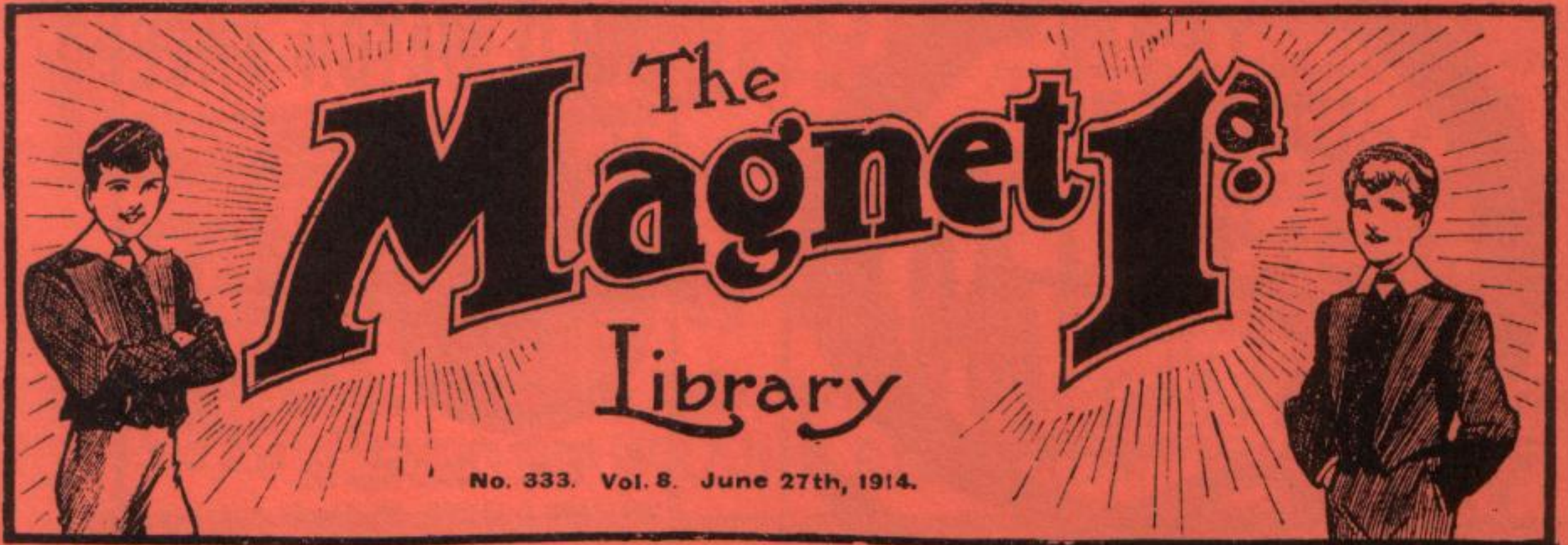


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THE DARK HORSE!

A Grand, Long, Complete Tale of Harry Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars.
By FRANK RICHARDS.



Wally Bunter leant out of the carriage window, and shook hands with his cousin Billy. "Good-bye, and good luck!" grinned Billy Bunter. And as the train steamed out of the station, Billy Bunter turned away, to sun himself on the sands at Margate, while his cousin was on his way to Greyfriars! (See Chapter 4.)

THE FIRST CHAPTER. Bunter is Detained!

THE door of the Remove Form-room at Greyfriars opened, and a cheery crowd of juniors swarmed out.
Billy Bunter, the fattest junior at Greyfriars, was the first out of the Form-room that morning. As a rule, Bunter's movements were slow; he had a great deal of weight to carry. But on this particular morning he displayed unusual activity. He made a rush for the letter-rack, and blinked anxiously over the letters there through his big spectacles. And Bob Cherry chirped out cheerfully:
"Expecting a postal-order, Bunt?"
Billy Bunter was in a perpetual state of expecting a postal-

order. Bunter blinked round at him as he took down a letter from the rack.
"As a matter of fact, I'm expecting several postal-orders," he replied loftily. "But they haven't come, owing to some delay in the post—"
"As per usual!" grinned Bob.
"But this letter is from my cousin," said Bunter. "He's having a ripping time at Margate. I'm going over to see him this afternoon."
"Come on, you chaps!" said Harry Wharton. "We've got to play the Fourth this afternoon, and there's time for a little practice at the nets before dinner."
"I say, you fellows, hold on a minute!" said Bunter, opening his letter by the simple process of digging his fat thumb

into the envelope. "I've got something rather important to say to you."

"Buck up, then!" said Harry Wharton tersely.

"Wait a minute till I've looked at my letter."

The Famous Five paused good-naturedly, but a little impatiently. Billy Bunter glanced over the letter, and gave a grunt of satisfaction.

"It's all right!" he remarked.

"What's all right?" asked Wharton. "Buck up! We want to get down to the cricket."

"My cousin's at Margate—"

"Blessed if I've ever heard of your cousin!" said Bob Cherry. "I didn't know there were any more at home like you."

"One of your titled relations—what?" chuckled Johnny Bull.

"Ahem! No; one of my poor relations," said Bunter. "We don't take much notice of that branch of the family as a rule. But now my Cousin Walter is at Margate he wants me to come over for the afternoon. I dare say he'll feel rather proud of going about with a public school chap, you know. I don't mind taking notice of him sometimes, when—"

"When he's on a holiday at the seaside?" suggested Bob Cherry. "And there's something to be got out of him—what?"

Bunter snorted.

"Of course, he'll have to stand the exes," he said. "He's only a chap in an office, you know, having his blessed annual holiday. Not much class. Still, he isn't a bad chap; he's my age, you know, and very like me—"

"Then he must be a bute!" said Bob. "I thought you were the one and only!"

"Very like me, only he doesn't wear glasses," said Bunter. "Rather good at games; though, of course, not such a cricketer as I am—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, come on!" said Frank Nugent. "We can't stay here till dinner hearing about Bunter's blessed relations!"

"Hold on a minute!" exclaimed Bunter hastily. "You see, I've got to get over to Margate this afternoon, or my cousin will be disappointed. I don't like to disappoint him—he's a good chap, though, of course, not my class. Only there's a difficulty in the way. I've been disappointed about a postal-order—"

"Same old postal-order!" groaned Bob.

"I suppose you chaps wouldn't mind lending me a half-sov—"

"Something wrong with your supposer, then," grunted Johnny Bull. "I've got no half-sovs. to chuck away!"

"Of course, I shall settle immediately my postal-order comes—"

"Rats!"

"It would be rotten to disappoint my cousin. Seeing me is the only chance he has of mixing with really decent people—"

"My hat! He must mix with an awfully fishy lot, and no mistake, if you're the decenter!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull! You see, it's an act of kindness on my part to go and see him; and, of course, he will take me round for the afternoon, and stand the exes. I should have plenty of money, only Quelchy's swindled me—"

"What?"

Mr. Quelch was the Form-master of the Remove, and Bunter's statement was, therefore, surprising.

"He has!" said Bunter. "It's sickening! I should never have thought it of Quelch! Just because I owe Mrs. Mimble an account at the tuckshop—a paltry fifteen-and-six—Quelchy has stopped my allowance until it is paid. Of course, he has no right to interfere with my allowance. I've only owed the

money for a term and a half, too. But Quelchy has ordered my allowance to be paid over to Mrs. Mimble as fast as it comes till the account is squared. What do you think of that?"

"Quite right!" said Harry Wharton.

"Oh, really—"

"The rightfulness is terrific," remarked Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh. "It is the esteemed Bunter who is inclined to act swindlefully."

"Oh, really, Inky—"

"Come on!" said Wharton. "'Nuff said!"

"I say, you fellows, hold on! I simply must have a half-sov., or I can't get to Margate. It's no good asking Todd, he never will lend me money; and Alonzo never has any; and Dutton is a mean beast. My own study never back me up. Look here, I simply must have half-a-quiv. If Quelchy hadn't swindled me—"

"Shut up, you ass!"

"Suppose he should hear you, you fat duffer!" exclaimed Harry Wharton angrily.

"I don't care!" snapped Bunter. "I say that Quelchy has swindled me out of my allowance, and he's a beast—"

A sudden change came over the faces of the Famous Five. Mr. Quelch had emerged from the Form-room, and was coming down the passage; and the start he gave showed that he had heard Bunter's words.

The juniors made almost frantic signs to Bunter to shut up, but the short-sighted Owl of the Remove did not observe them. He had his back towards Mr. Quelch, and did not observe him either. So he went on loudly:

"Stopping my allowance is a swindle—and I'd say so to Quelchy himself! It's utter rot, I say! Beastly meanness! I've a jolly good mind to complain to the Head! I'm fed up with Quelchy, anyway! I think it's time the Head sacked him!"

The frozen horror in the faces of Harry Wharton & Co. dawned upon Bunter at last. He realised that they were looking past him at something, and he turned his head.

Then he jumped.

Mr. Quelch stood rooted to the floor, looking at him with eyes that seemed like electric sparks to the startled and terrified Bunter.

"Oh, crumbs!" gasped Bunter, in utter dismay.

Mr. Quelch found his voice:

"Bunter!"

"Ye-e-e-s, sir?" moaned Bunter.

"What were you saying?"

"N-n-nothing, sir!" stammered Bunter. "I—I mean, I—I was saying, sir, that—that you did quite right in stopping my allowance, sir—and—"

"Don't tell falsehoods, Bunter!"

"C-c-certainly not, sir! I—I wouldn't think of such a thing! I'm quite incapable of it, sir! I—I—I—"

"You impertinent young rascal!" said Mr. Quelch, breathing hard. "How dare you allude to your Form-master in such terms!"

"I—I didn't—I wasn't—I—"

"Follow me to my study, Bunter! I shall cane you—"

"Grooo!"

"And you will be detained for the afternoon!"

"Ow!"

"Follow me at once!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"Oh, dear!"

"Poor old Bunter!" murmured Bob Cherry, as the fat junior went limply into the study after the angry Form-master. "It serves him jolly well right for speaking of Quelchy like that! His little trip to Margate is all U-P now."

There was a sound of a swishing cane from the study, and wild howls of anguish from Billy Bunter. Mr. Quelch was very angry, and Bunter was discovering it. After the swishing and the howling, the Form-master's angry voice was heard again.

"You will go to the Form-room immediately after dinner, Bunter. You will remain there until tea-time, and write out Virgil!"

"I—I—I can't, sir! I—I've got to go to Margate—"

"If you leave the Form-room, Bunter," said Mr. Quelch, in a concentrated voice—"if you dare to neglect my orders—I shall report your conduct to the Head, and you will be flogged!"

"Oh! Ow!"

"I am going out this afternoon, but I shall request a prefect to keep you under observation. Now go!"

"Oh dear! I—I say, sir—"

"Go!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

And Bunter almost jumped out of the study.

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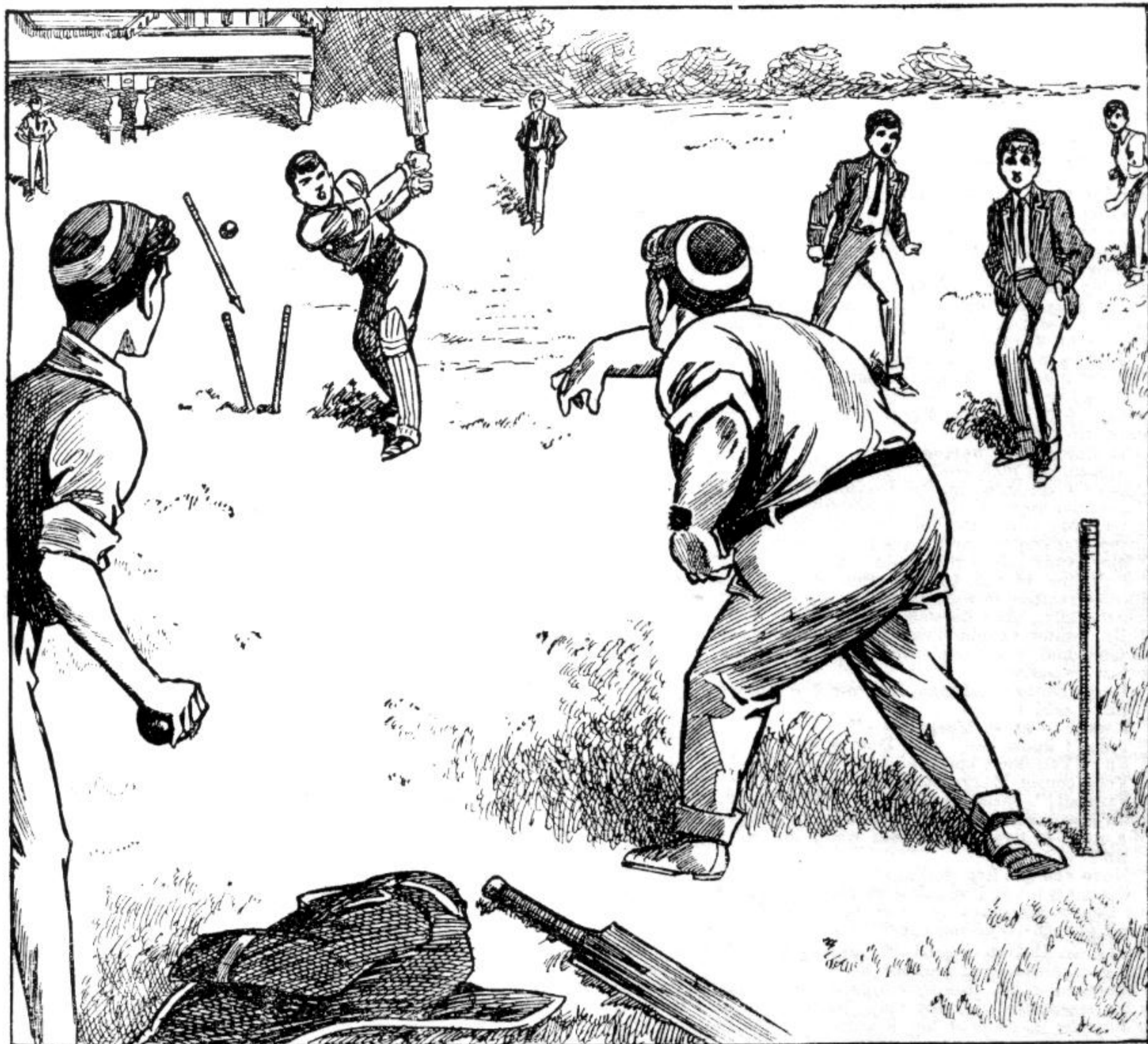
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"Play!" shouted Dabney. Whiz! The ball came down from Bunter's fat hand, and Temple swiped at it—missed it—and almost fell down in surprise. His middle stump was whipped right out of the ground. "My hat!" ejaculated Temple. (See Chapter 10.)

THE SECOND CHAPTER. Bunter Bolts!

THERE was one decidedly glum face at the Remove table at dinner-time.

It was William George Bunter's.

Most of the Remove fellows were looking in high feather. It was a half-holiday, and a glorious summer afternoon; and what more could they want? The Remove Eleven were to play in a Form match. Lord Mauleverer and some of his friends were going out on an excursion in a motor-car. Alonzo Todd had a new book dealing with the mission work in the Gooby-Booby Islands. Skinner and Snoop and several other black sheep were going to play billiards at a wayside inn at a safe distance from Greyfriars. Nearly all the Remove, in fact, had their plans for the afternoon. Billy Bunter alone was out of it—very much out of it. His scheme for the afternoon was completely knocked on the head. He was detained.

It was really too bad. At sunny and merry Margate, his cousin was ready for him, to take him out for the afternoon and pay all his expenses—that being a sine qua non where William George Bunter was concerned. And now he was detained. But for that unfortunate circumstance, he could have raised somehow the cash necessary for his ticket. He did

not even require a return ticket; he depended upon his abilities as a practised borrower to extract the return fare from his cousin.

And if he broke detention, he was to be flogged.

There was no doubt about that; Mr. Quelch was a man of his word. Bunter's remarks concerning him had made him very angry indeed. If Bunter added to his offence by directly disobeying his commands, the "chopper" would come down with a vengeance. And Bunter simply shuddered at the bare thought of a flogging. A caning doubled him up—he could never bear pain. But a flogging—

Bunter's face was very clouded as the juniors left the dining-hall after dinner. Bob Cherry clapped him kindly on the shoulder.

"Cheer up, Bunty! You shall come and feed with us after your detention." Which was really very kind of Bob, for Bunter was an object of his aversion.

Bunter snorted.

"I'm jolly well not going to be detained!" he growled.

"Better take care," said Bob. "I saw Quelchy speaking to Wingate and Loder and Walker. If you break bounds, he will know, as safe as houses. And he means it about the flogging."

"I don't care!"

"Don't be a young ass!" said Harry Wharton. "Quelchy

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is in deadly earnest. You have made him awfully ratty—and no wonder."

"I'm jolly well going to Margate!" said Bunter obstinately. "Will you fellows lend me the fare?"

"No fear! We're not going to help you get into trouble!"

"Oh, really—"

"Get into the Form-room, and don't play the giddy goat," advised Vernon-Smith.

"I say, Hazel, lend me half a quid—"

"Tell me where to find one," said Hazeldene, laughing.

"Smithy, old man, you might—"

"Or I mightn't," grinned Vernon-Smith. "In this case, I mightn't! I advise you to do your detention, and don't be an ass."

And the Bounder of Greyfriars walked out with Harry Wharton & Co. Peter and Alonzo Todd, and Tom Dutton, Bunter's study-mates in No. 7, gave him the same advice. But Billy Bunter seemed to be in a truculent mood.

"I'm jolly well not going to do the detention," he said flatly. "I've been thinking it over, and I've got an idea. I sha'n't be flogged."

"Quelchy was in dead earnest," said Peter Todd.

"Blow Quelchy! Lend me half-a-quid—"

"Good-bye!" said Peter airily. "I'm going down to the cricket. Get into the Form-room, and give my kindest regards to Virgil."

And Peter Todd walked away.

"Alonzo, old man—"

Alonzo Todd shook his head seriously at Bunter.

"I cannot approve of your disobeying your master's orders. Bunter. My Uncle Benjamin has always impressed upon me to obey and respect my kind teachers—"

"Blow your Uncle Benjamin! Look here, 'Lonzy—"

"I decline to talk to you, Bunter, if you allude to my respected relative in such extremely disrespectful terms," said Alonzo coldly. And he walked away.

Billy Bunter caught Tom Dutton by the sleeve. Dutton was deaf, and it was not easy to explain to him; but he was the last resource.

"I say, Dutton, old man, lend me five bob—"

"Eh?" said Dutton.

"I want to go to Margate—"

"I don't know her," said Dutton.

"Eh? You don't know whom?"

"Your cousin Margaret."

"Fathead!" shrieked Bunter. "Who's talking about a Cousin Margaret? I say I want to go to Margate! Lend me half-a-quid—or five bob—or four would do—"

"Eh?"

"Have you got five shillings?"

"Certainly; but I'm going to play cricket. I don't know your Cousin Margaret, but I should be willing, only you see I can't get off—Wharton expects me."

And Tom Dutton cleared off, leaving Billy Bunter with a lurking suspicion that perhaps he was not quite so deaf as he appeared to be. Bunter's eyes gleamed with rage behind his big spectacles. Having made up his mind to risk breaking bounds, in spite of his detention, it was too bad to be stopped by want of a small amount of ready cash. At that moment Billy Bunter sympathised keenly with Brutus's view of those who "lock such rascal counters from their friends." The want of a few rascal counters was to keep him away from the untold joys of merry Margate.

It was time for him to get into the Form-room and start on Virgil, too. Never had the classic poetry of that great man appealed to Bunter less. He would have given the whole of the *Æneid*, with the *Georgics* thrown in, for a third-class ticket to Margate. He was afraid every moment now of being spotted by Mr. Quelch, so he could not follow the crowd of fellows who had gone down to the cricket ground, in search of a likely lender.

A fat fag, very much like Bunter—indeed, a second edition of William George on a smaller scale—came along the passage, and Bunter swooped upon him. It was his minor, Sammy Bunter, of the Second Form.

"Just the chap I want to see," exclaimed Bunter, with more than brotherly affection.

Sammy blinked at him suspiciously through his glasses.

"I haven't got anything to lend," he said. Evidently he knew his major.

"It's a matter of five bob," said Billy Bunter.

"Might as well be five quid," said Sammy. "I was going to ask you if you could lend me tuppence!"

Bunter grunted.

"Oh, clear off, you rotten fag; you're always trying to screw a loan out of somebody," he said, in disgust.

"Runs in the family," said Sammy cheerfully, as he rolled away.

Loder of the Sixth came down the passage, and beckoned to Bunter.

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"You're detained," he said. "Mr. Quelch has asked me to see that you don't leave the Form-room this afternoon. Buzz off. I've got to see you started."

"I say, Loder—"

"Get a move on; I've no time to waste!" said the bully of the Sixth. "Now then, hop it!"

"Oh, really, Loder—ow—ow—leggo my car!" wailed Bunter.

Loder did not let go his ear. Keeping a tight grip on that fat appendage, he marched Billy Bunter to the Remove Form-room, slewed him in, and plumped him down at a desk. Bunter sat glowering, and rubbing his crimson ear.

"Ow!" he groaned. "Ow! Beast! Yow!"

"I shall look in presently, and if you're not here grinding Virgil, I shall report you to Mr. Quelch," said Loder.

"Yow-ow!"

The prefect departed, and Bunter shook a pair of fat fists after him as the door closed. He did not remain at his desk. He clambered to the Form-room window, and looked out disconsolately into the Close. In the distance, past the elms, he could see the cricket-ground. On Little Side, Harry Warton & Co. were already beginning their match with Temple, Dabney & Co. of the Upper Fourth. On Big Side, the First Eleven, captained by Wingate, were about to play a visiting team from Redclyffe. Fellows were strolling about the Close, or chatting outside the school shop. Bunter caught sight of the figure of Mr. Quelch, crossing towards the gates; and his fat fist was shaken again. Mr. Quelch had gone out, and the coast was clear. Bunter had no doubt about being able to dodge the prefects; they were too busy to look after him. Loder would content himself with glancing into the room presently, to report to Mr. Quelch if Bunter had gone out. But it was useless to dodge the prefects unless he could raise the fare to Margate.

There was a snort of a motor-car outside the gates, and Bunter, looking down from the window, saw Lord Mauleverer and Penfold and Mark Linley come out of the School House. They were going out in the car. The sight of Lord Mauleverer, the dandy of the Remove, raised Bunter's hopes. He dashed out of the Form-room, scudded across the Close after the schoolboy millionaire, and caught him as he reached the gates.

"I say, Mauly, old man—" he panted.

"No room in the car!" said Lord Mauleverer blandly.

"Sorry!"

"Rats! I don't want to come in the car!"

"Oh, good!" said Lord Mauleverer, much relieved. "All serene! Good-bye!"

"I'm detained for the afternoon," said Bunter.

"Yaas. Sorry!"

"Under the circumstances, you might lend a chap five bob," said Bunter. "I'll settle out of my postal-order—when it comes."

Lord Mauleverer did not exactly see the connection between Bunter's detention, and lending him five bob; but he had plenty of money, and he was good-nature itself. He extracted the required sum from his pocket.

"Thanks!" said Bunter. "I—ahem!—I meant to say ten shillings. You see, that's the exact amount of the postal-order I'm expecting, and—"

"Coming!" said Lord Mauleverer, and he followed Linley and Penfold.

"I say, Mauly—"

"Yaas; good-bye!"

And Lord Mauleverer stepped into the car, and the three juniors buzzed off, leaving Billy Bunter blinking after them.

"Beast!" murmured Bunter. That was the full extent of Bunter's gratitude for the loan. "I can get to Margate now, anyway."

Billy Bunter dodged into the house for his straw hat, and dodged out again. In a few minutes more he was outside the gates, and hurrying in the direction of Courtfield as fast as his fat little legs would carry him.

An hour later Loder of the Sixth glanced carelessly into the Remove Form-room, to make sure that Bunter was still there. The Owl of the Remove was conspicuous by his absence.

"Bolted, by Jove!" said Loder, in surprise; and he made a note of it, to report to Mr. Quelch when the Remove-master came in.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

In Deadly Peril!

HARRY WHARTON glanced up at the old clock-tower as he came off the pitch. He was "not out" at the end of the Remove innings.

"Half-past three!" he remarked. "Lots of time!"

"Heaps!" said Bob Cherry. "The Fourth won't get a hundred."

"The heapfulness is terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh; "and we shall also have a heapfulness of time to get over to Cliff House to tea, my esteemed chums."

"That's what I was thinking of."

The Form match was going strong—for the Remove. Two of Wharton's best players—Mark Linley and Penfold—had gone out with Lord Mauleverer; but Tom Dutton and Hazeldene filled their places well. The Upper Fourth were not "in it." Temple, Dabney & Co. prided themselves upon their cricket. They prided themselves, as a matter of fact, upon a good many things; but particularly upon their cricket. But it was very seldom that they were able to beat the Remove.

"All over bar shouting!" yawned Peter Todd.

"Rats!" said Temple, the captain of the Fourth. "We only want a hundred and one to win, and there's lots of time to do it in."

"Lots of time, if that's all that was needed," grinned Frank Nugent.

"You'll jolly well see what you'll see," said Temple darkly.

And the Remove cricketers grinned. They were quite prepared to see what they would see. It was a single-innings match. Temple opened the Fourth Form innings, with Dabney. They went to the wickets with a flourish.

Harry Wharton tossed the ball to Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. The dusky junior took it with a grin.

"Hat trick!" said Wharton, as if there was no doubt about the dusky youth being able to supply the required article.

"I will do my honourable and ludicrous best!" murmured the Nabob of Bharipur.

And Inky went on to bowl.

Temple received the first over; or, rather, he received the first ball of the first over—he did not "live" longer than that. His bat swept the empty air, and there was a clack; and he looked down in dismay at the wicket. The middle stump was out of the ground, and the wicket had a toothless look.

"How's that?" chirruped the Remove.

And Coker of the Fifth, who had kindly condescended to umpire, grinned and said:

"Out!"

Fry came in, as Temple disconsolately carried out his unused bat. Fry remained for just one ball; the middle stump again performing an acrobatic feat. And Fry went bootless home; or, at least, runless. Then Scott came in, and Scott slogged at a ball which was not there, and his off-stump reclined on the ground. Then the Remove roared.

"The hat-trick! Hurrah!"

"Good old Inky!"

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh smiled. He was a bowler of renown in the Lower School at Greyfriars, and the Fourth Form batsmen could not stand against him. Temple, Dabney & Co. were looking very blue. This was even worse than they had expected.

"Blessed if I think we shall ever beat those Remove beasts!" Temple growled. "They have the deuce's own luck."

"Oh, rather!" growled Dabney.

"Always seem to have a lot of flukes in their favour," Fry remarked. "You saw how my wicket went!"

"Was that a fluke?" growled Temple.

"Yes, it was," said Fry warmly. "What did you think it was?"

Temple grunted, and did not reply to the question. He had thought that it was good bowling and bad batting, but he did not say so.

"Well caught!" shouted the Removites, as Harry Wharton's hand closed on the ball, after three runs had been taken.

"Four down for three!" grunted Temple. "Pretty prospect!"

And the Fourth Form batsmen, after that, went in like lambs to the slaughter.

It was the dearest wish of Temple's heart to give the Lower Fourth a sound licking on the cricket-field; but it seemed that his dearest wish was never to be realised. If it was a succession of "flukes" that favoured the Remove, certainly their luck was phenomenal—those "flukes" never failed them. And when the last Fourth Form wicket went down for a total of forty-six runs, the Removites smiled.

Temple, Dabney & Co. walked off the ground frowning.

Harry Wharton & Co. left it smiling.

"Poor old Temple!" grinned Bob Cherry. "Those chaps think they can play cricket, you know. Queer fancies chaps have sometimes, don't they?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Wharton looked at his watch.

"It's only taken an hour," he remarked. "Plenty of time to change, and we can have a stroll round by the cliffs going to Cliff House."

"Right-ho!"

The Famous Five and Hazeldene were going to Cliff House School to tea. Hazeldene's sister Marjorie was hostess on the

EVERY
MONDAY,

The "Magnet"
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ONE
PENNY.

occasion. The Form match had ended unexpectedly early, owing to the collapse of the Fourth.

"No good getting there too early," Hazeldene remarked. "Marjorie and Clara are out for a drive this afternoon, and they won't be in much before tea-time. We can take it easy."

The chums of the Remove changed from their flannels, and strolled out of the school gates in the golden afternoon. They were in great spirits after their easy victory over the Fourth Form.

"Bunter's gone out," Bob Cherry remarked. "I looked in the Form-room. I was going to stand him a consolation feed in the study; but he's bolted."

Harry Wharton looked grave.

"The fat duffer!" he said. "He'll be flogged, as sure as a gun. Quelchy won't let him off."

"I wonder he had the nerve," said Bob, puzzled. "It isn't like Bunter to run risks like that. But he'll get it in the neck, as safe as houses."

"The neckfulness will be terrific," agreed Hurree Singh. "It is not usual for Bunter to act so pluckfully."

The Famous Five could not help feeling puzzled. However much Bunter wanted to have an afternoon at Margate, it was extraordinary that he should "bolt" with the certainty of being rewarded with a flogging. Billy Bunter was far from being of the stuff of which heroes are made; and more courageous fellows than the Owl of the Remove might have hesitated to face such consequences.

The juniors followed the lane down to the sea, and turned upon the cliff-path. Wide and blue the bay stretched before their eyes as they gained the top of the cliffs, and wide and blue beyond it lay the open sea, dotted with white sails. Looking inland from the cliffs, they could see the long, white road from Courtfield to the fishing-village of Pegg.

They paused on the high rocks, and looked away over the green countryside, and the long, dusty road. Bob Cherry uttered a sudden exclamation.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

"What is it?"

"Look!"

Bob raised his hand to point. A vehicle had come in sight on the white road; so far away that they could not recognise who was in it, though they dimly made out two figures in the open trap. The vehicle was dashing along the road at a terrific speed.

"The duffers!" said Hazeldene. "They'll have an accident if they're not careful!"

"The horse is running away," said Bob.

"By Jove! So it is!"

The juniors gazed breathlessly at the distant lower road. In the still, clear air, the faint tattoo of swift hoofbeats came to their ears from afar. They were too far away to think of rendering assistance; between them and the nearest point of the road lay three hundred yards of precipitous rocks. Long before they could have reached the lower road, the runaway trap would have come whirling past. They gazed at it, spell-bound. It was coming rapidly nearer, in a couple of minutes to pass beyond their vision, shut off by the further cliffs.

"They're women in the trap. No, girls!" muttered Bob Cherry, his face blanching.

Hazeldene uttered a hoarse cry.

"Marjorie!"

"What!"

"It's my sister!"

"Good heavens! Marjorie and Clara!"

The juniors' faces were white as death now.

Clatter, clatter, clatter!

The wild hoof-beats rang nearer and nearer. The horse was utterly out of control. They could make out now Clara Trevlyn holding the reins, dragging on them with all her strength, but in vain. Marjorie Hazeldene was sitting beside her, her face white and set. The trap rocked as it sped, from the terrific speed. At any moment it might have been overturned, or dashed against one of the trees by the wayside. And the juniors groaned as they remembered that there was an abrupt turn in the road just ahead, and there it was almost certain that the runaway would come to grief. As in a horrible vision they seemed to see the two girls tossed from the trap, to fall crushed—perhaps under the wheels, perhaps under the lashing hoofs of the runaway.

And they could not aid. They knew they could not; but they dashed recklessly down the cliff towards the road, falling, stumbling, but rising to dash on again. But they knew they would be too late. The runaway trap would pass the bend long before they could reach it. It was passing now. In a moment more it would vanish from sight—but in that moment a figure suddenly leaped from the roadside, and a pair of hands grasped at the horse's head.

The juniors stopped, their hearts thumping.

NEXT
MONDAY—

"THE SHADOW OF THE PAST!"

A Splendid Complete Tale of the
Chums of Greyfriars. Order Early!

Whoever it was that had leaped at the head of the runaway horse was taking his life in his hands. If he had missed his grasp, he would have fallen under the lashing hoofs, under the swiftly-rolling wheels—to death! But he had not missed his grasp. He was hanging to the reins now, dragged on by the rush of the horse; and the staring eyes of the juniors noted a heavy, fat form in etons—a form that seemed familiar, and whose weight told quickly upon the horse, dragging the runaway's head low. Just as it was passing the bend, the trap slowed down, and the juniors panted with relief. The runaway was stopped.

"They're saved!" panted Bob Cherry. "But—but did you see him? Did you see him?"

"Yes. It was——"

"Bunter!"

The horse, slowed down but still moving, had passed the bend, and the trap was out of sight; but the juniors knew that all was safe, unless the brave rescuer himself had been injured. They scrambled down to the road like fellows in a dream. It seemed like a dream—incredible, impossible—but yet it was true; for in that fat form clinging to the horse's head, as it whisked out of sight, they had recognised Bunter!

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

A Complete Change!

"HERE you are, Billy!"

Billy Bunter stepped from the train on to the crowded platform in the station at Margate, and a youth of his own age and size came hurrying forward to meet him.

Bunter blinked at him through his spectacles.

"Here I am, Wally," he said, as they shook hands—fat hands that matched very well.

Wally Bunter, Billy's cousin, was clad in light clothes, with a straw hat on the back of his head. He did not wear glasses, and his face, though very fat, was much healthier in hue than Billy's. Otherwise, the two cousins were exactly alike. Had Wally Bunter been in etons, and adorned with a pair of large spectacles, it would have been impossible to distinguish him from the great William George. Seen together, perhaps, Wally Bunter's healthier look would have been noticed, but that was all.

"Jolly glad you were able to come!" said Bunter's cousin, in a hearty and cordial manner. "This way out. Let's get on the front."

"I'm a bit peckish," said Bunter, as they left the station.

Wally Bunter grinned.

"Same old Billy!" he remarked. "Well, I could eat something myself. It's two hours since I had dinner, and I've only had a German sausage, and some tarts, and a cake, and a few apples and nuts since then. Come on; we'll have a feed first, and then look round—what?"

"Jolly good idea!" said Billy heartily. "And I've got a jolly good thing to tell you, too!"

"Good! I'll hear it over the feed."

And the two Bunters were soon sitting down to a feed, to the strains of a brass band, with a view of the sands and innumerable bathers.

For the first ten minutes Bunter did not speak a word. He was devoting himself to the feed; so was his cousin, for that matter. They were evidently alike in tastes as well as in appearance. And Wally Bunter, though Billy had described him as a poor relation, seemed to be flush with money on his holiday. He ordered good things recklessly, and the good things disappeared at a rate that astounded the waiter.

"I've got a jolly good idea," said Billy Bunter, when the first edge of his tremendous appetite was taken off. "I——"

"Have some more pie?" said Wally hospitably.

"Thanks, I will. How long are you down here for, Wally?"

"Only till Monday," said Wally, with a sigh. "You're a jolly lucky beggar, Billy, to be at Greyfriars. I've got to go back on Monday to the old grind. I'm in Have & Hookit's office, now, you know, while you're lazing about at school."

"Tain't all lazing," said Bunter. "I have to grind, too. My Form-master is a tartar. The beast actually detained me this afternoon, and I shall be licked for bolting!"

"I wouldn't mind that if I could be in your place."

Bunter blinked at him.

"That's what I've been thinking of, Wally. Why shouldn't you be in my place?"

Wally stared.

"Eh? How could I be in your place?"

"I mean for a time. I've been thinking of it to-day; it's a jolly good idea. You've often told me how you'd like to be at Greyfriars."

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 333.

"So I would," said Wally, with a nod. "I wouldn't mind the Form work. And the chances you get of playing cricket, too. I'm a good cricketer, but I don't get your chances at the game. Pity we can't change places. You're good enough to grind for old Hookit, and I should do your school more credit. Have some of these tarts."

"Thanks! I don't suppose you'd like Greyfriars any better than I do, if you had to be there," said Billy. "But why shouldn't you try it?"

"How can I try it?"

"That's my scheme," said Bunter eagerly. "You're just like me——"

"Am I?" said Wally, apparently not taking that remark as a compliment.

"Exactly like," said Bunter, "except that you don't wear glasses. It's really the glasses that give me my distinguished look."

"Your whatter?" gasped Wally.

"My distinguished look!" said Bunter firmly. "You know, sometimes when you've put on specs for a joke, you've been taken for me."

"Well, that's true," Wally admitted, somewhat reluctantly. His resemblance to the great William George was evidently not a thing he felt especially proud of.

"In the same clothes, and with a pair of specs, nobody could tell you from me," said Bunter, tucking into the tarts.

"They could if they saw us together," said Wally.

"But they won't see us together."

"What the deuce are you driving at?" asked his cousin, in astonishment.

"It's the scheme I've been thinking out," grinned Bunter. "I thought of it as soon as you wrote me you were on a holiday. Look here, I'm fed up with Greyfriars—simply sick of Virgil, and Cæsar, and vulgar fractions, and things—fed up to the chin with Greyfriars, and Quelchy, and lessons, and everything! What I want is a holiday."

"You get jolly long holidays."

"But I want one now. Now, you want to go to Greyfriars—you'd like even to go for a time, and see what it was like."

"I jolly well would, but it's impossible."

"Quite easy. All you've got to do is to change clothes with me——"

"What!"

"Put on a pair of specs——"

"Eh!"

"And go back to Greyfriars instead of me!" concluded Bunter triumphantly.

"M-m-my only hat!" stuttered Wally, in utter astonishment. "Are you off your rocker, or is the ginger-beer getting into your head?"

"It's as easy as rolling off a form!" urged Bunter. "I've thought of this for your benefit, of course—purely for your benefit! You want to see what it's like at Greyfriars, and I offer you the chance of changing places."

"But—but they'd spot me——"

"They wouldn't!"

"They'd spot you, anyway, in old Hookit's office, as soon as you started mucking up the books!" said Wally.

"I only mean for a few days," said Bunter hastily. "I wasn't thinking of going to your silly office. I mean as long as your holiday lasts, of course. You go to Greyfriars as me, and I stay here as you. We'll both have a good time. You want to sample Greyfriars—well, go and sample it. I want a holiday at Margate—well, here I am!"

"You—you want to bag my holiday!"

"Don't put it like that, please. I've thought this out entirely for your benefit. I shouldn't have thought of it, only I'm only such a good-natured and—and philanthropic chap," said Bunter. "Of course, I shall get a holiday; but I need it, you see. I'm quite run down with—with overwork."

"You must have changed your habits a lot, then."

"Oh, don't be funny! It's your one and only chance of going to a public school, even for a few days," said Bunter. "Pass the tarts."

Wally Bunter passed the tarts, but he had left off eating, himself. He was looking very thoughtful. It was true that he had often envied his cousin at Greyfriars, and wished very much to experience what public school life was like. The proposal astonished him at first, but the more he thought about it the better he liked it. A few days at Greyfriars, especially if he had a chance of playing cricket there, would be happier for him than his holiday at Margate. It would be a "lark" that would make the other junior clerks open their eyes when he related it later in Mr. Hookit's office.

"Don't you think it's a jolly good idea?" asked Billy Bunter, with his mouth full. "Of course, I've thought of it entirely on your account."

Wally grinned. He knew how much of that to believe. Billy Bunter wanted a holiday, and wanted to shirk school



As Bunter started to run, Coker lunged out with his boot. The fat junior suddenly halted, catching the foot stretched out behind him with his hand; and his grasp closed on Coker's ankle, and the Fifth-former came down with a bump! "OOOOH!" he gasped. (See Chapter 13.)

work for a few days, if he could do so safely. And he was willing to make use of his poor relation for the purpose.

"If I was bowled out?" said Wally slowly.

"You wouldn't be. You've got lots of nerve."

"But I don't wear glasses."

"I'll lend you some."

"But I couldn't see through them."

"Easy enough to get spectacles with plain glass," said Bunter. "You could see through them all right."

"Well, that's so; but—but I don't know any of the fellows there," said Wally. "I've never visited you there, and so—"

"All the better. If they'd seen you we shouldn't be able to work this scheme. You'll soon pick up the fellows' names. There's a photograph of the Remove eleven in my study—No. 7—with the names on it. You can look at it and post yourself that way about the fellows. Besides, I'll give you full information about the place and the chaps. You'd only have to be a bit careful; that's all."

"Your young brother would know me."

"Sammy's in the Second Form. He doesn't have anything to do with the Remove," said Bunter. "Why, I sometimes don't even see him for a week. The Forms keep to themselves. I don't bother myself looking after a fag in the Second."

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 333.

"Blessed if I don't chance it," said Wally.

"Good! I'll come to your lodgings with you, we'll change clothes there, and you can buy a pair of specs as we go in, and that's all that's needed. You can use my things at Greyfriars just as if they were your own. I'll do the same with yours here. I suppose you'll be able to lend me a quid or so? I happen to be short of money—"

"Ahem!"

"Of course, I couldn't stay here without any money in my pocket; though, of course, you will settle the bill at the lodgings, same as if you stayed there yourself," said Bunter calmly. "You'll get some lessons at Greyfriars for nothing; and you're always mugging over books, so you'll like that."

"Good enough!" said Wally. "It's a go!"

"You'll have to catch an early train, though," said Bunter. "The late train doesn't go as far as Courtfield. You'll get to Courtfield about half-past five, and I recommend you to hang about a bit and go in just before calling-over. Then you'll hear the names of the fellows called before they have a chance to talk to you."

"Blessed if you ain't getting quite brilliant," said Wally admiringly. "Well, if it don't work, they can't eat me."

And Wally having settled the bill for that little feed, they repaired to his lodgings, which were not in the most fashionable part of the town. Billy Bunter turned up his fat nose

a little as he was taken into a barely-furnished room with a wide outlook over roofs and chimneys.

"It's all right. You won't be indoors much, you know," said Wally.

Bunter grunted.

"All serene!" he said. "I suppose I must put up with it. Buck up and change; you mustn't lose that train. I'll come and see you off."

When the train started Wally Bunter sat in it, in Billy's etons, which fitted him as if they had been made for him, and with a pair of unaccustomed spectacles adorning his fat nose. Billy Bunter stood on the platform, clad in light tweeds and swinging a cane, and feeling exuberantly satisfied with himself and things generally. They shook hands through the carriage window.

"Good-bye, and good luck!" grinned Billy.

And as the train rolled out of the station, Billy Bunter strolled away, to sun himself on the sands and twirl his cousin's cane and generally to play the "seaside bounder." And Wally Bunter, with some misgivings in his breast but a determination to see the queer adventure through, rolled away towards Courtfield, to taste his first—and last—experience as a Greyfriars fellow.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Bunter I

"MARJORIE!"

"Safe?"

"And—and Bunter!"

Harry Wharton & Co. came with a rush round the bend in the road.

The trap had stopped. The horse, trembling in every limb, was standing quietly enough now, with a fat hand grasping the bit.

Marjorie and Clara were out of the trap, standing in the road, pale and shaken, as the chums of the Remove came tearing up.

"We—we saw you," panted Bob Cherry. "We were too far off to help! Oh, you might have been killed!"

"I—I thought we should be," said Marjorie Hazeldene, with trembling lips. "The horse was frightened by a motor, and ran away, and Clara couldn't hold him in. I—I thought we should be killed."

"I think we might have been, but for—for Bunter," said Miss Clara. "It—it's Bunter! I—I never thought Bunter would do a thing like that!"

Even with the horror of the danger they had so narrowly escaped fresh upon them, the two girls could not help feeling astonished that their rescuer was Bunter. No one had ever given Bunter credit for so much pluck, and certainly not for such quick decision and prompt action in the hour of peril. It was amazing, and Marjorie and Clara, as well as the Famous Five, found it difficult to believe their eyes.

"Thank goodness you're all right!" said Wharton, with a deep breath of relief. "It gave us a horrible shock. And we couldn't help you, though we came as fast as we could. It's all right, Hazel." Hazeldene came panting up last. "They're safe."

"Marjorie, old girl, you're all right?"

"Yes, thanks to Bunter."

"Bunter! My hat!"

The fat junior who was holding the horse's head grinned at them. He released one hand to lift his cap to the Cliff House girls.

"This gee-gee's all right now," he remarked. "But I'll look after him for you, if you like. I've got plenty of time before I get to Greyfriars. I'll drive you where you're going, if you'd like me to."

"Oh, rats!" said Hazel. "You can't drive for toffee, Bunter. I'll look after the horse."

"Just as you like."

"Bunter, old man," said Harry Wharton, "you're a giddy hero! I—I must say I'm sorry for some of the things I've called you."

Wally Bunter—for, of course, it was Wally Bunter—blinked curiously at the Greyfriars juniors through his big glasses. He could see by their caps that they belonged to Greyfriars. And he knew who the girls were, having just heard their names mentioned, and having heard about them from Billy. And Wally Bunter smiled to himself. Here were six juniors and two girls who knew Billy Bunter well, and they had taken him for Billy without a moment's doubt. It was a

lucky meeting for him. It was a proof on the spot that his little game at Greyfriars was a perfectly safe one.

"And I'll say the same," said Bob Cherry. "Give us your paw, Bunter."

Bunter gave him his "paw." Bob Cherry wrung it with a wring that made the fat fellow wince.

"Ow! Don't break my blessed fingers!"

Bob laughed.

"You're a giddy hero, Billy—you are, really! Blessed if I knew you had it in you!"

"The blessedness is terrific," said Hurree Singh. "Also I withdrawfully take back the esteemed names I have applied to you, my worthy Bunterful chum."

"Oh, don't mench!" said Wally airily.

"Are you hurt?" asked Marjorie.

"Not a bit. Only rather a twist in the arm, but it'll pass off."

"I don't know how to thank you," said Marjorie.

"Blessed if I do, either," said Miss Clara, in her boyish way. "You are a brick, Bunter, and no mistake—a regular brick! It was jolly plucky of you."

"Oh, don't mench!"

"You haven't gone to Margate, after all?" asked Nugent.

"Yes, I—I was at Margate this afternoon. I had to come by the early train," said Wally Bunter. "I—I left my cousin there."

"You'll have to look out for Quelchy when you get in."

"Who's Quelchy?"

"What!"

"I—I mean, I don't care for Quelchy," stammered the fat youth. "I—I—blow Quelchy!"

"Oh, Quelchy will be all right," said Johnny Bull. "We'll tell him about this, and after that he can't flog Bunter for breaking bounds this afternoon. He couldn't! Blessed if I understand you, Bunter! I never thought you were a plucky chap. But to break bounds, knowing you were going to get a flogging for it—"

"Oh, the rotter!" exclaimed Wally. He was thinking of his Cousin Billy. He understood easily enough why Billy had risked that flogging. It was no risk, as he was sending his cousin to Greyfriars to take it in his place.

"Oh, Quelchy isn't a rotter!" said Johnny Bull, who, of course, could not guess the fat youth's thoughts. "Naturally, he was wild at your calling him a swindler this morning, and he'll be wild at your clearing off when he detained you for the afternoon. But when we tell him about this—"

"Don't tell him," said Bunter. "I don't want to make capital out of having performed a little thing like that. If there's a licking, I can stand it."

The Famous Five almost fell down. Was this Bunter—Bunter, who boasted and swanked without limit and without cause? Bunter did not want to make capital out of having performed a really heroic action! They were simply astounded.

"Well, this beats the band!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "We shall tell Quelchy, of course. I say, Marjorie, may Bunter come along with us?"

"Why, of course!" said Marjorie. "You will come to tea at Cliff House, Bunter?"

"What-ho!" said Wally Bunter emphatically. His likeness to his cousin was not simply outside. He was blessed with an appetite and a love of good things that was quite equal to that of William George.

"I'd better drive," said Hazeldene. "Get in, and the chaps can walk."

"I'd rather walk, too," said Marjorie. "I don't want to get into the trap again, after that."

"Same here," said Miss Clara.

"Right-ho! Then you can drive, if you like, Bunter."

"Good egg! I'm a dab at driving."

"Rats!"

But Wally Bunter proved as good as his word. He took the driving-seat and the reins, and the horse obeyed him quietly. Harry Wharton & Co. walked down the road to Cliff House with the two girls, and Bunter followed with the trap at a walking pace. He did not know the way to Cliff House, but of course it was necessary to keep his ignorance of local topography a secret. Marjorie and Clara had quite recovered from their fright by the time they reached Cliff House School.

"The trap has to be taken back to the Anchor," said Miss Clara.

Bunter looked round him. He could see the Anchor at the end of the village street.

"Right-ho! I'll take it," he said.

And the trap dashed away in great style.

"My hat!" said Bob Cherry. "I never knew Bunter could drive like that! Bunter's coming out, and no mistake!"

"Well, he always said he could drive," Hazel remarked.

ANSWERS

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FRANK RICHARDS Contributes a Splendid, Complete School Tale "CHUCKLES," ½d. in our New Saturday Companion Paper—

"I never believed him. But after what he's done to-day, blessed if I wouldn't believe anything!"

"It seems rather ungrateful to seem so surprised at it," said Marjorie. "But—but I could not help feeling surprised. I'm afraid we haven't done Bunter justice."

"Never mind; give him a good feed, and make it up to him," said her brother cheerfully. "That's the best way of showing gratitude to Bunter."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Wally Bunter returned in a few minutes, and they went up the path of Cliff House School together. And when they were seated round the tea-table, Bunter showed promptly enough that the exciting experience had had no effect whatever on his appetite.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Extraordinary!

HAD the Owl of the Remove been able to see his cousin at that moment it is probable that he would have been willing to exchange the delights of Merry Margate for Wally's place at the tea-table at Cliff House. For Bunter—Bunter the Second—was the hero of the hour, and that would have been a novel and delightful experience to William George. And the feed was excellent, too. Miss Penelope Primrose, the head-mistress of Cliff House School, had been told of Bunter's heroism, and the good old lady, after overwhelming him with compliments and gratitude for rescuing her dear pupils, had made substantial contributions to the tea. Bunter simply revelled in jams and preserves and cakes, and he showed a stowing capacity that made even the fellows who knew the Owl well open their eyes.

"Margate air gives you a jolly good appetite, don't it?" Bunter remarked, as he started on his eleventh helping of cake, and they were large helpings.

"But you haven't had much Margate air," said Nugent. "You couldn't have been there more than a couple of hours at the outside."

"Ahem! No! Exactly!" stammered Wally, realising that he had nearly given himself away. "Quite so! Isn't this cake ripping? Excuse me speaking about it, Miss Marjorie, but it really is ripping."

Marjorie smiled.

"I am glad you like it, Bunter."

"Oh, it's topping! I wish old Scrubb could see me now."

"Who's that?" asked Bob.

"Eh? I—I mean—a chap I know," stammered Bunter, unable to explain that he was alluding to Mr. Hookit, his employer in London. "It's awfully good of you to have me here, you know. What a slice of luck my meeting you, wasn't it?"

"It was for us," said Marjorie, smiling.

Marjorie simply couldn't understand Bunter. As a rule, the slightest kindness to the fat junior made him assume familiar manners, and made it necessary to freeze him unmercifully. But now any amount of kindness was not having that effect on him. He was cheery and jolly, but not in the least familiar, and the two girls marvelled at the change. Really he seemed quite like another person, not the same Bunter at all!

He had taken his glasses off and laid them beside his plate, but he seemed to see very well without them. As a matter of fact, they worried him, as he was not accustomed to wearing spectacles. The juniors thought he looked better-looking without them—indeed, they all noticed that he did not look nearly so flabby as usual to-day. Apparently the short trip to Margate had done him a great deal of good.

"Let Bunter give us a ventriloquial turn," said Bob Cherry, as they finished tea. Billy Bunter was a famous ventriloquist, and as a rule he was only too eager to give a sample of his wonderful powers; and Bob generously thought that after what he had done that afternoon he was entitled to all the limelight he liked.

"Certainly," said Marjorie at last. "We shall be very pleased if you will, Bunter."

"What-ho!" said Miss Clara cordially.

Bunter stammered.

"Oh, I—I'm not in form for that!" he said awkwardly.

"I—I really can't!"

"Oh, pile in!" said Hazeldene. "You're generally jolly keen to give a show."

"Yes; don't be coy," said Bob Cherry.

"Go it, Bunter! Give us the dog in the chimney!"

"I—I really can't!" stammered Wally, speaking the solid truth. "I—I—another time. The—the fact is, I—I've made such a jolly good tea—ahem!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you don't really feel inclined——" said Marjorie.

"No; excuse me. Another time I'll be glad. Say next week," said Bunter.

"My hat! Aren't you going to get over this feed till next week?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But I'll have a bit more cake," said Wally. "This is

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simply ripping cake! I always did have a good appetite, especially for cake."

"Miss Primrose has a cake for you to take home with you," said Marjorie, as she helped Bunter liberally.

"Oh, my word! She is a brick, isn't she?" said Bunter.

And when the juniors left Cliff House, Wally Bunter carried a huge parcel under his arm—a cake of tremendous size as a present from Miss Primrose. Marjorie and Clara bade them good-bye at the gate, again thanking Bunter for his noble services. But the fat junior made light of the matter.

Harry Wharton looked at his watch as they walked down the lane.

"We shall have to step out for Greyfriars, or we'll be late for calling over," he said. "Shall I carry your parcel, Bunter?"

"You're awfully good," said Bunter, handing it over. "It weighs a good bit. I say, Miss Primrose is an old dear, isn't she?"

The juniors agreed.

"That's a jolly big cake," went on Bunter. "We'll whack it out for supper—what?"

"Eh!"

"What?"

"Which?"

The juniors gasped out those ejaculations. For Bunter to propose "whacking out" anything in the eatable line was too much. They began to wonder whether they were dreaming.

"I say, Bunter, you're not ill to-day, are you?" murmured Frank Nugent.

"Ill! No! Why?"

"You—you don't seem quite yourself."

Bunter looked rather alarmed.

"Don't I? What's the matter?"

"Oh, nothing! Only you've changed somehow."

"Don't I look just the same as usual?" asked the fat junior uneasily.

"Oh, yes, you look just the same!"

Wally drew a breath of relief. For a moment he had feared that the imposture had been "spotted."

"Then what's the difference?" he asked.

"Well, you—you seem to have improved, and—and it's rather sudden."

"'Elp a pore man, young gents!" said a rusty voice as the juniors passed the stile in Friardale Lane. A little shabby old man was seated there, and he held out a hand towards the Greyfriars fellows as they passed. He looked a deserving object of charity, and the Co. halted, and began to feel in their pockets for coppers.

"I'm 'ungry, gentlemen," said the old fellow. "Ain't tasted a bite to-day."

"Oh, I say, that's simply awful!" said Wally Bunter, with a shudder. "Here, have some of my cake!"

He took the parcel from Wharton, whipped it open, and gashed through the huge cake with his pocket-knife. He handed half of it to the old man. The latter received it with thankful astonishment, and the way he piled into it showed that his claim to be hungry was well-founded. He demolished the cake faster than Bunter himself could have done it. Bob Cherry felt as if he were going to faint.

"Bunter!" he gasped.

"Hallo!"

"You must be ill—I know you're ill!" said Bob gaspingly. "Either seriously ill or going off your rocker. Must be one of the two."

"I don't see it," said Wally Bunter. "The poor old chap's hungry. Look how he's tucking into it!"

"It's the first time you've ever cared a rap whether anybody was hungry or not."

"Is it?" exclaimed Bunter wrathfully. "Why, you——" He remembered himself in time. "Well, never too late to mend, you know."

"You've taken a long time starting to mend, but I must say you're going it now you've started!" said Johnny Bull.

"Like the cake, old chap?" asked Bunter, watching the beggar as he devoured the toothsome delicacy.

"Yes. Thank you, young gentlemen! May you never want!" mumbled the mendicant, with his mouth full.

"Have the rest of it," said Bunter. "You can shove in your pocket what you don't eat. And here's a tanner for you; sorry I can't make it more!"

"I'll make it more," said Wharton, adding a shilling. "Bunter, old man, you will kill us if you keep on like this. I sha'n't be able to bear much more!"

The Co. marched on, leaving the old fellow with one hand full of coppers and small silver, while he munched the cake. They regarded Bunter with sidelong glances as they walked on. It seemed like a dream. They were getting used to the

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idea of Bunter as a heroic rescuer. But to see him hand his cake to a beggar—that was the climax. That wanted even more getting used to.

"I suppose we're awake?" Bob Cherry murmured.

The juniors really doubted whether they were dreaming. Bunter was really a little too much for them that afternoon. The sight of Gosling closing the gates made them break into a run, and they passed in before the amiable Gosling had time to lock them out, and hurried into hall for calling-over.

Some of the fellows were surprised to see Bunter and the Famous Five on such evidently good terms. Peter Todd greeted the fat youth as they came into hall.

"You fat ass!" he exclaimed.

"Eh? What's biting you?" said Bunter.

"Loder's reported you to Quelch for breaking bounds this afternoon. Quelch will have you flogged, and serve you jolly well right!"

Bunter sighed.

"I didn't expect that——"

"Didn't expect it!" exclaimed Peter. "Why, he warned you that if you cleared out this afternoon you would be flogged!"

"Ahem! Yes; all right. Can't be helped."

Mr. Quelch entered the hall at that moment to take the roll-call, and the juniors took their places and were silent.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter on the Warpath!

"BUNTER!"

"Yes, sir!"

Bunter should have replied "adsum" to the calling of his name, but he was not used to the manners and customs of Greyfriars yet. Mr. Quelch raised his eyebrows, and glanced at him. His eyes looked almost as if they would burn a hole in the fat junior.

"Ah! You are there, Bunter?"

"Yes, sir!"

"You went out this afternoon in direct disobedience to my orders, Bunter!"

"I'm sorry, sir," said Bunter meekly.

"Very probably," said the Remove-master drily. "After roll-call you will go to my study, Bunter. I shall take you to the Head, and report you for a flogging!"

"Very well, sir."

Mr. Quelch finished calling the roll. Bunter paid a great deal of attention to the Remove fellows, who answered as their names were called. He was memorising the names. Calling-over finished, the boys crowded out of the hall. The Famous Five kept with Bunter.

The fat junior was rather at a loss. He had to go to Mr. Quelch's study, and he hadn't the faintest idea where it was.

"We're coming with you, Bunter," said Harry Wharton. "We're going to tell Quelch about what you've done this afternoon."

"Don't!"

"Rats! It's only cricket!"

And the Famous Five marched Bunter off to the Form-master's study. Wally Bunter was glad enough to be guided there. Mr. Quelch looked a little surprised when he came in, and found a crowd of juniors awaiting him instead of one.

"What do you boys want here?" he asked, frowning.

"I think we ought to tell you something, sir," said Wharton. "Bunter broke bounds this afternoon, we know, but——"

"It is useless attempting any excuse for him, Wharton, if that is what you are thinking of. You may leave the study. Bunter, follow me!"

"But we think you ought to know, sir," persisted Wharton. "If Bunter hadn't been out this afternoon, Marjorie Hazeldene would have been killed, or badly injured, and Miss Trevlyn too!"

"What!"

Harry Wharton hurriedly explained the circumstances of the rescue. Mr. Quelch listened with growing amazement. He looked very sharply at Wharton; but he knew the captain of the Remove would not lend himself to a deception to save Bunter from punishment. But, knowing Bunter as he did, the story was decidedly surprising.

"Indeed!" said Mr. Quelch, when Wharton had finished. "This is very—ahem!—very curious. I should hardly have believed that Bunter was the lad to act in the heroic way you have described, Wharton!"

"It surprised us, sir," confessed Wharton. "I thought I was dreaming when I saw Bunter jump at the horse!"

"Yes, rather," said Bob.

"The ratherfulness is terrific," said Hurree Singh. "The surprisefulness of myself was truthfully great!"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 333.

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Mr. Quelch paused.

"This does not, of course, affect Bunter's conduct in disobeying my commands," he said. "But I feel that I must take it into consideration. You appear to have acted in a very brave manner, Bunter."

"Any chap would have done it, sir," said Bunter.

"Perhaps so; but it was very brave indeed, all the same. Under the circumstances, I shall not report you to the Head for a flogging. I cannot, however, allow your conduct to pass unpunished. I shall cane you!"

"Very well, sir."

Mr. Quelch took a cane from his table. Swish—swish! Twice it came down on Bunter's fat hands, and the junior wriggled. But he bore his punishment very quietly, and the Removeites, who were accustomed to hearing Bunter yell wildly at the slightest hurt, were more and more amazed. Then the Remove-master dismissed them.

A crowd of Remove fellows met Bunter as he came out. Hazeldene had spread the story of the rescue, and the fellows were all curious to see Bunter. They stared at him as if he had been some wild animal fresh from the Zoological Gardens.

"Here's the noble rescuer!" chirruped Skinner.

"Begad! I think you acted rippingly, Bunter!" said Lord Mauleverer. "Were you asleep when you did it, my dear man?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I believe it!" said Snoop. "'Tain't like Bunter. They made up that yarn to get him off the flogging!"

"It's true!" said Harry Wharton.

"Oh, tell that to the Marines!" said Skinner contemptuously. "Do you mean to tell us that that fat rotter risked his life for anybody? He wouldn't risk his little finger. He's the biggest funk in the school!"

"Who's a funk?" demanded Wally Bunter.

"You are!"

"I'll jolly soon show you whether I'm a funk!" said Bunter, whipping off his spectacles and sliding them into his pocket. "Put up your hands!"

"Wha-a-at!"

"Put up your hands!"

"My only hat!" gasped Peter Todd, staring at his fat study mate in blank astonishment. "You must be dotty, Bunter! What do you mean?"

"I mean that I'll lick any chap who calls me a funk!"

"M-m-my word!"

"You fat chump!" snorted Skinner. "I could knock you into the middle of next week, and I will, if you stick your fat paws near my face! Take 'em away! You are a funk—a rotten funk—and a fat prize porker, too! Yow-ow!"

A fat finger and thumb had closed suddenly on Skinner's somewhat long nose, and gripped it like a vice. Skinner yelled with anguish.

"Grooh! Gerroogh! Leggo!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Am I a funk?" demanded Bunter.

"Grooh! Yes, you are! Yow-ow! Leggo, and I'll lick you!"

Skinner struck out furiously. Bunter guarded with his left with a skill that made the astonished spectators open their eyes, still keeping an iron grip on Skinner's nose.

"Well, this beats the giddy band!" gasped Peter Todd.

"Where is Bunter getting his pluck from? Blessed if I knew he had any!"

"He—he's been hypnotised or something, I think," gurgled Johnny Bull. "He's given a cake to a beggar as we came home—a thundering big cake!"

"Impossible!"

"Fact!"

"No, no; tell us an easier one!" said Peter Todd. "I can't swallow that! You dreamed it!"

"It's true!" said Harry Wharton, laughing.

"Then he's ill—or mad—or hypnotised, or something," said Peter Todd, with conviction.

"Groogh!" Skinner got his nose away at last. It was crimson, and there were tears of rage in Skinner's eyes. "Now I'll smash you, you fat frog!"

"Come on!" said Bunter, putting up his hands quite scientifically.

Skinner came on with a rush. He was half a head taller than Bunter, and at any time he could certainly have licked the Owl of the Remove without the slightest difficulty; but he met with the surprise of his life now.

The fat junior stood up to him grimly, knocked away his driving fists, and replied with a left and a right, and a left again, that sent Skinner spinning. He came down on the floor with a loud bump, and a gasp that was like air escaping from a badly-punctured tyre.



"I'm fed up with Quelchy!" said Billy Bunter. "I think it's time the Head sacked him!" "Shurrup, you ass!" whispered Harry Wharton, but it was too late. Mr. Quelch was coming down the passage, and he heard Billy Bunter's remarks. (See Chapter 1.)

"Get up and have some more!" chortled Bunter.
"Ow! Ow! Ow!"
"Go for him, Skinny!" roared Bolsover major. "Go for him! You can lick him easily enough!"
"Ow, ow, ow!"
"Skinny thinks he has had enough," grinned Johnny Bull.
"Ha, ha, ha!"
Skinner sat up dazedly.
"I—I—ow—was—was that a horse that kicked me?" he gasped.
"Ha, ha, ha!"
Bolsover major helped him to his feet. Skinner stood very unsteadily on his pins. His nose was swelling, and one of his eyes was already assuming a darker hue. Bolsover major urged him to go in and win. Skinner declined, without thanks.
"I—I—I've had enough!" he gasped. "I think I'm dreaming! Or else that fat beast has gone mad suddenly. Ow, my nose! Yow, my eye! Ow, ow!"

And Skinner retired hastily to bathe his nose and his eye. They both needed it. And the crowd dispersed marvelling. There was only one topic in the Remove that evening—the astounding change that had come over Bunter. He had risked his life to save somebody else, he had given away a cake to a beggar, and he had licked Skinner! And he was perfectly modest about it all, and not showing the slightest signs of "swank"!

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 333.

After that, as Bob Cherry remarked, he had only to start telling the truth, and the proof would be clear and conclusive that the age of miracles was not past.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER. What's the Matter with Bunter?

PETER TODD came into his study in the Remove passage, and he grinned as he saw Bunter there. The fat junior was studying very attentively a large framed photograph on the wall, a photograph of the Remove cricket eleven. He looked round as Peter came in, and blinked.

"Hallo!" he said.
"I want to speak to you, Bunter," said Peter.

"Go ahead!"
"What do you mean by it?"
"Eh?"

"You know what I mean. The way you've been coming out to-day. Have you been only pretending all this time to be a rotter, and a funk, and a sneak? If so, what have you been doing it for?"

Wally Bunter chuckled. His Cousin Billy had often told him that he was the most popular fellow in his Form at Greyfriars. Wally was learning now the estimation in which the veracious William George was really held by his Form-fellows.

"Well," said Peter, "what have you got to say?"

"Nothing," said Bunter cheerfully. "Only don't be an ass!"

"What-a-at!"

"Deaf?" asked Bunter. "Don't be an ass! That's all! I've been looking at this photograph. Is that you in the picture, or that other chap who's just like you?"

Todd stared at him.

"You know it is I," he said. "You know Alonzo doesn't play cricket. What are you getting at?"

Bunter coloured; he had put his foot into it again. He realised that it behoved him to pick his way very carefully at Greyfriars, if the imposture was not to be discovered.

"I don't see why I shouldn't play cricket for the Form?" he said.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you chuckling at?"

"Oh, don't be funny!" said Todd. "You've surprised us enough for to-day: but I suppose you're not going to ask us to believe that you can play cricket, too!"

"I'm a jolly good player."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I could play your silly head off, anyway," said Bunter.

"That chap Wharton's cricket captain in the Remove, ain't he?"

"You know he is, fathead!"

"Yes, I—I mean I know he is. Well, I'm jolly well going to ask him to play me."

"You've asked him often enough," grinned Peter. "I fancy you'll be declined with thanks, as usual. Now, leave off talking rot and get on with your prep."

"My—my prep!"

"Yes, fathead! And don't forget that you've got to go to Mr. Lascelles this evening."

"Mr. Lascelles?" faltered Bunter.

"Have you forgotten he's giving you extra mathematics, because you're such a silly dummy at them?" demanded Peter.

"Yes—no! But—"

"By Jove, you've left it late!" said Peter. "Lascelles will be here to fetch you if you don't cut off."

"Oh, let him come!"

"Ass! He'll report you to Quelchy."

"Let him rip!" said Bunter.

He would have been glad to "cut off"; but as he did not know where the mathematics-master's study was, and had never even heard of Mr. Lascelles before, and did not know him by sight, it was not of much use starting out to find him. He preferred to wait till Mr. Lascelles came for him. He did not have to wait long. There was a tap at the door, and the handsome face of the mathematics master looked into the study.

"Bunter! Are you here?"

"Here I am, sir."

"You have forgotten your extra tuition this evening," said Mr. Lascelles pleasantly. "I have heard of your conduct this afternoon, Bunter. I congratulate you on having acted in such a really plucky manner. Come along!"

Bunter followed the mathematics master; he guessed that this was Mr. Lascelles. The latter gentleman looked at him very curiously when they arrived in the study. Mr. Lascelles had had a far from high opinion of Bunter, and the story of his heroism had astonished the mathematics master as much as the rest of Greyfriars. And Mr. Lascelles was to be still more astonished in the course of the next half hour.

He had always known Bunter as very obtuse and a slacker—and he had not known how much his obtuseness set down to nature, and how much to humbug. He concluded now that it was all humbug. For Bunter "wired into" the maths lesson with a keenness that astonished him.

"Dear me!" said Mr. Lascelles, at last. "You are getting on so well, Bunter, that it will not be necessary for you to have extra tuition after this. I trust this will last. I shall know in future that you can learn if you choose, and I shall expect you to do so."

"Thank you, sir!" said Wally Bunter demurely, and he took his leave.

He chuckled as he thought what was in store for William George when he returned to Greyfriars. If Mr. Lascelles expected Billy to keep up to the mark set by Wally, the unfortunate Billy had a high old time in store for him. Billy Bunter had intended to "land" Wally with a flogging; but he would find himself "landed" with worse than a flogging. But that was William George's own look-out; he could not complain at the way his own scheme worked out. His holiday at Margate would have to be paid for.

Bunter the Second returned to No. 7 Study, and found the two Todds and Tom Dutton at work there at their

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 333.

preparation. He found the original Bunter's books, and sat down at the table. Wally had much more taste for learning than his cousin, and was something of a "swot" in his leisure hours. Billy had sometimes condescended to tell him about the things he learned at Greyfriars; and Wally, who would have given a very great deal to be in Billy's place at school, had learned from him all he could. What he knew of the school work stood him in good stead now; but he realised that he was in danger of "putting his foot in it" at every moment, and he watched the other juniors working, to get the "hang" of it.

"Want some help, Billy?" Peter Todd asked, good-naturedly, when he had finished.

"Thanks. I'd like you to help me, if you will," said Bunter.

"Of course I will, fathead!" And Peter Todd piled in and helped Bunter, and found him unusually intelligent, and yet seemingly unacquainted with small details of things that William George knew perfectly well from custom. Peter looked at his fat study-mate very queerly several times.

"I suppose you haven't lost your memory, Bunter?" he asked, when preparation was finished.

"No! Why?"

"Then I suppose you've been pulling my leg," said Peter. "I won't lick you for your cheek, in consideration of your having turned up trumps this afternoon, but don't do it any more." And Peter shook a warning finger at the fat junior.

"I won't," said Bunter, only too pleased that Peter suspected nothing more than that his study-mate had been pulling his leg. "I say, are you going to have any supper? Do you fellows have supper here?"

"Eh?"

"I—I mean, what is there for supper?"

"There's cold pie," said Peter. "You can get it out of the cupboard while I get the plates. Make yourself useful."

"Certainly."

Bunter served the pie. There were four hungry juniors to partake of it: and Peter was prepared, as usual, to see Bunter take the lion's share, and to swoop down on him and take it away again. To his astonishment, Bunter took the smallest helping. Peter was too surprised to eat for a moment.

"Must be ill!" he murmured.

Alonzo Todd beamed upon Bunter.

"My dear Bunter," he said, "I am so glad to see this change in you. My Uncle Benjamin would approve of it, I am sure of that. But what is the cause of it, my dear Bunter?"

"Must be dotty!" said Peter. "That's the only possible way of accounting for it: it's a sudden attack of insanity. Still, I must say I like you better mad than sane, Bunt, so you'd better keep it up."

Bunter grinned, and tucked into the pie. He understood more and more clearly the kind of character Billy had in the Greyfriars Remove. He was improving the absent Billy's reputation for him—which he considered was a set-off against the difficulties that awaited Billy with Mr. Lascelles!

"Shall I clear the table?" said Bunter, when supper was finished.

"Yes," said Peter faintly. "yes, please do it; it will be such a pleasure to see you doing some work, without having me behind you with a cricket-stump!"

And Bunter did. Then the juniors of No. 7 Study descended to the common-room. A buzz greeted the appearance of Bunter; the wonder he had caused had not yet died away. Temple of the Fourth came over to him, and walked round him, inspecting him on all sides. Bunter regarded the captain of the Fourth in surprise.

"Well, you'll know me again!" he remarked.

"Excuse me," said Temple gracefully. "I've heard about you! I wanted to see whether there was any change visible to the eye. There isn't! Just the same fat duffer as ever!"

"Whom are you calling a duffer?" demanded Bunter.

"Eh? I was alluding to you, my dear fellow!" drawled Temple. "From the well-known state of your intellect, I consider I am justified in calling you a duffer."

"Do you want a thick ear?"

"Eh?"

"Because, if you do, you've only got to call me a duffer again!"

Temple stared at him in astonishment. He had heard of the licking of Harold Skinner; but that defiance from the fat junior to himself, the captain of the Fourth Form, was simply amazing. But he kept his temper. Temple had a great idea of his own dignity, and he did not want a rough-and-tumble with the Owl of the Remove.

"Well, my word!" said Temple. "What a ferocious porpoise! Please let me off, Bunter; I'm not big enough to tackle you, I'm not, really."

And Cecil Temple retreated amid laughter. "Bunter, my dear fellow," said Lord Mauleverer, tapping the fat junior on the shoulder, "you asked me for a little loan to-day."

"Did I?" said Bunter. He was not surprised to hear it. "Yaas. I lent you five bob—but you wanted ten. My dear fellow, you're a trump, and here's the other five if you want it."

Bunter shook his head.

"Thanks; I don't want it!"

"What!"

"I don't believe in borrowing money!"

"Begad!"

Lord Mauleverer put his hand on the table for support. As Billy Bunter had made a regular income out of him, ever since the schoolboy earl had been at Greyfriars, he had reason to be surprised.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bob Cherry. "He doesn't believe in borrowing money! He's refused a loan! Bunter—refused a loan! Bunter doesn't believe in borrowing money! I know it's all a dream now! We can't be awake!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I say, Bunter!" stuttered the astonished Mauleverer. "I mean it, you know!"

"So do I!" said Bunter.

"Then either I'm dreaming, or you are!" said Lord Mauleverer, with conviction.

"Oh, rats!" said Bunter.

"He'll be paying back the little loans next, by Jove!" said Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars. "Now's the chance for his creditors. While he's in this mood, ask him for what he owes you—he may pay you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a shout from the juniors at once. Billy Bunter owed nearly all of them money, in smaller or larger sums.

"Pay up, Bunter! You owe me five bob!"

"You owe me ninepence!"

"You owe me half-a-crown!"

"You owe me tuppence!"

"Pay up, Bunter!"

The fat junior blinked round through his spectacles, and shook his head very decidedly. The change in Bunter had apparently not extended so far as all that.

"Rats!" he said, emphatically. "I'm not paying anybody anything! Rats!"

"That's our old Bunter again!" said Bob Cherry. "We're awake after all!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

THE NINTH CHAPTER. Bunter Makes a Bargain!

BILLY BUNTER was generally first in bed in the Remove dormitory, and last out of it. But Bunter was very slow undressing on this particular night, and all the other fellows were in bed first. Until all the beds excepting one were occupied, Bunter did not know which was to be his, though the Removites little suspected the reason of his delay. Loder came in to see lights out.

"Roll in, you fat bounder!" Loder snapped; and Bunter, being by this time sure which was his bed, promptly rolled in.

When the rising-bell rang out in the morning, Bunter was one of the first up. He jumped out of bed, and began splashing himself over with cold water. It was a fresh surprise for the Remove. Billy Bunter's ablutions generally consisted of what Johnny Bull described as a cat-lick. Once, indeed, the Removites had forcibly seized Bunter and bathed him, and it was popularly supposed that he had never bathed since. To see him splashing with evident enjoyment in cold water was a novelty.

"Wonders will never cease," remarked Bob Cherry. "You seem determined to surprise us to death, Bunty."

"Remember the time we bathed him?" grinned Bulstrode. "He found a waistcoat he had lost. It had disappeared under the layers."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But Bunter bathed cheerfully, heedless of remarks, and dressed himself, and was one of the first down. When the Famous Five came down, they were surprised to see the fat junior trotting round the Close at a good speed. He came to a halt by the steps of the School House, and grinned at them genially.

"Taking exercise?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Yes—do this every morning—it helps to keep the fat down!" Bunter explained.

"You blessed Ananias!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "It's jolly well the first time you've ever done it, since I've been at Greyfriars."

"I—I mean, I'm going to do it every morning."

"Well, it will do you good. Your fat wants bringing down," said Johnny Bull.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 333.

"Yes, I have to keep going, or I should get too plump for cricket!" said Bunter.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Are you going to take up cricket next?"

"I want to speak to Wharton about that. I'm willing to play in the Form team!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you cackling at?"

"I'm cackling at a silly fat duffer!" said Bob Cherry politely. "What are you cackling at, Franky?"

"I'm cackling at a silly chump! What are you cackling at, Johnny?"

"I'm cackling at a howling idiot!" grinned Johnny Bull.

"What are you—"

"Oh, cheese it!" said Bunter. "After lessons I'll show you what I can do at cricket, if you like."

"We know what you can do," said Wharton, laughing.

"No need to show us. When you bat, you can brain the wicket-keeper and when you bowl, you can brain anybody within range. We know all about it. Stick to sprinting for a couple of years, Bunter, and work off a ton or so of flesh, and then we'll talk cricket to you."

"Cricket!" said Temple of the Fourth, coming out of the School House, "is Bunter talking cricket? Well, that's too good—not that he plays much worse than you other fags."

"Well, of all the cheek!" said Bob Cherry indignantly. "After the walloping we gave you yesterday, without half trying—"

"That was a fluke," said Temple loftily. "We're going to wipe up the ground with you next time!" And he walked away before Bob Cherry could think of a sufficiently crushing rejoinder.

Bunter blinked after him through his spectacles. He had seen Temple several times, and learned who he was. He toddled after the Captain of the Fourth.

"I say, Temple, hold on! Do you want a good man when you play the Remove again?"

"Got plenty!" said Temple. "We don't play to have it taken down on a comic cinematograph, you know. Buzz off, and don't talk out of the back of your neck!"

"You haven't seen me bowl," said Bunter.

"No, I haven't," agreed Temple. "I've seen you chucking a cricket-ball about. I don't call it bowling!"

"I'd undertake to whop you, anyway. Bet you!" said Bunter. "After lessons, you stand up to my bowling. If I take your wicket you stand me a feed; and if I don't, I'll stand you one."

Temple snorted.

"I'd take that on," he said, "only you wouldn't stand the feed, you fat rotter. Expecting a postal-order, I suppose."

"No; I—"

"No!" gasped Temple. "Not expecting a postal-order! You! I say, Dab, Bunter says he's not expecting a postal-order!"

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Dabney, of the Fourth. "Think it over again, Bunter! Not from one of your titled relations?"

"Eh? I haven't got any titled relations."

Temple and Dabney clung to one another, as if they were going to faint. Everybody at Greyfriars had heard of Billy Bunter's titled relations, though it was true that no one there had ever seen them. But to hear Bunter owning up like this was simply staggering.

"Well, if that doesn't take the bun!" gasped Temple. "He's telling the truth! Bunter! The truth! The truth! Bunter! Oh, crumbs!"

"Oh, carry me somewhere to faint!" murmured Dabney.

"I think you're a pair of silly asses," said Bunter, blinking at them wrathfully. "I've a jolly good mind to lick the pair of you."

"Oh don't!" murmured Temple. "Be merciful! Don't!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Dabney.

"You funk letting me bowl you," snorted Bunter. "That's what it is. I'll bet you a feed against a feed that I take your wicket, and the other chap's after it, and if I don't, I'll stand a feed up to five bob. That's a fair offer, and here's the tin!" And the fat junior displayed a handful of shillings.

"Hallo! He's got some money!" stuttered Temple. "Bunter's got some money! He must have had a postal-order, or robbed a bank! Whose money it that, Bunter?"

"Mine!" yelled Bunter.

"Oh, don't be funny! I suppose you found it. But whose pocket did you find it in?"

"Yah! Funk!" said Bunter. "You're afraid to let me bowl you!"

"Well, I don't want to be brained," said Temple.

"Couldn't be done," said Bunter. "Brains required for that."

"Why, you cheeky young rotter—"

"Oh, talk sense!" said Bunter. "I want to play cricket while I'm here. Wharton won't let me play for the Remove. I'll play for the Fourth. If I don't take your wicket, there's the feed. If I do, play me in your team. Is it a go?"

"He really means it, and he's really got some money," said Temple dazedly. "If you've still got the money after third lesson, Bunter, I'll take you on."

"Done!" said Bunter.

And he rolled away to the School House. He left Temple and Dabney chuckling. Temple regarded that as an easily-earned feed—if Bunter still had the money after morning lessons. That was the doubtful point. Bunter joined the Famous Five as the Remove were going in to breakfast.

"You really don't want me to play for the Remove?" he asked.

"Thanks, no!" grinned Wharton. "I'd do anything I could, Bunt, after the ripping way you acted yesterday afternoon, but I must really draw the line somewhere. You see, the fellows would scalp me if I played you, and I should deserve it."

"Well, if you won't play me, I suppose there's no objection to my playing with the Fourth chaps, is there?"

"Not so far as I'm concerned. I fancy the Fourth chaps will object."

"Oh, rats!"

And Bunter went into the dining-room, and at the breakfast-table he showed that, however much he might have changed in other respects, he was as good a trencherman as ever.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

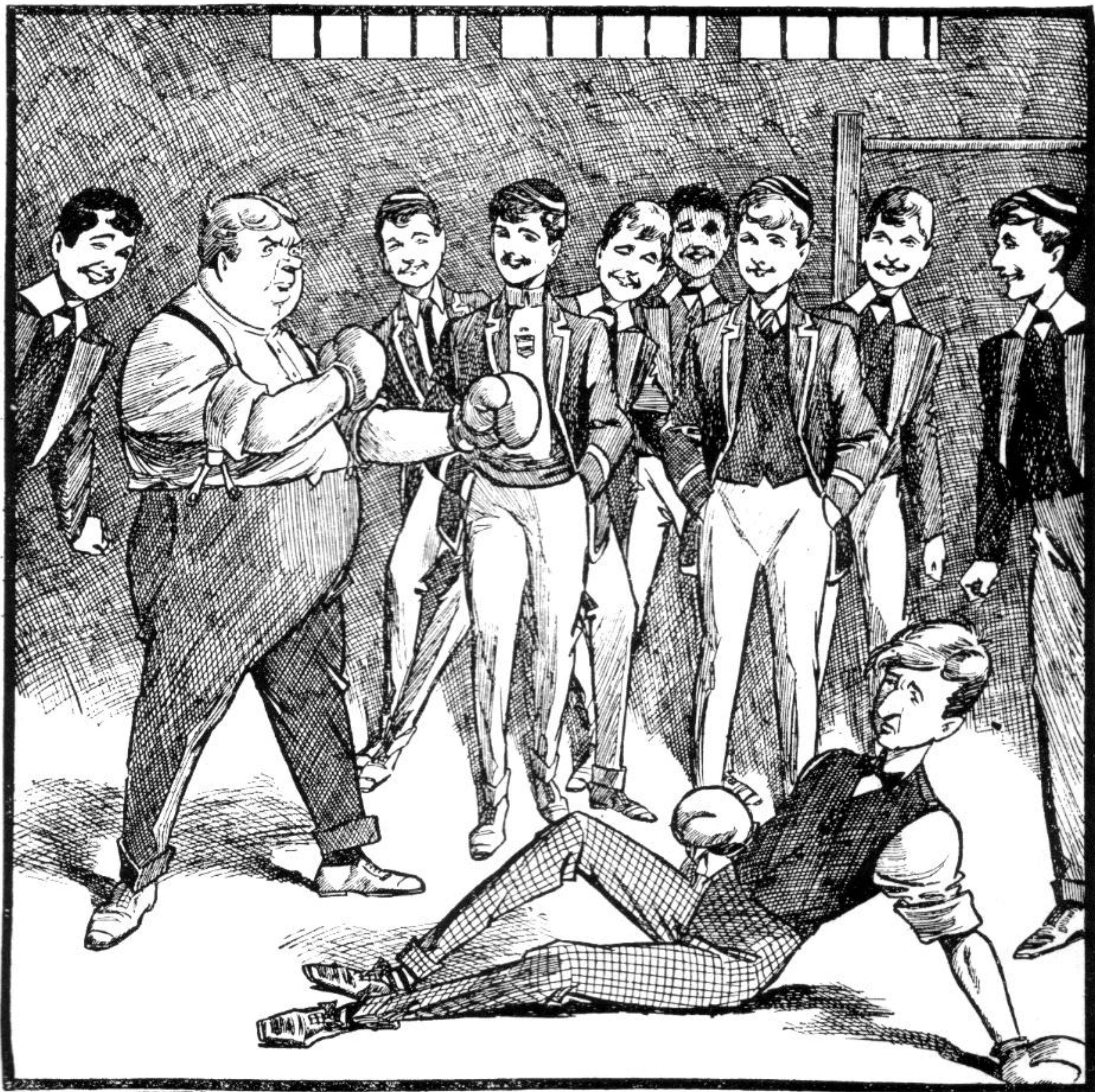
Temple's Little Scheme!

BUNTER joined Temple, Dabney, & Co., of the Fourth, as the latter came out after morning lessons. During lessons Bunter had been surprising the Remove. He seemed to suffer from some peculiar lapses of memory, as the juniors regarded it; but he had shown a remarkable amount of intelligence, and had been commended by Mr. Quelch. He had come through morning lessons with credit, and Peter Todd declared that he had always known that the Owl of the Remove wasn't such an ass as he had pretended to be.



AMBITIONS.—No. 10.

Among the many thousands of MAGNET readers, there must be many a one of artistic tendencies, whose dream it is to become a great painter, whose pictures shall go down to posterity as true works of art. The above picture shows a celebrated artist at work in his studio.



Bunter stood quite calmly, blinking down at the fallen chief of Study No. 7. "My only hat!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "Where on earth did the young rotter learn to hit like that?" (See Chapter 14.)

Temple grinned as the Removite joined him.

"Ready?" asked Bunter, in a businesslike manner.

"Oh, yes. Still got the dibs?"

"Yes, of course! Mind, if I don't take your wicket I stand you a feed; and if I do take it, you play me in the Fourth Form eleven."

"Agreed!" chuckled Temple.

And they proceeded to the cricket-ground. Dabney set up the stumps, and Fry tossed the ball to Bunter. He intended it to drop on the fat junior's chest. But Bunter's fat hand closed on it easily and caught it. Fry stared.

"Hallo, that was a good catch!" he could not help exclaiming.

"Catch you out any time!" said Bunter loftily. "Get to the wicket, Temple! Don't keep me waiting all day!"

Temple grunted, and took up his position at the wicket. Temple swiped at it—and missed it, and almost fell down batsman. He had a brilliant style with the bat. As a matter of fact, there was more "fluff" than hitting about Temple's style. As for the possibility of Bunter taking his

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 333.

wicket, he never dreamed of it for a moment, and he grounded his bat on the crease carelessly enough.

"Play!" chortled Dabney.

Whiz! The ball came down from Bunter's fat hand, and Temple swiped at it—and missed it, and almost fell down with surprise. His middle stump was whipped right out of the ground.

There was a fat chuckle from Bunter.

"How's that?"

"My hat!" ejaculated Temple.

"Fluke, of course!" said Fry.

"Oh, rather!" chimed in Dabney. "Try it again."

"I—I say, that was a fluke, of course!" said Temple, rather awkwardly. "I can't really play you in our team, Bunter, just for a fluke."

"I'll give you another fluke like it if you like," said Bunter. "Then will you play me?"

"Oh, yes," said Temple, in relief. "Take my wicket again, and I'll make you captain of the Form eleven if you like."

"Done!"

Fry had fielded the ball, and he tossed it back to Bunter along the pitch. He did not give the fat junior an easy catch, but Bunter caught it quite easily.

Fry opened his eyes.

"I say, Temple, he does know something about cricket," said Fry. "I fancy he's been spoofing us all along."

"Oh, rot! Play, Bunter!"

Temple was very, very careful this time. He did not mean to have any more flukes. But all his care did not avail him. It was quite a different kind of ball that came down, but it had precisely the same effect as the first. Temple's bails went spinning, and the captain of the Fourth gazed wide-eyed at his wicket.

"He—he—he's done it!" he stuttered.

"Oh, rather! And—and you've promised to make him skipper of the team!" gasped Fry.

"Oh, rats! I—I didn't mean that, of course!" said Temple, in dismay.

"You're not going back on your word, I suppose?" said Bunter indignantly. "You'd have claimed the feed fast enough if I hadn't taken your wicket."

That was true enough. Temple was fairly cornered. He was a fellow of his word, but to make Bunter captain of the Fourth Form eleven was preposterous—outrageous—unheard of. The Fourth Form eleven would have had something to say about it, too.

"But I won't be hard on you," said Bunter, with a generosity that was still more surprising than his newly-developed powers as a cricketer. "I won't ask to captain the team. But you'll have to play me. That's settled."

"I—I—I don't understand it."

"Like me to do it again?" grinned Bunter.

"You couldn't!" yelled Temple, exasperated.

"Chuck me the ball, and see."

Fry tossed down the ball, and Temple stood up to the bowling again. He was almost desperate now. He was determined that his wicket shouldn't go down this time. And he marked that whizzing ball, and swiped at it, and smacked it right back at the bowler. And he gave a gasp of relief when he knew that his bat had really hit it. But—Smack!

"How's that?" chortled Bunter.

He held up the ball. He had caught it, fresh and hot from the bat.

The Fourth-Formers looked at him dazedly. There was hardly another junior at Greyfriars who could have made that catch.

"Caught and bowled, Bunter!" gasped Dabney. "Well, I'm blown!"

"He—he—he's really caught it?" babbled Temple. "The young villain has been pretending to be a silly idiot all this time, and he's really a cricketer!"

"Looks like it," said Fry. "Can't all be flukes. Give me a ball, Bunter."

"Right-ho!"

Fry took the bat, and received the bowling—or, rather, his wicket received it. His leg stump pitched out of the ground.

"How's that?"

"It's magic—black magic, that's what it is!" exclaimed Fry. "He's been fooling everybody up to now, though what he's done it for is a giddy mystery. C-c-can you bat, Bunter?"

"Of course I can, fathead, though I'm best at bowling! But I'll bet you you can't take my wicket. If you do, I'll stand that feed after all."

"Done!" exclaimed Fry.

Fry was the best bowler in the Fourth Form at Greyfriars, and he considered that an easy thing. He changed ends with Bunter, and Bunter took the willow. It was a little large for him, but he handled it very well.

He had slid his spectacles down his fat little nose, and was looking over them. The Owl of the Remove did not seem so short-sighted as usual.

Fry sent down his very best ball, and Bunter smacked it away to the boundary-line. The Fourth-Former fielded it, and tried again. He was given another long run. He tossed the ball to Temple, and Temple did his best. The ball disappeared over the roof of the pavilion. Then the Fourth-Formers gave it up.

They gathered round Bunter, wonder in their faces. The fat Removeite rested on his bat.

"Satisfied?" he asked.

"Satisfied?" said Temple. "Yes, rather! You can play! If Wharton saw you in that shape he'd simply jump at you for his team. But you're going to play for us. I've given you my word, and I'll keep it."

"Hold on! If Wharton would—"

"Oh, never mind Wharton!" said Temple hurriedly.

He exchanged a quick look with his chums. Now was the

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 333.

chance to secure a player who would enable the Fourth to retrieve their many lickings at the hands of the Remove. Bunter could play cricket. Bunter was one of the best, if not actually the best, of the junior cricketers at Greyfriars. No one had ever suspected it. Bunter, for some mysterious reason, had kept it dark. But there the fact was, and Temple did not mean to let such a recruit slip through his fingers—not if Temple knew it!

"You play for us, of course!" he said. "I promised you, and—and you promised me. We'll put you in the Fourth Form team, Bunter. It's a go?"

"Oh, all right," said Bunter. "I don't care much, so long as I get a game."

"It's settled, then?" said Temple eagerly.

"Done!"

"Good! And we'll make the Remove play us again on Saturday afternoon," said Temple gleefully. "They've only got a practice match on, and we were going picnicking. But we'll play them instead—and lick them this time! Why didn't you ever let on that you were a giddy W. G. Grace, Bunter?"

"Keep it dark, though!" said Fry. "It will be a surprise-packet for the Remove. If they know Bunter's form, too, they may try to get him away from us. Keep it dark—don't let on a word about it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That's right!" said Temple, grinning. "Oh, my hat—won't there be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth in the giddy Remove on Saturday. Bunter, old man, you'll not say a word?"

"Well, I—"

"Come to the tuckshop!" said Temple affectionately.

"Come on, Bunter, old chap!"

"What-ho!" said Bunter promptly.

In a couple of minutes Temple, Dabney & Co., and Bunter were swearing eternal friendship over tarts and ginger-beer. And the fat junior—not averse to a little joke on the Removeites who had scorned his proffered services—agreed to keep very dark the surprise that was in store for the Remove on Saturday. They would know that Bunter was going to play for the Fourth—but how he was going to play they did not know—not until he played, and opened their eyes. Temple, Dabney & Co. chuckled gleefully over the little scheme, and Bunter devoured tarts, and chuckled, too.

Cecil Temple met Wharton as the juniors were going in to dinner. Wharton had been over to Cliff House to inquire after Marjorie and Clara, whether they were feeling any ill effects from their fright of the previous day. They weren't; and they sent kind messages for Bunter, and Miss Primrose sent another cake.

"Oh, Wharton," said Temple carelessly, "you got the better of us yesterday—"

"I fancy we did!" said Wharton.

"Care to play us again on Saturday afternoon? We'll undertake to lick you."

"Play with pleasure; and undertake to wipe you off the face of the earth," said Harry cheerfully.

"By the way, Bunter's going to play for us," said Temple carelessly.

Wharton jumped, and almost dropped the cake.

"BUNTER!"

"Yes. No objection to our playing a Remove chap in the team, of course?"

"Ha, ha! No; play him and welcome. Is it a joke?"

"Not at all!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the Co. roared, too, with laughter when they learned that Temple was playing Bunter in a Form match that Saturday. Temple, Dabney & Co. heard them roar, and they chuckled. There was a surprise in store for the heroes of the Remove.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Minor Takes the Cake!

"BILLY!"

Sammy Bunter of the Second Form hailed his major in the Form-room passage. The Second Form had come out a little earlier than the Remove, and Sammy was lying in wait.

The fat Removeite looked round, and spotted the fag, and walked quickly towards the doorway.

"Billy!"

"Your minor's calling you, Bunter," said Bob Cherry.

"Blow my minor!" said Bunter. "I can't be bothered with fags!" And he walked quickly into the Close.

Sammy Bunter stared after him through his spectacles in angry amazement. He could not understand that conduct on the part of his major. Billy Bunter certainly wasn't a very affectionate brother, but—

"Billy!" yelled Bunter minor. "Billy—Billy!"

Bunter major walked on more quickly than before. Evidently he didn't want to have anything to do with his minor.

"Well, the beast!" growled Sammy, halting in the doorway out of breath—Sammy was always short of breath. "He wants to keep the cake all to himself, and it's a jolly big one!"

"Rotten!" said Nugent minor of the Second—Nugent minor, and Gatty, and Myers were with Sammy Bunter. They did not always chum with the fat fag; but they had heard of a huge cake which Miss Penelope Primrose had sent over for Bunter of the Remove, and they heartily concurred with Sammy in thinking that Bunter major ought to "whack it out." They were ready to help Sammy dispose of his share. And they were quite of opinion that Billy Bunter ought to be compelled to act in a brotherly manner with regard to that cake.

"He was always a pig!" said Gatty. "I've seen the cake—I saw Wharton bringing it in—and it's a whacker! It's as big as those you pay six or seven shillings for at a confectioner's—a regular whopper!"

"Come after him!" said Sammy. "You fellows back me up, and we'll make him whack it out. Billy is an awful funk, you know, and the four of us can settle him!"

"What-ho!"

And the heroes of the Second proceeded to "stalk" Bunter across the Close. Bunter quickened his pace, but they broke into a run. He dodged round the elms and came back towards the School House, with the fags hot on his track.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, as Bunter came panting up the steps again. "Is it a footrace?"

"My blessed minor's bothering me!" panted Bunter. "I'm not going to have anything to do with fags. Blow him!"

"Minors are a worry!" agreed Frank Nugent. He had reason to know. "Give him a dot on the nose. I'll give my minor one at the same time, on general principles."

But Bunter did not stay. He hurried upstairs, and the four fags rushed after him. A door was heard to slam in the Remove passage. Sammy & Co. reached the door of No. 7 Study just in time to hear the key turn in the lock. Sammy halted, puffing and blowing.

"The beast's locked himself in, you chaps. He's going to scoff that cake now."

Gatty and Nugent minor hammered on the door.

"Let us in, you fat rotter!"

"I say, Billy, let me in, you know!" Sammy squeaked through the keyhole. "I'm going to have some of that cake!"

"Eh—what cake?" came Bunter's voice from within.

"That cake Miss Primrose sent you. We know you've got it there. Don't be a cad! You know you ought to whack it out."

"Go and eat coke."

"Will you let us in?" howled Sammy.

"No, I won't! Go away, and don't bother!"

"We'll wait for you, then, and scalp you when you come out!" shrieked the indignant Sammy. "Didn't I whack out my toffee with you the day before yesterday, you beast!"

"Bust the lock!" said Myers.

"Hold on, Todd or Dutton will be coming up soon, and then he'll have to open the door!" chuckled Dicky Nugent. "Peter Todd will make him whack it out—he always goes for him when he's being a pig, you know. Anyway, we can get in when the door's opened."

"Good egg!"

The fags' voices were quite audible in the study. Bunter realised that it would not be so easy to avoid meeting Bunter minor. Perhaps he preferred meeting him without any of his study-mates being present, for he unlocked the door. The four fags crowded into the study at once.

"Where's that cake?" demanded Sammy, looking round hungrily. "You're jolly well going to whack it out!"

"I didn't know that was what you wanted, fathead! Here you are!"

The cake was unwrapped on the table. It was certainly an enormous one, and looked very nice, and had a very fragrant smell. The fags' mouths watered as their eyes fell on it. Bunter had taken a knife to cut it. Sammy Bunter blinked at him very curiously through his spectacles. Already once or twice his major had seemed to avoid him, and on this occasion it gave Sammy food for thought. Bunter's ready surrender of the cake, too, was suspicious; it was so unlike William George.

Bunter bent over the cake as he cut it, keeping his face away from Sammy. Sammy went deliberately round the table so as to get a good view of him.

"My word!" ejaculated Sammy.

Bunter the Second felt a sinking at the heart. His little imposture had taken in all Greyfriars quite easily. But he had had an inward dread that Sammy Bunter might spot it. Sammy, of course, was more likely to spot it than anybody else, as he knew his major better than anybody else, and was

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 333.

also acquainted with the fact that Billy's cousin was his double.

Sammy had been as surprised as anybody else by what he had heard about his major's performances that day and the day before. Indeed, he had remarked to Gatty that Billy seemed more like his cousin than himself lately.

"My word!" repeated Sammy, with emphasis.

"It's all right," said Nugent minor. "He's going to whack it out, ain't you, Billy?"

"Certainly!" said Bunter. "Halves!"

"Not halves!" said Sammy Bunter very deliberately. "You're going to give me all that cake, old fellow—every blessed crumb!"

"Eh?"

"Did you leave our cousin all right at Margate yesterday?" asked Sammy, in such a significant tone that his Form-fellow stared at him, not understanding. But Bunter of the Remove understood, and he gave Sammy a quick glance.

"Ye-es!" he faltered.

"Having a good time there—what?"

"Ye-es!"

"While you're having a good time at Greyfriars—eh?" said Sammy.

"Shut up, you ass!"

"Oh, all right!" grinned Sammy. "I savvy now about risking that flogging. I couldn't catch on at the time. He, he, he!"

"What on earth are you cackling at?" asked Nugent minor, mystified. "Is there some joke on between you two?"

"Yes, rather! He, he, he!" cackled Sammy. "Oh, lor'! It's all right, I ain't saying anything. Billy!" He chuckled again as he emphasised the name. "Can I have all that cake—Billy?"

"You can have the lot if you like!" said Bunter.

"Good! Will you lend me a bob?"

"Look here—"

"Chap has a right to ask his major for a little loan," said Sammy, grinning. "I want some ginger-pop to wash the cake down. So do these fellows. Will you lend me a bob, or won't you? If you won't—"

"Here you are," said Bunter meekly, taking a shilling from his pocket and dropping it into the fag's outstretched fat hand.

"Thanks!" grinned Sammy. "I shall want another one to-morrow."

"A-a-all right."

"And another one every day all the time you're at Greyfriars," said Sammy.

"A-a-all right."

"My hat!" said Nugent minor, in amazement. "I've heard that old Bunter's changed a lot lately, but I'm blessed if I ever expected to see him shelling out like this! Where did you get the tin from, Bunter? Been robbing somebody?"

"Oh, rats!" snapped Bunter.

"Come on, you chaps!" said Sammy. "Here's the cake. It's ours!"

"I say, we don't want to scoff the lot!" said Gatty.

"Leave your major half of it."

"Oh, rot! He can get some more, I dare say. Besides, he can go and eat coke! This is my cake now. Billy doesn't mind. Do you, Billy?"

"Not a bit!" said Bunter. "You're welcome!"

"Well, this beats me!" said Dicky Nugent. "Your major's mad, or ill, or something, Sammy. But it's a jolly good cake! Come on!"

And the fags trooped off joyfully with the cake.

Bunter blinked after them, with a somewhat long face, as they disappeared.

"That fat little beast knows!" he muttered. "A bob a day! H'm! Just like Billy! He'd do the same. H'm! Still, it's worth it! I'm having the time of my life here! This beats Margate—rather! And the little beast will keep it dark so long as I shell out a bob a day. And it's only a few days, anyway—blow him!"

"Hallo! What are you muttering about?" asked Peter Todd, coming into the study.

"Oh! Eh? H'm! Nothing!"

"I hear you've got a whacking big cake as a present from Miss Primrose," said Tom Dutton, following Peter Todd into the study with Alonzo. "We'll have it for tea."

"Yes, rather!" said Peter. "Share and share alike—that's the rule in No. 7 Study. Rather a new experience for you to be standing your whack in a study feed, Bunter."

"I'm sorry—" began Bunter.

"Look here, you're going to whack it out!" roared Peter. "Not because we want your blessed cake—though we do, as a matter of solid fact—but because you're not going to be allowed to be a greedy pig—see? Now, where's that cake?"

"Sorry! I've given it away."

Peter Todd jumped.

"Given it away?" he said faintly.

"Yes. My minor asked me for it, and I gave it to him."

"Tell us an easier one," said Peter incredulously. "I know you can beat Ananias in his own line of business; but don't pile the agony on like that. There are limits, you know. I'm not a Doubting Thomas; I could believe lots of things—I could swallow the reports of a war correspondent, or a speech by a Cabinet Minister, or the fairy tales of science, or anything that wasn't too steep—but don't ask me to believe that you've given your cake away. My brain won't grasp it!"

"Fact!" said Bunter. "Sammy wanted it, and I've given it to him."

Peter Todd sank helplessly into a chair. Alonzo looked at Bunter with affectionate approval.

"That was very kind indeed of you, Bunter," he said. "My Uncle Benjamin would approve of this. I am so glad to see this change in you, Bunter. My Uncle Benjamin will be pleased, when he comes here next week, when I tell him—"

"Where's that cake?" demanded Dutton.

"I've given it away," said Bunter.

Dutton snorted.

"I'm not going to pay!" he said. "Pay, indeed! If you can't whack out a cake among your study-mates without being paid, you can keep it!"

"I didn't say 'pay!' I've given it to my minor!" shrieked Bunter. "I've given it to him for nothing."

"Of course we're going to have it for nothing!" said the deaf junior. "Catch me paying you anything, you mean beast!"

"Oh, my hat!" said Bunter. "That chap would make me ill if I had much of him!" He raised his voice and roared: "I can't whack out the cake, as I've given it to my minor. Otherwise, I should be quite willing!"

"A shilling!" howled Dutton. "A shilling from each of us, do you mean? You won't get a red cent out of me! We'll have something else for tea, you fellows. I'll never agree to pay that disgusting bounder a shilling for a share of his cake! I always knew he was a mean beast, but this is the limit. What are you cackling at, Todd?"

But Peter Todd did not undertake to explain what he was cackling at. He felt that his lungs were not equal to the strain.

They had something else for tea—it was necessary, under the circumstances—and all through tea Tom Dutton glared at Bunter in a state of unconcealed indignation and disgust.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER. The Dark Horse!

TEMPLE, DABNEY, & CO. were keeping their secret. That is to say, they were keeping it from the Remove, and from Greyfriars generally. But to the Fourth Form fellows Cecil Temple had to explain.

The news that he was playing Bunter in the Fourth Form team caused a general howl of indignation to rise from the Fourth. There were plenty of fellows in the Form who were quite willing to play in the team, and who considered their claims were uncontested. And one of the team had to be dropped, of course, to make room for Bunter. When the news became known to the Fourth, Temple was in danger of being mobbed. Only Fry and Dabney understood, and backed up their leader. The rest were almost ready to lynch Temple.

Under a strict promise of secrecy from the Fourth-Formers, therefore, Temple explained to them, calling a meeting for the purpose in the Form-room, with closed doors.

But his explanation was greeted with a howl of derision. "Bunter's a wonderful player—both at batting and bowling," Temple asserted. "He's been keeping it dark for some reason. Why, I don't know. But he's a marvel!"

"Rats!"

"Bosh!"

"Rubbish!"

"Piffle!"

The opinion of the Fourth Form on the subject was unmistakable. Temple's voice was drowned by the indignant yell. It was in vain that he and Dabney and Fry assured the Fourth-Formers that they had seen it with their own eyes, and were sure of the fact.

"Let us see it, then!" shouted Jones secundus. "I'll believe it when I see it. Not before!"

"Seeing's believing!" yelled Wilkinson.

"Can't be did!" said Temple. "We're keeping it dark, to spring it on the Remove bounders at the last moment. If they knew Bunter's wonderful form they'd try to keep him away from us. They're booked for a tremendous licking!"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 333.

"Rot!"

"That fat Owl can't play cricket!"

"We don't want Remove kids in the team, anyway."

"Resign!" roared Wilkinson. "We want a new cricket captain in the Fourth, that's what we want! Leaving me out of the team to put that fat porpoise in! Yah! Resign!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Resign! Resign!"

"We'll elect a new skipper!"

"Temple's off his chump!"

"Let's go and rag Bunter, and show the fat beast that we don't want him in the team!"

"Hurrah!"

"Hold on!" shouted Temple, as some of the Fourth made a move towards the door. "I made you promise to keep it dark if I explained—"

"But you haven't explained—only that you're a thumping ass!" said Jones.

"Look here, I'll get Bunter to show you what he can do," said Temple, realising that his followers were quite out of hand. "We can't do it here, or the Remove kids will spot us. It was a bit of luck that they didn't spot us to-day. We'll take out some stumps and things, and Bunter can give us a show on Courtfield Common. There's time before locking-up."

"Oh, you're dotty!" said Wilkinson. "You know as well as we do that Bunter can't play cricket!"

"I never believed he could," confessed Temple. "I can't understand why he's been keeping his form dark all this time. But it's honest Injun!"

"Rubbish!"

"Well, will you believe it if you see it?" demanded the captain of the Fourth.

Wilkinson sniffed contemptuously.

"Yes. And if that fat ass can play cricket I'll ask him myself to take my place in the team!" he said.

"Done!" said Temple instantly.

"But it's all rot!" said Wilkinson. "And you know it!"

"All of you come out; not in a crowd, but twos and threes," said Temple. "Gather on the common—where those Courtfield chaps play cricket, you know. I'll bring Bunter along. Dab can take the stumps, and Scott can take a bat along, and I'll bring a ball. But mind you don't whisper a word where the Remove kids can hear you. I tell you this is the biggest thing we've ever sprung on them, and if you give it away I'll—I'll—"

"Well, back up your words," said Wilkinson. "If you don't prove that Bunter is a ripping cricketer you'll resign and let some chap with more sense captain the team."

"Agreed!" said Temple.

Temple's prompt acceptance staggered the Fourth a little. After all, they knew that Temple knew something about cricket; and the day before he would have laughed as loudly as anybody at the idea of playing Bunter. The juniors could not help being impressed. But that Bunter could play cricket, that his form was anything like what Temple declared—that was too "thick." They simply couldn't believe it.

"Well, we'll give you a chance," said Wilkinson, "and we'll keep you to your word, mind."

"I'll keep my word," said Temple. "But mind you don't let it out. That's the important thing. We're going to surprise the Remove on Saturday."

"Yes, it will surprise them if Bunter plays a good game," snorted Jones. "It will surprise me, too! I think I should faint."

But the Fourth-Formers agreed that nothing should be said outside the Form until it was seen what Bunter could do. The Fourth-Formers left the school in twos and threes to gather on the common, where the public pitch was used by the fellows of Courtfield County School for their matches. Temple, Dabney, and Fry sought for Bunter, and found him in the school shop. He was eating tarts, and much to the surprise of Mrs. Mimble, paying for them. Mrs. Mimble had hinted to the fat junior that as he was in funds he might as well settle in full the little bill for which Mr. Quelch had stopped his pocket-money. But Bunter did not see the point at all.

"Hallo, Buntie," said Temple cordially, "I want you to come for a little stroll!"

"Feed?" asked Bunter.

"Ahem! No! Only a walk. We'll have some ginger-pop when we come back."

"All serene."

Bunter rolled down off the high stool, and left the tuck shop with Temple & Co. Harry Wharton and his chums spotted them as they strolled towards the gates, and grinned.

"Taking your dark horse out for exercise, Temple?" Bob Cherry inquired.

Temple nodded carelessly.

"Yes, just a walk to keep in form," he said.
"You're really playing him against us on Saturday?" asked Harry Wharton, laughing.

"Yes—really!"
"But what's the little game?" demanded the Famous Five with one voice.

"You'll see—on Saturday!"
And the Fourth-Formers walked off with Bunter. The chums of the Remove were laughing, but they could not help feeling puzzled.

"Blessed if I catch on," said Nugent. "I should think Temple's team would scalp him for putting that duffer in. What can he be doing it for?"

"It's a giddy mystery."
"Bunter has changed a lot in the last day or two; but he can't have learned to play a good game of cricket in the time," said Bob Cherry.

"Impossible, of course."
"Then what the deuce is Temple's little game?"
"Give it up!" said Harry Wharton; and the Co. had to give it up, too. It was simply an impenetrable mystery. But that Bunter would take either a run or a wicket on Saturday was not to be believed for a moment. That was absurd.

Bunter and the Fourth-Formers strolled down the road towards Courtfield. Temple explained as they went what was wanted. Bunter grinned.

"All serene," he said. "Stand your fellows up one after another, and I'll bowl out the whole gang like a set of skittles. I can bowl better than any junior bowling I've seen here, so far."

"You saw the Remove chaps at practice to-day?" said Temple eagerly. "You think you could take Wharton's wicket—eh?"

"Pretty certain," said Bunter.
"Oh, good! If you can take his wicket, you can take the others. He's the best in the bunch. Here we are!" said Temple.

Most of the Fourth were on the common now, and the others were coming up. They glared at Bunter far from amiably. They wanted a great deal of convincing that he was a suitable person to play in their team.

"Here's the silly idiot," said Smith major. "Now let's see what he can do!"

"Stick up the stumps," said Temple.
The pitch had been used that afternoon, but there was no one about at the present moment. The stumps were jammed into the ground, and the ball tossed to Bunter.

"You take the bat, Wilkinson," grinned Temple.

Wilkinson snorted, and took the bat.
"I'll jolly well show you whether that fat idiot can take my wicket!" he growled.

"Play!"
"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Wilkinson a moment later, as his wicket was spread-eagled. "How on earth did that happen?"

"Great Scott!"
"Rotten fluke!" said Jones secundus.
"Try it again!" howled Wilkinson.

"Give him another, Bunter."
"As many as you like," grinned Bunter. And apparently without an effort he knocked Wilkinson's wicket over again, in spite of Wilkinson's great care the second time.

"Well, I'm blowed!" said Wilkinson in utter astonishment.

"Some of you others try," yawned Bunter.
The Fourth-Formers tried in turn. All of them were anxious to sample the wonderful new powers which had been so unexpectedly developed by the Owl of the Remove.

The fat bowler simply made hay of the wickets. Sometimes a batsman would stop a ball or two, but the luckiest of them did not live through an over.

The Fourth Form simply gasped. It was miraculous. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh of the Remove was a splendid bowler, but he was nothing to this. Bunter simply took the cake.

"Well, I'm blessed!" said Smith major. "I wouldn't have believed it if I hadn't seen it. Blessed if I can quite believe it now I have seen it."

"He's a giddy dark horse, and no mistake," said Scott.
"But what has he been keeping his form dark for all this time?" demanded Wilkinson. "Why didn't you ever let on that you could do this, Bunter?"

"Time we get back and sampled that ginger-beer, Temple," yawned Bunter. "I'm thirsty."

"Look here, you fat ass, why didn't you ever let us know—"

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ONE
PENNY.

"Oh, don't ask questions!" said Bunter. "Let's get back. It'll be locking-up soon, and I'm thirsty after bowling to you duffers."

"Well, what price playing Bunter on the Remove?" demanded Temple triumphantly. "Won't he give 'em an electric shock—what?"

"What-ho!"
"It will be a giddy walk-over, and no mistake. Why, he could bowl the First Eleven bats, I verily believe," said Scott.

"Bet you I could," said Bunter. "Do let's get back and have that ginger-beer. Don't I keep on telling you I'm thirsty."

And the Fourth-Formers returned to Greyfriars in great spirits, and Bunter was duly regaled with ginger-beer. Temple would have stood him almost anything just then in the exuberance of his spirits. And the Fourth Form now were only too keen to keep the great secret until Saturday. Then it would be sprung upon the unsuspecting Remove. And the Fourth-Formers chuckled joyfully at the prospect.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Little Surprise for Coker!

THE first person Bunter met when he came down on the following morning was Sammy Bunter. Several other Remove fellows came down with Bunter, and they were surprised to see Sammy extend a fat paw towards his major without a word of explanation. They were still more surprised to see Bunter drop a shilling into it.

"Thanks!" grinned Sammy.

And he scudded off.

"This is getting too thick!" Bob Cherry murmured. "Have you taken to supplying your minor with pocket-money now, Bunt?"

"Well, a chap ought to look after his minor, you know," said Bunter negligently.

"Yes, he ought," agreed Bob. "I don't know about handing him out cash, though. But you—you—oh, it beats me! I give it up!"

Bunter grinned, and rolled away. The chums of the Remove watched him doing his early morning trot round the Close.

"What can it mean?" said Frank Nugent.

"He gets a good pace on him, too," remarked Harry Wharton, watching

Bunter with a critical eye. "I never knew Billy could run like that. His action's good, too! The fat bounder doesn't seem half so flabby as he was."

"Just as fat, but not so flabby," agreed Bob. "I wonder what's come over him. And what's come over Temple, too. They're quite serious about playing him in their team tomorrow. I thought the Fourth would scalp Temple about it; but they've taken it like lambs. They seem to be perfectly satisfied."

"After what Bunter's done, blessed if I should be surprised to see him play a good game of cricket, too," said Peter Todd. "He gave his cake to his minor yesterday! What do you think of that?"

Harry Wharton shook his head.

"I've given up thinking of it," he said. "It beats me."

"It will be a sight for Marjorie, anyway, Bunter playing cricket," said Hazeldene. "I'm going over to fetch them to see the match. They seem to think a lot of Bunter now; and they never could stand him."

"Well, no wonder, after he's saved their lives," said Bob. "But what made Bunter do it, that's the giddy mystery. It beats me hollow."

Bunter's unaccustomed exercise in the Close drew the attention of others, as well as his Form-fellows. Coker of the Fifth came out of the School House, and as soon as he caught sight of the sprinting junior he stopped and stared.

"Hallo! Bunter taking exercise!" he exclaimed. "That's something new. I'll give him exercise!"

And Coker, who was given to being humorous in a rather rough-and-ready way with fags, started sprinting after Bunter, and as he drew close to him, let out his foot, helping him on as if he intended to dribble the fat junior round the Close like a football.

Bunter gave a yelp, and stopped, and swung round, and Coker almost ran into him.

"You silly owl!" roared Bunter. "What are you up to?"

Coker chuckled.

"Only helping you on," he explained. "You want a bit

of assistance to carry all that fat. Get on. I'm going to take you right round the Close."

"You're jolly well not!" growled Bunter. "And if you touch me with your hoof again I'll go for you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Coker, greatly tickled at the idea of the Owl of the Remove going for him. "Ha, ha, ha! Start, you ass! I'm waiting."

Bunter started, and Coker of the Fifth started after him, lunging out with his boot. The fat junior suddenly halted, catching quickly behind him with his hand. His grasp closed on Coker's ankle, and held it like a vice. Coker was taken utterly by surprise, and he came down on his back with a mighty bump.

"Ooooooh!" he gasped.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Removites, who were watching from the doorway of the School House. "Well caught, Bunter! Down and out!"

Bunter turned round, and blinked down at the sprawling Fifth-Former. All the breath had been knocked out of Horace Coker by the shock, and he lay gasping, and staring blankly at the fat Removite.

"Cut off, you ass, before he gets up!" called out Tom Brown.

But Bunter did not cut off. Apparently he was not afraid of what the burly Fifth-Former would do when he got up. Coker struggled slowly and painfully to his feet. Coker's sense of humour failed him when the laugh was turned against himself—as is the case with so many humorists—and he was furious now. He made a rush at Bunter, and grasped him in his powerful arms.

"You fat bounder! I'll squash you!" he panted.

How it was done, the juniors could not see, but suddenly Coker's grasp on the fat Removite was torn asunder, and the great Horace went flying. He alighted on his back again with a loud grunt.

"Jiu-jitsu!" howled Bob Cherry. "Where did Bunter pick that up? What else has he been keeping dark, the fat spoofer?"

"It—it must have been an accident," stammered Peter Todd. "Bunter couldn't give Coker a fall. Here, come on; let's chip in before Coker slaughters him!"

But chipping in was not needed. Coker of the Fifth had leaped up again, and was charging at the fat junior like a mad bull. Bunter closed with him, and in a moment more Coker was on his back again. This time he stayed there, bumped quite out of breath.

"How—how—how did you do that, Bunter?" gasped Bob Cherry.

Bunter grinned serenely, and set his spectacles straight.

"Jiu-jitsu," he said. "I often practise it in the evening."

"What!" ejaculated Peter Todd. "You've jolly well never practised it in the study—and you never go into the gym."

"I—I—I mean I—I've practised it, you know," stammered Bunter. "Coker doesn't know anything about it, and I could handle him like a baby. Have some more, Coker?"

Coker had crawled up very painfully, gasping for breath. He had a considerable number of bruises scattered over his burly person, and he felt jarred from head to foot. He shook his head.

"No, you fat rotter! I didn't know you were a wrestler. I've a jolly good mind to lick you."

"I'll wrestle you any time, but I'm not fighting you," grinned Bunter. "You're rather too big for me."

"Hands off, Coker!" chorused the juniors. And Coker, after glaring at the Famous Five, gave up the idea of bestowing a thick ear upon Bunter. He walked away rather painfully. The chuckles of the Removites followed him.

"But what do you mean by it, Bunter?" Peter Todd demanded indignantly. "Only last week I larruped you with a cricket-stump for letting Tubb of the Third lick you. And now you handled Coker, who's too big for any of us. What do you mean by it?"

"Think it out," said Bunter cheerfully.

"Look here, I'm jolly well going to know what this means!" said Peter Todd, exasperated. "You've been spoofing us all along the line, and you're going to explain why you've done it. I'm head of the study, and I'm going to know what it means."

"Head of your grandmother!" said Bunter calmly.

"Nobody's head of my study."

"What!" yelled Peter, astounded by that cool defiance from the member of No. 7 Study who had always been the tamest under his rod of iron. "Do you want me to lick you?"

"Rats!"

"Wha-a-a-at!"

"You couldn't do it," said Bunter cheerfully. "Now, don't get excited; I don't want to hurt you—"

"Hurt me!" said Peter dazedly. "You hurt me! Why,

you—you fat earth-worm, you couldn't hurt my little toe! You—you—you—"

Words failed Peter. He felt that it was a time for action, too. His position as undisputed head of No. 7 Study was in danger, and Peter believed in the old maxim of resisting the beginnings. Rebellion had to be nipped in the bud. He made a run at Bunter, and seized him.

"Now, you fat rotter, if you don't want me to bump you hard— Yaroooooh!"

It was Peter who bumped. He descended upon the ground in a sitting position, with a bump that knocked out all his wind. He gasped wildly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I—I—" stammered Peter. "I suppose I'm dreaming. Yes, I must be dreaming! Pinch me, somebody, and see if I'm awake!"

"Pleased!" said Bob Cherry.

"Yow-ow-ow! Leggo, you thundering idiot! Gerrooh! Don't take a lump out of me!" shrieked Peter Todd.

"Well, you asked me—"

Peter Todd staggered to his feet.

"I don't like licking you, Bunter, as you've been so amazingly decent the last day or two," he said, "but this has got to be stopped. You'll be fancying yourself head of the study next if I don't nip it in the bud."

"Well, so I am, if you come to that," said Bunter.

"That settles it!" said Peter grimly. "Come into the gym. There's time for a few rounds with the gloves on before the bell goes. Come on!"

"Any old thing to please!" said Bunter resignedly.

The juniors followed them into the gym with alacrity. They were curious to see the two members of No. 7 Study with the gloves on. That the fat junior could stand up for a single round against so celebrated a fighting-man as Peter Todd seemed wildly impossible. But after the way he had floored Coker, nothing would have surprised them.

The news that Bunter and Peter Todd were going to have the gloves on spread like wildfire, and a crowd of fellows swarmed into the gym to see the fun. That Bunter would be knocked into the middle of next week, or the whole length of the calendar, seemed a foregone conclusion. But as the fat junior donned the gloves, and stood up to Peter Todd, Lord Mauleverer, who was a great judge of boxing form, chirruped:

"Begad! He knows something! Begad!"

And certainly Bunter looked very scientific. Peter Todd put on the gloves with a grim look, and advanced upon Bunter. He meant to finish in a single round. He did not want to hurt the fat junior, but it was strictly necessary to show Bunter who was the chief of No. 7 Study. Peter Todd came on with a rush, and the ring of juniors looked to see Bunter swept off his feet; but he wasn't. He had still one more surprise in store for his Form-fellows. Peter Todd's rush was stopped by a pair of fat fists, and Peter's blows were knocked up, and Peter's chin came with a crash against a hard glove, and Peter went down with a "wallop" that almost shook the floor of the gym. And the juniors gasped.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Bowled—Bunter!

BUNTER stood quite calmly, blinking down at the fallen chief of No. 7 Study over his spectacles. He had not even taken the trouble to remove his glasses.

Peter Todd lay on his back, gasping. It had been a tremendous drive, and the impetus of Todd's rush had added to its force. It would have knocked out a good many fellows. Peter Todd was not knocked out yet, but he was very groggy.

"My only hat!" exclaimed Wharton. "Where did the young rotter learn to hit like that?"

"My dear Bunter," exclaimed Alonzo Todd, pushing forward with a distressful look, "pray do not fight with Peter! This is most distressing. Uncle Benjamin would be shocked—nay, disgusted! My dear Peter—"

"Oh, shut up, Lonzy!" said dear Peter.

"Yes, cheese it, and clear off!" said Bunter. "I'm going to be head of the study while I'm at Greyfriars."

"My dear Bunter—" entreated Alonzo.

But the juniors dragged the gentle Alonzo back. They were keen to see the finish of that astounding fight. The odds were on Bunter now. Skinner was heard offering ten to one in tanners on Bunter, and he found no takers. Tom Dutton helped Peter to his feet. The chief of No. 7 was looking dazed.

"Want some more?" asked Bunter, with a grin.

"More!" gasped Peter. "Why, I'll smash you! I'll slaughter you! I'll mop up the floor with you! Take off those goggles! I mean business this time!"

"I'll hold the specs, Bunt, begad!" chuckled Lord

Mauleverer. "This is as good as Larry Lynx and the Lime-house Chicken, begad!"

"Go it, Bunter!"

"Go it, Peter!" said Tom Dutton, faithful to his leader.

Peter went it. He made a slogging attack that even Bolsover major would have found it difficult to stand up to; but it had no effect on Bunter. His guard was perfect and impenetrable. And every now and then he let out his left or right in a quick counter, and tapped Peter on the nose, or the chin, or in the eye. But for the gloves, Peter would soon have been looking a wreck. As it was, his face assumed a queer kind of mottled appearance, and he was growing groggier and groggier at every tap.

The excitement was almost feverish now. The crowd in the gym increased in numbers, and every fellow who came in stared in astonishment at the sight of Bunter standing up to Peter Todd, and getting the best of it. A terrific right-hander caught Peter on the chin at last, and he went down like a log. When he was helped to his feet, he peeled off the gloves.

"Had enough?" shrieked Skinner.

"Yes, I've had enough," said Peter soberly. "I don't understand it, but I've had enough. That young rotter is as fat as an ox, but he's as strong as a bull. I don't know why he's been taking us all in like this, but he's too good for me."

"Faith, and it bates Banagher intoirely," said Micky Desmond; "and sure Bunter is head o' the study now!"

Peter Todd made a grimace.

"I'll own up," he said. "Bunter's head of the study."

"Bravo, Bunter!"

"No, I ain't!" said Bunter unexpectedly. "I was only joking about that. You're head of the study, Todd, old man. This was only a friendly spar. It's all right."

"Wha-a-a-at!"

If Peter had been astonished by his licking at the hands of the fat junior, he was simply dumbfounded at this generosity in the hour of victory. That Bunter would be anything but cocky and aggressive after his success had never entered Peter's head. Already he had realised what a decidedly rotten time he would have in No. 7 Study, considering the way he had hitherto kept Bunter in order. Bunter peeled off the gloves, and jammed his spectacles on his fat nose, and held out his fat hand to Peter Todd.

"Give us your fist," he said. "It's all right!"

Peter Todd shook hands with him mechanically.

"I know I'm dreaming!" he murmured.

"My dear, dear Bunter," said Alonzo, "this noble conduct—"

"Oh, cheese it!" said Bunter.

And he walked out of the gym with Peter Todd. The fellows were left staring blankly at one another. It was too much for them.

"It's a miracle!" said Bob Cherry, with conviction. "Some silly ass said the age of miracles was past! It ain't—not by long chalks!"

"Peter used to say that he'd make a man of Bunter!" grinned Wharton. "He seems to have done it—with a vengeance. Poor old Peter!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But Peter Todd and Bunter were on excellent terms that day. Peter Todd could take a licking as well as give one, and Bunter's generous conduct after the victory could not fail to touch him. Peter had always felt a sense of duty towards his fat study-mate, and had licked him times out of number for his own good, in the most conscientious way; but now, for the first time, he felt really friendly towards him.

A chap who could lick him like that was worthy of respect, and a chap who could be so decent about it was good enough to be anybody's pal. That was how Peter Todd looked at it, and that day he was chummy with Bunter, and was heard to address him as "old fellow," instead of "silly ass" or "fat duffer"—which was a decided change.

"After this," said Bob Cherry solemnly, "I shouldn't be surprised to see Bunter play cricket to-morrow like W. G. Grace at his best!"

But the Removites grinned at that suggestion. Bunter had surprised them in many ways, but that was a little too much.

That day Bunter was treated by his Form-fellows in a very different manner from the Bunter of old. But he took it very quietly; and the juniors, who were accustomed to

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NEXT MONDAY—

"THE SHADOW OF THE PAST!"

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ONE PENNY.

see William George "swank" on the slightest provocation, marvelled more and more. But they had given up trying to understand it.

The next morning Bunter took his sprint round the Close as usual, but Coker of the Fifth did not offer him any assistance. Horace Coker had wisely decided to leave the surprising fat junior severely alone.

In the Form-room that morning, when Bunter construed a difficult passage in Virgil without a fault, Mr. Quelch opened his eyes, and gave him words of commendation; but the Removites were past being surprised by anything that Bunter did now.

Morning lessons over, all thoughts turned to the cricket-match of the afternoon. Temple, Dabney & Co. of the Fourth were in great spirits. Immediately after dinner they "bagged" Bunter.

Billy Bunter had no great reputation for keeping his word, and up to the last moment Temple was not quite sure of him. But Bunter meant business. He came down to the cricket-ground in flannels with Temple, Dabney & Co., and a general grin greeted his appearance there. Bunter had developed unexpected powers in many directions, but that he could play cricket was too incredible.

Harry Wharton & Co. arrived on Little Side in cheerful anticipation of victory. Hazel had gone over to Cliff House, and he returned as the two captains were tossing the coin, with Marjorie and Miss Clara. The two girls were very curious to see Bunter playing in a Form match.

Bob Cherry arranged seats for them outside the pavilion, and Bunter raised his cricket-cap politely. But he did not roll up and seek to monopolise the Cliff House girls, as of old. It was not till Marjorie beckoned to him that he approached.

"You are playing to-day?" Marjorie asked.

"Yes," said Bunter cheerfully; "against the Remove, I'm sorry to say. Wharton couldn't find room for me in his team—"

"You want a lot of room, you know," murmured Bob Cherry.

"So Temple's taken me on," said Bunter. "It's all the same to me, so long as I get a game. I'm rather keen on cricket!"

"Oh!" said Marjorie.

"Man in!" said Harry Wharton, who had won the toss.

"You're starting with me, Bob!"

"Right-ho!"

Temple led his merry men into the field. He tossed the ball to Bunter.

"First over against Wharton!" he said. "Give him socks!"

"You bet!"

Wharton grinned as he took up his position, and Bunter went on to bowl. Against a bowler like Bunter he did not think much care was necessary. He soon discovered his mistake.

Whiz! Swish!

Harry Wharton swiped at the ball—where he was certain it was—but it wasn't there! He soon knew where it was, however. Clack!

"How's that?" roared the Fourth Form, with one voice.

"My hat!"

"Out!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Harry Wharton, looking dazed, carried out his bat—clean bowled first ball by Bunter!

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Climax!

"BUNTER!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well bowled, Bunter!"

"What price duck's-eggs?"

Marjorie looked inquiringly at Harry as he joined the Cliff House girls, a somewhat disconsolate expression on his handsome face. It was a new experience to the captain of the Remove to be bowled first ball of the first over, and that Bunter should have sent down the ball seemed like insult added to injury.

"How ever did Bunter do that?" asked Marjorie.

"A giddy fluke?" suggested Miss Clara.

Harry Wharton shook his head.

"No," he said honestly, "it was no fluke—it was jolly good bowling. I never knew Bunter could bowl. I never knew he could do a lot of things he's been doing lately. He can bowl—no mistake about that!"

"He's been astonishing the natives lately!" grinned Vernon-Smith. "He's beaten Peter Todd with the gloves"

on, knocked out Coker of the Fifth at jiu-jitsu, does regular exercise in the morning, tells the truth—

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But this is the climax. My only summer hat!" yelled the Bounder. "There goes Nugent!"

Frank Nugent had followed Wharton. He stayed for one ball, which spread-eagled his wicket. Frank came out looking dazed.

"I'm dreaming," he said to Hurree Singh, the next man in—"dreaming fearful dreams! Look out for that fat villain, or you'll get the same!"

"The look-outfulness will be terrific, my esteemed chum!"

And the Nabob of Bhanipur looked out, with all his eyes, as he stood up to the fat bowler. But the "terrific look-outfulness," as Inky described it in his weird English, did not serve him. His leg stump was whipped right out of the ground, and the dusky junior gave it a dolorous look, and returned to the pavilion amid a wild roar.

"Well bowled, Bunter!"

"The hat-trick, by gum!"

"Hooray!" shrieked Temple of the Fourth. "What price duck's-eggs? Ha, ha, ha!"

The Fourth-Formers were in ecstasies. They were beating the Remove at last. Three wickets down for nil in the first over! It was an experience that had never fallen to the lot of Harry Wharton's team before. They rubbed their eyes.

It was true—the deadly truth—three down for nil! There was but one consolation. That deadly bowler was, after all, a fellow in their own Form—a Removeite! But he was playing for the Fourth, and at this rate the Fourth were going to win the match hands down!

"For goodness' sake stop him, Smithy!" said Harry Wharton imploringly, as the Bounder buttoned his gloves, to follow Inky in.

"I'll try," said Vernon-Smith soberly; "but I don't know. That chap's delivery is the finest I've ever seen. I can't believe it's Bunter. It must be his ghost—or else he's hypnotised, or mad, or squiffy! Bunter never could bowl!"

"He's bowling now," said Wharton ruefully. "Who'd have thought it?"

Vernon-Smith went to the wickets. He did not try his usual policy of hitting out for runs. He was only too glad to be able to stop the bowling. And the Remove fellows gave the Bounder a cheer when he stopped three balls in succession, though no runs came.

It was not like Smithy's usual performance with the willow; but, under the amazing circumstances, it was very creditable.

Temple thumped Bunter on his fat shoulders as the field crossed over.

"Good—good—good!" he ejaculated. "This beats everything. Bunter! By Jove, I wish you were in the Fourth! Look here, you've got to make an effort to get your remove, and get into the Fourth! We want you!"

Bunter grinned. He had only one day more at Greyfriars to do it in, but he did not tell Cecil Temple that.

Fry bowled the second over against Bob Cherry. Now the Remove were gratified with some hitting. Bob Cherry could deal with Fry's bowling, and he knocked it all over the field, and twelve runs rewarded him.

Harry Wharton drew a breath of relief. The Remove had broken their duck, at all events. But now Bunter went on again at the other end to bowl to the Bounder. All eyes were upon Vernon-Smith. His powers as a bat were well-known; and all were eager to see how he would deal with Bunter in this miraculous state. The news of that extraordinary display by Bunter had spread, and fellows were coming from far and near to see the match, and to look on and marvel.

The only fellow among the buzzing crowd who did not marvel was a fat fag of the Second Form—Bunter minor. He grinned. Sammy Bunter had kept his own counsel; the third shilling reposed in his pocket, the price of his silence, and he was willing to keep it dark for a whole term, if necessary, at that price. But he grinned and chuckled as he heard the fellows discussing Bunter's marvellous form. Sammy had always known that his Cousin Wally was a first-rate cricketer, so it was no surprise to him. But the rest of the crowd were overwhelmed with wonder.

The Bounder stopped ball after ball with sedulous care, but as he afterwards confessed, every one of them was a "twister," and gave him all he could do to stop it. It was at the last ball of the over that Vernon-Smith ventured to hit out, and he repented it. For the fat bowler was seen to give a jump and a run and a jump again, a fat hand swept in the air—smack! and there was a yell.

"Well caught!"

"Caught and bowled, Bunter! Hurrah!"

"Oh, my only hat!" gasped Vernon-Smith, and he walked off frowning. Four down for twelve, and all that dozen

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 333.

taken by Bob Cherry off Fry's bowling. Fry bowled again to Bob now, with a similar result. Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull scored fourteen between them in that over, so the Remove score jumped to 26. Then Bunter was put on to bowl again. Temple did not spare him. Bunter was to bowl as many overs as the laws of the game allowed. Just then Temple would have been quite willing to remodel the laws of cricket, and let Bunter bowl from start to finish.

Johnny Bull was the first to take a run from Bunter's bowling. It was only a single, but the Remove fellows cheered him heartily. Harry Wharton clapped his hands. Then a lucky catch by Temple deprived Bob Cherry of his wicket—five down for 27. Bulstrode went in to partner Johnny Bull.

Bulstrode stopped Bunter's bowling for the rest of the over. Dabney bowled to Johnny Bull; and the score jumped to 36. The last was a single, so Johnny had the bowling again when Bunter went on. Bunter looked as fresh as a daisy. His exertions had not told on him in the least, so far, and the juniors marvelled as they saw it. Johnny Bull was famous as a stone-waller, and he stone-walled to Bunter; but at the last ball of the over, the fat bowler found a crevice in the stone wall, so to speak. Johnny Bull's bails went down, and the Fourth yelled "How's that?" in huge delight. Six down! Scarcely half an hour had passed, and the Remove had lost six wickets for 36 runs. It was, as Temple had gleefully foretold, an eye-opener for them.

Bulstrode and Mark Linley made the running now; but Bunter was at point, and his eyes were gleaming over his glasses. Bulstrode had taken two from Fry's bowling, and when he hit out again the batsmen started running; but there was a yell at point, as the fat fieldsman held up the ball.

"How's that?"

"Well caught!"

"My only hat!" gasped Harry Wharton. "It—it—it's like a giddy nightmare! That was as good a catch as I've ever seen. Seven down for 38. Man in, Pen."

Penfold went in to join Linley. He added 6 to the score. Then the fat bowler was at work again, and Mark Linley was on his guard. There were ringing cheers when the Lancashire lad scored a 4 from Bunter, and followed it up with a 3. That brought Penfold to the batting end, and the next ball clean-bowled him. Eight down for 45. Peter Todd came on, and added 2, and then another 2; but the last ball of the over scattered his bails, and the Remove were nine down for 49.

"Last man in!"

Tom Brown, the New Zealander, joined Mark Linley. It was the last struggle of the Remove, and Linley and Tom Brown did their best. The score jumped to 56, and then—

"Well caught, Bunter!"

Mark Linley was out. The innings was over, Tom Brown being not out; total 56. The Fourth-Formers almost hugged Bunter. He had more than fulfilled their wildest hopes.

As the field came off, Bunter was surrounded by indignant Removeites.

"You fat bounder, why didn't you tell us you could play?"

Bunter grinned.

"But I did tell you. I told you lots of times. I asked you to play me, Wharton. Don't you remember?"

"Well, ye-e-es; but you've always been such a howling duffer at cricket," stammered Harry. "But you'll jolly well play for us in our next match, I know that."

And Bunter grinned more broadly at the thought of the surprise that would befall the Removeites when the genuine Billy played for them in their next match.

The Fourth-Formers were eager to begin their innings. Temple opened with himself and Dabney. If possible, he intended to win the match with Fourth Form batting. Bunter had kept down the Remove score, and so had given Temple a chance. The captain of the Fourth wanted to beat the Remove on his own, if he could, so far as the batting was concerned.

"Hallo, ain't I batting?" Bunter demanded.

"Later, my son, later!" said Temple loftily. "We don't really need you at the wickets, and this is a Fourth-Form match, anyway."

Bunter blinked at him indignantly.

"My hat! Look here, I want to bat!"

"Later, later—perhaps!" said Temple, with a wave of the hand.

The fat junior snorted.

"No perhaps about it, the way you bat!" he growled.

Bunter was right. Whether Bunter's batting powers equalled his wonderful powers as a bowler, the Removeites could not guess; but they feared so. And so they were glad enough to see that he did not go to the wickets. With the Fourth Form batting they knew how to deal. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh took the first over, and the lordly Temple was down for 2, and came off looking very crestfallen.

"Won't want me to bat—what?" chuckled Bunter.
 "Oh, rats!" said Temple crossly. "Man in, Dab!"
 Dabney went in, and came out with two to his credit. Fry followed him in, and was clean-bowled first ball. The Remove were beginning well. Harry Wharton smiled at the looks of the Fourth Form batsmen. Three wickets down for 4 runs did not look as if they would beat the Remove score, moderate as it was.

"Want me to bat?" chuckled Bunter.
 Temple pretended not to hear. He sent Smith major in next. Smith major survived for a couple of overs, and was then caught out by Harry Wharton. The Remove players were "bucking up," and doing their very best, and their very best was very good. Temple realised that he had only one chance—playing Bunter! And he beckoned to the fat junior.

"You're next, Bunter."
 "Jolly good mind to stay out till last now!" grunted Bunter.

"Oh, play up, old chap!"
 "All right. Gimme my bat."
 And Bunter went on. Another Fourth Form wicket fell. Five down for 4 runs. It was, as Inky remarked, terrific. But now the bowling was coming to Bunter, and all eyes were upon him to see how he shaped at the wicket. Inky's bowling was first-class. But Bunter dealt with it quite easily. The Removites started leather-hunting in that over for the first time. It finished with 15 runs to Bunter's credit. His pace between the wickets was marvellous. The crowd simply gasped as they looked on. How he could carry his weight at that pace was a marvel. And as they remembered the slow and lumbering motions of the Bunter of old, the fellows asked one another if they were dreaming.

Bunter was at the batting end again now, and Tom Brown tried him with every kind of ball. The New Zealand junior was a splendid bowler, and his bowling was fast, and generally dangerous. But Bunter did not find any danger. He took 11 runs from Tom Brown, and so was still batting when Inky bowled again. The Fourth Form score stood at 30 already, most of them due to Temple's wonderful recruit.

"Sure, it bates Banagher!" said Micky Desmond. "He bats as well as he bowls; and, faith, he never could do either before!"

Six for the next over; and then Jones secundus was getting the bowling. He did not get much of it, as Tom Brown caught him out at the second ball. Six down for 36. Then Scott ran a single, and brought Bunter to the batting end. The amount of running he had done did not seem to have tired the fat junior. Perspiration was streaming down his fat face; but, otherwise, he seemed quite fresh. And he made hay of the bowling for the rest of the over. The score stood at 46. Scott was clean-bowled, and Turner came in. Harry Wharton caught him out. Llewellyn of the Fourth was next man in, and he succeeded in adding 4, making the total 50, and then he fell.

"Nine down for 50," chuckled Bob Cherry. "We'll do it yet. They want 7 to win, and it's last man in!"

"Only Bunter's got the bowling!" grunted Wharton.
 Temple was looking on very anxiously now. It was pretty certain that Bunter would not lose his wicket. He seemed invulnerable. But the Fourth-Former at the other end was not much use against the Remove bowling. If Bunter ran a single, the game was up. Temple repented very sincerely

at that moment that he had not put Bunter on to open the innings.

And he feared, too, that Bunter might get even with him by deliberately taking a single, and leaving the batting to his Fourth Form partner. He watched very anxiously. Bunter was getting the bowling from Inky, and he was hitting out. Four—crossing the pitch like lightning—and the ball came in a second too late. Then 2, and there was a rear from the Fourth. They had tied! And Bunter had the batting still. He was loyal to the last. Inky sent down the ball without much hope, and Bunter snicked it away through the slip, and ran the one that was wanted.

Then he came off with his bat tucked under his fat arm, grinning. There was a roar of cheering. The first time there had been a cheer for Bunter on the Greyfriars cricket-ground was that afternoon, but now there was no grudging it.

"Bravo, Bunter! Bravo!"
 "You fat boulder, you're in the Remove team after this!" said Harry Wharton.

"Well, I told you we'd beat you, Wharton!" said Temple airily.

"Oh, rather!" chuckled Dabney.
 And the Fourth Form cricketers walked off, very well satisfied. It was Bunter who had won the match, as a matter of fact; but it counted as a win for the Fourth, of course, and that was what Temple, Dabney & Co. wanted. And so they rejoiced. Marjorie and Clara congratulated Bunter on his wonderful performance, and, to their surprise, found him quite modest and unassuming about it. But Harry Wharton & Co. were not surprised. They had given up being surprised by anything that Bunter might do now.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.
Same Old Bunter!

THE next day Bunter walked out of the gates of Greyfriars by himself in the morning. The fat junior was by this time so popular in his Form, that he could have had a "Sunday walk" was anybody he chose. But he preferred his own company on this especial morning. If the Remove fellows could have seen him when he arrived at Courtfield Station, they might have guessed the reason. For the fat junior waited on the platform for a train in, and when it stopped, he greeted another fat fellow exactly like himself, but dressed in grey, with a straw hat and a cane, and a flower in his coat.

"Here we are again, Billy!"
 Billy Bunter blinked at Wally Bunter.
 "Gone all right?" he asked.
 "Topping!"
 "Had a good time?"
 Wally Bunter sighed.
 "Oh, ripping! The time of my life," he said. "Blessed if I don't feel inclined to pitch you under the train, Billy, and keep it up for good!"

Billy Bunter chuckled.
 "Well, I'm blessed if I know how you found it a good time, but I suppose it's a matter of taste," he said. "I've enjoyed myself first rate. I'd have been jolly glad to stay at Margate, and leave you here for the rest of the term. If it could be fixed—"

Wally shook his head.
 "Got to get back to old Hookit's office," he said. "Besides, the money wouldn't run to it, unless you could pay your own expenses at Margate."

"Ahem! Quite stony! In fact, I've run up rather a little bill at your lodgings. Of course, you don't mind, considering that you've had a topping time here—"

"All the same if I did, I expect," growled Wally. "Well, let's get changed. My train goes in a quarter of an hour."

They hurried out of the station, and changed clothes in the old barn off the Courtfield Road. Wally Bunter, in his own person again, took the train for Margate; and Billy Bunter rolled away towards Greyfriars.

Harry Wharton & Co. spotted him as he came in. They came up to him with surprised looks.

"What have you been doing to your face?" demanded Bob Cherry.

"M-m-my face!"
 "Yes; it's sunburnt all over."
 "Ahem! Is it? The—the sun's very hot this morning," stammered Bunter.

But the juniors stared at him blankly. However hot the sun was, it was certainly extraordinary that Bunter should have become sunburnt to that extent in a couple of hours. However, there it was; extraordinary or not.

Sammy Bunter met his major as he rolled towards the School House. Sammy held out a fat paw as usual, and Bunter blinked at it through his big spectacles.

(Concluded on page 27, column 2.)



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**READ THIS FIRST.**

Ferrers Lord, the famous multi-millionaire, is engaged on one of his adventurous expeditions in company with Ching-Lung (the Prince of China), Rupert Thurston, Gan Waga (the Eskimo), also Prout, Maddock, Barry O'Rooney, and the rest of the famous band of stalwart seamen. Their quest is a field of blue orchids, which is said to exist somewhere up the great Amazon River, and their craft is a small steam launch named the Blue Orchid, which has been captured from Lord's enemy in this enterprise, a German millionaire named Hausmann, who is continually pursuing the millionaire in his magnificent yacht the Medea. The adventurers stumble across a village which is reigned over by a beautiful woman, who is known as Althara the Merciless, and are captured and taken prisoners. Ching-Lung, however, tells her he is a wizard, and by simple, yet wonderful, conjuring, he earns a reward from the queen, and with the exception of Prout, Filson and Vasco—who have disappeared in the forests—the whole party are eventually reunited. A great feast is held, and Barry O'Rooney tells his companions he is very uneasy about Hausmann.

(Now go on with the story.)

**In Terrible Danger!**

Ching-Lung flung a heap of twigs on the fire, which blazed up brightly. Maddock looked unutterably dismal.

"This 'ere is a pretty joke, souse me," he said. "Me and poor Tommy and dear old Joe has knocked about this rocky earth together for nigh on ten years. We've 'ad many a row, souse me, but we was good pals—the best of pals. If I—I—I wasn't a man, I'd—I'd— Oh, souse it! There!"

Ben flung down his cap and stamped on it ferociously.

"They'll come up smiling, Ben," said Ching-Lung. "Keep up your heart, sonny."

Ferrers Lord beckoned to the prince and went up the ladder after Thurston.

"We're inside the head of the idol, Ching," he said. "You're quick at such things, so look about you and find out how it works. You see the large altar in the centre. That is where the devil-man appears. We—the Queen and myself, that is—are going there through a secret passage that runs under the arena."

"All serene. What then? I can work this old peep-show in two ticks."

"They will expect the god to perform," went on Ferrers Lord. "Give us three minutes' grace and then set it going."

"All serene," added Ching-Lung again. "Just shout when you're making a start."

The glare of the torches flooding through the eye-holes, nostrils, and teeth of the idol afforded plenty of light. The mechanism was simple but effective.

"And everything in the garden was lovely," said Ching-Lung. "Working an idol ought to suit me down to the very ground, Rupert, for I've often been told I'm a very idle worker. See that handle? That turns the spectacle arrangement and brings the different glasses over his eyes to make them change colour."

"But we must have strong lights behind for that."

"Here are the lamps. Old Charkoni left everything ready. You can grind the bellows with your foot and make him breathe fire till all's blue. That you, Barry? You're the chap I want. If you hang on to that rope and pull when you're told the gentleman will gnash his teeth."

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 333.

"All right, sor," said Barry gloomily. "Bedad, ut's me own teeth Oi ought to be gnashin' wid sorrow this day."

Ching-Lung could give the Irishman no comfort, so he hurried into the cave below. Ferrers Lord was telling the Queen how to address her warriors. Tarface and Maddock sat on opposite sides of the fire, and it was hard to say which of them looked the more melancholy.

"Same old trick," thought Ching-Lung, examining the windlass. "A lot of stones and scrap-iron rattled together in a tank. Now, Ben, old boy, don't be so doleful. You'll be dead a long, long time. Pull yourself together."

"I've got the proper blues, souse me."

"What's the good of that, man? When I shout to you, grind away at this handle for all you are worth. What! drinking again, Tarface, you little wretch? Well, it doesn't matter much. You're about as useful drunk as you are sober, which isn't saying much for you."

Ferrers Lord called his name and Ching-Lung went over to him.

"I think I have arranged it all with the Queen," said the millionaire. "Only one man seems to have escaped—the one we saw—and, therefore, they cannot have heard that the village has been taken. The danger is that when we do tell them, we may not be able to control them. Whether Hausmann is dead or alive, we may be sure that the Germans will not allow themselves to be taken by surprise. If those poor fools insist on making an attack, there will be nothing short of a massacre."

"Humph!" grunted the prince. "We don't want that, Our skins pretty well depend on theirs."

"Quite so. If they will keep quiet, they can pester the Germans to madness and make it so hot that they will be compelled to attack us. Then we can choose our own ground. I am terribly anxious about our poor lads. If the warriors will listen to reason, we shall know the best or worst in a few hours, for I shall get them to hunt every inch of the ground. Do your best with the idol, for they have implicit faith in its powers."

"I'll give them a regular benefit, old chap. Good-bye! The thing is fit for action whenever you like."

"Give us five minutes, then. My watch is there, in case yours is not going. Good-luck!"

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Althara the Queen took a clumsy wooden key from its hook and unlocked a wooden door so cleverly painted that none of them had noticed it. With an encouraging nod to Ching-Lung and a cheery word to Maddock, Ferrers Lord followed the guide into the darkness.

"Don't forget to grind when I holler, bo'sun."

"'Ow am I to know when to stop, souse me?" asked Maddock. "It'll be no use 'ollerin' arter the thing's started."

"I'll send Barry down. Just five minutes to," he added, consulting the millionaire's watch and hurrying up the ladder. "Time to shut out the light, Rupert."

He gave a last glance downwards at the packed arena with its circles of flaming torches and shining spears.

"Give that handle a quiet twist, Ru."

Thurston obeyed, and black shutters fell over the eye-holes, nostrils, and mouth. Striking a match, Ching-Lung lighted the lamps which burned with a strong, white glare.

"I'll see to the fire-spitting business," he said. "Charkoni was a good hand at making squibs if size means anything. Here's a beauty six feet long, and here's his twin brother." He fitted the ends into two iron rings opposite the nostrils of the idol. "Where's his peep-holes?"

It was obvious that Charkoni had possessed some way of viewing the effect of his jugglery on the worshippers while the idol was hurling forth its terror of noise and flame. It took Ching-Lung no time to discover it—a black bag that fitted over the watcher's head and communicated with a hole in the chin of the image, letting no light escape.

"Time's up, boys. Are you ready? Give Maddock a yell to count six slowly, and go! Now for the music! Only one turn till I tell you, Ru, and you pull easily, Barry. One—two—three—four—five—Rip!"

Ching-Lung wormed his head into the bag. Maddock was a second late. A deep moan burst from the worshippers as the great eyes of the idol slowly opened and glared down. The hideous mouth moved and omitted its awful roar. The warriors sprang to their feet, waving spears and torches, and then beating out the torches, they sank upon their knees and covered their eyes. The cressets had already burned out.

The two crimson shafts of light that streamed from the eye-sockets of the god rested on the central altar. All around was dark. And amid the inferno of sound, Ching-Lung suddenly saw two figures standing there on the altar—Ferrers Lord and the Queen!—with the ravenous jaguars leaping to try and reach them.

### How Prout Went in Search of Loot, and Became Loot Himself!

Prout, Joe, Filson, and the little stoker shook hands with Vasco. They pushed the plank across the mysterious chasm. No sounds of music ascended now from the black pit. Vasco hurried away through the tunnel, and then the hungry men tramped back into the twilight. Prout sat down under the column to smoke a thoughtful pipe.

"Ain't you starvin', by honey?" he asked suddenly.

"Ain't you?" said Filson.

"Rabid," answered the steersman. "I could eat bricks spread wi' margarine! Things is gettin' serious."

They were all ravenous, and the prospects of a meal seemed far from rosy.

"If we could get to sleep we shouldn't feel it," said Joe; "but it isn't so easy when you're hollow inside. If Vasco isn't back in half an hour, we can pretty well reckon that he's managed to get out. He's took on a risky job, but he knows what he's doing. It won't take him long to get down to the village. I jolly well wish him luck. We shall be in Queer Street pretty sharp if he don't strike lucky."

Prout growled out something unintelligible, and stretched himself out to slumber.

"There's no need to keep a watch, is there, d'ye think, Joe?" said Filson.

"Shouldn't think so," said the carpenter. "I don't see how anybody can cross that 'ole unless they bring a plank wi' 'em. We sha'n't get into any trouble from that direction, mate. We'll give Vasco about four hours. He ought to turn up by then."

"And supposing he doesn't?"

"Oh, if he don't, we'll go arter him!" said Joe. "We might as well be shot as die of starvation."

Conversation languished. They tried to sleep, but they were too hungry. The stars overhead looked very cold and distant, and the breeze made a queer humming noise among the caves. Joe got up, and began to walk to and fro.

"Which of you isn't asleep?"

"None of us is asleep, by honey," growled Prout; "and we ain't likely to be, neither!"

"Then let's slide out of this, chaps; I can't stick no more of it," said Joe. "It's fair maddening to lie 'ere thinking our heads off. Maybe we'll miss Vasco; but I've got a pocket-book and pencil, and Vasco can read. How about leaving a message? What do you say?"

"Anything's better than this," agreed Filson. "This is torture."

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NEXT  
MONDAY—

"THE SHADOW OF THE PAST!"

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Prout said nothing, but he acted promptly. He struck a match, and by its feeble light Joe pencilled a message to the guide, telling him they would return if all went well. The paper was pegged to the grass beneath the column. By the light of another match they safely crossed the plank. The night was not particularly dark, and it was practically impossible to miss the path.

"Hallo!" said Prout at last. "Vasco's got through. He's managed to shift the stone!"

"Then get through afore the rummy thing shuts down," said Joe. "You can never trust these outlandish arrangements. Where's Filson? Are you all right, Filson?"

"Close behind," replied the engineer.

They went boldly across the open plain towards the village. "Whoa! Easy all!" said Prout. "I guess there's only about 'alf a mile to go. One man will run a sight less risks than four, by honey, so I propose as I go fust and you wait 'ere. There's sense in that proposition."

"Why should you go?"

"Because I'm in command, Joseph, and the commanding officer pleases himself," said the steersman. "You just squat down and wait. Them's the orders, and if you don't obey 'em I'll 'ave you tried for mutiny. 'Ere's a nice dry hollow, and that tree'll mark the spot, so I can't miss you."

Both Joe and Filson protested against the arrangement, but Prout was firm. With anxious eyes they watched his figure dwindle into the darkness.

"Mighty quiet and still, isn't it?" said Joe.

There was not a sound except the faint rustle of the forest.

"It is quiet," answered the engineer. "Has Hausmann wiped them all out, do you think?"

"Shouldn't wonder. He must have brought a regular army of thieves and wasters up with him from Obides to do it. The niggers looked a smart lot, but you couldn't expect 'em to put up much of a show against bullets. What's that yelling?"

It was only a wild cat in the forest, but the noise was startling. It made Thomas Prout start and look back.

"Just like a kid howling," he muttered. "Is it fancy, or can I see the huts? Yes, that's them, by honey!"

He was only a couple of hundred yards from the outer ring of huts. Prout bent almost double, and crept along, listening intently. In a few moments, still listening, he had pressed himself flat against the mud wall of one of the huts. The silence was alarming; the little town seemed dead.

"By honey! What if they've massacred the lot and cleared out!" thought the steersman, with a shudder of dread.

Prout edged along and came to a narrow lane. He could see nothing, hear nothing, until suddenly a restless cock began to crow. It was quite a relief to the steersman.

"By honey, there's something alive, if it's only a rooster!" he mumbled. "It wouldn't be like Hausmann to leave the place wi'out burning it, so I expect they're still— Ugh!"

His foot struck something, and, putting down his hand, Prout touched the icy face of a corpse. He secured the dead warrior's spear, which was lying beside him. Then he pushed open the rush door of a hut, and, entering, closed the flimsy door carefully behind him. He struck a match.

"Those who weren't killed must have bolted," he thought. "Hausmann's lot are sure to be in the palace, and they're just as sure to have plenty of sentries about. If they've nailed the chief and the rest of the boys they'll be at the palace, too, unless—" Prout ended by gritting his teeth together. The thought was too dreadful to put into words.

He looked round in vain for food. There was a little raw maize in a jar, but nothing else. Prout left the hut and walked along the narrow lane which joined the street. This, too, was utterly deserted. Even the hungry curs seemed to have fled before the conquerors.

"By honey, I mustn't lose my way!" said the steersman to himself. "Things are bad enough as it is, but if I go and get lost, the whole bag of tricks will be— Look alive! Who's that?"

A musical whistle struck his ears. Someone was whistling in perfect time and tune. The strains grew louder and clearer, and then a lantern flashed into view. A man with a rifle on his shoulder swung briskly along to his own music, and Prout nimbly skipped into an adjacent hut.

"By honey, the cheek of 'em!" said Prout. "That chap ain't afraid of much."

He peeped out after the retreating figure. The lantern fell with a clatter into the dust. There was a hushed cry and a faint thud, and the whistling ceased abruptly. Then came a soft patter of naked feet, and Prout saw another figure running up the road. The runner must have possessed the eyes of an owl.

"Hands up, or I shoot!" he cried.

"By honey, it's Vasco!" said Prout. "Fancy meetin' you, by all that's lucky! Did you kill him?"

"No; I only stunned him," said the guide quietly. "I needed his rifle and revolver. Come back with me to gag him, for he will begin to howl the moment he comes round. If we could speak his language, we should soon drag the truth out of him. Do you speak German?"

"Not enough to fill a thimble, Vasco. I never could get on wi' that lingo. By honey, I'm mighty glad I tumbled against you, messmate. We 'ad to come—couldn't stick it any longer. Have you found out anything?"

"Nothing." The guide knelt down, and swiftly gagged the senseless man. "They have a strong guard round the palace, and I could not get near. I heard them talking, but, of course, I could not understand. They were singing and laughing, so I suppose they were drinking. That will do. They will not find him till daylight."

He dragged the man into the dense shadow and put the broken lamp beside him.

"Where was most of the fighting?" asked Prout.

"Near the palace; the bodies lie thick there. But I do not understand. These warriors must be great cowards, for only a few scores seem to have been slain."

"And the rest have clapped on all sail—eh?" said Prout. "Hausmann's chaps don't seem to think much of 'em. This chap came along as if he owned the place. By honey, I can't make it out neither! They looked full of fight to me, not at all the sort to bolt when the bullets began to fly. What's the move now? I'd better take the orders from you over his job, I'm thinking. You're more accustomed to such jobs."

The guide handed him the rifle and cartridge bandolier, keeping the revolver for himself.

"You had better search for food," he said, "and await me here. I will try again to creep past the sentries and learn what has happened. There will be food in some of those huts."

"How long shall I wait?"

"Not more than half an hour. I may not be able to return, but do not let that make you anxious, for I do not think they will take me. Be cautious, for they may send out a patrol."

"All serene. I'll keep my eyes and ears open, by honey!" said Prout. "Jolly good luck, Vasco!"

The Indian went off at a swift, silent trot. Prout picked up the lamp. The glass was broken, but that did not matter to the steersman. He went into another hut and lighted the lamp. There was nothing there to suggest a hasty flight, and no sign of disorder. The hut obviously belonged to a fisherman, for it contained a heap of nets and a quantity of dried fish. Prout took the fish thankfully.

The next hut was even more profitable, for it yielded several fowls and a small bag of rice. Prout packed up the loot in a piece of fishing-net and slung it over his shoulder. Then he sat down to wait for Vasco.

"Time must be about up," he mused. "He said 'alf an hour. By honey, I feel more comfortable waitin' out yonder wi' the boys than 'ere. Vasco's as game as they make 'em. He won't throw up the sponge till he gets what he's after. Jee-hosh-ophat!"

There was the sound of a shot, and it brought Prout to his feet at a bound. Perhaps it was Vasco's death-knell. Utter silence followed. Another ten minutes went by. Peering out, the steersman was astounded to see a half-naked figure standing in the middle of the road not twenty paces from him. The man was leaning on a spear in a listening attitude. He straightened himself and dashed away like the wind.

"One of Althara's boys," said the steersman. "P'r'aps they haven't caved in yet. By honey, here's another!" A second warrior had appeared like a ghost. He, too, rushed away.

"It's beginning to look ugly," mused Prout. "They won't be particular arter this. They'll lump all white men together as a bad lot now. By honey, I don't like it!"

Prout felt that it would be quite as dangerous to meet any of Althara's warriors as to meet Hausmann himself. What had occurred had put them in an ugly temper, and they would not be likely to discriminate.

Every white man would be a deadly foe. The position was becoming acutely dangerous. It was useless to wait any longer for Vasco. Making sure that the coast was clear, and fervently hoping that he would escape with a sound skin, the steersman cocked his rifle and turned into the narrow lane.

"By honey!" he gasped.

Three gleaming spears were levelled at his breast. It flashed through his mind that if he pressed the trigger the report of the rifle would rouse the Germans, and probably cost Vasco his life. He ducked, and a spear went hissing above his head. Then he rushed in and struck out wildly. It was no use. He went down, and the naked warriors fell on him and pinned him fast.

#### Althara Wins Over the Warriors—Back to the Bungalow—A Merry Meeting.

Ching-Lung, with his head in the bag, laughed long and loud. In spite of their perils and anxiety, his Highness could not control his mirth. The whole situation was so absurd; so like a scene from a comic opera, as Ferrers Lord had said. The idol roared and gnashed and glared, the worshippers bowed reverently, and there, in his absurd kilts, with the stately and handsome queen beside him, stood the millionaire on the sacred altar.

"Funniest thing I ever knew!" chuckled the Prince. "He ought to give 'em a Highland fling and bring down the house." He jerked his head out and bawled to Barry O'Rooney: "Go and tell Ben to cheese it, Barry!"

Barry could not hear a word, but, guessing what was wanted, he scrambled down into the lower cave. Ching-Lung's head went into the bag again. The warriors were on their feet, and the Queen had stretched out her arm. All eyes were fixed on the altar. By degrees the ear-splitting noise died away.

"Give 'em a white light, Ru," cried Ching-Lung. "That's a lot better."

The white beams showed up the two figures vividly. There was a crash of voices.

"Althara, Althara! Amekeenish, Amekeenish!"

"My lucky stars! They think poor McNish has come to life!" said Ching-Lung. "This is too funny for words, Ru. Can you hear 'em yelling?"

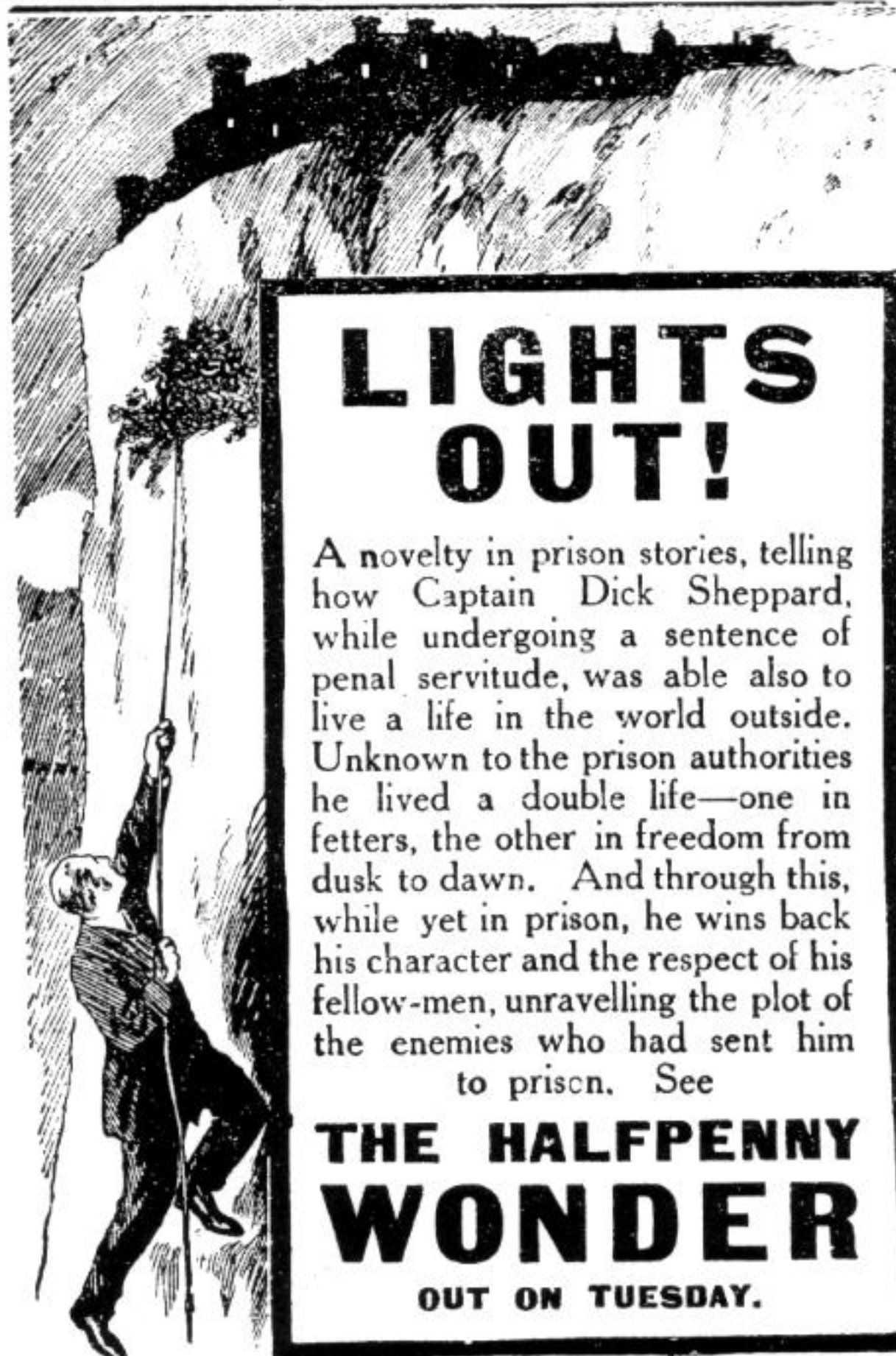
"I should be stone deaf if I couldn't!"

"I only asked because I fancied the row Maddock made might have deafened you," said Ching-Lung.

"I say, those kilts of Lord's take the biscuit! Come and have a look."

Thurston was in no mood to appreciate the humour of the situation. The diabolical noise seemed to have terrified and cowed the jaguars, for they had abandoned their attempts to gain a footing on the altar. The shouts of the warriors were silenced as Althara waved her hand.

"My children," she cried in clear, ringing tones, "I have come to the Feast of Treason, for the Queen is above all



## LIGHTS OUT!

A novelty in prison stories, telling how Captain Dick Sheppard, while undergoing a sentence of penal servitude, was able also to live a life in the world outside. Unknown to the prison authorities he lived a double life—one in fetters, the other in freedom from dusk to dawn. And through this, while yet in prison, he wins back his character and the respect of his fellow-men, unravelling the plot of the enemies who had sent him to prison. See

## THE HALFPENNY WONDER

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laws. I am tired of bloodshed and of witchcraft. To-night one of my people shall die."

She paused. People drew in long, hoarse breaths, and stared at her in stupefaction. They did not seem to grasp the news. She spoke again.

"All those who have been smelted out and slain have been those whom the devil-men have hated. I will have no more devil-men and wizards. Charkoni the Cheat is dead."

A wild roar of cheering followed. Not a man knew when he marched into that ghastly arena whether he would live to see another sunrise. The sense of relief was immense.

"They are in a good humour," muttered Ferrers Lord. "That is something."

"While I rule you," said the Queen, "no man shall be put to death unless he breaks the laws of our land. I come here, my children, with glad tidings, but with a heavy heart. But for this vile Feast of Treason which called you away from me, all would have been well. I bid you be silent so that all may hear."

She turned round, and her eyes swept the circle of eager faces. The jaguars began to howl.

"Slay the beasts!" cried Althara. "We have fed them enough."

The warriors swarmed over the barricade. In three minutes the battle was ended.

"My children," said the Queen, "my heart is heavy. When Charkoni summoned you away, leaving me with but half my bodyguard, the town was attacked by white men and taken. My warriors lie dead in the streets. They were brave, but they could not stand before the firesticks."

Her voice was drowned in a howl of rage. Ferrers Lord shrugged his shoulders.

"Speak faster, Althara. Slow speech is dangerous now." The warriors listened sullenly to the story of the attack on the village, and then angry shouts arose.

"Stranger," said the Queen, "they are hungry to attack the white dogs, but they will obey me. To-night they will herd up the cattle and take them to a secure refuge. Now that Charkoni is dead, Okarni shall command my warriors. He is old and wise and cunning. I will speak with him."

A grey-haired warrior stepped to the foot of the altar. He was probably not more than fifty years old, but men age swiftly on the Amazon. He bowed low.

"Okarni," said Althara, "you have served me faithfully, and I never needed faithful servants more than I need them this day. The white stranger is very wise. He, too, is a warrior and a brave one. Spears and shields cannot battle against firesticks. You and the stranger shall lead my people. Send out scouts, Okarni, and see what is doing in our city. The white stranger has lost some of his comrades. Seek them high and low, but do them no hurt. Bring them to the little house when ye find them."

Okarni bowed again. Presently nearly a hundred warriors left the arena at a trot. Okarni uttered a few hoarse shouts of command, and with a thunderous salute the others marched out.

"Queen," said Ferrers Lord, as they walked back to down the tunnel, "where are the women and the little ones?"

"In a secret stronghold made long ago by the hands of the dead. Once, the legend says, a great race lived here, and they raised these pillars and temples. But the fierce tribes around coveted their riches and they were ever at war. And so at last they became weaker and weaker, and made strongholds and hiding-places until a pestilence smote them and they all died. Amekeenish found out many things which he has written down, but none can read it."

The next moment they were back in the cave. "How has the show gone?" asked Ching-Lung. "Have you made it all right, do you think?"

"I trust so, Ching. We have delayed the massacre in any case, and put an end to the smelling-out. We must hear news very soon, for they have sent out about a hundred spies."

"Where do we go now?"

"Back to the bungalow," answered the millionaire. "Good biz! Poor old Gan will have missed me, I expect."

A tramp through the darkness brought them to the bungalow. To Ching-Lung's great joy, Gan-Waga was sleeping soundly, and there was not a symptom of fever about him. The troubles of Tarface were not yet over, for in about half an hour Okarni arrived, and the unhappy interpreter was put to work to translate. In the midst of it all there was noise of tramping feet and grounding spears. And then an amazed voice cried:

"By honey, it's the blubberbiter!"

"And, by honey," shrieked Ching-Lung frantically, "it's Tommy Prout!"

"Tommy! Souse me, it's Tommy!" howled Maddock.

(Another splendid long instalment of this grand serial next Monday.)

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## THE DARK HORSE!

(Continued from page 23.)

"What's that for?" he demanded.

"My bob!" said Sammy.

"Your bob! You silly young ass, you'll get a thick ear if you ask me for a bob," growled the Owl of the Remove.

Sammy jumped and stared at him.

"Oh!" he said. "It's you!"

"Of course it's me, you fat idiot," said Billy Bunter.

"Oh, I know all about it!" chuckled Sammy; and he walked away—minus his usual shilling. He was not likely to be able to extract any shillings from the genuine William George.

Billy Bunter was amazed by the respect and friendliness he received from the Removites that afternoon. He could not understand it at first. But references to the late happenings enlightened him, and he realised that his Cousin Wally had considerably improved his reputation for him during his absence. And, finding himself a person of some consequence now, Billy Bunter naturally assumed cocky airs, and swanked about in a way that made the fellows stare at him.

"I knew it wouldn't last," said Bob Cherry, with a sad shake of the head. "The change was too sudden! Bunter's the same old Bunter again now."

He was! The next day, after morning lessons, he scanned the letter-pack, and announced that he had been expecting a postal-order, and borrowed ten shillings from Lord Mauleverer on the strength of it. Evidently he was the same old Bunter. Having heard of the heroic rescue, and Miss Penelope Primrose's gratitude and admiration for the same, he borrowed Wharton's bicycle without leave, and pedalled over to Cliff House on Tuesday, and came back with a huge cake. And this time his minor did not get a "whack," by any means; neither did he share it with No. 7 Study.

The change evidently was not lasting.

But even if the Owl of the Remove was developing once more his old traits, still it was not to be supposed that he had lost his skill as a cricketer; and on Wednesday afternoon Wharton asked him to play in a match with the Shell. Bunter consented willingly. He had always believed himself a good cricketer.

But his performances at that match made the Remove fellows almost weep.

He was bowled first ball at the wicket; and when he was put on to bowl against the Shell, he nearly brained mid-on with the first ball, and point with the second. And then Harry Wharton dragged him off the bowling-crease by main force.

"B-b-but I say—"

"Get off!" roared Wharton, lifting his boot.

And Bunter rolled off, grumbling, and the Shell won that match quite easily. Bunter's wonderful form as a cricketer had vanished; and his popularity, by this time, had vanished too. The same afternoon Peter Todd found him gathering information, in his old way, with his fat ear to a keyhole, and kicked him along the Remove passage. And Bunter fled, yelling. Evidently he was no longer a boxer.

The Remove had been astounded by the change in Bunter in the first place. But this change back to his old self was more astounding still. There was some mystery about it, and they puzzled over it. But Bunter did not choose to enlighten them. He preferred to bask in the reflected glory of his cousin. Indeed, but for Sammy Bunter, the Remove would probably never have discovered the truth. But Sammy, after several ineffectual attempts to extract the price of silence from his major, gave the whole story away. And then the Remove understood.

They were amazed by the explanation of the little imposture. But it was not, as Bob Cherry remarked, so amazing as a change in Bunter for the better. If Bunter had really turned out a decent chap, that would have been the climax.

After Sammy's revelations, Billy Bunter was solemnly seized, and bumped in the common-room; not so much for having taken the Remove in, but for having allowed himself to be played in a Form match by mistake.

"You fat rotter!" said Wharton witheringly. "If you'd owned up in time, we might have saved that match; I mean we should have saved it! Bump him!"

And Bunter was bumped hard.

As he crawled away afterwards, Alonzo Todd gave him some really good advice.

"My dear Bunter, why not try to turn over a new leaf, and grow like your very estimable cousin, and then—"

"Oh, go and eat coke!" snapped Bunter.

Turning over a new leaf, and growing like his estimable cousin, was not in Billy Bunter's line. Never again was Greyfriars likely to ring to the shout of "Bravo, Bunter!"

THE END.

(Another splendid long complete tale of Harry Wharton & Co. next Monday, entitled "THE SHADOW OF THE PAST!" by Frank Richards. Order early.)

# My Readers' Page



WHOM TO WRITE TO :  
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## REMARKABLE CRICKET FEATS. Extraordinary Bowling Records.

No other bowlers can equal the records of those who wear the colours of Yorkshire, and that is the reason why the Tykes always play such a big part in the county tournament. And these men are not found by luck, for while other counties are hunting around for budding batsmen, the White Rose officials are looking for and developing bowlers, and that is why they have turned out such wonderful trundlers as Peate, Peel, Hirst, Rhodes, Haigh, Newstead, and many others. Most counties can point to one or two good performances by their bowlers, but where can we find anything to compare with this: Notts., all out 13, skittled by Hirst and Haigh; Worcester 25, when Sedgwick got going; Northampton 15, with Rhodes and Hirst in form; and Australia 23, with F. S. Jackson and Rhodes on the job?

Why, even Lord Hawke has had a turn, and the particular ball now rests on a sideboard in his drawing-room. It was in Ottawa, and the Yorkshire captain was persuaded to "have at" the batsman himself, and managed to hit the wicket, a feat that so surprised Mr. C. W. Wright that he had the ball suitably mounted and presented it to Lord Hawke.

Since that time he has often been heard to declare that the age of miracles is not yet past! One most extraordinary bowling feat was the dismissal of the Australians at Lord's in 1896 by Hearne and Pougher for 18. Attewell started with Hearne, who captured four wickets for four runs. When the score had reached 18, Pougher displaced Attewell, and the Leicester representative got rid of the remaining six batsmen for nothing. Hearne also greatly distinguished himself by claiming ten victims in the second innings.

When Albert Trott had his benefit match some years back he evidently thought he ought to do something out of the ordinary, and this he accomplished by performing a double hat trick, and taking four wickets with four balls in one innings, a feat that is without a parallel in modern cricket. A most sensational piece of bowling was seen a year or two ago, in a match between two very strong teams, who, however, were not quite in the first flight. One side had scored just over 150 runs, and the other in reply knocked up 97, at which total the first wicket fell. The bowler was changed, and in a few minutes it was finished, the new man capturing nine wickets for no runs in three overs.

Certain great catches will live for ever in cricket history, notably that one of A. C. MacLaren in a Gentlemen and Players match in 1899. Hirst hit a lob to square leg, low and hard, and MacLaren had to sprint fully fifteen yards along the edge of the ring before he intercepted the ball, which was only about eighteen inches off the ground, and it was another 20 yards before he could pull himself up.

A somewhat similar catch was made by a player named Banks. W. J. Ford was the batsman, and Banks had to go at full speed to reach the ball at all. He was unable to hold it, but knocked it forward and gathered it in safely at the next attempt when it was about six inches off the turf. Ulyett once caught and bowled Bonnor! How it was done no one could see, for the ball was struck with the full force of the latter's mighty frame, and all eyes were turned to the boundary as the sharp crack was heard. Everyone was thunderstruck when they discovered what had happened, and Ulyett was called over the coals for attempting such a dangerous thing, as the slightest misjudgment must have meant broken bones.

(Another Grand Cricket Article next week.)



### FOR NEXT MONDAY:

#### "THE SHADOW OF THE PAST!" By FRANK RICHARDS.

This splendid, long, complete story of the chums of Greyfriars School, entitled as above, will appear in next week's "Magnet" Library.

Vernon-Smith, the reformed Bounder of Greyfriars, is haunted by the shadow of his past; he is genuinely anxious to run straight, but the consequences of his former folly seem to forbid it. Harry Wharton's help is enlisted, and he makes a plucky attempt to set things straight, but only succeeds in making things worse for the unfortunate Bounder. Driven into a corner, Vernon-Smith sets his teeth, and determines to deal with the matter in his own way. That this is a perilous and desperate way goes without saying; but reckless determination succeeds in this case, and Vernon-Smith is at last successful in lifting from his shoulders

#### "THE SHADOW OF THE PAST!"

#### A NOVEL IDEA.

In No. 24—the current issue—of our grand Coloured Companion Paper, "Chuckles," a new note has been struck in one of the popular complete stories, which is a special feature of the paper. "To the Rescue," a story of the chums of Greyfriars and their rivals of Courtfield Council, by Frank Richards, is founded upon a plot supplied by one of "Chuckles" readers. Mr. Richards is, of course, the author of the popular Harry Wharton stories which appear in "The Magnet" Library every week, and the collaboration of this famous author and one of his readers has produced a very fine story, invested with a special interest. "To the Rescue" is the first of these stories to be written under the conditions of the "Chuckles" "Postcard Plot" Competition, in which all "Chuckles" readers are invited to submit plots or bare ideas for these stories, written on postcards, for Mr. Richards' inspection. Suitable ideas will be "written up" into complete stories by Mr. Richards' able pen, and will appear in "Chuckles" from time to time. A Cash Prize will be awarded to the sender of each "Postcard Plot" thus used.

This novel Competition, and the splendid, complete, school story to which it gives such a peculiar interest, are only two of the good things which "Chuckles" offers. Get a copy this week, and enjoy the amusing antics of Breezy Ben and Dismal Dutchy, Rufus Rubberneck, and Boxo, the Muscular Marvel, and all the rest of the merry "Chuckles" chums. Every copy of "Chuckles" is beautifully printed in colours, and is full of absolutely clean and wholesome fun, as well as the best of fiction. It is the bright paper for the whole family to read—and it only costs one halfpenny! No wonder it has scored an astounding success!

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