

Which was rather a change in a few weeks, from the time when Billy Bunter had been the most impecunious fellow at Greyfriars School, constantly in expectation of a postal order that never came, and seeking—not always with success—to borrow humble "bobs" and "tanners" up and down the Remove.

Bunter naturally enjoyed the change!

To roll in boundless wealth, to be kowtowed to by everybody who had a business-like eye on that wealth, and to be

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THE EDITOR.

of walking, but—we're rather a crowd." "Niente! You will honour me by stepping in."

The chums of the Remove were only too glad to honour the old gentleman by stepping in.

They stepped in promptly, and the big car rolled on again through the deep dusk for Rome.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Not Sacked!

"JARVISH!" "Sir!" "Haven't the fellows come yet?"

"Apparently not, sir."

"They'll miss their dinner if they don't get in."

"No doubt, sir."

"It's queer that they don't come."

"Quite so, sir."

"Well, I'm not going to wait dinner for them. They can't expect it."

"Certainly not, sir."

Bunter the Billionaire was dressing for dinner in his magnificent suite in the magnificent Hotel Superbo. Or, to speak more correctly, James Jarvish was dressing him for dinner, Bunter

served hand and foot by an incomparable valet like Jarvish, was great joy to Bunter.

It was a real worry to him that he had to sack Jarvish.

The fact that his tremendous wealth proceeded from that mysterious valet made it rather awkward. Of that fact the Famous Five were unaware, though they suspected that Jarvish had something—they could not guess what—to do with Bunter's sudden enormous riches.

Apart from that, Jarvish was such an excellent valet! Not only did he obey orders almost before they were uttered, but he seemed really to anticipate them.

Judging by appearances, James Jarvish lived wholly and solely for the pleasure of making himself useful to Billy Bunter!

That, of course, was exactly as it should have been, Bunter being such a splendid fellow in every way! Still, it was rather remarkable. Even Billy Bunter had wondered whether there might be a "catch" in it somewhere.

It had become clear at least, that by transferring his immense wealth to Bunter, Jarvish had also transferred the deadly pursuit of Tiger Bronx, the gangster of Chicago, to that fat and fatuous youth.

That, unfortunately, was not all. Harry Wharton & Co. had at first suspected, and then learned beyond doubt, that the mysterious valet was playing into the gangster's hands. And that fact having been made clear to Bunter's obtuse mind, he had made up his mind to give Jarvis the boot. In the plane on the way to Rome he had done so. Nevertheless, here was Jarvis, dressing him for dinner as usual.

Why the other fellows hadn't arrived at the hotel Bunter did not know. It did not occur to his fat mind that Jarvis had played any trick to keep them away while he handled the unexpected situation that had arisen.

Like the gentleman in the story who was dead but would not lie down, Jarvis was sacked, but he was not going to take his departure.

Billy Bunter blinked at him through his big spectacles, devoutly wishing that the other fellows were there to give him their moral support, as it were, in dealing with the valet.

Meanwhile, Jarvis, deferential as ever, made himself even more useful than ever, adding to Bunter's regret that he had to part with so valuable a "man." Bunter had arrived too early for dinner, which was at eight o'clock at the Superbo, so he had, of course, to have a "snack." That snack had been ordered and selected by Jarvis, and Bunter realised, with a sigh, that he would probably never get another "man" with such a genius for ordering meals!

"Your tie, sir!" said Jarvis. He tied Bunter's dress-tie with a masterly hand. "I should certainly not recommend you, sir, to wait dinner for your friends. No doubt they are amusing themselves somewhere."

"Blow 'em!" grunted Bunter.

"You have your health to consider, sir! Late meals are very detrimental to the health."

Bunter realised again what an intelligent man Jarvis was!

"You're right," he said. "I've always thought so! I—I—I wish I could keep you, Jarvis!"

"I trust, sir, that you will not seriously think of parting with a faithful, I may say, attached servant."

"That's all very well, Jarvis!" mumbled Bunter. "But Wharton thinks—"

"That young gentleman dislikes me for some reason, sir!" said Jarvis smoothly. "I admit, sir, I lost my temper on the plane this afternoon. In the circumstances—"

"But the other fellows think the same, you see!" said Bunter feebly. "You—you see, Jarvis, they feel certain that you've tried to let that lanky American Bronx get hold of me—"

Jarvis had a very pained look.

"An absurd suspicion, sir!" he said. "I am sure, sir, that you would never have thought of it yourself had it not been suggested to you."

"Yes, that's so," agreed Bunter. "But—"

"You are, sir, if I may venture to say so, so noble-minded, so unsuspecting, so far above any kind of pettiness, that you are not wholly on your guard against designing persons!" said Jarvis. "It is natural in a young gentleman of your high birth and aristocratic connections."

Billy Bunter purred like a fat cat.

Bunter liked flattery! He liked it like pineapple, in chunks! Jarvis was prepared to hand it out in stacks!

"Your friends, sir, are willing to benefit by your ungrudging bounty," said Jarvis. "But can you say, sir, that they are grateful?"

"No fear!" said Bunter. "I've often told them so."

"As your devoted servant, sir, I have sometimes resented this, and I cannot help thinking that that is why Master Wharton has this unfounded prejudice against me. I have served several masters in my time, sir, but never before have I experienced such a devoted attachment."

This was laying it on thick.

But it could hardly be laid on too thick for Billy Bunter!

He hesitated.

But back into his mind came the lean, hard face of Tiger Bronx and his terror of the grip of the gangster.

He had had a narrow escape, and, according to the Famous Five, Jarvis was playing a double-dealing game to land him in those lean, gripping hands.

Bronx had been left behind by the whizzing aeroplane, but Bunter had no doubt that sooner or later he would turn up again.

Before the gangster turned up he wanted to be safe from danger on the side of Jarvis.

"I am sure, sir, that you will reconsider—" murmured Jarvis.

Bunter shook his head.

"Sorry, Jarvis," he said, "but—I've made up my mind! I'm sorry to lose you; but—you're sacked!"

"Oh, sir!"

"I shall have to manage with the hotel valet here till I get another man," said Bunter. "After all, I can rough it a bit."

Jarvis stood winding his smooth hands together, his sly, shifty eyes watching the fat billionaire's face. The Owl of the Remove could not read the contempt and derision in those sly eyes.

"If you have resolved, sir—"

"Quite!" said Bunter. His fat mind was made up. Amenable as he was to flattery and leg-pulling, he knew, at the bottom of his fat heart, that the Greyfriars fellows were concerned for his safety. And Bunter's safety was very important to Bunter.

But James Jarvis had yet a card to play. He had left it till the last; but he played it now.

"Very well, sir," he said. "I am deeply pained, but I will say no more. The compact between us is now rescinded, by your wish."

"Eh?" ejaculated Bunter, startled.

"You will remember, sir," said Jarvis smoothly, "that when the deeds were drawn up, transferring my fortune to you, it was stipulated that you retained my services permanently as your valet."

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

Bunter had forgotten that rather important point! Indeed, he was so used now to being a billionaire, and to receiving deferential obedience from Jarvis, that he had almost forgotten that his wealth had come from the mysterious valet at all. Jarvis's smooth reminder was a "facer" for the Greyfriars billionaire.

"As you have no longer any use for that fortune," continued Jarvis, with smooth irony, "I will receive it back, by the cancellation of our agreement—"

"O. lor!" gasped Bunter.

"Doubtless, sir, it will be no very great inconvenience to you, as I understand, from what you have honoured me by telling me, that your relatives are all extremely wealthy."

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "Yes! But—"

"Then, sir, I will leave you with great regret! No doubt you will see the manager with regard to your bill here—"

"Oh crikey!"

"This suite is engaged at a hundred pounds a week—"

"Oh lor!"

"However, as I am no longer in your service, sir, you will prefer me not to discuss your affairs."

"Mum-mum-my affairs!" stuttered Bunter.

"Yours, sir! Good-evening, sir!" Jarvis retreated to the door.

Billy Bunter blinked after him quite blankly.

He realised that if Jarvis went his wealth also would go. Evidently Jarvis had foreseen this possibility when he carried out that strange and mysterious transaction by which his enormous wealth had been transferred to Billy Bunter. Bunter stood transfixed.

The valet's hand was on the door when Bunter gasped out:

"Hold on, Jarvis!"

Jarvis turned back.

"Sir!"

"D-d-don't go!" gasped Bunter.

"As you have discharged me, sir—"

"N-no! N-n-not at all! I—I'm not going to sack you, Jarvis! I—I think very likely those fellows are mistaken! I—I feel certain they're mistaken! You—you're not sacked, Jarvis!"

"Oh, sir!" murmured Jarvis.

"After all, they're silly asses!" said Bunter.

Billy Bunter had a wonderful faculty for believing what he wanted to believe and discarding what he did not want to believe. And he was not going to believe anything, if he could help it, that would cause him to cease being a billionaire, and drop him back with a bump into his former hard-up state!

"They're duffers!" said Bunter. "I've often told them what fools they are, if you come to that! You stick here, Jarvis! You—you're not sacked!"

"Thank you, sir!" said Jarvis, smoothly and deferentially. "I shall endeavour, sir, to repay your kindness by the most devoted service."

And all was calm and bright—so far as James Jarvis was concerned, at all events. Perhaps Billy Bunter had a lingering tremulous doubt left. If so, he stifled it; and when the lift carried Bunter the Billionaire down to the immense dining-room of the Hotel Superbo, James Jarvis was still his valet!

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Landing a Fat Fish!

"THAT fat ass!"

"That bloated bloater!"

"Exactly!" said Cecil Ponsonby. "I've heard about him in the hotel—I've got it out of the head porter, and the head waiter, and the manager—and it's official! Straight from the horse's mouth, dear men."

"Well, my hat!" said Gadsby and Monson together.

The three Highcliffe fellows were walking elegantly down the immense restaurant of the Hotel Superbo.

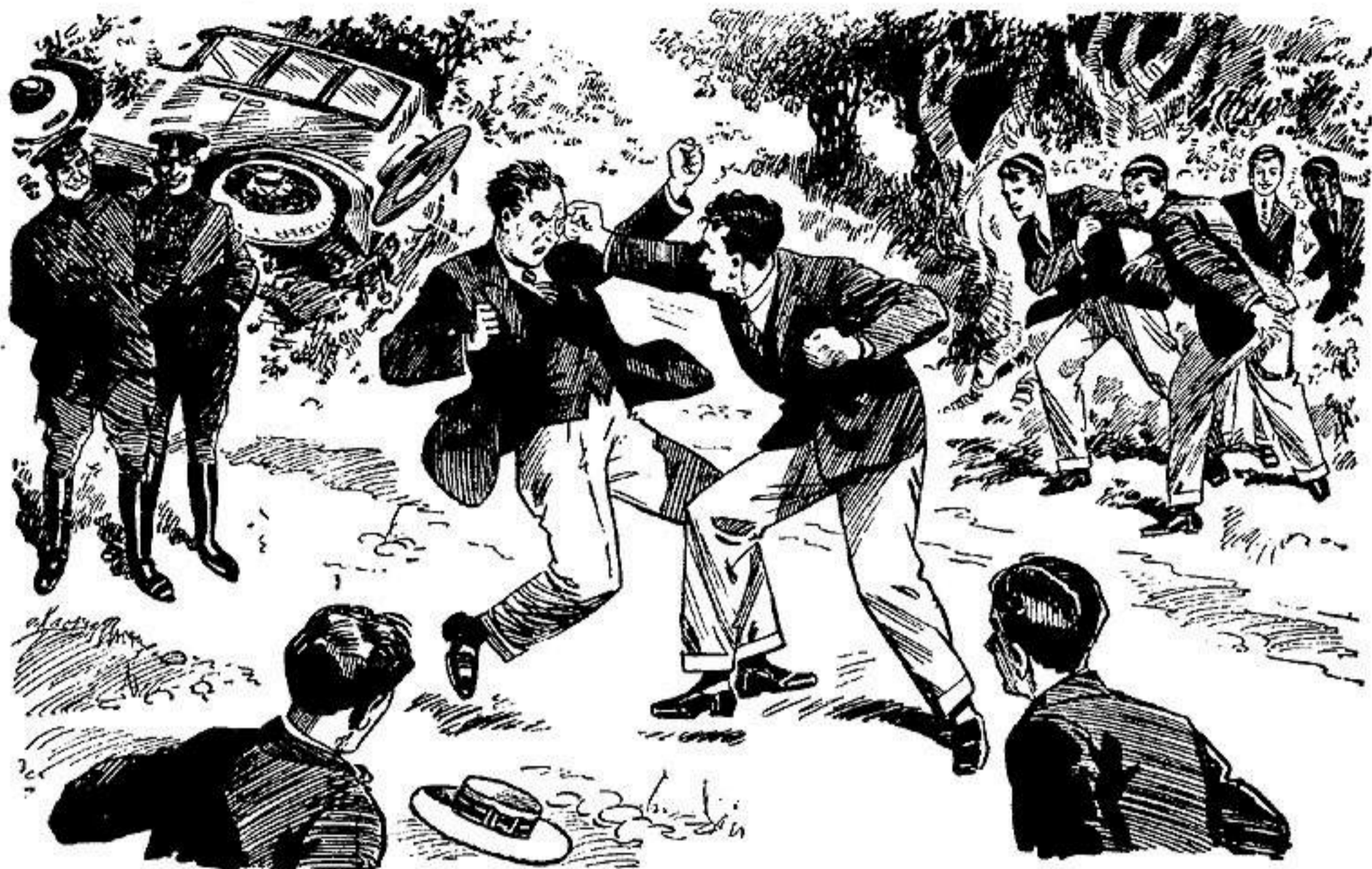
Innumerable tables, gleaming with flowers under shaded lights, accommodated innumerable diners, the hum of conversation mingling with the soft strains of the orchestra hidden by banks of ferns.

At one table, in solitary state, sat a fat billionaire. And it was on the fat billionaire that Pon & Co.'s eyes were turned.

Bunter was deeply occupied.

At the Hotel Superbo the grub was good! It was not merely good. It was excellent! It was splendid! It was gorgeous and fascinating.

Bunter wondered why the other fellows hadn't arrived. But he forgot



Ponsonby leaped to his feet, and made a spring at Johnny Bull. Johnny had just time to ward off the savage blow that came at his face. The next moment the two juniors were fighting fiercely. The two chauffeurs stared at the scene, and exchanged grins. "Chuck it, you Greyfriars cads!" exclaimed Monson. "Pon won't last many minutes!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

their existence in his intense interest in the grub.

The head waiter himself honoured Bunter's table by his personal presence, assisted by four or five myrmidons.

That alone demonstrated to all the immense hotel what an important person Bunter was. When Luigi, the head waiter of the Superbo, gave any guest his special attention it meant that that guest was somebody.

There were two or three hundred people dining at the Superbo. Many of them gave Bunter glances.

Some of them wondered, perhaps, where he was parking the foodstuffs. But the fame of his wealth had spread. All the Superbo knew about it.

Bunter the Billionaire occupied the best suite of rooms at a cost of a hundred pounds a week! Bunter the Billionaire practically exuded money at every pore of his skin. And money talks!

Pon & Co., when they had seen Bunter in the lounge, had wondered what the fat boulder was doing in a first-class and frightfully expensive hotel. They had plenty of money themselves; but the Superbo was rather a strain on their resources. But Pon had soon learned that the fat Owl of the Remove, whom he had kicked so often during the term, was now a millionaire, or a billionaire, rolling in uncounted money. Which made a big difference to Pon's estimation of Bunter. Although the nuts of Highcliffe were well-supplied with cash, they had very expensive ways; and the Roman races had run away with a great deal of it, too. A billionaire was a useful man to meet.

"I gather," went on Pon, in a low voice, "that he's travelling with some other Greyfriars men—that Wharton gang, that we met on the road from Tivoli this evening." Pon rubbed his nose reminiscently. There was a mark on it, left by Johnny Bull's fist, and a lingering pain. "They seem to have got

stranded on the road—a bit of luck for us."

"How's that?" asked Gadsby.

"While the cat's away, the jolly old mice have a free field!" answered Pon. "We're baggin' their billionaire."

"Oh, my hat!" said Monson.

"I suppose they're running him for what he's worth to them," went on Pon. "They can't like the fat fool's company! Well, if we can cut them out we can run him instead."

"Look here, we don't want that fat jackanapes hangin' on to us while we're in Rome!" objected Gadsby.

"We do!" answered Pon coolly. "Don't I keep on tellin' you that he's reckon' with filthy lucre? They cleared us out on the races yesterday, and we've hardly a bean till something comes through from home. I tell you men this is our lucky day. Come on."

"That's not the way to our table——" "We're dinin' with Bunter, fathead! Leave it to me—and mind you get your best manners on!"

Ponsonby led the way to Bunter's table. Bunter was guzzling soup. Guests at the Superbo went lightly on soup—but not Bunter! Bunter made a meal of it. He had plenty of room for other meals to follow. He had already made a meal of hors d'oeuvres. He was going to make a good many meals before he finished dinner.

Luigi, certainly, was rather startled to be asked for a second helping of soup. He was still more startled to be asked for a third. But Luigi, shocked as he was, knew how to deal with billionaires. He would have had a twenty-gallon drum of soup brought in if a billionaire had wanted it.

Bunter, as he disposed of the soup, seemed to be trying to rival the band! But millionaires, Luigi knew from experience, generally made a noise when they ate. A billionaire was entitled to make more noise than a mere million-
aire!

Intent, indeed engrossed, on that excellent soup, Bunter did not see the three fellows in elegant evening clothes who halted at his table.

Luigi bowed to them profoundly. He was aware that the billionaire was expecting schoolboy friends, and their places were already laid. He supposed that Pon & Co. were some of the friends.

"Bunter, old fellow, how do you do?" exclaimed Ponsonby. "Have we really met such an old friend so unexpectedly?"

Bunter blinked up from the soup. He gave the Highcliffe fellows a rather startled blink.

The last time he had met Ponsonby the merry Pon had kicked him along the Courtfield road. So his enthusiastic greeting was rather a surprise.

"I—I say, you fellows——"

"Fancy meetin' you, old chap!" said Gadsby, taking his cue from Pon.

"Look here, no larks, you know!" said Bunter suspiciously. "You Highcliffe cads begin kicking up a row here and you'll jolly well get slung out on your necks, see?"

"My dear old fellow!" exclaimed Ponsonby. "We're delighted to see you. I caught sight of you a minute ago, and said to Gaddy: 'Why, that's dear old Bunter!'"

"Those very words!" said Gaddy. "Bunter's not the man to remember any silly rows we may have had in term time!" remarked Monson.

"Not Bunter!" said Ponsonby, shaking his head. "Bunter's much too magnanimous for that! It's a real pleasure to see you here, Bunter, old fellow. Had a good train journey?"

"I don't travel by train," said Bunter disdainfully. "I charter my own aeroplane."

"Doin' it in style, what?" "Well, when a fellow's immensely wealthy, why shouldn't he spend his

money?" said Bunter. "A few thousands more or less makes no difference to me."

"Fat boulder!" murmured Gadsby.

"Eh?"

"Oh! I said that must be rippin'!"

"It wants some pluck, though, to travel by plane," said Ponsonby. "I remember Bunter always had pluck."

"Yes, that always was his long suit," assented Monson.

Bunter smiled genially.

"You fellows staying here?" he asked.

"Yes. We're doin' Rome," said Pon. "I hope we shall see somethin' of you while you're here, Bunter. We never had a chance at home to see as much of you as we wanted—somebody always bargin' in and claimin' you."

"Bunter's got so many friends, I dare say he'd almost forgotten us," said Monson solemnly.

"Look here, what about dinin' at Bunter's table, if he's agreeable," said Pon, as if struck by a sudden thought.

"We want to see somethin' of you, old chap, and—and talk over old times. There'll be a crowd of people rushing you off your feet most of the time, I expect."

"Well, I'm rather expecting my friends any minute," said Bunter doubtfully. "Wharton and those fellows, you know."

"I'm afraid they'd rather let you down, then," remarked Pon. "We passed them on the road to Tivoli."

"Tivoli!" repeated Bunter. "Wharrer you mean? The Tivoli's in London."

Ponsonby coughed.

"There's a place called Tivoli here, old chap; I think the London show was named after it. They were a good

fifteen miles from Rome when we saw them."

"The silly asses!" said Bunter. "They jolly well know I was expecting them here. Cheek, I call it!"

"Sit down, you men; Bunter would like us to dine with him," said Pon, and the Highcliffians sat down.

Bunter gave a genial nod of assent. He was a gregarious animal, and did not like being left alone. And he was rather bucked at being claimed as a friend by these three elegant and well-dressed fellows. And there was no doubt that Pon & Co. were treating him with much more deference and respect than Harry Wharton & Co. had ever done!

It was quite an enjoyable dinner. Not only was the food good, which was the most important thing, but Bunter found the company very agreeable.

Pon & Co. made themselves exceedingly pleasant. Pulling Bunter's fat leg was the easiest of tasks.

He only needed flattery to be laid on with a trowel! That came easily enough to Pon.

By the time that long dinner was over Bunter was thinking—as the cheery Pon intended him to think—how much pleasanter it was with fellows like these than with the Famous Five.

They listened to his words as if they were golden drops of wisdom; which the Greyfriars fellows certainly never did.

When he swanked, and talked about his money, they heard him with respectful admiration.

After dinner Pon proposed "doing a show" with Bunter! Bunter was only too pleased at the idea of rolling round Rome with those three elegant companions. He assented at once.

They walked with him to the lift. They agreed to wait for him in the lounge till he was ready to start. In the meantime, his car was ordered.

Bunter shot up to his magnificent suite for Jarvis to dress him to go out—and Pon winked at his comrades.

"I rather think," he remarked, "that we've landed that fish!"

"Hallo! There's that crew!" murmured Monson. "They've got back. They look a bit dusty."

Harry Wharton & Co. were coming in. They passed through the lounge and noticed Pon & Co. sitting there as they passed. Ponsonby elaborately ignored them; the Greyfriars fellows went on to the lift and were carried up.

Pon shrugged his shoulders. "They must have got a lift back," he remarked. "Too late, though—we've landed their fish!"

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Jarvis Gets His!

"**P**ERMIT me to change your tie, sir!"

"Think so, Jarvis?"

"There is a spot of soup, sir—"

"Oh, all right!"

Jarvis deftly changed Bunter's dress-tie. Then he selected a handsome light coat from among Bunter's many coats, for wear over his evening clothes. Bunter blinked into the pier-glass and smirked with satisfaction.

He was quite pleased with the handsome, aristocratic, distinguished reflection in the mirror.

"Your pin, sir!" Jarvis adjusted the diamond pin. "Your gloves, sir! Your handkerchief! A touch of eau-de-cologne—quite!"

"You think of everything, Jarvis!" said Bunter. "You're a jolly good servant, Jarvis!"

"You are very kind, sir."

After all, Bunter considered, those silly asses had very likely made a mistake about Jarvis. Bunter wasn't going to part with such a perfect manservant! He would be blowed if he would!

Thump!

There was a bang at the door, and it opened. Five tired and rather dusty juniors marched in.

Bunter blinked round at them. Jarvis surveyed them with an expressionless face, but a mocking glimmer in his eyes.

"I say, you fellows, you've got here, then!" grunted Bunter. "You're too late for dinner—over long ago. I'd like to know what you jolly well mean by it!"

"We want to know what Jarvis means by it!" said Harry Wharton, his eyes gleaming at the valet. "He instructed the driver to take us miles away and keep us out till midnight."

"What the dooce did you do that for, Jarvis?" asked Billy Bunter, in astonishment.

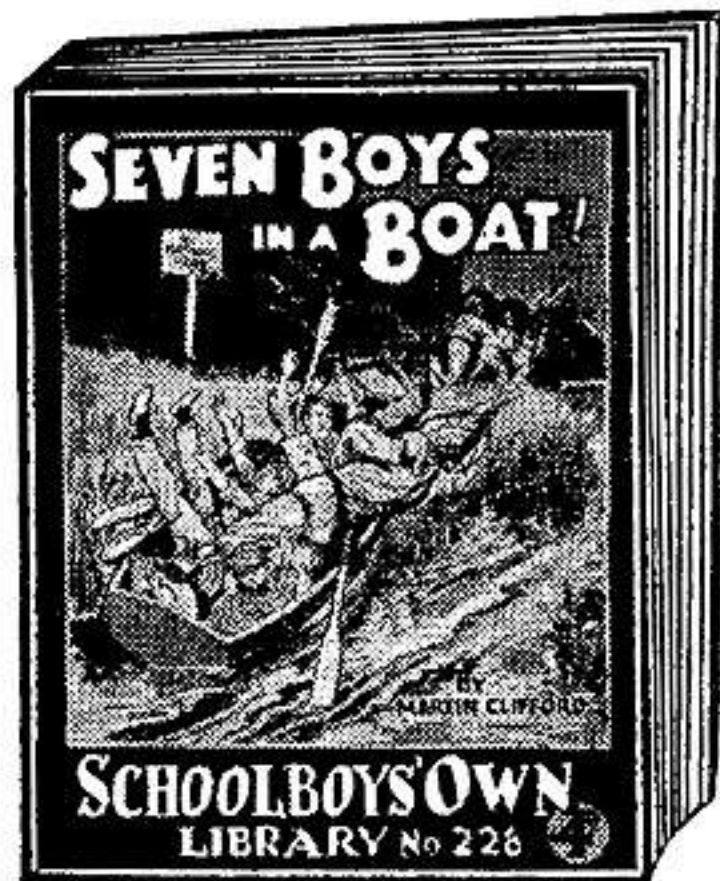
Jarvis wound his smooth hands together.

"Master Wharton is mistaken, sir!" he said. "I certainly never dreamed of anything of the kind!"

"We ragged the driver till he owned up," said Harry. "And now you're going to sit up for it, you double-dealing rotter!"

"The sit-upfulness is going to be terrific!" declared the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Bump the rotter!" growled Johnny Bull.



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"I say, you fellows—"
 "What's the man doing here now when he's sacked?" demanded Nugent.
 "I—I've decided not to sack him, after all," said Bunter. "The—the fact is, I—I think he's too good a servant to lose."

"You fat ass! Do you want him to hand you over to Bronx, when that American blows into Rome?" snorted Johnny Bull.

"Oh, rot! The fact is, I can't part with him—"

"Why can't you?" demanded Wharton.

"It's nothing to do with the money?" said Bunter hastily.

"The money!" said Harry blankly.

"Nothing at all, you know! But—but—Jarvis has explained, and it's all right! I want you fellows to be civil to Jarvis."

"You can want!" said Harry Wharton. "We've warned you that he is a treacherous rascal, and if you choose to keep him after that it's your own affair! But he's not going to play tricks on us! We walked miles before we got a lift back to Rome—"

"He, he, he!"

"Oh, that's a laughing matter, is it?" roared Johnny Bull.

"Well, after all, a joke's a joke," said Bunter. "He, he, he!"

"Jarvis is going to get some of the joke now!" said Bob.

"I say, you fellows, none of your rowing here! You're in my hotel—not in the Remove passage at Greyfriars!" said Bunter severely. "I expect you to behave yourselves, you know. In fact, I want you to be a bit more particular than usual, as I've met some friends here—rather classy friends! Don't let me down before the Highcliffe chaps."

"We saw that crew in the lounge as we came in," said Bob. "Have they glued on to you, you fat duffer?"

"I'm doing a show with them this evening," said Bunter, with dignity.

"I shan't see you fellows again till tomorrow. Behave yourselves while you're out of my sight!"

"I fancy I see why Jarvis played that trick on us," said Harry. "He has got you to himself, and pulled your silly leg somehow."

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Bag him!"

"Look here, don't you kick up a shindy here!" roared Bunter.

But the Famous Five did not heed Bunter. They rushed across the room at Jarvis and collared him.

There was a howl from Jarvis.

"Master William—"

"Chuck it!" roared Bunter. "Do you hear? Let my valet alone! I order you to let him alone, see?"

Bunter's orders were totally disregarded.

The Famous Five were tired and dusty and hungry and exasperated. Jarvis, sacked or not sacked, had to learn that he could not play such tricks. They proceeded to give him instruction.

Bump, bump, bump!

Thrice the wriggling, yelling valet smote the floor of Bunter the Billionaire's dressing-room. He smote it hard, and roared frantically at every smite.

Then Bob Cherry jerked a bottle of brilliantine from the dressing-table. Some of it had been used on Bunter's shiny hair. But there was plenty left in the bottle. Bob proceeded to pour it down the back of Jarvis's neck.

"Urrrrrgh!" gurgled Jarvis, wriggling wildly. "Ow! Urrgh! You young rascals—urrgh! Master William—wurrgh!"

"I say, you fellows—" gasped Bunter.

"Give him a few more!"
 Bump!
 "Yooooop!" roared Jarvis.
 Bump!
 "Urrrrrgh!"
 Bump, bump, bump!
 "Ow! Wow! Oooogh!"

"There, I think that will do!" gasped Wharton, as the juniors released the valet, and he sprawled on the floor, gurgling and gasping for breath. "That will be a lesson to you, you cheeky tick."

"Urrrrrgh!" spluttered Jarvis.

"I say, you fellows—"

"If you've got the sense of a bunny rabbit, Bunter, you'll kick that rascal out before he has a chance to play any more dirty tricks!" snapped the captain of the Remove.

"I—I can't—I—I mean, I—I won't! Look here, you fellows, you—you mind your own business!" stammered Bunter. "Think I want you to manage my affairs for me? You—"

"Oh, go and eat coke!" snapped Wharton. "If you weren't in danger from that rascal Bronx and this rascal who is helping him, we'd turn you down on the spot, and have done with you. But we can't leave you to it."

"Look here, you cheeky beast—"

"Oh, let's get out of this, you fellows," said Harry; and the Famous Five left Bunter's dressing-room, leaving the fat billionaire frowning and Jarvis still gasping on the floor.

Jarvis was still gurgling and gasping when Bunter went out, leaving him to it. The fat billionaire went down in the lift, and joined Pon & Co. in the lounge.

They greeted him with their politest manners and sweetest smiles, and walked out to the car with him.

Meanwhile, the Famous Five had a wash and a brush down, which they rather needed, in their own rooms, and then came down to scout for some supper.

After supper it was bed-time, but they stayed up awhile to wait for Bunter to come in. Bunter was not in at eleven o'clock, however, and they went to bed. Apparently the fat billionaire was making a night of it with his nutty Highcliffe friends.

And superb as the Hotel Superbo was, the chums of the Remove were strongly tempted to clear off, and leave the fat and fatuous billionaire to his own devices. It was only the certainty that

Bunter was in danger that made them resolve to stand it as long as they could. But how long they would be able to stand it was another matter.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Wharton Loses His Temper!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. came

back the following day to lunch, after a ramble among Roman ruins.

Bunter was not up when they went out—nor, in fact, for a good many hours afterwards. The Famous Five spent quite a happy morning rambling

over the glorious old ruin of the Colosseum, and they were tempted to get their lunch out at a trattoria or a ristorante, and make a day of it. However, as they were Bunter the Billionaire's guests, they felt that that would hardly do; so they walked back to the Superbo, and turned up in time for lunch.

Three fellows were sitting at Bunter's table with him—Pon and Gaddy and Monson, of Highcliffe. Evidently the Highcliffe trio had "glued" on to the fat billionaire.

They exchanged covert glances and grinned as the Famous Five came up to the table.

Bunter blinked at the Greyfriars fellows.

He looked rather pasty and pallid after his late night. He had not been out of doors yet, having breakfasted in bed, and snoozed again till it was time to get up for lunch.

"I say, you fellows, I've told Luigi to set another table for you," said Bunter. "These fellows are lunching with me to-day."

"Sorry if we're in the way!" said Ponsonby, with sarcastic politeness.

Harry Wharton looked fixedly at the fat billionaire.

Certainly the chums of the Remove did not specially want to lunch at Bunter's table. Indeed, as a matter of taste, they would have preferred any other table.

At the same time, it was not agreeable to be pushed out to make room for the nuts of Highcliffe.

"Hope you don't mind!" added Bunter carelessly, evidently not worrying whether the fellows minded or not.

"Not in the least," said Bob. "We'll listen to the band instead of to you, Bunter."

"Don't you be a cheeky beast, Bob Cherry—"

"We'd better have this plain," said Harry Wharton. "Are you taking up with these Highcliffe fellows, Bunter?"

"Why shouldn't I, if I choose?" demanded Bunter.

"You will do as you like; but they are no friends of ours, and we want to have nothing to do with them."

"Look here, if you can't be civil to my friends—" began Bunter.

"We bar Highcliffe cads!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"The barfulness is terrific."

(Continued on next page.)

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"I say, you fellows, don't you get kicking up a shindy here!" said Bunter. "Pon's told me about how you rowed with him yesterday, and I can tell you I think it's pretty thick that you can't behave yourselves a bit better."

"You fat ass!"

"Oh, really, Wharton! Ragging my friends, and ragging my valet!" said Bunter warmly. "I really think you might try to remember that you're not in the Remove passage at Greyfriars now. You might try to keep up appearances in a first-class place like this."

"Look here, let's get out!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Let's!" agreed Nugent.

"I tell you I've ordered another table for you," said Bunter. "I don't want you to clear. I'm not chucking you! But you can't expect to take up all my time."

"You blithering owl——"

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"Come on, you men!" said Harry Wharton, and the chums of the Remove walked out of the restaurant of the Hotel Superbo.

Bunter blinked after them, rather dismayed.

It was true that he preferred the company of Pon & Co., who took the trouble to pull his fat leg.

But he had not quite forgotten Tiger Bronx, and he was quite well aware that, if danger accrued, his nutty Highcliffe friends would not be of much service. That was where the Famous Five came in.

Pon & Co., on the other hand, were distinctly satisfied. They exchanged a cheery grin as the chums of the Remove disappeared.

They preferred to have their billionaire all to themselves.

Certainly, they were not enjoying his company. But they were enjoying the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table.

Where Billy Bunter had got his immense wealth from they could not guess or imagine. But there was no doubt about the wealth, and that was enough for them.

After coming in with the fat billionaire at twelve the previous night, they had sat up for an hour playing banker with him in his rooms. Quite a considerable sum had been transferred to Pon & Co. from the Greyfriars billionaire. They had rather a feeling that they had discovered a goldmine in Rome.

Judging others by themselves, they had no doubt that the Famous Five regarded Bunter in the same light. They had exercised superior cunning, and got possession of the man of money. And they were going to keep him if they could!

Lunchless, Harry Wharton & Co. walked out of the Hotel Superbo. They lunched at a "ristorante" in the Piazza di Spagna on their own.

After lunch they went for a saunter in the beautiful park on the Pincian Hill. Wharton's face was very thoughtful.

"I'm dashed if I know what we'd better do!" he said, at last. "The hols are coming to an end now, anyhow, and we shall have to be getting back home before long. But——"

"But that fat idiot——" said Bob.

"We can't turn him down, in the circumstances," said Harry.

Grunt from Johnny Bull.

"He's turned us down, hasn't he? Let him rip! We're not after his putrid money like those Highcliffe cads, I suppose."

"No, ass! But——"

"Let's chuck him, same as we did in Venice."

"It's different now," said Harry. "That cur Jarvis has got round him somehow. But we know, if Bunter doesn't, that the rascal is playing a double game. That villain Bronx is after him, and Jarvis will betray him into the man's hands as he did before."

"Well, Pon & Co. can see him through," said Johnny, with another grunt.

"Fathead! Lot they care what happens to him! It's rotten for us, but I don't feel that we can leave him to it. It's up to us to keep an eye on the fat dummy—at least till he gets home. We should feel pretty sick if something happened to him."

"After all, the fat owl can't help being a born idiot!" remarked Nugent.

"We can't let him come to harm."

"We can't hang on with those Highcliffe cads!" growled Johnny Bull.

"No fear! I think the best thing we can do is to keep our rooms at the Hotel Superbo; then we shall be able to keep an eye on the fat duffer," said Harry. "For the rest, he will have to be left to himself. We don't want his money or his motor-cars."

Having arrived at that decision, the chums of the Remove dismissed the matter from their minds.

Certainly they did not miss the company of the fat billionaire in their rambles round Rome. Pon & Co. were more than welcome to that.

It was not till nearly bed-time that they returned that evening to the Hotel Superbo. When the gold-laced porter revolved the magnificent doors and they went in, a nasal voice, speaking to one of the reception clerks, fell on their ears.

"Yep; I guess that's the name—Bunter. He's staying here?"

The Famous Five all looked round at once.

Their eyes fell on a tall, lean, hard-faced American; and they recognised Tiger Bronx.

Evidently the gangster had arrived in Rome, and tracked Bunter the Billionaire to his quarters.

"Bronx!" murmured Bob Cherry.

The gangster, leaving the bureau, came towards the doors. His eyes fell on the juniors, and he grinned.

"So you're here, Mr. Bronx," said Harry Wharton quietly.

"I'll say I'm around!" agreed Bronx. "I guess this baby don't get left—not so's you'd notice it."

And he lounged out of the hotel.

The juniors went up in the lift to their rooms. Harry Wharton went along to Bunter's suite. It was a magnificent suite—bed-room, dressing-room, bath-room, sitting-room, and ante-room. In the latter was Jarvis.

"Is Bunter in?" asked Harry.

Jarvis gave him a rather furtive look.

"My master is in," he said. "But he is with his friends, and does not wish to be disturbed."

Taking no heed of that, Wharton crossed the room to the door of Bunter's sitting-room. Jarvis laid a hand on his arm and stopped him.

"Kindly do not go in, Master Wharton," he said smoothly. "I have told you that my master is with his friends, and——"

"Let go my arm!"

"I must insist, sir——"

Harry Wharton gave the valet a push that sent him staggering back, and he sat on the floor.

Then the captain of the Remove opened the door and stepped into the billionaire's sitting-room.

Bunter was, as Jarvis had said, there with his friends. His friends were Pon & Co. The four of them were sitting round a green baize card-table, on which there were cards, cigarettes, and ash-trays. There was an atmosphere of smoke in the room. Pon & Co. were smoking, and the fat billionaire had a cigarette in his mouth.

Wharton's brow darkened as he looked at the scene. He had hardly needed telling why Pon & Co. had taken Bunter up; but if he had doubted, he had proof now.

Billy Bunter blinked at him through his big spectacles.

"That you, Wharton? Have a smoke?" he said breezily.

"You fat dummy!"

"Oh, really, Wharton! Be a man, old chap!" urged Bunter. "Sit down and take a hand. We're playing poker. Be a man, old fellow—like me."

"You howling ass!"

"Yah!"

"Shut the door after you, will you, Wharton?" asked Ponsonby.

"Get on the other side of it first," suggested Monson.

"Yes; you're rather a skeleton at a feast, if you don't mind my sayin' so," remarked Gadsby.

Wharton breathed hard. Bunter was his own master, so far as that went; and he had plenty of money to lose. But it went against the grain to see him fleeced by these unscrupulous young rascals.

"How much have you lost, so far, Bunter?" asked Harry.

"Eh? I may have dropped fifty pounds or so," answered Bunter. "Nothing to me. How did you know I'd been losing?"

Harry Wharton laughed; he could not help it. It did not need a very keen intellect to guess that the fat billionaire was losing money in a game of poker with Pon & Co.

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at!" grunted Bunter. "No bizney of yours, anyhow. Why not sit down and take a hand? Pon's teaching me to play poker. He'll teach you, too, won't you, Pon?"

"Lessons from Ponsonby would be rather too expensive, I think," said the captain of the Remove contemptuously. "Look here, Bunter! Be a sensible chap, and chuck this and go to bed."

"Bunter's not in need of advice from you," remarked Ponsonby.

"No fear," said Bunter. "You're a bit of a soft ass, Wharton. Namby-pamby, you know. Spooney."

"I came here to tell you——"

"Look here! Get out!" said Ponsonby. "Bunter doesn't want you, and you're interruptin' the game!"

"Yes, shut up!" said Bunter. "Take a hand, or get out! I don't want any sermons from you!"

"You fat ass!" exclaimed Wharton angrily. "Can't you see that this gang of sharpers are rooking you?"

"Oh, really, Wharton!"

Ponsonby turned quite pale. That description of his proceedings was accurate, but it was very unpleasant to listen to. He jumped up from his chair, his eyes gleaming.

"Look here! Bunter's told you to get out!" he snarled. "Get out before you're put!"

"Yes, rather! Of all the cheek——" gasped Bunter.

"Shift, before you get hurt!" said Gadsby.

"Turn the cad out!" said Monson. And the three Highcliffians hustled Wharton towards the door by which he had entered.



As Wharton pitched Gadsby and Monson headlong away, the Highcliffe juniors crashed into the card-table, and table, cards, ash-trays, piles of money, matches, and cigarettes went whirling over Bunter the Billionaire. "Ow! Oh erkeley!" roared Bunter, as he rolled on the floor. "Oh lor'! Beast! Yaroooh! Ow! Wow!"

"Bunter, you ass——"

"Oh, get out!" grunted Bunter.

"Out you go!" grinned Monson; and he gave Wharton a shove.

Three to one, the Highcliffe nuts expected to get away with it quite easily. But that was rather a mistake on their part.

Wharton staggered towards the doorway as he was shoved. There he rallied, and came back at the Highcliffians, his hands clenched, and his eyes blazing.

A crashing right-hander sent Ponsonby spinning across the room. He went down on his back with a terrific yell.

Gadsby and Monson had hold of Wharton. The next moment they wished that they hadn't.

The captain of the Remove grabbed them by their collars, and the weedy nuts fairly crumpled up in his grasp.

Bang!

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"Yoop!"

Two simultaneous yells rang out from Gadsby and Monson as their heads were banged together.

Then, with a swing of his arms Wharton pitched them headlong away, and they crashed into the card-table.

Table and cards, ash-trays, and piles of money, matches and cigarettes, went whirling over Bunter the Billionaire.

"Ow! Oh erkeley!" roared Bunter, as he rolled over under the shower. "Oh lor'! Beast! Yaroooh! Ow! Wow!"

"Oh gad!" gasped Ponsonby.

"Ow! Wow-wow!" groaned Monson.

"Ow! Beast! Wow!"

Harry Wharton stared at the scene of wreckage for a moment, then, with a

contemptuous laugh, he walked out of the room. And Bunter the Billionaire and his nutty friends were left to sort themselves out at their leisure.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Pon's Pall

"SOME big gun!"

Cecil Ponsonby made that remark. He was loafing in a Madeira chair in the porch of the Hotel Superbo, in the sunny morning. Gadsby and Monson were loafing also. A good many other guests of the hotel were about; among them, the Famous Five of Greyfriars.

Pon & Co. carefully ignored the existence of the Greyfriars fellows. They did not even indulge in any disdainful or supercilious glances. They still had a few aches and pains left from the scuffle in Bunter's room the night before, and no doubt that helped to keep their impudence in check.

Outside, a superb car, worthy of a superb hotel, was waiting. Bunter had not come down yet. Pon & Co. had to wait for Bunter. Flattered as he was by the attentions of the Highcliffe Nuts, for which he was paying rather high at poker and banker, Bunter was not disposed to turn out early on their account. Holidays to Billy Bunter were a time for slacking in bed as long as he liked.

From the wide, open doorway there was a superb view of the superb grounds of the Hotel Superbo. Gardens with trees and fountains surrounded the palatial building, and there was a long, winding drive down to the Corso from the hotel. Up the drive from the bronze gates came a large limousine, even

handsomer than the car that waited for Bunter. It was such an impressive car, with such an impressive chauffeur, that many of the Superbo crowd gazed at it with interest, and Pon remarked that it was "some big gun" who had arrived.

The head porter, majestically descending wide marble steps, majestically opened the door when the limousine stopped. From the car stepped an Italian gentleman dressed in black. Apparently he was a person of importance, for the gold-laced official convoyed him into the porch of the Superbo with an air of tremendous respect.

"Wonder who the dooce it is!" yawned Gadsby.

Harry Wharton & Co. did not observe the little scene. They were standing in a group discussing the programme for the day.

Except that they were still staying at the Hotel Superbo, they were done with Bunter the Billionaire. They did not feel that they could desert the fat junior, especially now that they knew that Tiger Bronx was in Rome. But he had to be left to his own devices, and certainly they could not dream of disputing with Pon & Co. the possession of the fat Owl. Pon & Co. were left in possession.

The chums of the Remove were now planning a walk in Rome, with the aid of trams and buses, to see the sights. Bob had a map of the Eternal City spread out on a little table, and they were going over it. Not being billionaires, the Famous Five had to think in terms of buses and trams. They could not afford tremendous cars like the fat billionaire.

"Il segretario di Cardinale Colonna!"
(Continued on page 16.)

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RUCTIONS IN ROME!

(Continued from page 13.)

Pon heard some Italian remark, as the man in black come along, conveyed by the head porter.

"The secretary of Cardinal Colonna!" said Ponsonby. "I've heard of that old boan—a tremendous big gun in Rome—only second fiddle to the jolly old Pope! I wonder whom the secretary's come to see."

He soon discovered.

The gold-laced majesty of the Superbo escorted the gentleman in black to the Famous Five. They looked up in some surprise. With a very impressed air, the head porter presented him.

"Signore Pucci, secretary to his Eminence Cardinal Colonna!" he said, and retired backwards.

Signore Pucci bowed and smiled. Harry Wharton & Co., not to be outdone in politeness, bowed and smiled also.

"His Eminence send me to greet you, signorini," said the secretary. "You are the young gentlemen who help the povero prete on the Tivoli road—yes? His Eminence busy man with great affairs; but he send me, his secretary, to be of service to you."

"But I don't quite understand," said Harry, rather puzzled.

"You are here to see our city?" said Signor Pucci. "Yes? You like to use his Eminence's car, and the service of secretary as guide? All is at your service."

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Bob.

It was rather a surprise for the chums of Greyfriars. They had almost forgotten that episode on the Tivoli road. Evidently the good cardinal had not forgotten. He was placing his car and his secretary at the service of the Greyfriars tourists, as an act of acknowledgment. It was so polite and gracious an act that they could not think of refusing.

"This is rather luck!" remarked Bob Cherry.

"The luckfulness is terrific!"

There was no doubt that the Famous Five were rather in luck. Seeing Rome with a cardinal's car to carry them about, and a cardinal's secretary as guide, was rather different from hoofing it, tramping it, and bussing it, so to speak.

Ponsonby & Co. looked on in deep disgust as the chums of Greyfriars walked out to the big car with Signor Pucci.

"How the thump did those rotters ever get in with a big gun like Cardinal Colonna?" asked Pon. "Can't make it out."

The Famous Five rolled away in the cardinal's car, leaving Pon & Co. still waiting for Bunter.

They had another hour to wait.

Then the fat billionaire put in an appearance.

Pon & Co. greeted him with great politeness, betraying no sign of desire to kick him for having kept them waiting so long.

"Well, what are we doin' this mornin'?" asked Pon. "St. Peter's—the Vatican—Castle of San Angelo—"

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"What about a drive on the Pincio?" asked Bunter. "Jarvis says there's a jolly good cafe in the gardens there."

"Any old thing," said Pon agreeably, and they went out to the car, and the Superbo chauffeur drove them away in the Superbo automobile.

The gardens on the Pincian Hill, one of the pleasant spots of Rome, were green and cool, and very agreeable. Pon & Co. would have been quite pleased to drive round for an hour or two before going back to lunch.

But when Bunter sighted the cafe, he signalled to the driver to pull up. The stretch between breakfast and lunch seemed, to Billy Bunter, a long and dreary desert. He liked to find an oasis, in the shape of a substantial snack, in the middle of that desert.

"Get down here," he said.

"Oh, all right!"

They left the car at a little distance, and sat under a shady tree at a table where a waiter served them.

Pon & Co. had iced drinks, which were grateful and comforting on a warm day; but Bunter had hunger to consider as well as thirst.

An immense pile of sticky cakes was placed before Bunter, through which he travelled slowly but steadily.

Pon & Co. began to show signs of impatience.

Bunter was a very useful acquaintance as a pigeon to pluck. But sitting round a table watching him eat was not a fascinating occupation.

"What about gettin' a move on?" asked Pon at last.

"I'm not finished yet," answered Bunter calmly.

"You'll queer your lunch," suggested Gadsby.

"It's more than an hour to lunch yet."

"Where do you pack it all?" asked Monson.

"Look here—"

"Shut up, Monson!" said Ponsonby, with a warning look. "Bunter doesn't like jokes of that sort."

"I can tell you I jolly well don't!" grunted Bunter.

"Let's take a bit of a stroll round the gardens, and come back for Bunter," suggested Gadsby.

"I say, you fellows—"

"That's a good idea," agreed Pon, rising with alacrity. He felt that any idea would be good that would relieve him of Bunter's company for a time. "See you later, Bunter."

"I say, don't go far! I say—" But Ponsonby & Co., affecting not to hear, walked away. They felt that they were entitled to a rest from the Greyfriars billionaire.

Bunter grunted, and blinked round discontentedly. Harry Wharton had looked in on him early that morning to tell him that Tiger Bronx had turned up in Rome. Bunter did not want to be left alone. Still, in the middle of the crowd in the Pincian Gardens, there did not seem much danger, and the stack of sticky cakes was a sheer delight. The fat billionaire proceeded to travel through the cakes, and concentrated his fat thoughts on them.

A tall, lean figure came lounging along the front of the cafe. Two keen slits of eyes roved over the people sitting at the tables.

Bunter blinked up as the lean man dropped into the chair vacated by Ponsonby a quarter of an hour ago.

The fat billionaire gave a terrified squeak.

"Oh erikey!"

"Don't get up!" drawled Tiger Bronx. "I never was a guy to stand on ceremony, and I'll sure excuse you! Sit where you are, fat boy, or this

here little gun in my pocket will go pop, and I'm jest mentioning that I guess you'll go pop, too, jest a few."

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Carried Away!

BILLY BUNTER sat frozen to his chair, blinking across the little round table at the gangster.

He even forgot the pile of sticky cakes on the table which he had, as yet, travelled only half-through.

His fat jaw dropped, and his little round eyes dilated behind his spectacles.

"Oh lor'!" he gasped.

"Keep your chin resting!" warned Tiger Bronx. "I ain't hoping for a pow-wow with any of them cops wandering about the Pincio—guardie, they call 'em here, I guess. I sure don't want to talk to 'em! I want to talk to you, big boy."

"I—I—I'm glad to—to—to see you, Mr. Bronx!" stammered the hapless Owl of the Remove. "I—I'd just like a—a—a talk with you."

"You look it!" agreed Bronx dryly.

"I—I say, my friends will be back in—in a minute!" stammered Bunter. "They're only strolling round the gardens."

Bronx's slits of eyes glittered round him. He supposed that Bunter referred to Harry Wharton & Co. And he had a good many reasons for knowing that he would not be able to handle Bunter easily if the Famous Five of Greyfriars were on hand.

He was relieved to see nothing of them, however. Three elegant fellows whom he did not know by sight, were sauntering towards the cafe, and his eyes rested on them for a moment. But he gave Pon & Co. no attention.

"I guess you're pulling my leg," he remarked. "I don't seem to see hide nor hair of that bunch! Now you listen to me, you fat gink! I been looking for you, and I guess I found you. You sure didn't walk here from the Hotel Superbo. You got an auto?"

"Yes," gasped Bunter. "and—and a chauffeur, and—and the chauffeur will—will call the police, if—if—"

"I guess not!" said Bronx. He was speaking in a low voice, for there were a dozen people not ten or twelve feet away. "You're going to give me a ride in your car, bo."

"I—I'd be pleased," groaned Bunter. "But—but—you see—"

"You want to hear this gun talk from my pocket?"

"Ow! No! I—I'll take you for a drive with pleasure."

"Sure!" said the Tiger.

His hand was in the pocket of his loose lounge coat where he kept his revolver. That even the Chicago gangster could be so desperate as to use it in a crowded public place, with uniformed guardie actually in sight, was not likely. But the bare possibility was enough for Bunter. He shivered like a fat jelly.

"You're taking me for a ride," said the Tiger quietly. "You're tellin' your chauffeur you want to hit Frascati, and that you want to hit it quick! You get me?"

"Oh dear! Yes."

"And I reckon," said Bronx, "that we'll start now. We'll hit the horizon before those friends of yourn mosey around, if they're here."

"Oh lor'!"

Tiger Bronx rose to his feet. Bunter sat and blinked helplessly at him, like a fat rabbit fascinated by a serpent.

He had counted himself safe in a crowded public place. Evidently he was not so safe as he had supposed.

By sheer terror, the Tiger was going to walk him off, under a hundred pairs of eyes, and kidnap him in his own car!

The bulge of the revolver in his pocket was enough for Bunter. He dared not resist.

"You coming?" asked Bronx.

"Oh lor! I—I say—"

"I guess I give you one second to hop out of that chair! You'll never hop out of it alive, if you don't hop quick!" said Bronx in a low tone of menace that sent a thrill of terror through the fat billionaire.

Bunter staggered to his feet.

"Beat it!" said Bronx briefly.

Billy Bunter almost tottered away towards the car in the roadway. By that time Pon & Co. were close at hand.

They stared at the sight of Bunter leaving the cafe in company with the tall, lean American.

They had left the fat billionaire to enjoy a rest from his fascinating society.

But it was rather a jolt to see him clearing off with somebody else before they rejoined him. That did not suit Cecil Ponsonby's game at all.

He broke into a trot to intercept Bunter on his way to the Superbo car, and Gadsby and Monson hurried after him.

Bronx's eyes gleamed in their direction.

"You know them guys, fat boy?" he asked.

"Eh!" Bunter blinked round. "They're my friends—"

"You got a new bunch, then!" Bronx dropped his voice to a whisper. The Highcliffians were quite close now. "Tell them I'm an American friend, going for a ride with you."

"Oh dear! Yes!"

Pon & Co. came up. Bronx gave them a cool nod, and they stared at him far from amicably.

"Going, Bunter, old man?" asked Ponsonby.

"Oh! Yes!" gasped Bunter. "I—I—I'm taking this beast—"

"What?"

"I mean this old American—that is, this old friend—for a a—a drive!" gasped Bunter.

"Friends of my young friend, Bunter, what?" asked Mr. Bronx genially. "I'll say I'm glad to meet up with you."

Pon & Co. showed no geniality whatever. It was easy enough for them to read in the Tiger's hard, lean face that he was a hard character—a "tough guy," as he would have called it himself. They did not like his looks, and certainly did not want his company.

"Well, look here, Bunter, you're with us, you know," said Ponsonby. "You're not lettin' us down, old fellow?"

"No! Yes! You see—"

Bronx opened the door of the Superbo car.

"Hop in, bo!" he drawled.

Bunter hopped in, with an inward groan. He dared not disobey in his deep terror of the gangster. Pon and Co. exchanged surly looks. They

(Continued on next page.)



Our Soccer specialist is at your service. If you want an expert opinion on any point in connection with the great winter game, write to "Linesman," c/o The MAGNET, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

GETTING OFF THE MARK

BY this time many of my "football fan" readers will, I know, be all cock-a-hoop over the manner in which their favourite club has got off the mark this season. There will be others very much depressed because their favourite club has not made anything like such a good start as they anticipated.

To both these sections of fans I would say, take a sane view. It does not necessarily follow that because your club has won the first three or four matches off the reel that the championship is necessarily coming that way at the end of the season. Nor does it necessarily mean that the side is a very good one.

In the same way, because your pet team has done nothing up to now, it does not follow that they won't do anything when they get settled down. There are all sorts of things to account for successes and failures in the early part of the season. Some players like the hard ground: others have to wait till the softer pitches come along before they can do themselves justice. Again, one club may have had the bad luck to run up against nothing but the really good clubs in its particular League.

I have known clubs start off very badly, and yet come through on top. I seem to remember Burnley, just after the War, losing their three opening matches off the reel, and then they entered on a spell during which they went through well over twenty League games without a defeat. And, of course, they won the championship that season.

The reverse applies, too. Many are the teams I have seen start off with a flourish, sending themselves and their supporters sky-high, and then not been able to last. Indeed, I think it should be said that in football the prize usually

goes to the good stayers rather than the good starters.

Nothing I have said above, however, must lead my readers to think I am running down the virtue of a good start, or failing to appreciate the disadvantages of a bad start. But we do want to keep sane about these things.

In no class of football is it wise to make panic changes in a team because that team has made a bad start. I once came across a very wise old football manager, who had been right through the mill of experience, and he said to me: "The conclusion I have come to is that it is safer to make a change in a winning team than a losing one." That summing-up could not be taken too literally, of course, but there was a lot of truth in it.

What this wise old man of football meant to convey was that when a team is winning, a new man may be carried along on the flood-tide of success. But when the team is losing, and the players have no confidence in themselves, it doesn't help to chop and change the side about from week to week. Never mind whether it is First Division football or just a school team—the secret of success is to find the best side available, and play that side long enough to give the lads a chance of getting to know one another: of getting confidence in themselves as a team.

SECRETS THAT SCORE

NATURALLY, in these early days of the season I have had several letters from readers very anxious to improve their football, and asking me to recommend them some form of practice. Well, when I want to give the best advice on a football subject, I always go to the people who ought to know. So, as I have called in at the various big football grounds recently, I have either watched the players practise,

or asked the manager for any ideas he had of his own for making better footballers.

Here, and by way of reply to my several correspondents, I will pass on some of the "dodges"—if you like to call them that—about which I learnt.

There was a call I made at Stoke, for example. There, looking in on the players one mid-week morning, I saw a strange sight. Right across the goal-mouth there was a form—the sort I used to sit on at school—about three feet high. The Stoke players were apparently shooting at this form, but actually what they were doing was trying to hit the ball hard, and yet keep it so low that it went underneath the form. That struck me as a very good idea, especially when I thought of the football matches I have witnessed which have been lost by players banging the ball over the crossbar.

This is the sort of practice you can all try. It tends to make keeping the ball low a habit, and a low shot is better than a high one, because the goalkeeper can throw his arms out to stop a high one, whereas he has to throw his whole body across to stop a low one which is going away from him. What a harvest of goals we should have in most matches if there were no such things as shots over the bar!

HEADS ARE HANDY!

I ALSO went to Preston, and there came across another idea, though this was not absolutely new to me.

I had seen the same thing done by the Arsenal at Highbury. Four of the players were out on a hard lawn tennis court, and were playing something like a game of lawn tennis, but there were these differences between the way these fellows were playing—they were using a football instead of a tennis ball, and either their heads or their feet instead of rackets.

You need not have a real lawn tennis court to do a bit of practice on these lines—just a piece of ground marked out: two sticks, and a piece of string will do equally well. Then have a little match with one or two players on each side of the string. To score points you must either head the ball, or kick it—either on the volley or the first bounce—back into your opponent's "court." This is a little practice idea which teaches heading and ball control, and makes the players quick. Try it. You will find it both interesting and helpful.

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certainly were not going to be dropped in this way.

Pon made a sign to his comrades and the three Highcliffians barged into the car after Bunter. Bronx pushed in last.

If this lean American was, as Pon supposed, some adventurer after the fat billionaire's money, he was not going to walk off the billionaire under Pon's very nose!

It was some relief to Bunter to have the trio in the car, though, certainly, he would have preferred Harry Wharton & Co. just then!

Bronx raised no objection. He was anxious to get his quarry away from such a public spot, and a dispute would not have helped him. Pon & Co. could be dealt with later.

"You ain't put the chauffeur wise yet, bo!" he drawled, with a meaning look at Bunter.

"Oh, yes! Where—where did you say?"

"Frascati!"

"Look here, are we goin' out of town?" snapped Pon. "Frascati's about fifteen miles from Rome."

"I'll say it's an interesting spot," drawled Bronx. "On the Alban hills, fine villas, lovely views, monastery of Camaldoli, and—"

"What about gettin' back to the Superbo to lunch, Bunter?" asked Pon, coolly interrupting Mr. Bronx.

"Oh, yes! No!" gasped Bunter.

"We don't want to go out to Frascati!" grunted Monson.

"Oh dear!"

"You speaking to the chauffeur, bo?" asked Bronx.

Bunter spoke to the chauffeur. Whatever the Highcliffians thought of his proceedings he dared not disobey the gangster, who sat with his hand resting on the hidden revolver in his pocket.

"Si, signore!" said the superb Superbo chauffeur, as he set the car in motion, and the ill-assorted party rolled away.

Pon & Co. sat looking sulky and surly. Bunter quaked and gasped. Bronx sprawled easily in his seat.

What was the matter with Bunter,

Pon & Co. could not guess, though it was easy for them to see that something very unusual was the matter with him.

That he was being carried off, in his own car, by a desperate gangster from Chicago, was not likely to occur to them—yet.

The Pincian Gardens were left behind; Rome was left behind, and the car ran out on the road across the sunny Campagna.

Pon & Co. scowled. Bunter quaked. And Tiger Bronx, sprawling in his seat with his hand on his "gun," grinned. This time, Mr. Bronx calculated, he had got by with it.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Painful for Pon!

"STOP!"

The Superbo car was ten or twelve miles from Rome on the hilly road ascending to Frascati. Bronx rapped out the order suddenly.

Ponsonby gave him a surly look.

"What are we goin' to stop here for?" he snapped. "We can get some lunch at Frascati—but it's miles yet."

"I guess I ain't looking for cats!" drawled Mr. Bronx. "You telling your chauffeur to stop, Bunter?"

"Oh dear! Yes!" groaned Bunter.

The chauffeur drew the Superbo car to a halt at the roadside under shady branches of trees.

Tiger Bronx opened the door and stepped out. He stood for some moments watching the long white road.

Two or three cars were in sight, and the gangster waited for them to disappear.

Bunter wiped his perspiring forehead.

"Oh crikey!" he mumbled.

"Look here, Bunter, what's this game?" demanded Ponsonby savagely. "What on earth have you picked up this blackguard for?"

"I—I haven't!" groaned Bunter.

"He's—he's picked me up! Oh lor'!"

"Well, if you don't want him, let him clear!" said Gadsby. "I suppose you're

not bound to let the fellow glue on to you, are you?"

"Oh lor'!"

Bunter blinked out of the car at Mr. Bronx, standing a few feet away, watching the road.

"I—I say, you fellows," he breathed, "you—you collar him—"

"Wha-a-t?"

"He—he's kidnapping me!" groaned Bunter.

"Mad?" asked Ponsonby, staring at him.

"He's a gangster—an awful character! He's after my money! I say, he's got a revolver in his pocket!" gasped Bunter. "I say, Wharton and those chaps wouldn't let him carry me off like this if they were here! I say, you fellows, we're pals, ain't we? You stand by me—"

Pon & Co. stared at him blankly.

They had wondered what might be the reason of Billy Bunter's peculiar proceedings. But assuredly they had never dreamed of anything like this.

"Oh gad!" gasped Monson. "Look here—"

Bronx stepped back to the car.

The Highcliffians eyed him with great uneasiness as he looked in. They could hardly believe Bunter's startling statement; but they were alarmed and very uneasy.

"Bunter boy," drawled Mr. Bronx, "I guess I'm driving from now on! You tell your chauffeur he's to walk on to Frascati and take the train back to Rome."

"I—I—" stammered the wretched billionaire.

"Do it quick!" said Bronx.

"Look here—" began Ponsonby.

"Don't you spill anything, bo!" said Bronx. "I guess I'm the baby that's doing all the squealing in this act! Yep!"

He gave Bunter a look; and the fat billionaire hastened to give the Superbo chauffeur his instructions. All the Superbo chauffeurs spoke English, so it was easy enough so far as that went; but the man was greatly surprised to receive such orders. However, he was there to do as he was told by the billionaire, and very unwillingly he vacated his seat and walked up the road and disappeared.

Bronx waited till he was gone, and Pon & Co. waited with deepening uneasiness. A car hummed by—then another! It was a fairly well-frequented road. It seemed impossible to Pon & Co. that a Chicago gangster stunt could be brought off in such a place. And yet they were beginning to fear that it was not so impossible as it seemed.

"I say, you fellows," whispered Bunter, as Bronx, watching the road, turned his back for a moment. "I say, you're three to one, you know—collar him!"

"What did you let him bring you out here for, out of reach of help, you ass?" muttered Ponsonby.

"He's got a revolver—"

"It's all gammon!" muttered Gadsby.

"It can't be so! Look here—"

Bronx turned back to the car.

"Hop out, you 'uns!" he barked.

"Look here, my man—" began Ponsonby.

"I guess I said hop out."

"Well, we're not gettin' out!" said Ponsonby, with a show of defiance. "We're goin' on in this car! Think we're goin' to walk?"

"Jest that!" agreed Bronx. "You steppin' out, or waitin' to be put?"

"Oh gad!" breathed Monson.

"I—I say, you fellows!" groaned

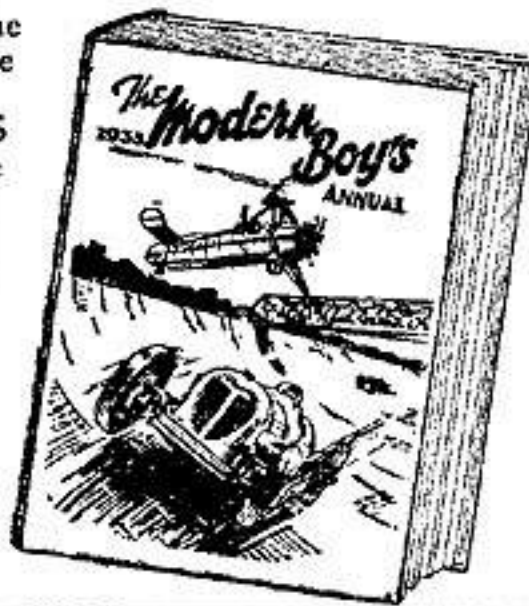
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"You step out!" said Bronx, clutching a revolver in his jacket pocket. Ponsonby & Co. jumped back in alarm. "I guess you want to beat it quick!" went on the American gangster. "If you ain't running for Rome in two shakes of a beaver's tail I guess you will hear something drop!" Billy Bunter sat quaking in the car.

Bunter the Billionaire. "I—I say, Wharton wouldn't let him get away with this if he was here—"

A long, lean arm reached into the car, and a lean hand grasped Ponsonby by the collar. He was hooked out of the car like a winkle from a shell.

Bump!
The dandy of Highcliffe went sprawling in the road, with a howl.

"Oh lor'!" gasped Bunter.
"You guys getting out?" asked Bronx, his slits of eyes gleaming at Gadsby and Monson.

They got out promptly enough. Bunter made a feeble movement to follow. But he shrank back in his seat as the gangster's eyes glittered at him.

"You're sitting this one out, bo!" said Bronx.

And the hapless billionaire sat it out. Gadsby and Monson helped the gasping Pon to his feet. The three Highcliffians stood glaring at the lean American with savage looks.

"Look here, you ruffianly scoundrel, I'll—"

roared Ponsonby. Bronx made a gesture towards distant Rome.

"Step out!" he said. "Step out lively!"

"Do you think you can strand us like this?" roared Ponsonby.

"Yep, jest a few! You stepping out?"

Pon clenched his fists convulsively. Bronx's hand came out of his pocket with something in it that glimmered in the sunshine.

"Oh gad!" yelled Monson, at the sight of the pistol.

Ponsonby jumped back.

"I guess you want to beat it, and beat it quick!" drawled Bronx. "If you ain't running for Rome in two

shakes of a beaver's tail I guess you will hear something drop! You going?"

He half raised the revolver. That was enough for Pon & Co.

Like three frightened rabbits, they scampered down the road in the direction of the distant city, raising a cloud of dust as they went.

Tiger Bronx chuckled, and slipped the gun back into his pocket.

"I'll say they're burning the wind!" he remarked. "You sure was some jay, Bunter, to quit the other bunch and gun on to that bunch! Yep! The other bunch wouldn't have stood for it, I guess."

Bunter groaned dismally. He was well aware of that. Gun or no gun, the gangster would not have got away with this so easily had the Famous Five been there instead of the nuts of Highcliffe.

"You got a good car," went on Bronx. "I'll say you're doing yourself well out of old man Shook's billions! You sure are! I guess this is the car I'd have picked to take you for a ride! I'll mention that this is the opossum's eyelids!"

And Tiger Bronx sat in the driver's seat, curled up his long legs, and started the car.

"Oh lor'!" groaned Bunter.

Pon & Co. had already disappeared. Billy Bunter was left to the mercy of the gangster.

He leaned back limply on the cushions of the Superbo car as Bronx set it in motion. A moment more, and they were whizzing up the road to Frascati—but not, it was certain, to stop there for lunch. Tiger Bronx grinned over the wheel, and Bunter groaned in the car as the miles flew underneath.

Meanwhile, Pon & Co. had covered a quarter of a mile before they even

paused to take breath. Then they slackened down and fanned their heated faces with their hats.

"What a go!" gasped Gadsby. "The fat, funky fool!" growled Ponsonby. "Precious shindy ho's let us in for! Bother the fat fool!"

"We've got to get a lift somehow!" groaned Gadsby.

"I—I say, what on earth's going to happen to Bunter, though?" asked Monson.

Ponsonby gave a snarl. "Hang Bunter!"

And the dusty and perspiring Highcliffians tramped sullenly down the road under the blaze of sunshine.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

In Chase I

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

He stared at three dusty figures in the sunny road.

The Famous Five had had a busy and happy morning.

The cardinal's secretary was an excellent guide. The cardinal's car whisked them from one place to another at record speed.

They had walked over St. Peter's, and the Colosseum, and the castle of San Angelo, and the Sistine Chapel, and other wonderful spots. They had looked at wonderful pictures and statues and frescoes. Signor Pucci had told them more things than they could ever dream of remembering. They had quite enjoyed it; but when the secretary asked them whether they would rather lunch in the town, or run out to some country place in the car, they plumped for a run out of town.

Rome was immensely interesting, but it was hot and noisy and stuffy; and they were getting rather fed on marble and bricks and mortar. So the big car took the road to Frascati, where there were hills and open spaces and green trees. The Famous Five agreed that it was a happy thought of the little old cardinal to lend them his car and his secretary for the day. In helping that poor priest on the Tivoli road they had cast their bread upon the waters, and it had, so to speak, come back buttered!

The car fairly ate up the miles, when they got out of Rome. They took a boyish pleasure in passing other cars on the road; and they passed every one they came across. And they were whizzing on, in great spirits, when Bob spotted the three dusty, tramping figures, and recognised the Highcliff nuts.

Harry Wharton looked out at Pon & Co.

They had supposed that the Highcliffians were out with Bunter, and were surprised to see them walking, and without the fat billionaire.

The trio looked tired and dusty and savage. Obviously they were somehow stranded. Bob had a cheery thought.

"Mind if we stop, sir?" he asked, addressing Signor Pucci.

"Si, si! By all means!" said the secretary, and he signed to the cardinal's chauffeur to halt.

"You don't want to jaw to those Highcliff cads!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Not in the least, old bean," answered Bob. "But you can see that they've got left somehow! They look as tired as dogs."

"Not thinking of offering them a lift, I suppose, after the way they treated us the other day?" asked Johnny sarcastically.

"Just exactly that!" answered Bob, cheerfully.

"Well, you ass!"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Let's!" he said. "There's lots of room in this tremendous car—if Signor Pucci doesn't mind."

"Friends of yours?" asked Signor Pucci, glancing at the dusty three, who had stopped, and were staring at the car.

"No; enemies," said Harry, with a smile. "But they look jolly tired, and as if they'd like a lift."

The cardinal's secretary opened his eyes for a moment. Then he smiled, and nodded.

"Buono! Buonissimo! That is very good!" he said. "Certo—certainly, as you wish."

Wharton leaned out of the car.

"You Highcliff men stranded?" he asked.

"Can't you see we are?" snarled Ponsonby.

"Well, we're going to Frascati to lunch. Like a lift that way? You can get a train there for Rome."

Pon & Co. stared at him. They had walked only half a mile; but they were hot and tired. But they did not quite catch on.

"Pullin' our leg?" asked Gadsby.

"Not at all! We'll be glad to give you a lift, if you like! Drop you at the railway station in ten minutes."

"The gladfulness will be terrific, my esteemed and absurd Ponsonby."

"Well, we'd be jolly glad!" said Monson. "It's frightfully decent of you chaps, considering. But I say, about Bunter—"

"Anything happened to Bunter?" asked Harry quickly.

"He's been bagged by a lantern-jawed American. Blessed if I know why," answered Monson. "The brute got into

the car on the Pincio, and now he's got the car and Bunter."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Bronx!" exclaimed Johnny Bull.

"But—didn't you try to stop him?" exclaimed Frank Nugent.

"He was armed!" muttered Gadsby. "He threatened us with a pistol—"

"That's Bronx all right!" said Bob.

"Where did you leave them?" asked Harry quietly.

"About half a mile up the road—"

"Thank goodness we stopped to speak to you, then! We may get after him in time! Hop in, and lend us a hand if we get up with Bronx."

"He's got a gun!" muttered Ponsonby.

"Never mind that! Hop in—we can handle him."

Pon & Co. exchanged glances. They would have been glad of a lift to Frascati railway station. But they did not want a lift in pursuit of a desperate American gangster armed with a revolver.

"What—what is all this?" asked the astonished Signor Pucci.

Wharton hastily explained to him—and the cardinal's secretary's eyes opened wider and wider!

"You'll let us go after him in the car?" asked Harry eagerly. "Goodness knows what will happen to Bunter if that brute gets clear with him."

"Certo! Certo!" said Signor Pucci.

"You Highcliff men getting in?" asked Bob.

"I tell you that ruffian's armed," said Ponsonby. "You'd better steer clear of him, and leave it to the police."

"Are you getting in?"

"No!" snapped Ponsonby.

"Please yourself! You'll pick up a motor-bus sooner or later, if you keep on!"

Leaving the three Highcliffians staring in the road, the cardinal's car shot onward. Pon & Co. vanished behind in a few moments. Whether they picked up a motor-bus or not, the Famous Five never knew, and cared little. They were thinking of Bunter, in the hands of the Chicago gangster. The fat billionaire's offensive manners and customs were forgotten now; the Famous Five had no thought but to rush to his help, and save him if they could.

As the car rushed on, faster than before, the juniors explained further details to the astonished secretary. That gentleman, astonished as he was, was quite keen to back them up.

"Hallo, there's Bunter's shover!" exclaimed Johnny Bull suddenly.

The car thudded to a halt, as the juniors overtook the chauffeur of Bunter's car, who was tramping up the road towards Frascati. They knew the Superbo chauffeur by sight. Wharton called to him.

"Has Bunter passed in the car?"

The man nodded and gesticulated.

"Si, signore! He send me away—and soon after, he pass me in the car. The young ones are gone, but the tall Americano he drive—"

"Towards Frascati?"

"Si, signore."

The cardinal's car shot on again. The juniors knew now, for certain, that Bronx had kept on, with Bunter, on the same road.

As he could have no expectation of such immediate pursuit, they hoped every moment to sight the Superbo car ahead. So long as he did not know that he was pursued, he was unlikely to turn into bumpy by-roads on the hills.

They came into the little town of Frascati with a rush and a roar. The chums of the Remove were not thinking of lunch there now. Signor Pucci called to a couple of "guardie," or constables, and learned that the Superbo car had gone on by the road to Palestrina.

Frascati dropped behind, and the cardinal's car roared on to the east over the Alban hills. And Bob Cherry gave a sudden shout, as a big car, blue picked out with red and gold, the gorgeous colours of the Hotel Superbo, was spotted on the long road ahead.

"There they are!"

"Good egg!"

"Jump on the gas!" gasped Bob.

The cardinal's car whizzed on like an arrow.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Run Down!

TIGER BRONX grinned over the wheel of the Superbo car.

He was doing thirty, and feeling greatly bucked. A contrast to Bunter the Billionaire—who was feeling anything but bucked.

Bunter lolled in the car in a crumpled state.

The gangster had "got him."

It was unfortunate for the fat billionaire that he had not, after all, been able to sack Jarvish! Not that it occurred to his fat brain that his valet had had any special reason for suggesting a drive in the Pincio that morning; or that Jarvish had contrived to let the gangster know where to look for him. Bunter was not thinking of Jarvish—or indeed of anything. His fat brain was too scared and confused for thought at all. He rocked in the rushing car, blinked dizzily at the villas and trees that fled by, and gasped and groaned. Bronx had got him—Bronx was carrying him off to goodness knows where—and what was going to happen to him when he got there? Had he been capable of thought at all, he might have thought that it was rather better to be the impecunious Owl of the Remove of former days, than a billionaire on such terms as these!

He had hardly a glimpse of Frascati as the car shot by. Where he was going he had no idea. He just groaned!

Bronx, however, was thinking! He had "cinched" the unexpected inheritor of the Shook billions! This time he had, as he termed it, cinched him for keeps! But the fellows he had turned out of the car would be sure to report what had happened to the police in Rome, and telegraph and telephone would soon be at work; the carabinieri looking out for the stolen Superbo car. It came in useful to get Bunter away—but at Palestrina, he decided, he would abandon it and hire another car not so easily traced. There were no difficulties to be expected from Bunter—the fat billionaire was wax in his hands.

A few hours, and he would be far away, deep in the Apennines, in a hidden spot he knew of, where his prisoner would be safe. All he had to do was to get him there, and it seemed "all clear."

With these thoughts in his mind he did not heed the roar of a high-powered car on the road behind him. He was not expecting pursuit yet.

Suddenly, in the mirror before him, flashed the reflection of the car behind.

He fairly jumped.

Five familiar faces were visible in it, and a sixth—an older one—that he did not know.

"Carry me home to die!" gasped Tiger Bronx.

He could hardly believe his eyes for a moment.

The sight of the Famous Five, roaring on behind in a car more powerful than his own, seemed to him like magic.

"By the great horned toad, I'll say this gums it!" muttered the Tiger.

He twisted his head and looked back.

There they were—with all eyes on him! How they were there, where they had suddenly sprung from, was a mystery to the Tiger. Certainly they had not been with Bunter on the Pincio, and the other "bunch" could hardly have given the alarm yet. But there they were—in fierce pursuit; there was no room for doubt about that.

"Stop, you scoundrel!" shouted Harry Wharton, and his voice reached the gangster above the roar of the cars.

Bronx set his teeth and stamped on the accelerator. The Superbo car leaped forward at redoubled speed.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter, rolling over on the seat as the car leaped.

With set teeth and jutting jaw, Bronx drove on. He cut between another car and a country "carro" with a couple of inches to spare. He swept round a corner into a country road as Paestrina appeared in sight ahead, on two wheels. Bunter rolled again.

In the town he would be stopped—he knew that! He had to keep to the open if he was to escape.

"Oh lor'!" gurgled Bunter.

The fat junior realised that Bronx must have some reason for this sudden desperate hurry. And he had heard a shouting voice behind. He dragged himself up and blinked back through his big spectacles.

"Oh crikey! I say, you fellows, save me!" yelled Bunter, waving frantic hands at the juniors in the car behind. "Rescue, Greyfriars!"

Harry Wharton waved back.

"We're after you!" roared Bob Cherry.

The cardinal's car spun round the corner after the fugitive. Main roads were left behind now, and the way was narrower and bumpy. Bronx drove

with utter recklessness, in true gangster style. He shaved a country cart with less than an inch to spare. He rocked round a corner and nearly piled the car in a clump of trees. The fat billionaire rocked about inside like a pea in a thimble.

"Presto, prestissimo!" exclaimed Signor Pucci, entering into the excitement of the chase.

"We're gaining!" said Harry Wharton. "We can beat him!"

"The beatfulness will be terrific!" gasped the Nabob of Bhanipur.

The bonnet of the cardinal's car nosed behind the Superbo. Bronx was overhauled; but the road was too narrow to pass him. He was going all out in utter desperation; but he had no chance of shaking off the pursuers. The juniors were on their feet, eager and excited.

"We've got him!" panted Nugent. "He can't get away!"

"No jolly fear!"

Twice, thrice, Bronx spun sharply round dangerous corners, and Billy Bunter squeaked with affright. But, like a bloodhound, the cardinal's car hung on his traces.

Bob Cherry chuckled breathlessly.

"We'll get him! Lucky for Bunter his jolly old Eminence lent us the car to-day! We couldn't have done this on a tram!"

"Ha, ha! No!"

"Somebody after us!" said Frank Nugent, looking back.

"A small black car with two men in uniform in it, and another man in uniform driving, was shooting up the road after the pursuers.

"A police car!" said Signor Pucci.

"Oh, good!"

The police car from Frascati was keeping up the pace, but with difficulty.

The juniors were glad to see it there. Whether Bronx had spotted it, they did not know. He was still making desperate efforts to escape.

"Here's a chance!" exclaimed Harry Wharton suddenly, as Bronx shot out of the narrow lanes into a road.

But the chauffeur had seen the chance as soon as Wharton. He accelerated and fairly spun past the Superbo, with a foot of space to spare.

For a minute or two the two cars raced cheek-by-jowl; then the cardinal's car shot ahead, and hedged out into the middle of the road.

Tiger Bronx had to slow down then, or smash himself and his car into fragments—an alternative that did not appeal even to the reckless gangster.

He braked, gritting his teeth; the juniors' car slowing down in the middle of the road ahead of him.

"Got him!" breathed Bob.

"The gotfulness is preposterous."

The Superbo came to a stop, and the gangster reversed and backed, evidently with the intention of attempting to turn and escape by the way he had come! It was then that he sighted the police car shooting on behind.

"Aw, snakes! I'll say it's gummed!" gasped Bronx.

It was undoubtedly "gummed"—with the cardinal's car ahead, and the police car behind. Tiger Bronx gave one desperate glare round and leaped into the road.

Even then he hesitated for a second, as if unwilling to abandon his prey. But the juniors had stopped now; had jumped out, and were running back towards him, and the police car, with three armed men in it, was coming on fast. The gangster realised that he had

(Continued on next page.)



"Swop you my water pistol for your FRY'S"

But Smith minor isn't having any, thoughtful chap. He holds that a Fry's Monster Bar in the hand is worth two in the tuckshop when Third Lesson begins in half a minute . . . Offers half the bar + 1d. for pistol. Offer accepted.

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no time to attempt to get away with Bunter—indeed, he needed luck to get away himself!

He bounded across the road, clambered up a bank, and disappeared into a grove of olive-trees. Half a minute later the police car clanged to a halt, and the three carabinieri jumped down. Signor Pucci shouted and gesticulated, and they ran up the bank and rushed into the wood after the gangster.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Sticks.

"I SAY, you fellows!" gasped Billy Bunter.

"Safe and sound, old fat bean?" grinned Bob.

"The safe-ness is terrific, and the sound-ness preposterous, my esteemed idiotic Bunter!"

"Right as rain, old chap!" said Harry Wharton.

"Is—is—is he gone?"

"The gone-ness is——"

"Terrifically preposterous!" chuckled Bob.

"Oh lor'!" gasped Bunter. "I say, you fellows, he was buzzing me off in my own car, you know! Those Highcliffe cads funk'd him! Let me down, you know! Sure he's gone?"

"He's bolted into the wood with three carabinieri after him," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "You won't see him here again."

"Nothing to be frightened at!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Of course, I wasn't frightened——"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Nothing of the kind, of course," said Bunter. The fat billionaire pulled himself together now that he was assured that the gangster was running, with three carabinieri at his heels. "I hope I'm not afraid of an American gangster. But——"

"Well, you're all right now, anyhow," said Harry. "We may as well be getting on, you fellows."

"I say, don't you leave me alone here!" squeaked Bunter, in alarm. "I say, you fellows, don't you let me down like those Highcliffe cads! I say, you jolly well stick to me, you know! Why, you promised to stick to me when I brought you on this trip! You jolly well know you did."

"You blithering ass!"

"Oh, really, Bull——"

"You pernicious piffler!"

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"You terrific, footling fooler!"

"Oh, really, Inky! I say, you fellows, I'm chucking those Highcliffe cads! They let me down! They let that brute Bronx frighten them away! Actually scared, you know!" said Bunter, with a contemptuous sniff. "Fancy that!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! I'm jolly well going to cut that gang! And I'll jolly well pull Pon's nose if he has the cheek to speak to me again! I say, you fellows, don't go!"

"But you're all right now."

"I want your company, old fellows. You're—you're so nice, you know!"

"Oh crumbs!"

"Where did you get that car?" asked Bunter, blinking across at the cardinal's handsome automobile. "I shouldn't have thought you fellows could have afforded a car like that!"

"We can't!" said Harry, laughing.

"It was lent to us for the day."

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"Well, look here, send it back and come in my car," said Bunter. "Who's that merchant in black sitting in it?"

"Man who's been showing us round."

"Sort of guide—what? Well, tip him to take the car back and come with me, and lend me your chauffeur!" suggested Bunter. "Tip that man a hundred lire. Two hundred, if you like. I'll stand it."

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Wharton, quite overcome by the idea of tipping Cardinal Colonna's secretary to take the cardinal's car home.

"That's all right—what?" asked Bunter.

"Not quite!" grinned Bob. "The fact is, old fat bean, we're fed-up with you! We'll give you a tow somewhere where you can pick up a driver, if you like."

"I'm not going about alone! I want you fellows to stick to me! After all, we're pals, ain't we?"

"Fathead!"

"If you won't come with me," said Bunter, "I'll come with you! That will be all right, won't it?"

"Will it?" said Johnny Bull, very doubtfully.

"Quite, old fellow!" Bunter rolled out of the Superbo car. "Look here, I haven't had lunch yet! I'm jolly hungry! Let's get somewhere where there's some grub! Mind, you've got to keep with me! That beast Bronx may turn up again—he keeps on turning up! Not that I'm afraid of him, of course; but I want the company of my old pals!"

The Famous Five exchanged glances. They had forgotten everything else to go to the rescue of Billy Bunter. Now that they had rescued him, they were landed with him—which was really not the sort of reward they wanted.

"What about your car?" asked Bob.

"Leave it here," said Bunter carelessly. "I'll phone to the Hotel Superbo, and they can send somebody to pick it up."

"And suppose it's pinched?"

"Never mind that—I can afford to pay for it! Bother the car! Come on, you fellows!" said Bunter; and he rolled across to the cardinal's car, and settled the matter by clambering into it.

"Well, my hat!" said Bob Cherry.

"It seems that Pon & Co. are turned down, and we're taken into favour again by his lordship! Shall we pitch him out on his silly neck?"

"Let's!" grunted Johnny Bull.

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Oh, let him stick!" he said. "The fact is, the fat duffer isn't safe, and it's up to us to look after him. If we leave him around loose, Bronx may get hold of him again!"

"Blow him!" growled Johnny.

But he acquiesced, and the Famous Five followed Bunter into the car. The Superbo automobile was left to take its chance. Bunter the Billionaire was quite regardless of what might happen to it.

There was no sign of the carabinieri returning. They were in pursuit of the gangster through the olive woods, and were at a considerable distance by that time.

"Bit of a crush!" remarked Bunter, when the chums of the Remove got in.

"Can't that Italian chap get out!"

"Shut up, you fat idiot!" hissed Bob.

"That's all right! These silly foreigners don't understand English!" said Bunter cheerfully. "Looks a bit of a fool, too!"

Signor Pucci blinked at Bunter. The cardinal's secretary had taken quite a liking to the Famous Five. He did not

seem to be taking a liking to William George Bunter.

"Don't mind him, sir!" said Harry Wharton hastily. "Bunter's a born idiot, and can't help it!"

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"Shut up, fathead!"

"Very good—very good, signorini!" said Mr. Pucci. "Let us proceed!"

"Oh crikey! I say, you fellows, he understands English!" said Bunter. "Most of these silly idiots don't, you know! I say—Yaroooh! What beast stamped on my foot? Whoop!" Bunter roared. "Look here, if you're going to stamp on a fellow's foot——"

"Shut up!"

"Beast!"

The car rolled away, taking the road for Frascati.

There the juniors had a rather late lunch, and Bunter phoned to Jarvis at the Hotel Superbo. After which there was a drive to Tivoli and Hadrian's Villa, and other interesting spots. And at sunset Signor Pucci took his young charges back to Rome and landed them at the Hotel Superbo.

Billy Bunter rolled into the hotel, while the Famous Five lingered to give Signor Pucci their thanks, and to send by him a grateful message to the cardinal. After which they followed Bunter in.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Punch for Pon!

"HERE he comes!" murmured Ponsonby.

Pon & Co. were in the lounge of the Hotel Superbo. They were dressed for dinner, and looked very elegant as they lounged there, waiting for the Greyfriars billionaire to come in.

They were not feeling quite easy about that meeting with Bunter. They had learned from Jarvis, who had had a phone call, that Bunter was with the Famous Five; from which they guessed that the Greyfriars fellows had got him away from the lean American. But how he would regard their desertion of him in the hour of peril was rather a doubtful question. Pon & Co. were conscious of the fact that they had not shown up remarkably well in that transaction.

Pon's view was that no fellow could be expected to tackle a dangerous ruffian with a "gun" in his hand. Still, leaving the fat billionaire to his fate while they ran for safety was not exactly an act of loyal and devoted friendship. Pon realised that some leg-pulling would be required when he met Bunter again.

So he was feeling a little uneasy as the fat billionaire rolled in. However, he put on his friendliest smile, and Gadsby and Monson followed his example as they advanced to meet Bunter.

"So jolly glad to see you back, old fellow!" said Ponsonby.

"Awf'ly glad you're safe, old chap!" said Gadsby.

"We've been frightfully anxious about you!" declared Monson.

Billy Bunter looked at them.

He did not speak; he appeared to be deaf to the voice of the charmer. But his look was expressive.

He fixed his eyes and his spectacles on the faces of the three Highcliffians and allowed his gaze to sink to their feet. Then he raised it again to their surprised faces.

This was what Bunter called looking a fellow up and down! It was expressive of the most crushing contempt.



Ponsonby, bound and gagged as he was, could not utter a sound. Beppo was giving him no chance of alarming the hotel. Dizzy with amazement and terror, the Highcliffe "nut" felt himself lifted in the ruffian's arms, and dropped into an immense trunk!

"Got you safe, signore Buntero!" muttered the Italian crook.

Pon coloured with vexation. There were a good many people in the hotel lounge, witnesses to this peculiar scene. It was extremely discomforting for the nuts of Highcliffe.

"Look here, Bunter—" muttered Ponsonby.

Bunter waved a fat hand at him.

"Don't speak to me!" he said.

"Look here—"

"Keep your distance, please!" said Bunter, with a great deal of dignity.

"You're dropped! I'm done with you! Get out!"

"You cheeky, fat cad!" hissed Monson, red with rage.

"Yah!"

"I've a jolly good mind—" breathed Gadsby.

"Yah!" repeated Bunter.

"Shut up, you fellows!" said Ponsonby. Pon was not losing his billionaire, if he could help it. "I say, Bunter, old fellow, if you'll let us explain—"

Bunter gave a contemptuous sniff.

He was done with Pon & Co. As a matter of fact, after what had happened in the Pincian Gardens that morning, the fat billionaire realised that he was not safe alone, and not safe with fellows who would not stand by him in danger.

Bunter was not very bright, but he was bright enough to understand that. And he had made up his fat mind to stick to Harry Wharton & Co. like glue. As a matter of choice, he would rather have preferred Pon & Co., and their flattery. But it was a case of "safety first." The Famous Five did not pull his fat leg, or affect to listen to his chin-wag as to golden words of wit and wisdom, but they were the fellows to stand by him if danger appeared in the offing, and it was the fat billionaire's

sage intention to cling to them closer than a brother. And, having done with Pon & Co., Bunter was the fellow to drop them with a bump!

Fatuous as he was, he had a secret suspicion of how they really regarded him, and so there was considerable satisfaction in treating them with lofty disdain.

So he turned up his fat little nose even farther than Nature had already turned it up, and sniffed.

"Yah!" he said, for the third time.

It was not elegant, but it was expressive.

Gadsby and Monson gave him almost homicidal looks, and backed away, anxious to get out of such a scene. But Ponsonby stuck to his guns, so to speak. He was making too good a thing out of the Greyfriars billionaire to lose him, if he could help it.

"Look here, old chap, don't be shirty about a trifle," said Pon, in his smoothest tones, choking back his rage and his desire to knock the fat junior spinning along the lounge of the Hotel Superbo. "We thought that the best thing we could do was to go for help."

"Rotten funks, leaving a fellow in the lurch!" sneered Bunter. "Not Greyfriars style, I can tell you."

"But—you see—"

Bunter waved a fat hand at him again.

"Sheer off!" he said.

"Look here, Bunter—"

"You're a rotten funk," said Bunter. "A sneaking cad! Yah! I wouldn't touch you with a barge-pole! You make me sick! Gerrou!"

Harry Wharton & Co., having finished with Signor Pucci, came in at that moment. They were in time to hear Bunter addressing Pon, and they exchanged a grin.

Pon's face was growing crimson with suppressed rage and humiliation. Despising the fat billionaire, as he did, from the bottom of his heart, as a rotten upstart and a rank outsider, it was exceedingly bitter to Pon to have to listen to this sort of thing from him. Even Bunter's billions could hardly prevent him from grabbing the Owl's fat nose and tweaking it. But he made one more effort.

"Bunter, old fellow—"

"Yah! Leave me alone!" said Bunter. "Keep your distance! I want to have nothing to do with you, Ponsonby—absolutely nothing! I'm fed up with you. Dashed if I know why they let such a rank outsider stay in this hotel at all for! I shall complain to the management. This really isn't a place for you Highcliffe trippers! Anyhow, sheer off, and don't keep on barging in on your betters!"

That was the last straw.

Ponsonby realised that the game was up—that he had lost his billionaire. With a glitter in his eyes he made a stride at Bunter, snatched at his fat nose, and caught it between a finger and thumb.

"Tweak!"

"Gurrrrgggh!" spluttered Bunter. "Ow! Led go by dose! Urrrrgggh!"

"Tweak!"

"Yurrrroooogggh!"

Harry Wharton ran forward. He grasped Ponsonby's arm and wrenched it away. In his lofty grip the dandy of Highcliffe had to let go Billy Bunter's nose.

Bunter staggered back, clasping his damaged nose with both hands and yelping with anguish.

There was a buzz of voices. This was quite an unprecedented scene in the

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superb lounge of the Hotel Superbo. Pon would hardly have let himself go to such an extent in such a place had he not completely lost control of his temper.

"Chuck that, Ponsonby!" said Harry Wharton quietly.

Ponsonby wrenched his arm away. For a second he looked as if he would hurl himself at the captain of the Remove.

Then Bunter weighed in.

Bunter's nose was hurt. His dignity was hurt. Fifty pairs of eyes had seen his nose pulled! Bunter hurled himself at Ponsonby.

Crash!

A fat fist, with all Bunter's tremendous weight behind it, landed in Cecil Ponsonby's eye.

Pon shot over backwards as if a cannon-ball had struck him. He sprawled on the floor with terrific crash.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Take that, you rotter!" roared Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

There was a buzz of startled voices. Harry Wharton & Co. gathered round the warlike Owl of the Remove and whisked him away to the lift. Porters and bureau clerks, and waiters, and a horrified manager, were hurrying on the scene. The superb Hotel Superbo was thrilled almost to its foundations by such a shindy in its superb lounge. The Famous Five, gasping with laughter, got Bunter off the scene, and the lift shot them upwards.

Bunter, on second thoughts, was not sorry to be hurried away. Knocking a fellow down was satisfactory, so far as it went. But there was always a doubt about what the fellow might do when he got up again. So Bunter was not sorry to have the length of the lift shaft between him and the dandy of Highcliffe.

"Well, I jolly well knocked the cad down!" said the fat billionaire, as he got out of the lift. "I say, you fellows, you jolly well saw me jolly well knock him down—what?"

"Yes, rather, you ferocious hippopotamus!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm jolly well going to complain to the manager about those hooligans staying in this hotel kicking up shindies!" said Bunter. "I shall jolly well tell him that if they don't go, I go! I mean it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You'll jolly well see!" said Bunter.

And he rolled away to his magnificent suite for Jarvis to dress him for dinner, greatly bucked by the fact that he had knocked Ponsonby down, but rather anxious not to meet the dandy of Highcliffe again in the Hotel Superbo.

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Man in the Trunk!

"SOME trunk!" remarked Bob Cherry.

The Famous Five, having dressed for dinner, came along to Bunter's suite.

Bunter had specially asked them to call for him before they went down. Even in the heart of the immense Hotel Superbo the fat billionaire did not feel quite secure from Tiger Bronx. Since the gangster's audacity in walking him off in the Pincian Gardens under the eyes of a crowd, Bunter realised that Bronx was equal to almost anything, and he would not have been surprised to see the hard, lean face and slits of

eyes in one of the endless carpeted corridors, watching and waiting for him. Probably, too, a lingering distrust of Jarvis was in his fat mind, in spite of his determination not to part with that valuable valet. Anyhow, he was resolved never to be left alone, if he could help it, and the chums of the Remove good-naturedly played up till he should get over his scare a little.

Bunter, of course, was not ready. Bunter never was ready. So the chums of Greyfriars waited in his dressing-room while Jarvis gave the finishing touches to the billionaire's toilet.

Wharton looked at the valet several times, keenly, but there was nothing to be read in the smooth, sleek face. He had a strong suspicion that Jarvis had had a hand in the affair of the morning, somehow contriving that the gangster should "corral" Bunter on the Pincio, but there was, of course, no sort of proof to go upon.

There was a tap at the door, and the gold-laced head-porter presented himself, with bows. He was followed by four other porters, carrying a large trunk.

The trunk was not merely large, it was huge—bigger than Lord Mauleverer's big trunk at Greyfriars, famous in the Remove. It was of the Saratoga variety, and strongly banded with metal. Its tremendous size elicited the remark from Bob Cherry.

It was landed in the dressing-room, and the porters were duly tipped by Jarvis and retired. Bunter blinked at the giant trunk through his big spectacles.

"What the thump do you want a trunk that size for, Bunter?" asked Nugent. "Are you buying up the Colosseum to take home?"

"I never ordered that trunk," answered Bunter. "What's it for, Jarvis?"

"It contains some works of art in bronze, for your inspection, sir," answered Jarvis. "Reproductions, sir, of the work of Benvenuto Cellini. I inspected them in a place in the Piazza di Spagna while you were absent to-day, sir, and gave the dealer permission to send them here for you to look at."

"Oh, all right!" said Bunter. "Can't look at 'em now—dinner!"

"Oh, no, sir, but perhaps to-morrow you—"

"Remind me after brekker, then, Jarvis."

"Very good, sir."

Bunter was finished at last, and the Greyfriars fellows went down to dinner. Jarvis waited till the lift had carried them down. Then he went back into the dressing-room, and stood looking at the big Saratoga trunk. There was a very curious expression on the face of James Jarvis.

He bent over the huge trunk and scanned it carefully. In inconspicuous places holes were bored in the lid and the sides. The work was so carefully done that the orifices would never have been observed without a careful inspection, such as Jarvis was making now.

He smiled—not a pleasant smile.

Taking a key from his pocket, he unlocked the trunk.

He lifted the huge, heavy lid, and revealed the contents. Harry Wharton & Co. would have been astonished could they have beheld the "works of art" concealed in that Saratoga!

A man of rather diminutive size, though wiry and muscular, rose to his feet in the trunk as Jarvis lifted the lid. Big as the trunk was, it hardly afforded accommodation for any but a rather small man. The man was an

Italian, with a dark, reckless, vicious face—even a less keen reader of character than James Jarvis would have known that he was a crook of the Roman underworld.

Anyone in the Hotel Superbo might have been amazed to learn that a Roman bravo had been introduced into the building concealed in a Saratoga trunk. But Jarvis did not seem surprised.

The dark little man grinned at him, and Jarvis made a sign of silence.

"Your name?" he whispered.

"Giuseppe, signore—me chiamano Beppo." The man answered in Italian, though evidently he understood English.

"You know what you have to do, Beppo?"

"Si, signore."

"You have seen the Signore Bunter?"

"No, signore; but—"

"He occupies these rooms—it will be easy! I shall take care to be off the scene!" answered Jarvis, with a sour smile. "You will need no help—he is but a boy, and a foolish and cowardly one."

Beppo looked round him with keen eyes, taking in his surroundings. Jarvis went on to speak in low tones.

"I shall leave the hotel after they have finished dinner. I must not be suspected; his friends distrust me already. He may come up in the evening, or not till bed-time. There are plenty of places here where you can hide, and take care not to show yourself if others come. If anyone comes in alone it will be Bunter."

"Si, signore."

"You will seize him, bind, and gag him, and place him in the trunk. Here is the key—see that you lock it safely."

Giuseppe took the key and slipped it into a pocket.

"After that you must get out. You will find it easy to slip away in the crowds of attendants here. If you are questioned you came with a message for me, and may refer to me."

"Va bene, signore."

"So that I may be sure you have done your work, when I return make a cross on the lid of the trunk with this chalk, when all is done."

The Italian nodded.

"I will see that the trunk is taken away to-night. It will be taken in a car, and the driver will be—"

"Il Signore Bronx!" grinned Beppo. "Exactly."

After a few more words the Italian selected a place of concealment in a curtained alcove, and Jarvis closed the trunk again. Then he turned off the light and left the dressing-room.

In his own room Bunter's valuable valet paced to and fro for some time, every now and then wiping a spot of perspiration from his brow.

Risks did not appeal to James Jarvis, but he was taking risks now, and he did not like it.

For his own mysterious reasons, at which Harry Wharton & Co. had been quite unable to guess, the valet was plotting and planning for the fat billionaire to fall into the gangster's hands. He had contrived to throw opportunities in Bronx's way, without even the gangster being aware that he was doing so, though at last Bronx had come to suspect the game.

But every one of those opportunities had failed Tiger Bronx in one way or another, generally owing to the Famous Five. Now, at long last, Jarvis had come out into the open, as it were, so far as Bronx was concerned. The plotting rascal would have preferred to hide his tortuous scheming, even from Bronx; but that was no longer possible.

The gangster no longer dared to show himself openly. He had stepped too far over the law at last, and the Roman police were looking for him for the kidnapping of Bunter and the stealing of the Superbo car that day. He had to consider his safety now, and his safety lay in placing a long distance between himself and the Eternal City. He was going, but Bunter the Billionaire was going with him if Jarvis's treachery was successful. And he did not see how it could fail.

The plotting rascal went down in the lift at last. Harry Wharton & Co. were in the lounge after dinner with the fat billionaire.

Jarvis approached the group with his soft step.

"What about a game of poker in my rooms?" Bunter was saying, as he came within hearing. "Pon's taught me how to play poker, and I'll teach you fellows, if you like."

"You begin playing poker, and I'll begin with the shovel and tongs!" said Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Cherry!" Jarvis coughed his deferential cough. The juniors looked round at him. He stood respectfully before Bunter, winding his smooth hands together.

"If you will excuse me, sir," said Jarvis, "I should be very glad of a few hours off this evening, if you are not requiring my services, sir."

"Oh, all right! You can cut!" said Bunter.

"You are very kind, sir! Thank you, sir!"

Jarvis disappeared.

"I can't stand that crawly worm!" growled Johnny Bull. "Why the thump don't you boot him, Bunter?"

"You see, I—I can't—"

"Why can't you?"

"I—I—I mean, what about a game of banker?"

"Fathead!"

"What about the Colosseum by moonlight?" asked Harry Wharton. "There'll be a gorgeous moon to-night."

"Good egg!" said the Co.

"I say, you fellows, suppose that beast Bronx is hanging about—"

"Oh, rot! We'll take care of you, unless you'd rather stay in—"

"No fear!" said Bunter promptly.

"After all, we can stop at a cafe and get a snack! I'll order the car—"

"Oh, blow the car! It's not a quarter of an hour's walk! Let's get our coats and hoof it."

And the Greyfriars fellows walked out of the Superbo and along to that glorious relic of ancient times, the Colosseum, which was undoubtedly very imposing by moonlight. They little dreamed of what was happening at the Hotel Superbo while they were gone.

THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER.

Pon Asks for It!

CECIL PONSONBY looked in the glass, rubbed a darkened and swollen eye, and gritted his teeth.

Gadsby and Monson eyed him rather uneasily. They knew their Pon of old, and when he had that look on his face they were a little alarmed. As Pon's closest pals, they were aware that under his nutty exterior the dandy of Highcliffe was little better than a hooligan at heart.

"Look here, Pon, it's time we went!" said Gadsby. "We're all packed."

"And the sooner the better!" said Monson. "I tell you, Pon, I don't like the look in your eye."

Ponsonby turned from the glass. He had given that eye his very special attention since Billy Bunter had punched it. But it availed not. It was black, with a shade of purple. For a good many days to come the dandy of Highcliffe was going to be disfigured with a black eye. And the rage and fury in his breast gleamed like fire from the other eye.

"You measly worms!" said Ponsonby, between his teeth. "Do you think I'm takin' this lyin' down! Look at my eye!"

"Well, you pulled the fellow's nose!" said Gadsby.

"Dash it all, you started the row!" said Monson. "Anyhow, that's that, and we've got to get out."

"That fat freak, who isn't fit to clean our boots, had the cheek to turn us down—in public!" said Ponsonby, breathing hard. "The manager has asked us to leave the hotel—us!"

"Well, they're not losing their giddy billionaire!" said Gadsby. "I bet they're making a fortune out of that fat fooler. I've heard that his suite alone costs a hundred quid a week. Lot they care about us in comparison with that."

"Anyhow, we've got another hotel to go to," said Monson. "We've fixed it by phone and we've only got to go a street's length."

"Turned out—at Bunter's order!" said Ponsonby between his teeth.

"Well, it's rotten, but what's the good of grousin'," said Gadsby. "After all, you did kick up a row in the lounge, Pon, and a fellow's not supposed to kick up rows in an hotel of this class."

"Oh, shut up!" snarled Ponsonby.

"Look here, I'm goin' to ring the porter to take down the trunks," said Monson. "I jolly well don't like the look in your eye, Pon."

Ponsonby threw himself into a chair and lighted a cigarette. When the Superbo porters came up for the Highcliffians' luggage, Pon remained where he was, till they had gone with it.

Gadsby and Monson, impatient to go, looked at him.

"Ain't you comin'?" demanded Gadsby.

"Shut that door!"

"Look here—"

"Shut that door, you fool!"

Gadsby muttered under his breath and shut the door. Ponsonby threw away the stump of his cigarette.

"I'm not takin' this lyin' down!" he said, in a low, tense voice. "That Greyfriars rotter has blacked my eye!"

"You asked for it!" grunted Monson.

"We've got to get out of the hotel! We shan't have another chance at him! But while we're still here, we can walk along to his rooms—"

"The car's waitin' below—"

"We can send the baggage off first. We've a right to stay on till midnight, if we choose. We can get into Bunter's rooms and wait for him there!" said Ponsonby.

"That man Jarvis will be hangin' about—"

"He's gone out."

"Well, and what are we to do in Bunter's rooms?" demanded Gadsby. "Are you thinkin' of a school rag in a show like this, you ass?"

Ponsonby's sound eye glittered.

"I'm thinkin' of smashin' up that fat freak till he won't be able to crawl!" he hissed. "I'm thinkin' of blackin' his eyes and breakin' half his bones—that's what I'm thinkin' of."

"I fancied it was somethin' of the sort!" said Monson, "and are you thinkin' that we're goin' to bail you out when you're run in by the police for doin' it? Wash it out, you ass!"

"I should jolly well say so!" exclaimed Gadsby. "I know you won't get me anywhere near Bunter's rooms."

Ponsonby's lip curled with bitter contempt.

"So you're funk'n' it?" he sneered.

"I'm not goin' huntin' for trouble," said Monson, sullenly. "After all, we've done pretty well out of the fat ass! And we did let him down when that American bagged him—what's the good of denyin' it? And you started the row in the lounge—"

"I'm goin'!" said Gadsby, abruptly. And he opened the door and went.

Gaddy, at least, made it clear that he had no intention of taking a hand in Pon's schemes of vengeance on the Greyfriars billionaire.

Ponsonby gave Monson a bitter look.

"You backin' out, too?" he sneered.

(Continued on next page.)

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"Look here, don't be a fool, Pon! We're ready to go—let's get out without any more trouble."

"Are you stickin' to me in this?"

"No!" hooted Monson. "I think you're a mad fool."

"Then get out, confound you, and I'll handle it alone! I don't need any help to smash up that fat frump."

"Look here, come along—"

"Get out!"

Monson shrugged his shoulders, and followed Gadsby down the corridor.

Ponsonby remained.

He looked in the glass again, passing his hand over his discoloured eye. His face was pale with bitter fury. He left the room at last, and, with a careless air, walked along to Bunter's suite.

There was no light turned on there, but moonlight streamed in at a window as Ponsonby looked into the dressing-room.

Bunter evidently was not there. Where he was that evening, Ponsonby did not know, though he had no doubt that he was somewhere with the Greyfriars fellows. But that he would come up to his room, sooner or later, was certain, and Pon had only to wait for him.

He stepped quickly into the dressing-room and shut the door after him. He crossed the room towards the communicating door that led into the billionaire's bed-room.

Pon's plans were cut and dried.

If Bunter came up alone, he was going to "handle" Bunter in revenge for that black eye. If he came up with any of the Removites, or with Jarvis, he was going to wait till he could catch him alone. After which, he would quietly slip out of the Hotel Superbo, and go along to the other hotel, for which Gadsby and Monson had already started with the baggage.

It seemed all simple enough, and certainly it never crossed Pon's mind, as he made his plans, that somebody else had been making plans already, and that there was already a man hidden in the room waiting to "handle" Bunter.

What happened next was an utter surprise to Cecil Ponsonby—so astonishing that he almost wondered whether he was dreaming.

He had almost reached the door of Bunter's bed-room, when he was suddenly seized from behind.

He was down on the floor in the twinkling of an eye, and as he opened his mouth for a startled howl, a cloth gag was thrust into it.

In utter amazement and terror, he struggled.

But he was in the hands of a ruffian twice or thrice as strong as himself. His hands were dragged together, as a sinewy knee was planted on him, pinning him to the floor.

Beppo was skilful and swift at this peculiar kind of work. In a few seconds, Ponsonby's hands were bound fast, and then his legs were tied.

Then, as he lay helpless, breathless, dizzy, dazed, a cord was wound about him and knotted again and again.

Bound so that he could hardly stir a finger, gagged and unable to utter a sound, Ponsonby stared with distended eyes at the shadowy figure of the bravo in the glimmering moonlight from the window.

Beppo grinned at him.

"Tutto sicuro, signore Buntero!" he breathed.

If anything could have added to Ponsonby's amazement, it would have

been that intimation that he was mistaken for Billy Bunter.

Obviously, the bravo could never have seen Bunter, or he could not have made such a mistake, even in the dim light.

But Beppo had no doubts! He was waiting and watching there for the schoolboy to whom the rooms belonged to come up. Ponsonby's action, in entering by the dressing-room, and crossing to the bed-room door, left no doubt in his mind that this was the fellow to whom the rooms belonged.

Ponsonby strove madly to speak. But he could not utter a sound. Beppo was giving him no chance of alarming the hotel.

Dizzy with amazement and terror, Ponsonby felt himself lifted in the ruffian's arms and dropped into an immense trunk.

Beppo arranged several cushions round him, apparently to make him as comfortable as possible. Then the lid was closed, and Ponsonby heard the click of a key.

For a moment or two, the awful terror of suffocation rushed on him. Then he found that he could breathe quite easily through his nose, as only



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Disgusted Second: "No, but keep on swinging your fists about—the draught might give him a cold!"

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his mouth was stopped by the gag. He realised that the trunk must have been prepared for this, and that it was perforated for breathing.

Beppo grinned at the locked trunk. He took the chalk and made the sign on the lid to let Jarvis see that the work was done when he came in. And then Beppo slipped out of the room, with the key of the trunk in his pocket, and was gone. And Ponsonby, curled up in the trunk, was left—with feelings that could not have been expressed in words.

THE NINETEENTH CHAPTER.

Not Bunter!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

"Bed!"

"What about a spot of supper?" asked Bunter.

"Bow-wow!"

"Beast!"

Harry Wharton & Co. came in, rather later than usual, after that moonlight inspection of the ancient Colosseum.

The Famous Five walked to the lift—Billy Bunter to the hotel restaurant. Bunter had had only one snack since dinner, and he wanted another before he went to bed. Leaving him to it, the chums of the Remove went up in the lift.

There was a heavy, bumping sound, as they came along the broad corridor on which their rooms opened.

Four porters were carrying the big Saratoga trunk, and James Jarvis, standing in the doorway of Bunter's dressing-room, looked on.

"Some trunk!" grinned Bob. "What's it going away for, Jarvis? Bunter hasn't seen the jolly old works of art yet, has he?"

"I find, sir, that a mistake was made, and that the wrong articles were sent," explained Jarvis smoothly. "But I have no doubt that the mistake will be rectified before Master William rises in the morning."

And Jarvis followed the porters down the corridor with the heavy trunk. Harry Wharton & Co. went to their rooms, certainly without the remotest suspicion in their minds of what that Saratoga trunk contained.

The big trunk went down in the service lift, accompanied by the porters and Jarvis. It was carried out of the Hotel Superbo, to where a motor-car stood waiting in the shadows.

The driver, a tall, lean man, had a thick black beard, and a hat pulled down over his brow. He remained at the wheel, but twisted round and watched eagerly as the heavy trunk was heaved on.

Then he drove away and disappeared into the night.

Jarvis turned back into the hotel with a furtive smile lingering on his sleek face. Tiger Bronx was gone—with the prisoner in the Saratoga trunk.

The whole thing had worked like a charm. Jarvis, on his return to the Superbo, had found the chalk mark on the trunk and the bravo gone. And the weight of the Saratoga told that there was a load in it! All the valet had to do was to send the trunk away—and the gangster, disguised with a false beard, was there to take it.

Bunter's incomparable valet, as he went back to his master's rooms, was feeling pleased with himself and things generally.

That feeling was not destined to last.

After a little thought, Jarvis went along to Harry Wharton's room. Now that the prisoner in the trunk was safely gone, it was his cue to miss his master and inquire if the juniors knew where he was.

He tapped at Wharton's door.

"Come in!" called out the captain of the Remove.

The Famous Five were all in the room for a chat before going to bed. Bunter the Billionaire had told them that he was fed-up with Rome—no doubt on account of his adventure on the Pincio. He wanted to get off in the plane the next day, and the Famous Five were discussing a map and air routes and dromes when Jarvis entered.

"Please excuse me, young gentlemen," said Jarvis smoothly. "I am a little uneasy about my master."

"Afraid he'll burst?" asked Bob Cherry.

Jarvis blinked at him. He was quite unaware that the juniors, less than half an hour ago, had left Bunter

in the hotel restaurant, scoffing supper. His belief was that Bunter was in the Saratoga trunk, already out of Rome.

"Perhaps you know where he is, sir!" said Jarvis.

"Hasn't he come up?" asked Harry.

"No, sir."

"Then I suppose he's still feeding in the restaurant downstairs."

Jarvis gave a little jump.

"In—in—the—the restaurant downstairs!" he ejaculated.

"Yes, that's where we left him."

"You—you left him in the restaurant downstairs!" repeated Jarvis, staring at the captain of the Greysfriars Remove. "When, pray?"

"About half an hour ago, I think."

"What do you mean?" snapped Jarvis. "If this is a silly schoolboy jest, Master Wharton, I must warn you that the matter may be serious."

Wharton stared at him.

"I don't know what you're driving at, Jarvis," he answered. "We left Bunter downstairs in the restaurant when we came up and passed you and the porters in the passage with that trunk."

Jarvis almost staggered. If this was true, what had happened? Somebody was in the trunk; its weight proved that!

"What on earth's the matter with you, Jarvis?" exclaimed Bob. "There's nothing unusual in Bunter scoffing an extra feed before he comes up to bed, is there?"

"The unusualness is not terrific!" remarked Hurrea Jamset Ram Singh, with a dusky grin. "It would be preposterously unusual if he did not."

Jarvis panted

"I tell you this is not a matter for foolish jesting!" he exclaimed shrilly. "My master is not in his room! I fear that some mischance may have occurred to him. You know as well as I do that he is not in the hotel restaurant."

Wharton fixed his eyes grimly on the valet.

"What do you think has happened to Bunter, Jarvis?" he asked, very quietly. "What rotten, treacherous tricks have you been playing this time?"

"He thinks that something has happened to him!" growled Johnny Bull. "That's clear enough! The rotter's been up to something!"

"Jolly clear!" said Frank Nugent. "But what? Bunter's all right. At least, he was half an hour ago. Nothing's happened to him, unless he's burst all over the Superbo restaurant."

Jarvis, his sleek hands trembling, stood looking at them, almost like a man in a dream. He was utterly confounded and taken aback. He had—or believed he had—seen Bunter carted away by Tiger Bronx in the big Saratoga! His brain seemed to be in a whirl.

"I—I tell you—" he panted. "I—I came here to tell you that—that my master is missing—and—and—"

"I say, you fellows!"

Jarvis jumped almost clear of the floor at that fat voice behind him.

He spun round like a humming-top and blinked at Billy Bunter.

The Greysfriars billionaire rolled in, quite unaware of the stunning effect of his sudden appearance on his valet!

Jarvis stood rooted, his face white as chalk, his eyes almost starting from his head! Somebody had been in the trunk! But not Bunter!

Obviously not Bunter, for here was Bunter!

The Famous Five exchanged glances. What it all meant they did not know; but they could see plainly enough that the valet had been plotting some treachery, and that it had somehow missed fire. His almost ghastly looks left no doubt on that point.

"I say, you fellows," rattled on Bunter, in happy unconsciousness—"I say, you were rather asses to cut supper! I can tell you it was prime! I'm rather sorry to be leaving here—the grub's so good. But I think we'd better be getting along—the hols don't last for ever, you know! Don't fancy that I'm afraid of that man Bronx! Still, I think—"

He broke off and blinked at Jarvis through his big spectacles. Even the obtuse Owl of the Remove noticed that there was something amiss with Jarvis.

"What's the matter, Jarvis?" he asked.

"Oh, nothing, sir!" articulated Jarvis. "A—a slight feeling of faintness, sir! Nothing!"

"You look as sick as a boiled owl!" said Bunter. "Look here, Jarvis, it's no good getting ill—I want you to get an extra bed fixed up in my room—go and tell the hotel people, and get it done. I say, you fellows, I want one of you to sleep in my room. I'm not nervous, you know—I hope I'm not the fellow to get nervous—still—"

"Who can stand Bunter's snore?" asked Bob.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

Jarvis almost tottered from the room to carry out the billionaire's orders.

Harry Wharton cast a very expressive glance after him.

"Right-ho, Bunter, I'll be the victim!" he said. "I've stood your snore in the dorm at Greysfriars, and I'll try to stand it here."

"Beast!" said Bunter, doubtless by way of thanks.

Tiger Bronx drove all night, and the dawn was breaking on a lonely road in a gorge of the Apennines, when the gangster halted his car at last and quitted the wheel.

The Tiger was tired; but he was grinning with satisfaction as he drew a key from his pocket and bent over the big trunk in the car.

"I'll say this is the opossum's eyelids!" Bronx remarked to space, as he fitted the key into the lock.

He threw up the heavy lid.

He grinned into the Saratoga.

Then the grin was suddenly wiped from his lean face as if by a duster. Almost in stupefaction he stared at the bound and gagged figure in the trunk—and met Ponsonby's terrified and furious eyes.

"Search me!" gasped the Tiger.

It was not Bunter the Billionaire! Not for a moment, till then, had the Tiger doubted that the fat billionaire was in the Saratoga. He had to doubt it now!

He cut the cords and removed the gag. He lifted the stiff and numbed Highcliffe fellow from the trunk. He glared at Ponsonby as if he could have bitten him.

Five minutes later the gangster was driving away in the car, leaving that unwanted prisoner to his own devices! It was hours later that the hapless dandy of Highcliffe got a lift in a country cart to a railway station, and was able to start for Rome.

Tiger Bronx was there long before him. And as he came in sight of the Eternal City, the gangster also came in sight of a giant aeroplane, rising gracefully to the skies, and recognised the Kingfisher.

And there were no words in the American language to express Mr. Bronx's feelings, as he realised that the Greysfriars party were off again, and Bunter the Billionaire far out of his reach.

THE END.

(Bunter the Billionaire has escaped again from the wily Chicago crook, but there's still more trouble for him in next week's great story: "PERIL IN THE AIR!" Don't miss it!)

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Creates beautiful designs from common things. Fascinating amusement. You have no conception what remarkably beautiful and ingenious effects are obtained by looking at odd pieces of rag, leaves, flowers, materials, coins, etc. as they move on the revolving plate. As you revolve the turntable the most beautiful and elaborate kaleidoscope pictures will appear, changing continuously. About 9 inches in height, with 4 inch turntable, strongly made. More than a toy, it is an educational instrument a child or a grown up will never get tired of. Postage 6d.

BLACK FACE JOKE

Just an ordinary looking piece of toilet soap, but when you try to wash your face becomes all black. Postage 2d.

SORE FINGER JOKE

You will never know how much sympathy and consolation it is possible to receive until you fool your friends with the "SORE FINGER JOKE." It is a compound bandage which slips on over the finger in an instant just as readily as a thimble, and may be just as readily taken off. It is coloured with a red colouring matter which has the appearance of blood, and when worn will elicit many sympathizing inquiries. Postage 2d.

BLACK EYE JOKE

Your victim cannot understand why everybody laughs when he takes the scoop away from his eye. He looks as though he has taken part in a prize fight, and rubbing makes it worse. Postage 2d.

BOYS! WRITE YOUR OWN CHEQUES

Own a cheque book of your own, one just like Dad's. Write out a big cheque and give your friends a surprise. Full size cheque book and also a reliable lever-filling Fountain Pen with non-rust nib, nickel clip for pocket. A cheque book and valuable pen, all for 6d. Postage 2d.

SNOW STORM TABLETS

These white tablets are very unusual and surprising. When placed on the burning end of a cigarette the air becomes saturated with a light fluffy substance, and the whole room has the appearance of a miniature snow storm. Quite harmless. Gives lots of fun. Several tablets in each packet. Two boxes of 12 each, postage 2d.

REMIT BY POSTAL ORDER OR ENGLISH STAMPS (NOT COINS). OVERSEAS ORDERS REMIT BY INTERNATIONAL MONEY-ORDER OBTAINABLE AT ALL POST OFFICES. WRITE NAME AND ADDRESS PLAINLY. YOU MAY ORDER WITH CONFIDENCE. OUR STORE IS AS CLOSE AS YOUR NEAREST PILLAR BOX.

ELLISDON & SON (F), 125, HIGH HOLBORN, LONDON, W.C.1. (Est. 1897).

SITUATION WANTED

Gentleman offers his services as Football Referee. No knowledge whatever of football, but wide experience of being bumped, kicked, scragged, and strewn about in little pieces.—Apply (with the "Herald's" compliments) HORACE J. COKER, Fifth Form.



THE NEW Greyfriars Herald



ARE YOU TOO SHORT?

If you are, come and have your legs stretched by an expert. Anyone who knows me will tell you I'm the best leg-puller in the Remove.—H. SKINNER, Study No. 11, Remove.

No. 103 (New Series),

EDITED BY HARRY WHARTON.

September 22nd, 1934.

THE CROONER OF ST. SAM'S By Dicky Nugent

"Thussness, my dear Lickham?"
"Why the garstly groans and mizzerable moans, sir?"
"Judging by the fearful din you were kicking up, I quite expected to find you on the floor with your life's blud oozing out of you. But you seem to be quite unhurt! Surely, sir, you were not doing it a-purpuss?"
"Of course I was doing it a-purpuss, you silly ass!"
"What the merry dickens—" gasped Mr. Lickham.
"Ah! It is you, Lickham!" cried Dr. Birchmall, ceasing his nerve-racking din and nodding cheerfully at the newcomer. "Take a pew, dear man!"
"With plezzure, sir!" said Mr. Lickham, advancing rather dewbiously from the doorway. "But—why this thussness, sir?"
Dr. Birchmall raised his eyebrows.

Linking arms with his subordinit, Dr. Birchmall piloted him along to the Junior Common-room, where Jack Jolly & Co. were giving a highly successful concert in aid of the Distressed Fags' Society.
Needless to say, the performers and audience alike were astounded when the Head marched in and calmly announced that he was going to sing jazz songs to the mewic of the comb-and-paper band. But there was a respectful cheer when the



"Put a sock in it! Have a hurt, sir!"
Dr. Birchmall carried on regardless, however, and the audience became more and more restless. Eventually, one of the more daring spirits threw a tomato at the crooner, then another threw an egg, while a third an ink-pellet. Soon he was thick with flying missiles, until the crooner of St. Sam's was simply compelled to stop.
From his raised position on the platform, Dr. Birchmall glared fiercely at the rebels.
"So this is the gratitude you show to your headmaster for condescending to croon to you, is it?" he cried witheringly. "Very well. Every boy prezrent will write me five hundred lines!"
"You're going, sir?" asked Jack Jolly hopefully.
"What ho!" said the Head emphatically. "I absolutely refuse to croon a minnit longer to such a boorish crowd. In fact, in view of the general lack of appreciation of my jeniuss as a jazz singer, I think I'll give up crooning altogether!"
Dr. Birchmall seemed to think the audience would be stunned by that statement. Grately to his shagrin, however, they only cheered instead. Pawing only to herd them a skorafal glarnse, Dr. Birchmall stamped out in a fine old rage, muttering into his beard.
One look at him was suffisant to show that the crooner of St. Sam's was a crooner no longer!
"Lickham," he raged as he erorled off, "it's no good trying to do ennything for these yung domuns. They don't appreciate art, that's what it is."
"Well," replied the Fourth-form master, "they made an artistick piteler of you!"

Richard Hillary on— HOME SWEET HOME

An Englishman's home is his castle and a schoolboy's study is his home. I share Study No. 5 with Kipps, the celebrated conjurer, and it reminds me very much of home for one very reason—there's no place like it!
No study in the Remove passage is more cosy than our little den. There's a desk, a locker, a table and easy-chairs—everything for our comfort and convenience, in fact.
The great charm about it is its unexpectedness. When you open the desk to find



writing materials you find white rabbits instead. When

you go to the locker for a clean handkerchief half a dozen tame mice jump out and start scampering cheerfully around the room. When you sit down on one of the easy-chairs a brace of performing pigeons flutter away from it, registering extreme annoyance. When you look under the table to see what's getting in the way of your feet you see a clockwork skeleton grinning up at you.
Of course, it's a little disconcerting sometimes, this unexpectedness. If you sit in a chair it is liable to turn into a cabinet and imprison you as securely as a cell at Dartmoor. Your handkerchiefs are

always liable to turn into the flags of all nations. Your watch is always liable to disappear temporarily, and turn up afterwards at the back of your neck.
But these little surprises are a mere nothing. They make no real difference to the comfort and homeliness of Study No. 5. Study No. 5 is the goods, believe me, chaps, and Kipps is one of the best fellows in the world! In fact, it's only because I don't like to keep such a good study-mate to myself that I'm asking now:
WOULD ANYONE LIKE TO SWOP STUDIES WITH ME?

Our Footer Expert Says— HOBBIES GO WELL WITH FOOTER

Fellows sometimes tell me they're so busy with other hobbies that they don't have much time for footer. This is quite a mistake. Other hobbies combine very well with footer.
Stamp-collecting, for instance, is easy when you're playing a team like the Courtfield Savages. The Savages spend half their time jumping on their opponents' feet. By the time you're half-way through the game you've collected as many stamps as you'd collect in a week off the footer field!
Again, there's no need to join a debating society if you have a chap like Stewart, of the Shell, as referee. Stewart's decisions are so extraordinary that most of the time is spent arguing with him about them. A chap whose hobby is debating can't do better than take up footer when Stewart is ref!
As for the chap who likes to tell funny stories, there's unlimited scope when he's in a team playing against Coker. At the end of the afternoon he'll have enough funny stories to keep his pals in fits for weeks!
It's wonderful, when you come to

think about it, how well hobbies really do combine with footer. For instance, you might think that the fellow who goes in for reading books couldn't possibly play footer at the same time. Yet, in some cases, it's easy.
If he happens to be goalkeeper for the Remove when they are playing the Upper Fourth, he can rely on ninety minutes of uninterrupted peace in which he can read his book without once looking up!
So don't be put off because you happen to have other hobbies, you men. Carry on with your hobbies—and play footer at the same time!

SITUATION VACANT.

Black Eye Inspector wanted.—Duties consist of inquiring into all black eyes in the school and reporting on the cause thereof to the Prefects' Black Eye Committee. Salary, 3d. per week and an occasional late pass. Send full parties, of experience to G. WINGATE, c/o GREYFRIARS HERALD.

SOLEMN WARNING

Any outsiders who use Study No. 14 as a headquarters for their shady stunts next Term are going to be bashed!—JOHNNY BULL, c/o GREYFRIARS HERALD.

THE SPARTAN CURE By H. Vernon-Smith

A genius named Professor Punk has been telling the newspapers that schoolboys catch cold so easily in the autumn because there's too much luxury at the modern Public school. Now, there's a lot to be said for this point of view. It's my own firm opinion that a reduction in the standard of luxury at Greyfriars would do us all a lot of good.
To begin with, I think we might well abolish the sprung-cushioned armchairs in which we recline in class. They make our muscles far too flabby!
The ten-course dinners which at present ruin our digestions could easily be replaced by simpler meals, and English cooking could be substituted for the rich Continental style at present favoured. Our cigar rations, too, would stand a slight reduction, I fancy.
The footmen and page-boys who are continually at our beck and call should be reserved for the more tiring jobs like taking off our shoes, while the fleet of fast cars used to take us to the pictures whenever we feel like it should give place to a few simple motor-coaches.
We could surely do without the gold-plated, diamond-studded beds provided nowadays in the Remove dormitory. Plain wooden ones with, of course, Slumber-sound Super-sprung Mattresses, would suit us equally well.
I'm dashed certain that the ice-cream soda fountain attached to every study could be done away with, too, and the powerful wireless and television sets at least reduced in number without the slightest inconvenience to any of us.
Another thing: why not cut out the scented bath crystals in the swimming bath water, and do away with the new heating apparatus which supplies warm air to the playing fields during footer matches on cold, wintry days? We shouldn't miss either of these luxuries.
Yes, dear readers, the more I think about it the more convinced I become that the Spartan Cure is the only way out for us.
Down with luxury!
(New kids are advised not to take Smith's too seriously. He breaks out like this now and again!—Ed.)

Inky's Birthday Guide This Week: Alonzo Todd

From the starful horoscope of Alonzo Todd it is clearly evident that he is a singular sahib. Perhaps it is a goodful thing that he is singular. Alonzo Todd in the plural would surely send us all brainfully potty!
One of the things that stands out protrudably is that the esteemed and idiotic 'Lonzy is unusually fond of vegetables. But please don't mistakefully misunderstand me. 'Lonzy's is not the fondness of those who revel in plentiful heaps of beans and potatoes. Contrarily, he carefully eats beans and potatoes for fear that the hurtfulness to these esteemed vegetables should be terrific. Hence his attachment to honoured and fat-headed books like "The Story of a Potato."
Softfulness is the centreful feature of the

esteemed and ludicrous 'Lonzy. He is softful in speech, softful in action, softful in heart, and above-allfully, soft in brain!
The message of the stars is that a great book of words moves walkfully when 'Lonzy takes a stroll. What this meant I had no wheezeful idea at first, but the honoured and ridiculous Franky Nugent pointed out to me showfully the esteemed explanation.
The fact is that the notable 'Lonzy is himself a walking dictionary!
This horoscope indicates a happy future. Ere long 'Lonzy will journey across the seas with trousers for esteemed savages. This trip will please him noendfully.
Only one thing must he beware of—a boiling-pot of great sizefulness, such as cannibals use for cooking white men in.
When you see that pot, my esteemed and nonsensical Alonzo Todd, a quickful run for safety will be the esteemed and proper caper!

Head stood up on the platform to start his recital; the juniors were willing to be indulgent to their revered and respected Head.
Once he started crooning, however, they were quickly reminded that there are limits to indulgence. The Head's voice was something that had to be herd to be believed. Every note he sang was in the wrong key, apart from which the thing he called a voice was like a foghorn and a squeaky tin-whistle rolled into one!
For a time the audience endured it. Then a mermer of protest began to arise. "Chuck it, sir!"

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GREYFRIARS FACTS WHILE YOU WAIT!

WOULD YOU BELIEVE IT?

A Mass Meeting in favour of Free Speech will be held in the Rag on the first Monday of new term, at 7.45 p.m., when P. Bolsover, Esq., will speak on the right of all schoolboys to say just what they jolly well like. Interrupters and hecklers will be smashed to pulp!



HOPSCOTCH!

Enthusiasts are reminded that entries for this year's Hopscotch Tournament must be posted at once. The secretary asked us to mention the date when the first heats will be hopped off, but we didn't quite catch what he said. If it's any help to you, it sounded rather like October the Umpteenth.

"Between the sticks," S. Q. I. Field leaps about like a kangaroo from his native Australia. It takes a very high shot to beat "Squiff." When Temple, of the Upper Fourth, tried a high one, "Squiff" coolly tipped the ball over the bar!

When Harold Skinner hinted that Monty Newland's father was a moneylender, Newland hit out first and then explained that his father was a respectable Jewish financier. Skinner had to agree that Newland's argument was "unstoppable"!

Mr. "Larry" Lascelles, the popular Maths master, finds private amusement in solving problems which would give any Removite a headache. He is always ready to help even a duffer like Bunter with his class work, however.

Old Tozer, the Friardale policeman, dislikes footer intensely. Perhaps this is explained by the fact that a football propelled by Dicky Nugent, from the school gates, knocked Tozer's helmet off! Tozer still laments that he didn't see who did it!
A gypsy fortune-teller told Bunter to "watch his step"—but Billy didn't think she meant the banana skin Bolsover dropped, and over which he went whizzing. The "gipsy's warning" came true—and pretty "slippy," too!
The crash still echoes!
Hurree Singh, the Nabob of Bhanipur, has "taken" to English football with a vengeance! At outside-right he is full of guile, and his passing is a model of accuracy. His "centre" enabled Wharton to net the winning goal against Courtfield!