

BUNTER THE BLADE!

Grand Long Complete School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co. in This Issue.



BILLY BUNTER IS CAUGHT IN THE ACT!

(A Screamingly Funny Incident in the Magnificent Long Complete School Tale contained in this issue.)

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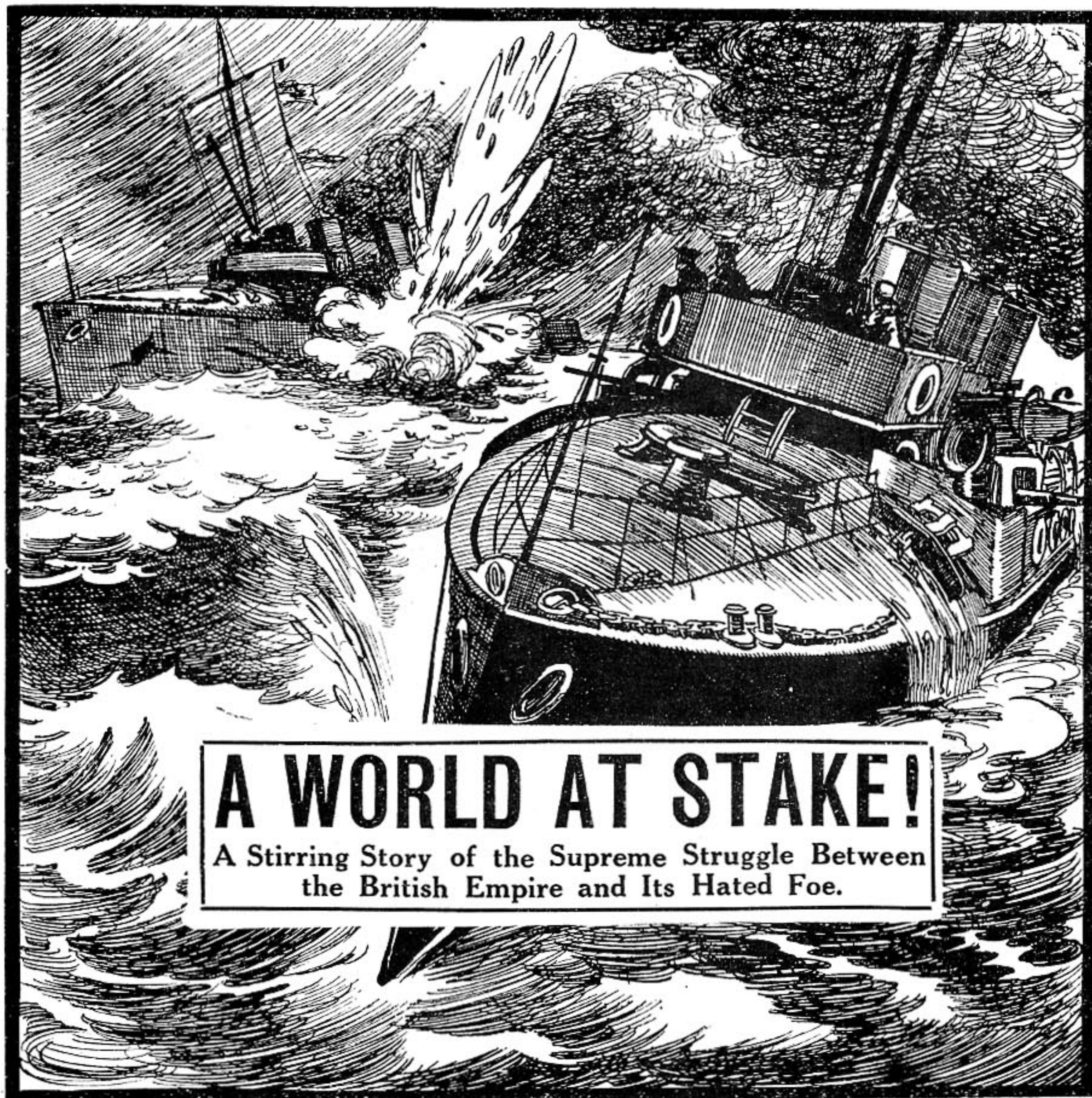


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READ THIS FIRST.

Thorpe and Dick Thornhill, brothers, and inventors of the airship Night Hawk, play a prominent part in the war with Germany on land and sea. The Germans invade Britain, and are in possession of the country round Edinburgh, with the Kaiser in supreme command. After a heavy bombardment by the British Fleet, the town surrenders, and the British Field-Marshal discovers that the Kaiser has escaped, and that, in consequence, the war is likely to drag on indefinitely. He, therefore, instructs Thorpe Thornhill to proceed to Germany in the Night Hawk, and destroy the dockyards and battleships at Kiel. After succeeding in his mission, Thorpe steers the airship to Berlin, where he hears that the Kaiser is reviewing his troops. The young Britisher descends, and is successful in capturing the Kaiser during the proceedings. He allows his captive, however, to take leave of the Empress, and as they approach Potsdam an officer rides up, bearing a letter from the Tsar of Russia, offering an alliance between him and the German Emperor, an alliance which would, even at the last moment, turn the scale against the hitherto victorious Britons.

(Now go on with the story.)

Thorpe Thornhill and the Emperor.

Not daring to denude her island home of troops, how could England hope to hold India against the advance of Russia? For, quick to read the veiled language of diplomacy, William of Germany knew that such was the meaning of his Imperial cousin's letter.

Suddenly the Russian officer, who was watching every expression of the German Emperor's face, saw a look of unutterable despair creep into his eyes. William had just remembered that he was no longer a free agent, but had, to all intents and purposes, given his word not to escape from the Thornhills.

For several minutes he remained with bowed head and drooped hands, thinking deeply; then a change came once more over his face, a look of determination flashed from his eyes, and, turning to the Russian, he said:

"It is inexpedient to write what I would say. Hasten back to your Imperial master, who, this letter tells me, is at Warsaw; say I will meet him there to-morrow. Say, further, that I am surrounded by spies and traitors, and dare not therefore entrust my words to a letter."

The Russian bowed; then, turning his horse's head in the

direction of Berlin, set forth at a hand-gallop, and half an hour later the special train by which he had come was bearing him and his all-important message towards Germany's eastern frontier.

In the meantime, the members of the German Emperor's staff had been watching the interview between their Imperial master and the messenger with the greatest anxiety.

"The Emperor is interested in his letter," hazarded Thorpe to the Chancellor.

For a moment the other did not speak, but shifted uneasily in his saddle. At last he broke out with:

"By thunder, yes! Although you are fighting only for your country, Herr Thornhill, I believe you are doing Germany a good turn at the same time by forcing the Emperor to sue for peace. Yonder man wears a Russian uniform, and what else can come from Russia but a declaration of war?"

Thorpe looked with more interest at the messenger, and saw that his informant's words were true. The uniform was that of a Russian dragoon.

The discovery made him vaguely uneasy, though why he could not exactly tell. However, he determined to find out, if possible, whither the messenger was bound.

Muttering a few words of apology, he turned his horse and galloped off to where, some two hundred yards in the rear of the staff, the Avenger was hovering.

Dick saw him coming, and lowered the machine to within speaking distance.

"Keep an eye on that chap talking with the Emperor, Dick; and, when he goes, follow him. I expect you will find he makes his way straight to the station, perhaps calling at the Russian Embassy on his way. Anyhow, be back at the palace at eight o'clock this evening. I want to have the Emperor safely in London by to-morrow morning."

Dick nodded; and when the interview between the Russian officer and the German Emperor terminated, the former, not knowing that the airship was an English vessel, thought little of the fact that it was hovering behind him through the suburbs of Berlin to the station, above which it waited until a short train of three carriages—evidently a special—steamed forth in an easterly direction, and Dick knew that the man he had been sent to watch had returned to Russia.

In the meantime, the Emperor had called his staff around him once more, and continued on his way until the Imperial palace at Potsdam was reached.

With a haughty inclination of his head, he signalled Thorpe Thornhill to follow through the magnificent facade into the palace.

"Leave us. We would be alone," he said to those who would have followed him. Then, as the others retired out of earshot, he continued: "I suppose, sir, I am at liberty to visit the Empress alone?"

"Certainly, your Majesty. I do not wish to cause you more inconvenience than is absolutely necessary. I will await you here."

"No, no," returned the Emperor with a sudden accession of good temper. "Colonel Riche, I put this gentleman under your charge. See that he has all necessary refreshment."

The colonel saluted, and, turning to Thorpe, led the way into a suite of sumptuously upholstered private apartments, where Thorpe was soon busy discussing the merits of a superb collation.

Presently a messenger came from the Emperor saying that he wished to see him at eight o'clock that evening.

Thorpe took this as meaning that he would be ready to accompany him, and was quite content, for he would thus be able to leave the palace whilst it was too dark for any

to witness his departure. Besides, it was at eight o'clock that he had ordered Dick to bring the Avenger to the vicinity of the palace.

The Imperial palace at Potsdam holds priceless gems of art and vertu, and Thorpe did not find the time hang heavy on his hands, as, under the guidance of Colonel Riche, he passed from apartment to apartment, from treasure-house to treasure-house, until he was almost sorry when a footman in the Royal livery announced that dinner had been served in the private apartments to which he had been first escorted.

Barely had Thorpe finished his after-dinner cigar ere the ornolu clock on the mantelpiece chimed the hour of eight.

Almost with its first beat the door opened, and an equerry entered to say that his Imperial master awaited the young Britisher near Bismarck's statue in the Royal Park.

Thorpe, who had strolled through the park during the afternoon, realised why this part of the grounds had been chosen, for the statue of Germany's greatest statesman—at no time a great favourite of the impetuous Emperor—stood by itself some distance from the palace.

Bidding Colonel Riche adieu, Thorpe followed the equerry out of the palace and through the magnificent grounds until they came within sight of the statue indicated.

Here the equerry bowed, and bade Herr Thornhill good-night, whilst Thorpe walked on, his hand grasping the six-shooter in his coat-pocket, without which he never moved abroad, for it had entered his mind that if treachery was intended, no spot could be better chosen. It was doubtful if even an explosion of firearms could be heard in the palace from that remote part of the park.

With every nerve on the alert, he approached where the statue stood, looking white and ghastly in the darkness.

At first his doubts grew more pronounced, for there did not seem to be anybody near; but, as he reached the side of the statue, he started back, as a grey figure emerged from its shadow and stood before him.

Drawing an electric torch from his pocket, Thorpe flashed it in the other's face.

Clad in a grey military overcoat, with a grey, flat cap on his head, was the German Emperor, ready to follow his captor into exile.

"Your Majesty is punctual."

"On such occasions delay only adds to one's torments!" replied the Emperor. "Where is your airship?"

"She is close at hand, sire. I will summon her," replied Thorpe.

And, pointing his lamp upwards, he flashed it three times in the air.

An answering flash came from immediately above the palace, and the two waited in silence until a dark, cylindrical object approached them, and, halting, came to the ground close to where they stood.

As it did so, the rattle of arms caused the grey-clad figure to start, as though fearful of treachery, but it was only the airship's crew coming smartly to the salute as their illustrious captive stepped on board, and was escorted, with every mark of respect, to Thorpe's own cabin, which he had given up to his prisoner.

Then the Avenger rose in the air, and, with swiftly beating wings, forced her way at full speed westward.

"At last, Dick! Now the war is indeed over!" said Thorpe, as, glad of a rest after the fearful strain of the past twenty-four hours, he sank down on a deck-chair by his brother's side.

"Yes, old boy. When the history of this war is written, I do not think the name of the Thornhills will be forgotten."

This, perhaps, sounds conceited, but it must not be forgotten that they were carrying the German Emperor to lay a prisoner at their King's feet.

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Duped!

When they arrived in London they found the great metropolis gaily decorated, for that day the King had announced his intention of proceeding in state to St. Paul's Cathedral, there to attend a thanksgiving service for the great victory which had been vouchsafed his arms.

Flying across the City, Thorpe headed the Avenger straight for Buckingham Palace.

As he flew over St. James's Park soldiers were already forcing their way through the crowd to take up positions on either side of the road down which the King was expected to travel.

A loud cheer arose from the crowd when they saw the airship forcing its way through the air, until, circling round, it came to a halt, resting on its long, vibrating tentacles within the precincts of Buckingham Palace.

A groom-in-waiting hastened forward, and raised his hat in answer to Thorpe Thornhill's salute.

"Can I see the King at once? I bring him most important information," said Thorpe.

"Will not your news wait, Mr. Thornhill?" asked the equerry. "His Majesty is preparing, as doubtless you have heard, to proceed to St. Paul's."

"I have heard nothing. I have just arrived from Germany, and I bring with me an illustrious prisoner," replied Thorpe.

"Not the German Emperor?" queried the equerry, in astonishment.

"None other," asserted Thorpe proudly.

"Then under such circumstances I think we will be justified in intruding upon his Majesty. Ah, here comes Lord Roberts! He will be the man to break the great news to his Majesty," he added, as Lord Roberts, with a smile of welcome on his war-worn face, approached Thorpe Thornhill with outstretched hand, saying:

"We have heard how well you obeyed my instructions, Mr. Thornhill."

"I did my best, sir," replied Thorpe modestly, "and a little something on my own account," he added; then informed Lord Roberts whom he had on board the airship.

To his surprise, the veteran seemed far from pleased with the intelligence. However, he uttered a few words of congratulation, and disappeared within the palace.

Ten minutes later he returned, and Thorpe felt his enthusiasm ooze from his finger-ends, for the veteran's face showed unmistakable annoyance.

However, having assisted the German Emperor to the ground—who, presumably to avoid recognition, had drawn his cap over his eyes and turned up the collar of his coat—he escorted him into the palace.

They found King George pacing up and down the library. He turned to face them as Lord Roberts introduced Thorpe Thornhill.

"I am pleased to meet you, Mr. Thornhill, and to thank you for all you have done for me and your country. I understand you have kindly given my cousin a passage on your wonderful airship to England. I will exchange a few words with him, and then you will add greatly to the many great services you have already rendered if you will take him back at once."

Thorpe was greatly disappointed; but, hiding his chagrin as best he might, he bowed over the King's hand, and backed from the Royal presence, whilst the prisoner—who had, of course, removed his cap—stepped forward in his place.

With a smile of welcome on his face, George V. stepped forward, holding out his hand to his fallen brother-monarch.

As he did so he came to a sudden halt; then a sigh of relief escaped him, as, a smile hovering on his lips, he said:

"Ah, Colonel Hoche, we have met before!"

And, to Thorpe's amazement, the man he had brought with such pains from Germany took the King's outstretched hand and raised it respectfully to his lips.

"Colonel Hoche!" repeated Thorpe.

"Do you not know that every reigning monarch has a double, so like him that he is often able to secure for his master spells of holiday, untrammelled by the unwelcome attentions which a well-meaning public bestows upon Royalty?" explained Lord Roberts.

Thorpe was thunderstruck until the King, pitying his disappointment, drew near, and, laying his hand on the young inventor's shoulder, said kindly:

"Don't be annoyed, Mr. Thornhill. My Imperial cousin has but sent a substitute; and, believe me, the last thing I wish to see is William of Germany a prisoner in England."

"But, your Majesty, he has deceived me! The Emperor gave me his word of honour he would not escape!" returned Thorpe, scarce able to restrain the anger which filled his heart.

"Pardon me, Herr Thornhill, my Imperial master did not give his parole, or he would have been here. In fact, had not intelligence which made it imperative for him to remain in Germany reached his ears at the last moment, he would have accompanied you," interposed the Emperor's double. "As it is, I remain a prisoner in his place."

"Not a prisoner, Colonel Hoche, but a guest!" cried the King. "You are at liberty to stay or to depart, as you think best."

"Then, if Herr Thornhill will so far forgive the trick I have played him as to carry me back to Germany, I will be pleased—ay, more than pleased—to bear any message your Majesty may wish to send to my master," returned the German, bowing.

For a few minutes the King did not speak; but, leaning with his elbow on the mantelpiece, surveyed the three men in thoughtful silence.

"Germany has invaded my country—has brought death and ruin to thousands of my subjects," he said at last slowly and deliberately; "yet I would not make a whole nation suffer for the sins of one man. Tell my cousin that, should he wish it, Britain is ready to make peace, if suitable reparation, as far as money can repair the damage committed, be made to those who have suffered from his act."

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NEXT
MONDAY—

"THE LAST PLUNGE!"

Then, seeing Thorpe Thornhill was still silent—for the young inventor had expected so much from his capture that he felt the disappointment keenly—he continued:

"I must take this opportunity, Mr. Thornhill, of thanking you for the services you have rendered myself and my country, also for enabling me to send the Kaiser a direct and unofficial message."

Thorpe Thornhill flushed with gratification.

"My airship, myself, and my life are always at your Majesty's service," he said fervently.

"We have had good proofs of that, Mr. Thornhill. By the by, how is it you have no rank? We must remedy it at once. Kneel down."

Wonderingly Thorpe Thornhill sank on one knee before his Sovereign, who, drawing his ivory-hilted marshal's sword from its sheath, struck the young inventor lightly across the shoulder, saying:

"Rise, Sir Thorpe Thornhill!"

Too excited to do more than murmur a few incoherent words of thanks, Thorpe Thornhill rose to his feet, and, bowing gratefully to his Sovereign, backed from the room.

"Allow me to be the first to congratulate you on your title, Sir Thorpe," said Lord Roberts genially, holding out his hand. "I am not betraying any secret when I assure you your foot is only upon the lowest rung of the ladder of honour his Majesty has determined you shall enjoy. But now I must leave you, for the responsibility of marshalling the troops on a great occasion like the present gives one but little time for chat."

And, with a hearty squeeze of the hand, the old veteran hastened to the courtyard, where an orderly was holding his horse, and rode away.

Although intensely gratified at the honour done him, Thorpe Thornhill was not quite satisfied. He deemed that the German Emperor had served him a scurvy trick, and he would not be easy until he could get equal with him in some way.

But how? The King's words had expressly forbidden him to lay hands upon that monarch, and, although he would dearly have loved to have done so, he felt it would be a decided breach of etiquette to horsewhip a reigning monarch.

As he passed through the ante-chambers a lord-in-waiting overtook him.

"It is his Majesty's wish that you and Mr. Richard Thornhill should take part in to-day's function," he said. "Horses from the Royal stable will be put at your disposal."

Thorpe glanced at his somewhat worn and frayed uniform, which bore upon it the marks of the campaign.

The lord-in-waiting noticed the motion.

"My wardrobe is at your service, Sir Thorpe, if you can find anything there that will be of use to you," he said.

And, having no other course open, Thorpe gladly accepted the kindly offer.

Thus it was that Sir Thorpe and Richard Thornhill rode in a place of honour close behind the King's carriage on the occasion of the Royal visit to St. Paul's Cathedral.

It was a stirring scene, and one the brothers never forgot.

Loud and prolonged was the cheering along the route; but his Majesty himself did not receive a greater ovation than that accorded to the two stalwart figures who were speedily recognised as the young inventors to whom Britain owed her safety.

The events of that day seemed like a dream to the Thornhills. Hitherto they had had no time, even if they had had the inclination, to taste the joys of popularity.

At last the procession was over, and, as Thorpe Thornhill and his brother—the heroes of the hour—took part in the Royal banquet which followed, night had already fallen ere they rejoined the Avenger.

Indeed, they would not have escaped even then had not Thorpe motioned Dick to slip away at the earliest possible moment, and ere long the crowds in the gaily illuminated streets below were watching in the bright, starlit sky above an elongated sphere of silvery flame shooting rapidly towards the east, for Thorpe Thornhill had added his quota to the illuminations by transforming his airship into a huge sphere of light.

In Moscow!

"By Jove, Thorpe, what does it mean?"

The words broke from Dick Thornhill's lips, as from a mass of clouds high above the earth they sailed over Russian Poland.

The whole country had been turned into an enormous camp. To right, to left, in front, behind, were tents, whilst the blare of cavalry trumpets, the roll of drums, the shrill challenge of infantry bugles rose in the autumn air.

But it was not this countless horde of armed men that had

called forth the ejaculation of astonishment from Dick Thornhill's lips. It was the fact that camp after camp was being struck, whilst, instead of moving westward, where the enemy's frontier lay—if, indeed, Germany was Russia's enemy—by road and by rail, even in flat-bottomed barges towed by noisy, puffing tugs, the whole army was moving eastward.

"It means, Dick, that the German Emperor has come to his senses at last, and has given in to Russia's demands, as he will undoubtedly have to do to the demands of France on her southern frontier."

Dick shook his head.

"Maybe, but I don't understand it," he declared. "You know when we left Colonel Hoche at Potsdam we heard that the Kaiser was not in the palace. The fellow who met him coming back from the manoeuvres was a Russian. Put two and two together. Doesn't it look to you as though Germany and Russia had arrived at some arrangement?"

"That's just what I've been saying!" ejaculated Thorpe.

"Ah, but I don't mean an arrangement of that kind! There is something more—something that means mischief at the bottom of it all. If he had plenty of time before him, would the general commanding that enormous army march them all off at once? No. Depend upon it, Germany and Russia have joined hands. They are going to strike at Britain somewhere—perchance through Turkey, perchance through India."

"You ought to have been a novelist, Dick! Your imagination would have done you credit!" laughed Thorpe.

And Dick, somewhat huffed at his brother's incredulity, said no more.

However, it would be as well to find out, if possible, what this army was doing, and also what was taking place in other parts of Russia. So, entering the chart-room, Thorpe spread the map of Russia on the table in front of him, and from thence, for nearly a week, guided his airship hither and thither over the enormous empire ruled by the great White Tsar.

From Petrograd to the Crimea, from Poland to Siberia, he crossed and recrossed that mighty empire, gradually coming round to the belief he had laughed at in his brother, for beneath him was a nation arming, and as he drew nearer to the Ural Mountains, he saw a continual stream of soldiers passing in an eastward and south-eastward direction.

Already the Caspian Sea was black with all manner of craft, bearing stores and ammunition to Michaelslovsk, from whence starts Russia's military railway to the gates of India.

That Russia intended war was evident; it was also evident that it was not against Turkey she would hurl her enormous strength. Thorpe deemed it unlikely that India was her immediate goal, for although a great deal of stuff was landed at the railway's head, a day's journey brought to view the rugged coast of Persia, and, following the direction taken by many of the Russian vessels, he found that an enormous camp was being formed on the Persian frontier.

The riddle was solved. Deeming England's hands too full to interfere, Russia was determined to conquer Persia, and get an outlet for her trade in the Persian Gulf, from whence she could invade India at her leisure by way of Baluchistan as well as Afghanistan.

Here was information which would be invaluable to the British Government, and well would it have been for Thorpe Thornhill had he been content with the news he had already gathered; but he determined to learn yet more, and, having flown straight to Moscow, despite his brother's arguments to the contrary, he decided to enter the city, and find out what was actually taking place.

Although Petrograd is the capital of Russia, the Government is wherever the Tsar may happen to be, and the Imperial flag flying over the Kremlin told Thorpe Thornhill that the Tsar of Russia was in Moscow.

Probably no people in the world know so little of the intentions of their Government as the Russian, curiosity in matters political being looked upon by the police with great suspicion. Therefore Thorpe knew that if he would gain any really useful information, it must be in the Kremlin itself he must seek it. Therefore, taking advantage of a heavy mist that hung over the city one morning, he steered the Avenger to the foot of the Veliki Tower, and landed unseen, close by the gigantic bell known as the "King of Bells," which, having been cracked in its making, has never been hung.

Then the Avenger soared aloft through the fog, and Thorpe Thornhill was left to find his way as best he could in that enormous mass of palaces and cathedrals known as the Kremlin.

Thorpe had every element of greatness in his composition except caution, and the want of this last landed him in the very centre of Russian intrigue and diplomacy, unable to speak a word of the language, and with but a vague idea of what he really wanted.

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Fortunately the keenness of the air had induced him to don a fur coat and cap, which acted as an excellent disguise.

The Kremlin is, first and foremost, a citadel, and consequently had a large garrison. Once or twice a soldier accosted the young Britisher respectfully, but each time Thorpe haughtily waved him aside and went on his way unquestioned.

It was not from the common soldier that he hoped to gain information—in fact, his ignorance of Russian would preclude all hopes of that; but the better class Russian seldom speaks his own language, and he hoped, if he could find some place where officers congregated, he might be able to pick up no little information.

Anyhow, he had but little time to lose, for a rough study of a map of Moscow had shown him that the nearest open space to the Kremlin was the Dyeviechie Field, where in two hours' time his brother was to meet him.

Presently, just as he was despairing of success, and had nearly made up his mind to seek the spot from whence the Avenger would take him up, he was rejoiced to hear voices speaking French within a few yards of him.

Cautiously stepping in the direction from whence the sound came, he found his further progress blocked by the wall of what was evidently a guard-room near the gate of the arsenal.

The voices came from above him, and, looking up, Thorpe could just distinguish through the mist the outline of a large open window.

"So your regiment is already at the front, eh, Michael, and you set off for the south this evening?" Thorpe heard one of the voices say.

"Yes; and glad am I that at last the long spell of peace which has kept down promotion in the Army is broken. But I wish my corps had been ordered to Merv. The Persians are but curs, who will fly at once when the Russian bares his steel!"

"Tut, tut!" returned the other somewhat contemptuously. "You never could see an inch before your nose, Michael! Do you not know that the expedition to Merv is but a feint? The real attack on India will come when Persia is conquered."

"You think that, instead of rapping at the iron gates of the Himalayas we will slip through the back door of Baluchistan?" cried the other excitedly.

"I more than think—I know. My uncle is secretary to the Minister of War, and he declares that such is the Tsar's plan."

"The Tsar! Pshaw! Fortunately for we soldiers he is but a puppet in the hands of his fire-eating generals!" returned the other.

"Hush, hush!" cried the first speaker in alarm. "One word like that heard by wrong ears, and instead of Persia, Siberia would be your destination!"

Thorpe had heard enough, and a glance at his watch showing him that the two hours was nearly up, he stood for a moment recalling to mind the plan of Moscow he had studied ere alighting, then, turning abruptly to his left, started off.

He had little doubt of reaching the Avenger in safety, for it was unlikely that the sentries would regard with suspicion anything passing out of the Kremlin. Consequently, with a quick, assured step that was his best passport for safety, Thorpe walked on until he arrived where, beneath a large, massive arch, surmounted by a Gothic tower, was a gateway leading to the straight, well-kept streets beyond.

The gate before him was the Gate of the Saviour, beneath which no Russian may pass with covered head.

This Thorpe did not know, and was dismayed to find his further progress barred by the crossed rifles of the soldiers on guard over the gate.

Had he understood but one word of Russian, and realised the reason why he was stopped, all might yet have been well; but, unable to gather from the harsh, guttural speech of the soldiers the cause of his detention, he immediately jumped to the conclusion that he had in some way betrayed his errand, and, determined to risk all in one fierce break for liberty, he felled the astounded and unprepared soldiers to the ground by a right and left from his well-trained fists, then sprang forward, hoping to dodge his pursuers in the mist which still obtained on every side.

However, as the sentries' rifles clattered to the ground, the guard turned out, and one of the fallen men, shooting forth his arm, clasped him by the ankle, bringing him heavily to the ground. In a moment half a dozen grey-coated infantrymen were on him, and the next he was dragged roughly to his feet, to find himself confronted by a black-bearded, evil-faced man, the marks on whose shoulder-straps denoted his rank as captain.

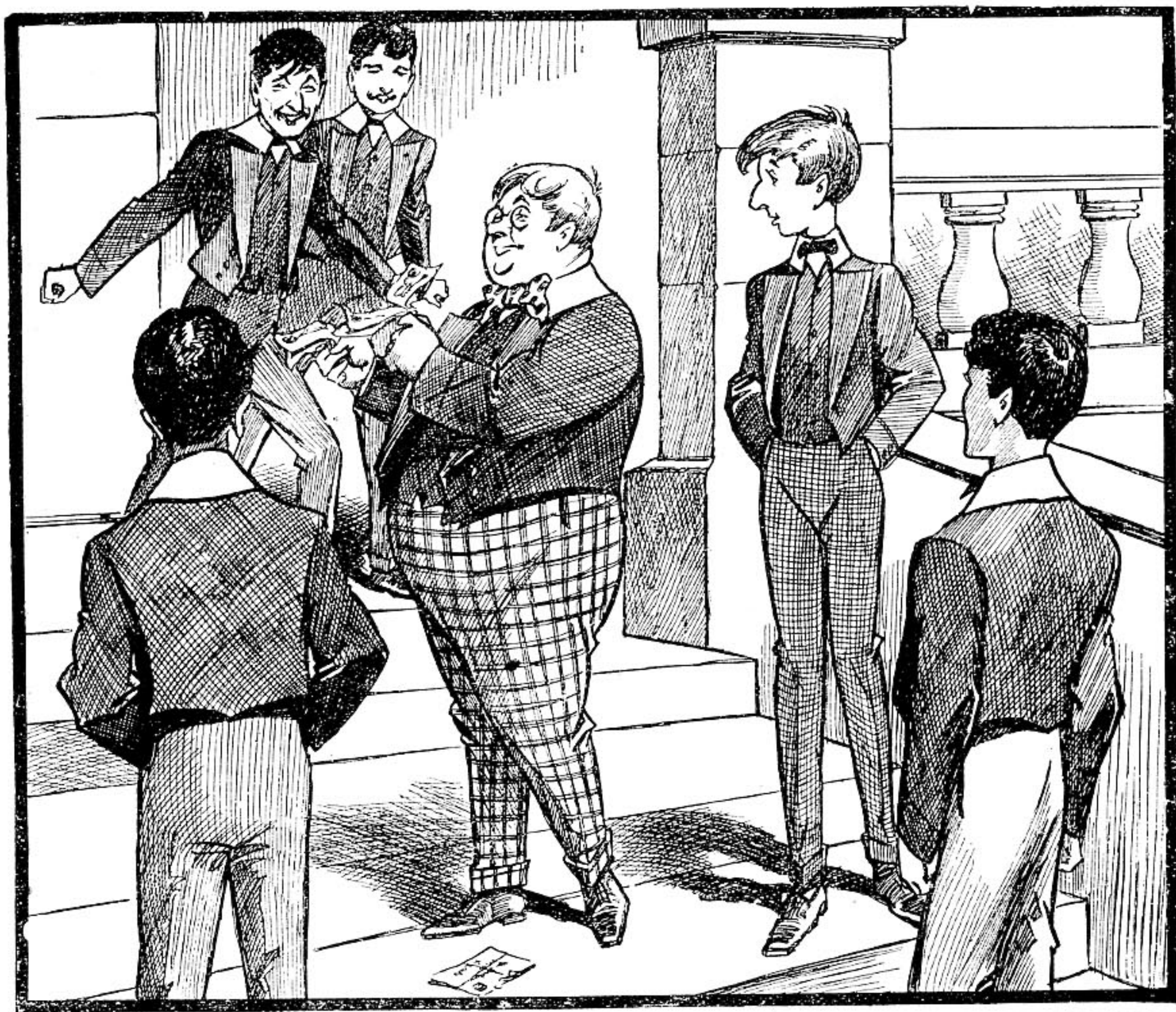
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By FRANK RICHARDS.



"Fellows who expect me to stand whacking feeds with this remittance are quite off-side," said Bunter. "I've got nothing to waste on rotters who've refused me small loans when I've been hard up!" "Sure, we haven't seen the remittance yet, Bunter darling," said Micky Desmond. Bunter drew out the letter, and produced four crisp banknotes. "Fivers!" gasped Nugent. (See Chapter 3.)

THE FIRST CHAPTER. Nothing Doing!

"IT'S true!"
"Rats!"
"I tell you it's perfectly true!" howled Billy Bunter.
"Honest Injun!"
"Bow-wow!"

Billy Bunter breathed hard through his fat little nose, and glared at the Famous Five of the Greyfriars Remove, his very spectacles gleaming with wrath.

When a fellow said "Honest Injun," that ought to have settled it. But, as Bob Cherry remarked, Billy Bunter's Injun was far from honest.

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NEXT
MONDAY—

"THE LAST PLUNGE!"

The Famous Five were chuckling. Billy Bunter's latest yarn simply put the lid on. His devices for obtaining little loans from his Form-fellows were many and various. Generally he was expecting a postal-order, which he desired some good-natured junior to cash in advance. The Remove fellows knew all about that postal-order. But "Bunter's latest" beat the postal-order hollow. Accustomed as they were to Billy Bunter and his little ways, Harry Wharton & Co. stared when the fat junior calmly informed them that he was expecting a remittance for twenty pounds, and requested the loan of a "quid," to be repaid when that twenty arrived. Bunter's statement took their breath away for a moment. Then they smiled—loudly.

"I tell you it's true!" Bunter almost shouted. "Quite

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Wharton & Co. By FRANK RICHARDS.

true! Absolutely true! Twenty pounds! And it's coming to-morrow! From my pater! Twenty pounds in banknotes!"

"Not a postal-order this time?" said Harry Wharton, laughing.

"No; banknotes!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There's nothing to cackle at. It's true——"

"The public-house business must be flourishing, if your pater can send you twenty quidlets in one whack!" remarked Nugent.

"You rotter! My pater's on the Stock Exchange. Since they've opened the Stock Exchange again, he's been doing marvellously——"

"Doing whom?" asked Squiff.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And he's sending me twenty quid——"

"Not twenty thousand?" asked Bob Cherry.

"As a little present," said Bunter, with a glare. "Twenty quids! I tell you it's an absolute fact! I've got a letter from him to prove it."

"Write it yourself?" grinned Nugent.

"Oh, you suspicious beast! Of course I didn't! It's from my pater, and he says he's going to send me twenty quid!"

"Your pater must be a humorist," remarked Wharton.

"What is he pulling your leg like that for?"

"He isn't pulling my leg, you rotter. It's true—absolutely true—honest Injun. Look here, can't you take a fellow's word?"

"Ahem! Some fellows——"

"What I want you to do is to lend me a quid off it," said Bunter. "I'll change one of the fivers immediately they come, and square up——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I want to have a good feed at tea-time, to celebrate the occasion. 'Tain't every day that a fellow's pater sends him twenty quid. And I'm stony to-day—and to-morrow I shall be rolling in money!" said Bunter plaintively.

"Well, you'll be rolling, I suppose," admitted Bob Cherry. "You generally roll, when you don't waddle. But in money—— Tell us another!"

Billy Bunter clenched his fat little fists. He felt greatly inclined to "go for" the doubting Thomases who declined to believe in the twenty quid. He was evidently in a towering rage, and the chums of the Remove regarded him curiously. They could see nothing for Bunter to be in a rage about. He generally took it more or less philosophically when his yarns failed to attract loans.

"You—you rotters!" gasped Bunter. "You suspicious beasts! I've a jolly good mind to punch your head, Bob Cherry——"

"Go hon!"

"And yours too, Wharton, you beast!"

"Mercy!"

"And yours, you fathead, Squiff——"

"Here, run for your lives!" gasped Squiff. "Bunter is getting dangerous. Fly!"

The Famous Five, laughing, rushed out of the doorway of the School House.

"I say, you fellows, don't go. I want—— Beasts!" howled Bunter.

The Famous Five were gone, and their laughter died away in the distance. Billy Bunter gave a snort of wrath. He blinked round through his big spectacles, in search of some fellows of a less suspicious turn of mind. Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars, came down the passage, and Bunter buttonholed him at once.

"I say, Smithy——"

"Sorry—can't do it!" said Smithy.

"I'm expecting——"

"Yes, yes, I know; a postal-order, and I'm jolly well not going to cash it in advance," grinned Vernon-Smith.

"It's not a postal-order. It's a remittance in banknotes, to the tune of twenty pounds, and it's coming to-morrow!" hooted Bunter.

Vernon-Smith almost fell down.

"Just you lend me a quid off it to-day, Smithy——"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped the Bounder. "Twenty quids this time! You get a bigger and bigger liar every day, Bunter! Wouldn't you like me to lend you five pounds off it?"

"Well, yes, I——"

"Because I'm just as likely to lend you five as one, you know," smiled the Bounder.

"Beast!"

Vernon-Smith walked away chuckling, and Bunter shook a fat fist after him. The fat face of the Owl of the Remove was purple with wrath. For, as it happened, for once in his life, Billy Bunter was telling the truth—the real truth—neither more or less than the actual facts. His father had made a successful coup on the Stock Exchange, and in the

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exuberance of his satisfaction he was coming down handsomely for once, in unprecedented style. Bunter had been astonished himself. He could scarcely believe in his good luck. And he could not get anybody else to believe in it at all. His abilities as an amateur Ananias were too well known. He had told the story of the expected postal-order so often, that now, when a real remittance was coming, his statement was received with howls of laughter.

And to be "stony," and in want of a feed, on the eve of receiving a whacking remittance from his pater—it was exasperating—it was cruel. Billy Bunter was puffing with wrath.

"I saw, Browney——" He spotted Tom Brown, the New Zealand junior, in the passage, and bore down on him. "Brown, old man, I'm expecting——"

"Nothing doing!" said Tom Brown.

"Twenty pounds!" yelled Bunter.

"Twenty which?"

"Pounds, you ass; and if you'll lend me——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Tom Brown.

"There's nothing to cackle at. My pater's sending me twenty pounds—he says I can get a new bike, and a footer, and——"

"Ha, ha, ha! Do you hear that, you fellows?" roared Tom Brown. "Bunter's expecting twenty pounds! Anybody offer him half-a-crown for it in advance?"

"No fear!" chuckled Skinner.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But it's true!" almost wailed Bunter, in desperation. "It's absolutely true—true as a die, you know. My pater's handing it out for once—really the handsome thing, you know—twenty golden quidlets—and I want a little loan till——"

"Till Doomsday!" grinned Bolsover major.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, you suspicious rotters——"

"I'll tell you what," said Bolsover major, "I'll give you tuppence for it when it comes!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter rolled away furiously. He left the juniors howling with laughter. If Bunter had said one pound, or two pounds, it would not have been so funny. But twenty pounds! Even Vernon-Smith, who was a millionaire's son, did not often get twenty quids at one fell swoop, so to speak. And Bunter, the impecunious bounder who was always hard up—it was too funny!

Bunter rolled into his study, No. 7 in the Remove passage. He found there his study-mates, Peter and Alonzo Todd, and Tom Dutton. Peter Todd held up a warning finger.

"Chuck it!" he said.

"Chuck what?" howled Bunter.

"That yarn about twenty quids. I don't want to hear it again!"

"But it's true!" shrieked Bunter.

"Rats!"

"I say, Alonzo," said Bunter beseechingly, "Lonzy, old chap, you believe me, don't you? I give you my word I'm expecting twenty quids to-morrow morning!"

The gentle Alonzo coughed.

"I should be very sorry to doubt your word, Bunter, untruthful as I unfortunately know you to be. I am willing to accept your statement."

"Then you'll lend me half-a-quid, and I'll settle to-morrow out of my whacking remittance?" said Bunter eagerly.

"Ahem!"

"Look here, why can't you lend me half-a-quid, when I've got twenty pounds coming to-morrow?"

"I should be very pleased——"

"Well, hand it over——"

"But——"

"Oh, blow your butts! Hand it over!"

"But I happen to be without financial resources at the present moment——"

"Oh, you silly fathead! If you're stony, why can't you say so, without jawing a chap's head off?" growled Bunter ungratefully.

"My dear Bunter——"

"I say, Dutton," roared Bunter to the deaf junior, "I'm expecting twenty pounds——"

"Rubbish!" said Dutton. "You couldn't stand twenty rounds! I'd undertake to give you the kybosh in one round with one hand."

"Pounds!" shrieked Bunter. "I'm getting twenty quids to-morrow from my pater." He bawled that statement in the deaf junior's ear.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Dutton.

"What are you cackling at, you idiot?"

"Make it twenty thousand! Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter shook a fat fist at No. 7 Study collectively, and rolled out, followed by loud laughter.

It was evidently N.G. There was nothing doing. Up and down the Remove Bunter went, like a lion seeking whom he might devour, so to speak. But at the first mention of twenty pounds he was interrupted by howls of laughter. It was the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth for once; but the Remove fellows declined wholly, totally, and absolutely to swallow it. And Billy Bunter, with feelings too deep for words, had one sardine for his tea—a single solitary sardine—when on the morrow he was expecting to roll in wealth!

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Nipped in the Bud!

HARRY WHARTON sniffed.

He was surprised.

The scent of tobacco was unmistakable.

Harry Wharton had looked into No. 7 Study to speak to Peter Todd on the subject of next half-holiday's footer match, Todd being centre-half in the Remove eleven.

And immediately his nose was inside the study the scent of tobacco smote it.

Wharton had reason to be surprised. Peter Todd and Tom Dutton were far too healthy and sensible to "play the ox" in the way of smoking cigarettes, and the good Alonzo would have been horrified at the bare idea. Fellows like Skinner and Snoop distinguished themselves in that manner, and the Bounder had not quite dropped his old habits. But in No. 7 Study the scent of tobacco was never scented. Yet here it was—strong and unmistakable.

Wharton looked round the study. The Todds were not there, and Dutton was absent, too. But a fat figure reclined in the armchair, and a curl of blue smoke rose up past the spectacles that adorned the fat face.

Bunter!

With all his disagreeable little ways, Billy Bunter was not what one would have called addicted to vice. He had free and easy ideas about money—other people's money—he would listen at keyholes and look at other fellows' letters—his sins were innumerable. But to see the Owl of the Remove playing the "giddy ox" in this manner was decidedly a surprise. Harry Wharton stared at him blankly. Billy Bunter was all sorts of a duffer, but he had never shown up as a "dog" before. He might have been called, perhaps, piggish, but never doggish.

Yet here he was smoking a cigarette like the Bounder, or like Loder of the Sixth. And he did not look ashamed of himself as he caught Wharton's surprised glance. He blinked at the captain of the Remove—a more emphatic blink than usual, as some of the smoke had got into his eyes. Then he deliberately blew out a little cloud with an air of great enjoyment.

"Well, my hat!" said Wharton.

Puff, puff from Bunter.

"You fat duffer!" ejaculated Wharton. "What's the little game?"

"Have a fag?" drawled Bunter.

"Wha-a-at!"

"They're rather good, dear boy," said Bunter, in quite the manner of Gerald Loder, the black sheep of the Sixth. "I'll give you a light."

"Are you dotty?" exclaimed Harry, in increasing astonishment.

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"What are you smoking that cigarette for?"

"It's awful fun!" said Bunter.

"More awful than fun, I should think," said Harry. "You'll make yourself sick."

"Rubbish!" said Bunter. "The fact is, I'm taking up smoking."

"Wha-at!"

"Why shouldn't a chap have a good time when he's got plenty of money?" argued Bunter. "Smithy used to have a topping time—smoking and playing cards, and keeping whisky in his study. He's turned goody-goody. But I'm not soft like that. I believe in a fellow enjoying himself when he's got plenty of money."

Wharton could hardly believe his ears. He gazed at Billy Bunter, who continued to puff out little clouds of smoke with an air of determined enjoyment.

"Plenty of money?" said Harry.

"Certainly! I shall have plenty of money to-morrow."

"Bosh!"

"You won't say bosh to-morrow," said Bunter, with a sneer. "You'll come round trying to borrow some of my money. But I shan't lend you any."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"If you get any money I won't borrow any of it," he said. "But—but, of course, I don't believe it. You can't expect anybody to believe it. And if you did get any money, by a miracle, I suppose you'd spend it in gorging."

"You'll see to-morrow whether I'm going to get any."

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ONE
PENNY.

said Bunter, with a sniff. "And I'm not going to spend it in standing feeds either. Fellows who have refused to lend me a few bob when I've been stony needn't think they're going to live on the fat of the land on my twenty quid. And I'm not going to whack it out in the study either. I'm going to have a good time. I'm going to paint the town red."

"What!" yelled Wharton.

"I'm going to see life a bit," said Bunter loftily.

"See—see life!"

"Yes, rather! Same as Smithy used to do," said Bunter. "I've got a lot of ideas about it. You needn't be surprised if you see me getting out of the dorm—"

"The dorm?"

"Certainly! I can't go out and play cards in the daytime."

"P-p-play cards!" said Harry dazedly.

"That's 'seeing life,'" said Bunter. "That's what I'm going to do. I'm going to give my friends at Highcliffe a look-in, too—Ponsonby and the rest. They're regular blades, you know. I mean to skin 'em at nap and banker. I dare say Loder will ask me into his study to play bridge when he knows I've got plenty of money. I shall chum up with some fellows in the Sixth. I don't suppose I shall have much time to talk to you Remove chaps."

"My hat!"

"In fact, I'm going to have a high old time," said Bunter. "I might be willing to take you down to the Cross Keys with me one night, if you're civil."

"Me! The Cross Keys!"

"Yes. I shall be there a lot," said Bunter carelessly. "A really keen chap like me can make a lot of money playing cards, with a little capital to work on."

"Great Scott!"

Bunter puffed at his cigarette with great satisfaction, while the captain of the Remove stared at him with amazement too deep for words. This was a new development of Billy Bunter's character. Wharton had believed that he knew the Owl of the Remove quite thoroughly. Evidently he didn't, however. Bunter, in possession of financial resources, was quite a new Bunter. He was going to be a "blade" like Ponsonby of Highcliffe when he got his money.

"So that's the kind of howling idiot you would be if you had any money!" gasped Wharton at last.

"Oh, really, Wharton! Of course, you wouldn't understand," said Bunter patronisingly. "You haven't any go in you. You only think about silly football and gymnastics and amateur theatricals and things—kids' games! I'm going to see life! Still, perhaps I might take you in hand a bit."

"Take me in hand!" stuttered Wharton.

"Yes. I might let you come with me one afternoon when I have a drag to the races," said Bunter.

"You—you thumping ass! It's jolly lucky for you you're not likely to have any money! You'd get sacked from the school in a week."

"Poof! Smithy didn't get sacked. And they don't sack Loder," said Bunter.

"Loder's jolly careful not to be found out. He isn't such a thundering idiot as you are!" said Harry. "Still, as you're not going to get any money, I suppose it's all right. Where did you get those cigarettes?"

"Oh, I got these from Skinner! I've shown Skinner my pater's letter, and he believes my money's coming now," said Bunter. "He said he'd lend me a quid with pleasure, only he happens to be hard up. Some fellows can believe my word. Hallo, Toddy! Have a fag, old man?"

Billy Bunter made that remark in an airy manner as Peter Todd came in. Peter did not reply; he stood staring at Bunter open-mouthed. Harry Wharton chuckled. He could see from the expression on Peter's face that the "blade" was not likely to get much encouragement in No. 7 Study in his new manners and customs.

"What are you doing?" gasped Peter at last.

"Smoking," said Bunter defiantly.

"You silly owl! You rotten chump! You're making the study smell like a tap-room!" roared Peter. "I'll give you smoking!"

He rushed at the fat junior.

"Here, I say, Toddy, chuck it! Yow! I'm going to do as I like," roared Bunter. "Leggo! Groogh! You're chook-chook-choking me! Yow! Wow! Ow!"

Bunter yelled as Peter yanked him out of the chair, with a grip of iron on his collar. Peter did not "chuck it." He shook Bunter till the fat junior looked like a shaking mass of jelly. The cigarette slipped into his mouth as he gasped, and then he gurgled horribly. The lighted end of the cigarette did not feel comfortable inside his mouth.

"Grooh! Ugh! Oh! Ow! Leggo! Gerrogh!"

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"THE LAST PLUNGE!"

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Splutter! Splutter! Splutter!

Bunter ejected the cigarette, but Peter went on shaking him.

"You fat idiot!" bawled Peter. "Smoking, by gum! Smoking in my study! My hat, I'll—"

"It's my study, ain't it?" yelled Bunter. "Lemme alone! Grooh! If you make my glasses fall off—Yaroooh!—and they get broken—Yarooop!—you'll have to—Yow! Ow!—pay for 'em! Yaroooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Wharton, as Peter, tired at last, hurled the Owl of the Remove into the armchair again. "Mind how you handle the blade, Peter! You may break it! Didn't you know that Bunter was going to start as a blade?"

"Gur-r-r-r-ogh!"

"I'll give him blade!" said Peter, gasping for breath. "I can put up with his sneaking and spying and gorging and cadging; because he's born like that and can't help it; but if he starts playing the giddy goat as well—"

"Gur-r-r-r-ogh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Todd gathered up the rest of the cigarettes.

"Where did you get these, you fat duffer?" he demanded. "You haven't any money to buy 'em, and I know you'd spend your money in tuck, if you had any. Somebody's given them to you. Who was it?"

"Gur-r-r-g! Gur-r-r-g! Yow! D-d-don't shake me again, you beast! I'll lick you! Groo! I'll smash you! Groog! It was Skinner, you beast! Gro-o-o-o-o-o-gh!"

"Skinner, was it?" said Peter. "I'll talk to Skinner! I'll tell Skinner about leading my prize idiot from the path of virtue."

"Look here, Todd, you rotter—"

Peter Todd strode from the study. Harry Wharton followed him, laughing. Todd burst into the study which Harold Skinner shared with the Bounder. They were both there, at their preparation. Peter Todd did not waste time in words. He seized Skinner by the back of the neck and yanked him out of his chair, knocking the chair flying.

"Hallo!" ejaculated the Bounder. "What's the trouble?"

"Leggo!" roared Skinner. "Wharrer you at? My hat! Why, I'll—"

"You've been giving my prize porker smokes," said Todd. "I don't allow my prize pig to be corrupted, Skinner. These cigarettes belong to you. You're going to eat 'em."

"Why, you ass, you fathead! Gr-r-r-r-r-r-r!" Skinner tried to close his mouth, but he was too late. Todd had jammed the crumpled handful of cigarettes into it, and Skinner choked and spluttered, his face turning almost green.

"There!" panted Peter. "Now, you corrupt my porker again, and I'll give you a thundering hiding next time."

"Ow! Groo! Ugh! I shall be s-s-sick! Ugh!"

Peter Todd walked out of the study, leaving Skinner leaning over the fender, and looking as if he were in mid-Channel on a very rough day, and uttering the most unearthly sounds. Todd looked rather red and excited as he came out, and Harry Wharton was almost in hysterics. Peter had a heavy hand.

"I think that will stop 'em—what?" said Peter.

"Ha, ha, ha! I should say so," gasped Wharton. "But I say, Peter, is there anything in Bunter's yarn about a lot of money coming to him to-morrow?"

"Of course it's only his gas. The fat Ananias ought to be in Berlin, in the Wolff Bureau, giving out German news. He's wasted here."

"But he's going to be a blade, a dog. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let me catch him!" said Peter.

"There's a footer meeting in my study," said Wharton. "Come on! I don't think Bunter will do any more smoking this evening."

In No. 1 Study the football meeting was acquainted with Bunter's new departure, and they roared over it. But they little knew.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Twenty of the Best!

"GATHER round, my infants!" sang out Squiff.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Sampson Quincy Ifley Field was grinning. The other fellows were grinning, too. It was "to-morrow" at last, and the Remove had come out after morning lessons. That morning Billy Bunter was to receive his tremendous remittance.

Before lessons he had scanned the morning's post, but there had been nothing for Bunter. But the Owl of the Remove was "keeping it up." In the Form-room he had received fifty lines from Mr. Quelch for talking in class,

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simply because he could not refrain from declaring that after lessons the Remove fellows would see what they would see.

There was no doubt, of course, that they would see what they would see; but that they would see twenty pounds arrive for Bunter no one thought of believing. Skinner was the only fellow who was not grinning. He had seen the letter from Bunter's pater, and although he did not believe the yarn, it occurred to him that there was a bare chance that there was something in it. Skinner was a deep fellow, and so he had taken the trouble to be civil to Bunter "on spec." If it turned out to be another of Billy Bunter's "whoppers," Skinner intended to indemnify himself for his trouble by thumping the fat junior.

The postman was coming across the Close, and Bunter was blinking at him eagerly through his spectacles. The psychological moment had arrived.

"Gather round!" repeated Squiff. "Walk up, gents! The chance of a lifetime! This is where Bunter gets a remittance. Gather round!"

"The gather-roundfulness is terrific," purred Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "But the twentypoundfulness—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You'll jolly well see," said Billy Bunter. "Hallo, Sammy! Here you are! The postman's coming. There'll be something for you, too."

Sammy Bunter, Billy's minor of the Second Form, came along with a crowd of fags. The fags were all grinning. Sammy had told them that his pater was going to send him a fiver. The heroes of the Second Form were prepared to believe in that fiver when they saw it.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, Boggy!" said Bob Cherry, as the postman came up. "You've got a registered letter for Bunter—what?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yessir," said Boggy.

"Wha-a-at!" ejaculated Bob.

"Two registered letters, sir; one for Master William Bunter, and t'other for Master Samuel Bunter," said Boggy.

"My only hat!"

"Begad," said Lord Mauleverer, in amazement—"begad! Bunter has been telling the truth! Fan me, somebody!"

The juniors stared as the postman handed out the two registered letters. The two Bunters took them, with triumphant grins. Sammy rushed away with his, amid a now eager crowd of fags. Sammy Bunter was quite a personage in the Second Form that afternoon.

"Well, bless my boots!" said Squiff. "It can't be true, of course. How could Bunter have said it, if it was true?"

"You'll jolly soon see," snorted Bunter.

"Open the esteemed letter, my fat Bunter," said Hurree Singh. "When the esteemed banknotes are visible to the nude eye, then the seefulness will be the believfulness."

"Lend me a penknife, Skinny, old chap," said Bunter airily.

Skinner lent him a penknife quite respectfully.

With all eyes upon him, Billy Bunter slit the thick envelope. The Remove fellows were simply breathless. That Bunter should receive a handsome remittance was astonishing enough. But that he should have told the truth, the frozen truth, that was more astonishing still. Most of the juniors were still inclined to believe that it was a "spoof." They would believe in the twenty pounds when they beheld them with their own eyes.

"Open it quickfally, my esteemed Bunter," murmured Hurree Singh. "Cannot you see that you are keeping us on tenterhooks?"

"You're jolly well not going to touch it, Inky," sniffed Bunter. "I haven't forgotten that you refused me a small loan yesterday."

"Why, you fat owl—" began Bob Cherry.

"Nor you, either, Cherry. No good your coming round cadging, either."

"Why, I—I—I—" stuttered Bob.

"As for you Peter Todd, I decided last night to have nothing more to do with you, after your beastly conduct in the study," said Bunter.

"My only aunt!" murmured Peter.

"The same with you, Alonzo. I can't stand a snuffling ass like you, anyway. As for Tom Dutton, I'm done with him."

"There must really be some money in that letter," said Harry Wharton, in wonder. "If there is, we shall see Bunter at his best. He's growing quite delightful already."

"What I've said applies to you, too, Wharton. I refuse to have anything to do with you. The mean way you've treated me justifies me in refusing to take any notice of you. So it's no good trying to curry favour now—"

"I? Curry favour! With you?" gasped Wharton. "Oh, my hat! I must be dreaming!"

"Fellows who expect me to stand whacking feeds with

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"Hallo, hallo, hallo, what have you got there?" asked Bob. Bunter recovered himself, and blinked defiantly at the Co. "Whisky!" he said. "All go-ahead chaps drink whisky. Don't be surprised if you see me come into the dorm. some night squiffy. I'm going to have a ripping time, I can tell you. I'm going to paint the town red." (See Chapter 10.)

this remittance may as well understand that they're off-side," said Bunter. "I'm going to have a good time now I've got plenty of money. I've got nothing to waste on rotters who've refused me a small loan when I've occasionally—very rarely—been hard up."

"Sure, we haven't seen the remittance yet, Bunter darling," said Micky Desmond.

"Oh, you can see it!" said Bunter loftily.

He drew out the letter, and unfolded it. The Removites gasped as they saw him unroll four crisp banknotes.

"Fivers!" gasped Nugent.

"I guess that's the real goods!" said Fisher T. Fish. "Bunter, you galoot, where did your popper raid those? He'll be doing time for this, I guess!"

"Must have robbed a bank!" murmured Bolsover major.

"Real fivers!"

"Great Scott!"

"Don't take any notice of 'em, Bunter, old fellow," said Sidney James Snoop. "You stick to your old pals, and let 'em go and eat coke!"

"Snoopey's an old pal already," chuckled Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter stuffed the banknotes into his pocket. The fat junior seemed to have grown a couple of inches taller. With twenty pounds in his pocket, he was somebody. Already

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Skinner, and Snoop, and Stott, and Fisher T. Fish were bestowing upon him their most agreeable smiles, but Billy Bunter did not seem to observe their smiles. He rolled out of the doorway into the Close, heading for the tuckshop.

"Bunter, old man——" called out Bob Cherry.

Billy Bunter did not turn his head.

Bob rushed after him and caught him by the shoulder. Bunter gave him a blink of the deepest contempt.

"Hands off!" he snapped.

"I want to say——"

"Oh, I know what you want to say," grinned Bunter; "but it's too jolly late now. You're simply not going to touch a bob of it. Understand that!"

"You fat burbler!" howled Bob. "Do you think I want your beastly money? I was going to say that I'm sorry I doubted your word, when you were telling the truth for once. But you couldn't expect a chap to know you were breaking the record."

Bunter waved a fat hand disdainfully.

"Don't talk to me!" he said loftily. "I don't desire your acquaintance, Bob Cherry. I'm rather particular in my choice of friends."

And Bunter swaggered away to the tuckshop, leaving Bob dumbfounded.

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THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

After the Feast the Reckoning!

"JAM-TARTS—"

Mrs. Mimble, who kept the little tuckshop in the corner of the old Close, coughed. It was Billy Bunter's way to roll in and give an order; but Mrs. Mimble knew him so well that she always waited to see the "colour" of his money before she fulfilled the command.

"A dozen to begin with," said Bunter.

"Ahem!"

"And you can change that for me," said Bunter, flicking a five-pound note down on the counter, with a lordly air.

Mrs. Mimble jumped. She looked at the fiver, and then adjusted her glasses and looked at it again. Then she looked at Bunter.

"I hope this is your own, Master Bunter?"

"What?" roared Bunter. "You just change it, Mrs. Mimble. I've got some more here, if you'd like to see 'em. Look at that!"

"Bless my soul!" said Mrs. Mimble. "But—but—"

The good dame hesitated to take up the fiver. Bunter's possession of three more like it made her suspicious. She had reason to be well acquainted with William George's extremely free-and-easy ideas about money. But several juniors followed Bunter in, and they chipped in to reassure the good lady.

"I guess it's all O'K, Mrs. Mimble," said Fisher T. Fish.

"Bunter has had a whopping remittance from his popper."

"Right as rain!" said Skinner. "Bunter is going to stand treat, ma'am. Trot out the jam-tarts."

"We've come to help you spend the fiver, Billy," said Snoop jovially.

"Cream-puffs for me," said Stott.

Billy Bunter asked at them.

"Give these chaps a tart each, Mrs. Mimble," he said. "It's my treat."

"A—a—a tart each!" said Snoop. "You've got twenty quids in your pockets and you can't stand your old pals more than a tart each! My hat!"

"Twopenny ones, I suppose?" said Fish.

"Penny ones!" said Bunter firmly.

"Well, I swow!" said Fish.

"Of all the pigs!" said Skinner. "But, of course, you're joking, Bunter?"

"Rats!" said Bunter.

Mrs. Mimble smiled, and "trotted" out the tart each for the four fellows who had come to help Bunter spend the fiver. Evidently they would not be able to afford him much help in that line. Billy Bunter himself wired into a whole dishful. Bunter had not forgotten his new plans of becoming a "blade" and a "dog" now that he was in possession of funds. His father had intended him to make useful purchases with the money—such as a bicycle and a new footer and new "clobber." Bunter had no intention of expending the money in that manner, however. He intended to be a "dog"; but first of all; he meant to have a whacking feed—such a feed as he had not enjoyed for whole terms. But he did not see any reason whatever why he should waste his capital in standing generous feeds to Skinner & Co. That wasn't in the programme.

Skinner looked at his penny tart, and looked at Bunter. Snoop started on his tart—one was better than nothing. Fisher T. Fish gave a loud snort, and walked out of the shop, leaving his tart on the counter. It wasn't worth while to "suck up" to the Owl of the Remove for a miserable penny tart. Stott picked up his tart, with a gleam in his eyes.

"And this is the lot?" he asked.

"That's the lot," said Bunter, with his mouth full.

"Then you can keep it!" said Stott. And he jammed the tart upon Bunter's fat little nose and walked out.

"Grooh!" roared Bunter. "You—Wow! Beast!" The fat junior had to suspend operations on the dish, while he dabbed at his jammy face with his handkerchief and wiped his spectacles.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Snoop. "Serve you right, you fat beast! Look here, is there any more for me?"

"Go and eat coke!" howled Bunter.

"Then I'm off!"

Snoop playfully kicked the stool from under Bunter, and walked away. There was a terrific crash as the Owl of the Remove came to the floor.

"Oh! Yow! My hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Skinner.

"You—you cackling beast!" howled Bunter. "Gimme a hand up! Yow! I'm hurt! Oh, crumbs!"

Skinner kindly gave him a hand up. He did not intend to quarrel with Bunter—not till the twenty pounds were gone. Bunter grunted, and perched himself on the high stool again. He was in an exasperated frame of mind; he felt that he was not being treated with the respect due to a fellow who possessed the whacking sum of twenty pounds.

"Rotten!" said Skinner sympathetically. "Ahem! Excuse my laughing; I—I was laughing at Snoop, you know."

"Groo!" said Bunter, tucking into the tarts again. Harold Skinner watched him hungrily, debating in his mind whether he should knock Bunter flying off the stool.

"Ahem! I'm a bit peckish, Bunter, old man," said Skinner.

"You can have another tart," said Bunter.

"Thanks! I really think the fellows will expect you to stand a treat—something really handsome, you know," said Skinner.

"Let 'em expect," said Bunter.

"What price a feed in the Rag to the whole Form?" suggested Skinner, demolishing his second tart, and helping himself to a third.

"Rats!" said Bunter.

Skinner absent-mindedly took a fourth tart from the dish. Billy Bunter turned his gleaming spectacles upon him.

"Let my grub alone, Skinner!"

"Oh, come; be a pal, old chap!" said Skinner. "We're going to have a fag afterwards in my study, you know."

"Oh, all right! I'm jolly well not standing feeds all round, though," said Bunter. "Now I've got plenty of dibs, I'm going to look after Number One, you see—that's me! I'm going to have a high old time, you bet! You can have another tart. Ginger-pop, please, Mrs. Mimble."

The Owl of the Remove continued to eat and to drink, and to drink and to eat, till the bell rang for dinner. By that time his fat face was looking very shiny, and he had a feeling of uncomfortable tightness under his waistcoat. He rolled down with some difficulty from the high stool.

"How much is that, Mrs. Mimble?" he gasped.

"Eight shillings and sixpence," said Mrs. Mimble.

"Oh! Gimme my change."

Mrs. Mimble passed four currency notes for a pound each across the counter. Billy Bunter blinked at them.

"That's only four quid!" he exclaimed.

"You owed me eleven-and-sixpence already, Master Bunter."

"Oh, I say!" ejaculated Bunter indignantly. "Look here, you know, that was an old account! You can't collar my money like that, Mrs. Mimble."

"You promised to pay it when you received a postal-order, Master Bunter," said the good dame, her jaw setting very squarely.

"But this wasn't a postal-order; this was banknotes!"

"It is all the same."

"It isn't the same!" howled Bunter. "Look here, you gimme my eleven-and-six!"

"Nonsense!"

Skinner chuckled, and cleared off to run in to dinner. Mr. Quelch did not like the juniors late at the dinner-table. Billy Bunter blinked furiously at Mrs. Mimble. The tuckshop-keeper was firm as a rock. An unexpected chance had come for recovering that old bad debt from Billy Bunter, and Mrs. Mimble naturally did not intend to let it slip.

"I tell you this ain't playing the game!" howled Bunter. "Tain't legal! Stoppage is no payment, you know. That's law; you can ask Toddy! Look here—"

"You will be late for dinner, Master Bunter."

Billy Bunter crumpled the pound-notes in his fist and snorted and stalked away. There was evidently no recovering his eleven-and-six. That old account had been settled at last, and there was no means of unsettling it.

Bunter rolled out of the tuckshop and hurried across the Close to the School House. He was feeling very uncomfortable inside—he had overdone it a little with pastry and ginger-beer. For once in his life, he was not keen on dinner. But he had to turn up at the Remove table.

Mr. Quelch gave him a severe glance as he came in and dropped into his seat with a breathless grunt.

"You are late, Bunter!"

"S-s-sorry, sir!" gasped Bunter. "Mrs. Mimble got my change wrong, sir, and I had to explain it to her. A very ignorant woman, sir!"

"Don't let it occur again, Bunter."

The Remove fellows regarded Bunter curiously. Bunter in funds was an interesting object. And Bunter without an appetite was remarkable.

The fat junior toyed with his dinner. It seemed to him

ANSWERS

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a sheer waste not to eat it when he got it for nothing, and he crammed down a little, but he simply had no room for it. The juniors grinned as they noted a greenish look overspreading his fat face.

"Bunter, old man," whispered Micky Desmond, "would ye like some fat bacon?"

Bunter turned quite pale. Cream-puffs and jam-tarts and doughnuts and chocolate-creams and Turkish delight and ginger-beer were on the worst of terms with one another in his inside. The mention of fat bacon made him feel quite ill.

"Have some gravy, Bunter?" whispered Bob Cherry.

"What he wants is some cod-liver oil!" chuckled Bolsover major.

"Grooooh!"

"Bunter," rapped out Mr. Quelch, "what is the matter with you? Are you ill?"

"N-n-no, sir! I—I have no appetite to-day!" groaned Bunter.

"You have been over-eating, I suppose—and just before a meal-time!" said the Remove-master severely. "This is disgusting, Bunter! You are a disgusting boy!"

"Grooooh!"

"Leave the table at once!" snapped Mr. Quelch. "You are not in a condition to be at a dinner-table with civilised beings! Go away at once!"

Billy Bunter rolled out of the dining-room, feeling very bad indeed.

The Removites grinned joyously. Bunter had shown so many unpleasant traits in his character already since receiving his whacking remittance that they were not displeased to see that his riches were not bringing happiness. Queer sounds were heard from Bunter as he beat a retreat; and after dinner the Removites found him in the Close, leaning against the wall and looking pale and sickly.

"Still feeling that you'd like some fat bacon, Bunt?" asked Squiff.

"Oh, go away!" said Bunter faintly. "I—I think I'm going to be—groo—ill! I—I feel the same as I did—groo—on the Channel once—grooooooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"A good strong dose of cod-liver oil!" suggested Bob Cherry. "Hallo, hallo, hallo! He's exploding! Clear off!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter was bent almost double, and from his fat throat came extraordinary sounds. The juniors, yelling with laughter, cleared off, leaving the Owl of the Remove alone with his misery.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Valuable Pals!

"AT it again!" roared Peter Todd.

It was the evening, and as Todd came into his study he found the atmosphere of No. 7 thick with the fumes of tobacco.

Billy Bunter was smoking. Evidently he had recovered from the painful results of his visit to the tuckshop.

Bunter the Blade was going strong. The new blade was not alone in the study. Skinner and Snoop were there, and they were smoking, too. The three young rascals were trying to look as if they were enjoying themselves.

Peter Todd sniffed violently.

"You silly young ass!" he exclaimed. "Put that fag down at once!"

"Rats!" said Bunter. "Look here, Todd, I don't want any of your cheek! I don't want to speak to you, in fact. Under the circumstances, I don't care to know you. The son of a poverty-stricken solicitor isn't exactly the kind of pal I want. I'm going to spend my money as I like. You're not going to touch it. I'd be obliged to you if you'd change into some other study."

"My aunt!"

"Yes, you let Bunter alone!" said Skinner. "Bunter's got pals to stand by him, and he doesn't want you to bother him!"

"You—you filthy, smoky rotters!" shouted Todd. "Get out of my study! You don't want to share my quarters any longer, Bunter—what?"

"No, I don't! I don't like impecunious fellows!"

"Good! Then you can clear off!" said Peter. "I can't change studies myself—at least, I won't! But you can! And you're going to! I don't want any high-flying blades in No. 7. Out you go!"

"Yaroooh!" roared Bunter, as Todd seized him by the collar and yanked him out of the chair. "Help me, you fellows! Stand by a pal!"

"What-ho!" said Skinner, not very heartily, however. "Let him alone, Todd!"

"Chuck the cad out!" yelled Bunter.

"Come on!" said Peter cheerily. "If I couldn't handle three pasty-faced wasters like you chaps I'd drown myself! Kim on!"

Skinner and Snoop were not in a hurry to "kim on," so THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 366.

NEXT
MONDAY—

"THE LAST PLUNGE!"

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ONE
PENNY.

Peter came on himself. Peter Todd was a great warrior, and he was exasperated now. He slung Billy Bunter through the doorway, and then rushed at Skinner and Snoop. Instead of tackling him, those two heroic youths dodged round the table and darted for the door. They jammed together in the doorway in their haste, and Peter was close behind them. Peter seemed to imagine that he was on the footer-field, kicking for goal. His heavy boot crashed upon Skinner and Snoop in turn, and they went rolling into the passage with loud yells.

Peter Todd surveyed them grimly from the doorway.

"Now, if you want any more, come back!" he said.

"Grooooh!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"You rotter!"

Peter slammed the door on them. The three "blades" evidently did not want any more, for they did not come back. They sorted themselves out, and picked themselves up, grunting dismally.

"I say, you fellows," gasped Bunter, "I'm not going to dig with that cad any longer. I'll share your study after this, Skinner."

"Smithy wouldn't have it," said Skinner.

"Come into my study, Bunt," said Snoop, who was as keen as Skinner to capture the moneyed man of the Remove. "Stott's quite willing; he'll be delighted. You come and share No. 4 with us."

"Thanks, I will," said Bunter.

Stott showed great pleasure when Billy Bunter was brought into the study. He pulled out the armchair for Bunter, and the fat junior sat down with a grunt of satisfaction.

This was very different from what he had been accustomed to. Billy Bunter had often offered to share fellows' studies with them, and the fellows' replies had always been painfully direct and lacking in politeness. But Billy Bunter was a study-mate to be desired now—at least, as long as the twenty pounds lasted.

"I've got some fags here," said Stott. "Put a cig on, Bunt, old man. Here's a light. I say, I'm glad to see you going it like this! You are a sport!"

"I'm jolly well going to be a sport—rather!" said Bunter. "None of your goody-goody rot for me!" He blew out a cloud of smoke. "What do you fellows say to a little game?"

"A—a—a little what?" ejaculated Stott, rather taken aback.

"Nap!" said Bunter. "Sixpenny points, you know."

"My word!"

"Hum! Suppose—suppose a prefect should look in?" murmured Snoop.

"Oh, blow the prefects!" said Bunter.

"Yes, let's chance it," said Skinner, seeing an excellent opportunity for transferring some of Bunter's wealth to his own pockets. "Anybody got any cards?"

"Ahem!"

Nobody had. It was hard lines on a fellow who was starting in business as a gay dog to be stopped at the very start by a lack of the "wicked pasteboards." As a matter of fact, any junior at Greyfriars who had been found in possession of a pack of cards would have been caned severely.

Bunter grunted discontentedly.

"Make it toss-up?" suggested Skinner, feeling in his pocket.

"Right-ho!" drawled Bunter. "Anything for a bit of excitement—what?"

Skinner and Snoop and Stott exchanged greedy glances. Pennies were fished out, and, amid a cloud of cigarette-smoke, the young rascals proceeded to toss. Whether it was luck, or whether it was skill, or whether there was an understanding among Bunter's pals, it was certain that for some reason the Owl of the Remove had no luck. He found himself paying out pennies at a great rate, and he soon called a halt.

"Make it a bob a time," said Skinner.

"Thanks! I'm tired of that!" said Bunter. "It's a kids' game, anyway. So-long! I'm going to see Smithy."

"'Nother little game any time you like," said Snoop, clinking a dozen pennies in his pocket with great satisfaction.

The door closed on Bunter. Then Skinner & Co. looked at one another and grinned.

"Did you ever see such a blithering, fat, silly chump?" said Skinner. "Fancy Bunter starting as a giddy dog? Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Snoop and Stott.

"The silly ass——"

"The howling idiot——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Which was not at all complimentary to the Blade of the Remove.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Birds of a Feather!

VERNON-SMITH was yawning in his study, when the door opened and Billy Bunter blinked in. The Bounder of Greyfriars had finished his preparation, and was turning it over in his mind whether he should have a cigarette. He grinned at the sight of Bunter. He had heard of Billy Bunter's new departure, and Bunter as a blade tickled him immensely. He decided immediately in his mind against the cigarette he had been thinking of. To act the goat on the same lines as Bunter was a little too undignified.

"Hallo!" said Vernon-Smith. "Still rolling in filthy lucre?"

Bunter slapped his pocket. There was a chink of cash.

"Oh, I'm pretty flush," he remarked. "My pater's doing remarkably well on the Stock Exchange, you know. Some men have sense enough to make something out of this blessed war—what?"

The Bounder sniffed.

"I'm going to have my allowance doubled," went on Bunter. "In fact, I shall always have plenty of cash in the future. Of course, a fellow with plenty of money has to be rather particular in his friends, don't you think so?"

"Oh!" said the Bounder.

"I've left No. 7 Study for good," said Bunter. "I never could stand those Todds. I'm not going back into No. 1, either. Wharton and Nugent are jolly civil to me now, but I'm not taking any."

"You fat prevaricator," said the Bounder. "Wharton and Nugent wouldn't touch you with a barge-pole!"

"Ahem! Now, I've dropped in to see you, Smithy," said Bunter, seating himself in an armchair and crossing one fat leg over the other. "You're a fellow I can get on with!"

"Thanks!"

"Not at all. As your father's a millionaire you have plenty of money, and you won't always want to be sponging on me, like Skinner and Snoop, and that lot," explained Bunter. "Besides, you're a fellow of my own tastes."

"My hat!" said the Bounder. "I've never stuffed till I burst my crop, that I remember!"

"Ahem! I—I don't mean that," said Bunter hastily. "As a matter of fact, I'm going rather easy in that line myself. I'm going to cut a dash."

"A—a what?"

"A dash," said Bunter. "I'm going to have a high old time. That's why I'm going to pal on with you, Smithy."

"My only chapeau!" said the Bounder, in astonishment.

"You're going to pal on with me, are you?"

"Just so. You're a fellow after my own heart, really," said Bunter. "I say, Smithy, have a smoke?"

"No, I won't!"

"You don't mind if I smoke here, I suppose?"

"Yes, I do!" said Smithy. "If you start smoking here I'll sling you out on your neck!"

"Oh, draw it mild, Smithy! I know you smoke, you know. Don't we all know that you were nearly sacked from the school once for smoking, and gambling, and pub-haunting, and so forth? You've made Wharton and the rest believe that you've chucked it, but of course you can't take me in."

Vernon-Smith half rose from his chair, but he sat down again with a laugh. Billy Bunter was too absurd to get angry with.

"Now, that's what I'm going to talk to you about," continued Bunter. "We're really birds of a feather, you know. I'm going to have a ripping time—smoke, and play, and—and drink, too. Why shouldn't a fellow have some whisky if he wants to—what?"

"Great Scott!"

"In fact, I'm going to be a regular blade," said Bunter impressively, "and I'll pal on with you, Smithy, and we'll have a roaring time together—see? I—I'm not really up to all the ropes yet, and I'd like you to show me round a bit—introduce me to the sporting set at the Cross Keys, and those bookmakers your know, and that kind of thing. Of course, I shall pay my whack all along the line."

Vernon-Smith stared at the fat junior dumbfounded. Once upon a time the Bounder had been a wild beggar, but he had developed more sense since then. His escapades, at one time, had been the talk of the Remove. They had very nearly landed Vernon-Smith with the sack. Smithy was not particularly proud of that

episode in his career. For this fat, ridiculous duffer to come to him like this, coolly proposing to be initiated into a career of vice, simply took Smithy's breath away.

He could only stare at Bunter. The Owl of the Remove was smirking in a self-satisfied manner. He did not seem to see anything extraordinary in his request.

"You see, you'll show me the ropes," he remarked. "You fellows haven't seen me as I really am, so far. I've really had to hide my light under a bushel, you know. But I'm coming out now—right out. I'm going to paint the town red."

"Oh, crumbs!"

"A short life and a merry one—what?" said Bunter. "Now I've got lots of money I'm going to be a high-roller."

"A—a high-roller!" said Smithy faintly.

"Yes, rather! Now, you've finished your prep. What do you say to a little game?" asked Bunter.

"A game of what?"

"Cards, of course!"

"Beggar your neighbour, do you mean?"

Bunter snorted.

"Oh, don't be funny, Smithy. I mean bridge, for bob points."

"Eh? Five quid a hundred?" said Smithy.

"I—I don't care. Any old thing," said Bunter recklessly.

"You're a goer, Smithy. I'm going to be a goer, too."

"You'll be a goer. You'll go out of the school on your neck if a master or a prefect hears anything of this," said Smithy.

"Pooh! They never bowled you out," said Bunter. "I'm pretty deep, too, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you cackling at? Look here, if you ain't afraid of losing your money, let's have a little game!" said Bunter.

"We can play dummy, you know."

"It would be three dummies if I played you."

"Oh, really, Smithy—"

"You fat idiot! I don't want to be sacked, if you do. And I don't want your silly money. Keep it in your pocket."

"When I want your advice I'll ask for it," said Bunter, with dignity. "If you don't care to play, I dare say I'll find somebody else who's got some cards. Loder of the Sixth plays bridge in his study."

"He wouldn't play with you," said Smithy. "He'd be afraid of you blabbing it out afterwards."

"Pooh! I'm a sport," said Bunter. "I shouldn't grumble if I lost. Besides, I should win. I'm a deep chap, with a steady head, you know, and an iron nerve. I'm convinced that I should have topping luck at cards. And look here, if you won't help me, I shall do without your help. The chaps at the Cross Keys would be glad enough to see me, without an introduction from you, for that matter."

"You fat duffer! If you took your money down there that gang would have every shilling of it off you before you could say jam-tarts!"

"Oh, rot! They didn't have yours off you, Smithy."

"I've got my eye-teeth cut, you ass!"

"Well, I'm pretty keen, too—sharp as a razor, in fact," said Bunter. "I can look out for myself, and don't you forget it! And I'm jolly well going! Don't be surprised if you hear me getting out of the dorm to-night. The fact is, I'm keen to be at it."

Vernon Smith gazed at him aghast. Hard and cynical as he was, the Bounder was not without good-nature, and he felt a certain contemptuous pity for this absurd amateur blackguard. Truly, Bunter in funds was a new Bunter!

"You awful idiot!" said the Bounder. "You'll get sacked, as safe as houses. And those sharpers will have all your money. What will you feel like when all your quids are gone?"

"Oh, I'm a sport, you know!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter snorted, and rose to his feet. Although he had only just started as a blade, a blade was too consequential a personage to be laughed at like this.

"Well, if you can't do anything but cackle, I'll clear off," he said. "I was willing to pal on with you, as we're so much alike in tastes. Still, I dare say you'd be rather slow for a goer like me. I'll try my luck at the Cross Keys."

"Hold on!" said the Bounder. "Do you really mean that you're going to break bounds to-night and get down to that beastly pub?"

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Billy Bunter put the cigar between his fat lips again, and pulled at it, while Peter Todd raised the dog-whip threateningly. Bunter's complexion changed considerably as he progressed with that cigar. "Like it?" asked Peter: "Grooh! I—I—I f-f-feel ill!" (See Chapter 9.)

"I'm certainly going to have my fling," said Bunter loftily. "If you want to be pally, you might stay and help me in. I may come home a bit screwed."

"Screwed!" yelled Vernon-Smith. "Oh, my only aunt!"

"A bit squiffy, you know," said Bunter. "Fellows generally get a bit squiffy when they go on the razzle."

"The—the razzle! Oh, my hat! Hold on, though. I'll have that little game," said the Bounder. "We'll play banker."

"Oh, good!" said Bunter, brightening up. "Trot out the cards, old scout."

Vernon-Smith regarded him with a cynical smile. The fat junior was almost trembling with eagerness. He was in a fever to be winning Smithy's money. Vernon-Smith opened the table drawer, and took out a little box marked "Crayons," and extracted a pack of cards from it.

"Shuffle," he said. "Cut for banker."

"Right-ho!"

They sat on opposite sides of the table, and Bunter, in spite of Smithy's prohibition, lighted a cigarette. He explained that

he would play better with a fag between his teeth. He blinked round the study as he shuffled the cards.

"Anything to drink here?" he asked.

"Lemonade," said Smithy.

"I mean something stronger than that."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you cackling at?"

"Ha, ha, ha! And I always thought you were nothing but a fat porpoise," grinned the Bounder. "I suppose you've got the makings of a blackguard in you, Bunter; but you'll be the funniest blackguard that ever blagged."

"Oh, really, Smithy—"

"Play up!" said Smithy. "If you want to get rid of your twenty quid, you can leave it in this study. Pile in!"

Smithy won the bank, and they began to play. Bunter had changed some of his currency notes, and was well supplied with shillings, half-crowns, and half-sovereigns. With his fat face tense with eagerness, his eyes glittering behind his big spectacles, the Owl of the Remove proceeded to gamble recklessly.

There was a tap at the door, and Harry Wharton looked in. "I say, Smithy—why—why—what— My hat!" "Come in!" said the Bounder coolly, while Bunter blinked round rather nervously. "Trot right in! No extra charge to see the show!"

Harry Wharton's brows contracted.

"Look here, Smithy, what does this mean—"

"Bunter wants a lesson in playing the giddy ox," said Vernon-Smith. "I'm giving him the lesson. He is going to be a blade, a dog, and a goer."

"The fat idiot!"

"I'm putting him through his paces," said Smithy. "He came to me as the biggest blackguard he knows, to help in his new career. It was very complimentary to me—Bunter is always so tactful."

"Oh, really, Smithy—"

"Look here—" began Wharton doubtfully. Vernon-Smith had closed one eye at him, the Owl of the Remove being too short-sighted to see that secret sign, and Wharton understood that there was some joke on. Still, he did not like it. Playing cards for money was enough to get both of them kicked out of the school, if it were discovered.

"Oh, come in!" said the Bounder. "Hallo, Cherry—you come in, too! And you, Squiff. It is really worth watching. The first step on the road to ruin, you know—Bunter is having his first lesson in being a blackguard."

The Co. came in, looking very dubious. Hurree Singh, the last in, carefully closed the door behind him, and turned the key. If any person in authority came along, the cards had to be got out of sight before he was admitted to the study. Bunter blinked at the Co. with a vaunting air.

"Take a hand, you chaps!" he said. "Be sporty, you know."

"Rats!" said the Bounder. "This is between you and me, Bunter. I'm giving you a lesson, not those chaps. Play up!"

Bunter played up.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

A Lesson for Bunter!

HARRY WHARTON & Co. gathered round the table, and looked on.

They understood, from the Bounder's sign to them, that he was pulling the leg of the fat junior, and that he was not really gambling. But they did not quite see how he was working it. Certainly he was winning Bunter's money.

The fat junior, with all his keenness, was as big a duffer at cards as at everything else. The Bounder was lucky; and he was perfectly cool and clear-headed, qualities more valuable than luck.

Billy Bunter had a few wins, and each time he won his fat face fairly glistened with greed, but as a rule he lost.

Four pounds in change passed over to the Bounder's side of the table, and by that time Bunter was looking a little green.

"Fed up?" asked Smithy carelessly. "Chuck it, if you like."

Bunter glared through his spectacles. The fever of gambling was on him now, and he was intensely excited and irritated.

"You keep on," he howled. "You're not going to leave off when you've won my money. You just keep on."

"My dear chap, I'll keep on so long as you've got a bob left," said the Bounder.

"Gimme some change," said Bunter, fishing a five-pound note out of his pocket.

Vernon-Smith passed him change for the note, and placed the fiver under the inkstand. They played on, Harry Wharton & Co. watching in silence. What the Bounder's little game was they did not know; but upon one point they were determined, that the winner of that game, whichever party it was, was not going to keep his winnings. If it turned out to be real gambling, they intended to rag the Bounder bald-headed before they left his study.

Bunter began to play more recklessly. With the idea of indemnifying himself for his losses with a few lucky coups, he began to play with half-sovereigns instead of half-crowns.

The result was that his five pounds lasted about ten minutes. When it was gone, Billy Bunter sat and blinked at the cards.

"Oh, crumbs!" he mumbled.

"Tired?" asked the Bounder, with much solicitude.

"No," yelled Bunter. "You're jolly well going on, Smithy."

"Certainly, dear boy."

"Gimme some more change."

"Here you are!"

Vernon-Smith put a second fiver under the inkstand. THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 366.

Bunter, with a desperate look in his fat face, made a big plunge. Vernon-Smith was keeping the bank again, and Bunter planked down two pounds at a time. He won—and his fat face flushed with greedy glee. Then he lost to Vernon-Smith, and the Bounder took the bank again. Then Billy Bunter lost, and lost—and lost—

"Gimme some more change!" groaned Bunter.

The last fiver came out.

Vernon-Smith slipped it carelessly under the inkstand, and gave Bunter change. The Bounder still had the bank.

"Make your game!" he said cheerily.

Billy Bunter hesitated. He was trembling and twittering with unhealthy excitement. His little round eyes seemed to roll behind his glasses. Finally, he planked down the whole five pounds in a lump.

"There!" he muttered.

"Right-ho!"

The cards were turned up, and Bunter gave a deep and dismal groan. He had lost.

Vernon-Smith collected up his winnings.

"Going on?" he asked.

"I—I'm stony!"

"Oh," said Smithy, "all right! When you get another remittance, you can let it go the same way, you know. Lemme see—I've won nineteen pounds from you, less two shillings—eighteen pounds eighteen shillings. Quite a nobby little sum—worth while sitting opposite a silly idiot for three-quarters of an hour, for that."

Billy Bunter sat staring stonily at the money he had lost. Only that morning he had been in possession of twenty pounds. He had made himself sick with a feed—he had unwillingly paid up an old account at the tuckshop—and he had had a plunge on the cards. And now all his remittance was gone. That whacking remittance, which had seemed big enough to last him the whole term, was gone to the last penny. Truly, his good fortune had not lasted long.

"I—I say, Smithy, I—I'm going on," he stammered. "You—you can take my I O U's, you know."

"Well, I'm not really a collector of waste-paper," demurred Smithy.

"Look here, you've won my money—"

"What did you expect to happen?" asked the Bounder, with a laugh. "However, I'll give you a little run."

Bunter brightened up.

"My pater will be sending me another remittance soon," he said. "Ten quid, very likely."

"All serene. I'll take your I O U's up to ten quid," said Smithy.

"Good. I'll jolly soon get all that back!"

Bunter tore a sheet of impot paper into squares, and took a pen. He wrote out five I O U's for £2 each, and began to play with them. Harry Wharton & Co. still watched in silence, wondering what on earth Vernon-Smith was driving at. Even if he wanted Bunter's money, he must certainly know that Bunter's I O U's were no use. But they did not speak. Billy Bunter was certainly getting the lesson of his life, in the joys—or otherwise—of gambling.

Fortune smiled on the fat junior for some minutes, and then turned again. In a quarter of an hour his I O U's had joined his banknotes, his currency-notes, his quids, and his half-crowns and shillings. He sat with a stunned look.

"I—I say, Smithy, I—I'll sign some more I O U's," he stammered.

"Nearly bedtime," yawned Smithy. "I'm afraid I can't play you for waste-paper, Bunter. Lemme sec. I've won eighteen pounds eighteen bob in money, and ten quid in impot-paper."

The Co. chuckled.

"You owe me ten quid, Bunter. When are you going to pay up?"

"Ow!" groaned Bunter.

The feverish excitement of the game had left him now, and he was as limp as a rag. He sat trembling and perspiring, with such misery in his fat face that the Famous Five could not help taking pity on him.

"Your next remittance belongs to me," said the Bounder mercilessly.

"Ow!"

"Really, I hope your pater will go on treating you handsomely, Bunt. It will mean a regular income for me."

"Ow!" groaned Bunter dismally.

Vernon-Smith burst into a laugh.

"You fat duffer! Have you had enough of being a blade and a blackguard?" he asked.

"Ow! Yes, rather! All my money gone! Yow!"

"Lucky for you it wasn't at the Cross Keys!" grinned the Bounder. "Here you are, you thumping duffer!"

He pushed back Bunter's money across the table. Then he screwed up the precious I O U's and tossed them into the

fire. Bunter's fat hands closed on the money, but he blinked at Vernon-Smith in amazement.

"You thundering idiot!" said Smithy. "Did you think I was going to keep your money? You came here for a lesson, and I've given you one. See? If you'd had your lesson at the Cross Keys, you'd never have seen a stiver of your money again. You're not built for a bold, bad blackguard, Bunter. You'd better keep on in your old role, as a champion gorger. Put that money in your pocket, you fat idiot!"

"You—you—you're not going to keep your winnings?" stuttered Bunter, scarcely daring to believe in his good luck, but at the same time stuffing the money into his pockets.

Vernon-Smith snorted contemptuously.

"Of course not, you silly idiot! I played with you to give you a lesson, and if you've got any sense at all in your fat chump, that lesson will be enough for you."

"I—I—I say, Smithy, I—I—I don't think I shall gamble any more," mumbled Bunter. "It—it's no great catch, that I can see. You might have kept all my money. Oh, dear!"

And Billy Bunter rolled out of the study in a great hurry, perhaps fearing that the Bouncer might change his mind and claim his winnings, after all.

Vernon-Smith put the cards away, and grinned at the Co., who were grinning, too. They understood the Bouncer's little game at last.

"A whole hour wasted on that silly chump!" said Vernon-Smith. "But I think that lesson ought to do him good—what?"

"What-ho!" chuckled Squiff. "His face was worth a guinea a box—at least, when his last quid went."

"You see, if I hadn't taken him on, he was going down to the Cross Keys to look for a little game," the Bouncer explained. "And they wouldn't have given him his money back at the finish."

"Not half!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "Poor old Bunter—he wasn't cut out for a blade!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't think we shall hear any more of that," said Wharton, laughing. "The silly ass—after that experience, I should think he would have sense enough to chuck it!"

But they did not know their Bunter yet.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Mr. Quelch Does Not Approve!

DURING the next few days the lesson Billy Bunter had received in the Bouncer's study seemed to have its effect upon him. He did not ask Vernon-Smith for any more little games; he declined Skinner's kind offers to play him at pitch-and-toss; and he did not make any attempt to be admitted to the select circle who played bridge in Loder's study. Whenever Bunter thought of the narrow escape his twenty pounds had had, he shivered at the bare idea of it. He was fed up with gambling—for the time, at least. The Bouncer's method of nipping his doggishness in the bud seemed to have been effective.

But the fat junior's ambition to shine as a "blade," like the estimable Ponsonby of Highcliffe, was only subdued; it was not by any means eradicated. He was fed up with cards, but he broke out in other directions. After two or three attacks of sickness, he found that he was able to smoke cigarettes without internal trouble. And he was greatly elated with that fact. On all possible occasions he would sneak off with Skinner and Snoop into the wood-shed, or the old tower, or somewhere out of bounds, to smoke. As he was no longer in No. 7 Study, Peter Todd was unable to keep a fatherly eye on him.

The twenty pounds was steadily melting away in the tuck-shop, certainly; but in that line it did not go so fast as at banker. Even Billy Bunter's capacities were limited in the tuck-shop, and he was likely to have money in his pocket for some time to come. The fellows he had always pestered for loans had quite a pleasant rest. In fact, it was Bunter who was pestered now. He owed money to nearly every fellow in the Remove, and to a good many other fellows in other Forms, and they did not see why he should not pay up now that he was in funds.

But Billy Bunter apparently saw a reason why he shouldn't. At all events, he didn't. His money remained in his pockets, excepting the amounts that passed over the counter of Mrs. Mumble's little shop, and the other amounts that were expended in the village on the purchase of cigarettes.

But Bunter, though he prided himself on being a deep dog, was not really built on the lines of a blade. One afternoon, when he was smoking on the stile in the lane with Skinner and Snoop, he was suddenly surprised to see his companions roll off the stile and bolt across the field behind. Bunter blinked round after them in astonishment, the cigarette still between his fat lips.

"I say, you fellows, where are you off to? What's the row? What—Oh!"

"Bunter!"

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NEXT
MONDAY—

"THE LAST PLUNGE!"

EVERY
MONDAY, The "Magnet" LIBRARY. ONE
PENNY.

"Oh, my hat!"

Billy Bunter almost rolled off the stile as he heard the voice of Mr. Quelch. Skinner and Snoop had spotted the Remove-master coming down the lane in time. Bunter was too short-sighted for that.

He sat on the stile, the still-smoking cigarette glued to his lips, and blinked at Mr. Quelch in terror.

The Form-master's expression was simply terrific.

"Bunter!"

"Ow!"

"You are smoking!"

"Oh, no, sir!" stuttered Bunter. "N-n-not at all, sir! I—I never smoke, sir. I—I think it's no-class, sir."

"That is a cigarette in your mouth now!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"Oh, dear!"

Bunter dropped the cigarette as if it had suddenly become red-hot.

"Turn out your pockets, Bunter!"

The Owl of the Remove dismally turned out his pockets. He was fairly in for it now.

"Ah, I thought so!" said Mr. Quelch, taking a couple of packets of cigarettes and a cigar. "So you smoke cigars, too, Bunter?"

"Nunno, sir!"

"Then what is this cigar doing in your pocket?"

"I—I was going to try—I—I mean, I don't know how it got there," mumbled Bunter. "The—the tobacconist must have slipped it in for a j-j-joke, sir."

"You have been to a tobacconist's, Bunter?"

"Oh, no, sir! I wouldn't enter such a place, sir."

"Bunter, you are aware of the foolishness of this habit in a boy of your age. You are quite aware that smoking stunts the growth of a growing lad, and has a most pernicious effect upon his health. You are also aware that it is a childish and ridiculous action in a boy. You are aware, too, that it is a strict rule at Greyfriars that this kind of petty blackguardism shall never be indulged in. You will follow me, Bunter. I shall try to impress upon your mind, Bunter, that you cannot make a fool, an unpleasant and unhealthy fool, of yourself with impunity!"

"Oh, crumbs!" groaned Bunter.

He rolled off the stile, and marched dismally behind the Remove-master back to the school. Mr. Quelch went directly to his study, and the Blade of the Remove followed him there. Mr. Quelch selected his stoutest cane.

The scene that followed was painful. The voice of Billy Bunter could be heard over half Greyfriars. Mr. Quelch, though he had had a good deal of practice in that particular line, looked a little breathless when he had finished.

"You may go, Bunter. I trust that you will remember this."

Upon that point there was not the slightest possible doubt. Billy Bunter was not likely to forget that licking. He crawled out of the Form-master's study, doubled up, squeezing his fat hands and groaning dismally.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, meeting him in the passage. "What on earth's the matter, Bunter?"

"Wow!" moaned Bunter.

"My hat! You look hurt!"

"Gwow!"

"Loder again?" asked Peter Todd.

"Yow! No. Quelch! Yow! I'm nearly killed! Yow—hooh!"

"But what for?" demanded Peter.

"Yow! The beast! Oh, the awful rotter! Groooh! And the beast has taken away all my cigarettes, too!" groaned Bunter. "Yow-ow-ow!"

"Oh!" said Bob. "So you've been smoking?"

"Yow-ow! Why shouldn't I smoke if I like? Groooh! Old Prout smokes! Yow! I'm jolly well going to smoke! Yowp!"

"Serve you jolly well right," said Bob unsympathetically.

"Let me catch you smoking," said Peter Todd sulphurously. "I'll—I'll—"

"Yow-wow-wow-ow!"

Billy Bunter crawled away in anguish, and for the next couple of hours he was "yowing" and "wowing" almost without stopping to take breath. Skinner and Snoop found him in the study when they came in. He was stretched in the armchair, groaning.

"Caught it?" asked Skinner.

"Yow-wow! Yes! Yow-wow—"

"Have a smoke, old chap—it'll set you up."

Bunter groaned deeply.

"Yow! No! Yow! Wow!"

"I say, that's a blessed row you're making," remarked Snoop.

"Yow-wow-wow."

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"For goodness' sake chuck it."

"Yow-wow."

"Here, let's get out, Skinny. I can't stand that awful row," said Snoop; and Bunter's pals quitted the study. The unhappy Blade of the Remove was left alone, to yow and to wow to his heart's content. And for quite a long time after that, fellows who passed the study chuckled as they heard the Goer of the Remove yowing and wowing.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Going Strong!

"HALLO, hallo hallo! What the dickens——"

"You, Toddy——"

"Have you become a blade and a goer?"

"My esteemed Todful chum, I hope you are not going on the downful path. As the respectable Virgil says, 'Facilis descensus Averno,' " said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh reproachfully.

Peter Todd grinned. The Famous Five had come upon him, and to their astonishment found him examining a tremendous cigar. It was a very large cigar, and almost black, and looked strong enough to blow up any daring smoker who tackled it.

"What's the game?" demanded Squiff. "You can't be going to play the giddy goat, Toddy, surely? If you are, it's up to us, as your pals, to bump you—hard."

"Fathead!" said Peter politely. "This is for Bunter."

"Bunter!" exclaimed the Famous Five together.

"Certainly. You know that Bunter has become a blade, a dog, a nut, and a goer——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"As his bear-leader, if not his chum, I am helping him," explained Peter. "Quelch caught him yesterday and gave him socks. That ought to have been enough for the hopeless ass. But was it not written, though you bray a fool in a mortar, yet will not his folly depart from him. It's no good licking Bunter. I've nearly broken a cricket stump on him myself. I've kicked him out of the study. I've lathered him till he wriggled. I've punched him, and jammed him, and rubbed his head in the cinders. In fact, I've done all that a real pal could do——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And still he goes on," said Peter. "He goes on because he's a goer, I suppose. So I am going to help him on the downward path. He's going to smoke this cigar. By the time he has finished it, I've got a faint suspicion that he will be fed up with smoking. Unless he's got an inside of cast iron, he will feel as if life isn't worth living by the time he's done with this corker. I gave threepence for it—rather a waste—but, of course, you can't expect real Havana for threepence. I don't know what it's made of, but the tobacconist said it was tobacco. Flor de Cauliflower, I suppose. Anyway, it's a corker. I know how Smithy cured the fat idiot of gambling. I'm going to cure him of smoking the same way. Twig?"

"My hat!" said Squiff. "If he smokes that awful thing——"

"He's going to smoke it from end to end, from start to finish," said Peter Todd determinedly. "He's offered me a fag several times. Now I'm going to offer him one, and see that he smokes it. He's filling himself up with pastry just now. The more the merrier. On a foundation of jam tarts and cream puffs, this cigar ought to be as effective as a four-point-seven shell."

The fat figure of Billy Bunter appeared in the doorway of the tuckshop. Peter Todd nodded to the Co., and hurried towards the fat junior. Billy Bunter's face was shining, and he was breathing a little heavily. Evidently he had done very well in the tuckshop—perhaps a little too well.

"Hallo, whither bound, my fat tulip?" asked Peter affably.

"I'm going to have a smoke," said Bunter defiantly. "I always like a smoke after a feed—quite the thing, you know. I'll jolly well show old Quelch how much I care for him. And I'll jolly well show you, too, Peter Todd. You mind your own business. I've told you already that I don't desire your acquaintance."

"Then you don't feel inclined to come and have a smoke along with me?" said Peter. "Not even if I stand the cigar?"

"Well," said Bunter relenting, "if you're going to do the decent thing, Toddy, I don't mind. I'll tell you what I'll do. You come under my wing, and I'll take you down to the Cross Keys with me to-morrow night. I'm going for a bit of a razzle, you know. See life a bit, you know. This school is too slow for a real goer."

"Oh, you crass idiot! I—I mean, come on, Bunter. I've got a good cigar for you. One you'll enjoy immensely. The

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best thing you could possibly have. We'll get into the old tower," said Peter.

He linked arms with Bunter, and sauntered off with him. Bunter's fat face was quite amiable now.

"Well, I will say, I'm glad to see you showing some sense at last, Toddy," he remarked. "Of course, I don't really want to drop you if you are going to be decent. You can pal on with me if you like, and have a high old time. Of course, you will have to pay your whack. I'm not going to lend you any money."

"You're too good, Bunt, old man," murmured Peter. "Here we are."

They entered the old tower, which was well out of sight of the school buildings. Billy Bunter sat down on a fragment of masonry.

"Trot out the fags," he said airily.

"Here you are!"

"Phew! That's a corker," said Bunter, as he took the enormous cigar. "I—I say, Toddy, is this a good one?"

"Good one?" sniffed Peter. "Lot you know about cigars, and you call yourself a goer. Don't you know the celebrated Flor de Cabbagio when you see it?"

"Of—of course I do," said Bunter. "But—but there isn't any band on it."

"The best cigars don't have bands," said Peter solemnly. "The Flor de Cabbagio is a very special brand. Here's a match."

Bunter bit the end off the cigar in quite a knowing manner. Peter Todd applied the match, and Bunter pulled at the cigar. He made a wry face.

"Like it?" said Todd affably.

"Grooh! I—I mean, yes, rather! Ripping!" said Bunter.

"Pile in!"

"I—I say, ain't you going to smoke, Toddy?"

"Only got the one cigar," explained Todd. "I got that for you, Bunter. I wanted you to enjoy yourself. Isn't it a treat?"

"First rate," said Bunter. "B-b-but I don't think I'll smoke it all now; Toddy. I—I think I'll leave it for a bit."

"You call yourself a blade!" said Peter contemptuously. "Lot you know about cigars. You can't light a cigar a second time—it's too bitter."

"I—I say, this tastes rather bitter, anyway."

"That's the special flavour of the Flor de Cabbagio."

"Grooh!"

"What's the matter?"

"N-n-nothing! B-b-but I'm not going to finish this cigar. Why, you beast, wharrer you at? Leggo my collar."

Peter Todd had taken an iron grip on Bunter's collar. He produced a dog-whip from under his jacket with the other hand.

"Pile in!" he said grimly.

"Oh, really, Toddy——"

"You're not smoking, Bunter."

"I—I—I—I can't finish it!" howled Bunter. "It—it's making me feel queer inside. Ow! It was the pastry, you know, not the cigar. I'm a seasoned smoker, of course. But I'm not going to finish it now."

"Your mistake—you are!" said Peter Todd. "You're going to smoke that cigar right through, and if you don't get on with it sharp, I'm going to lay this dog-whip round you. See? Like that!"

"Yaroooh!"

"Now you've dropped it," said Peter. "Pick it up, and get on."

"Yow! I—I won't——"

Whack, whack, whack!

"Yow-ow-ow! You beast, Toddy! I—I'll thrash you! Yaroooh! I—I mean, I'll smoke the cigar if you like! Grooh! Leggo!"

"Buck up!"

Billy Bunter put the cigar between his fat lips again, and pulled at it. He smoked on furiously, Peter Todd keeping an iron grip on the back of his collar. The dog-whip was ready, and there was no escape for the Blade of the Remove. Bunter's complexion, usually very ruddy, changed considerably as he progressed with that cigar. It became a pasty white, and then turned to an art shade in yellow, and then gradually assumed a greenish tinge.

"Like it?" asked Peter.

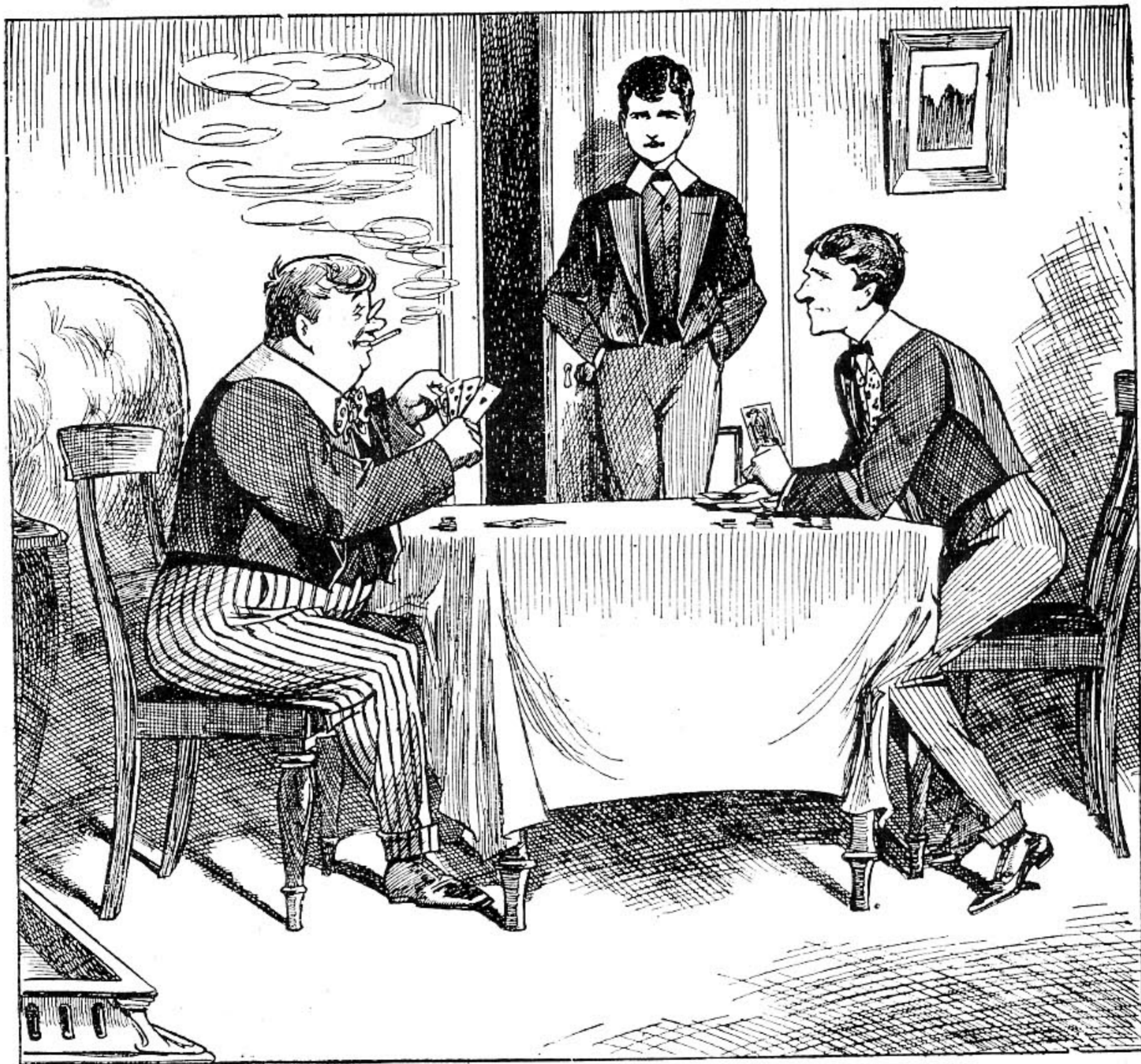
"Grooh! I—I—I feel ill!"

"Rot! Fancy a regular goer feeling ill over a cigar," said Peter contemptuously. "A real Flor de Cabbagio, price threepence, too!"

"You—you horrid beast! You—you're making me smoke a threepenny cigar!" groaned the hapless goer.

"Well, threepence is a lot to spend on rubbish like that," said Peter. "Perhaps I might have got a stronger one for fourpence. Don't you find that strong enough?"

"Oooooo-er!"



"Look here, Smithy, what does this mean?" demanded Wharton, looking into the study. "Bunter wants a lesson in playing the giddy ox," said Vernon-Smith. "He is going to be a blade, a dog, and a goer." "The fat idiot!" exclaimed Wharton. (See Chapter 6.)

"Don't you like the flavour?"

"Woooo-er!"

"What on earth's the matter with you, Bunter? Blessed if your face isn't turning quite green! Is that the latest colour for goers?"

"Waw-aw-aw-er!"

"I don't understand that, Bunt. Is that German?"

"Groo-er—errrr!"

"You're getting through it," said Peter encouragingly. "Nearly two-thirds. You'll finish it all right, unless you perish in the attempt. If you perish in the attempt, are there any special wishes you would like to express about the funeral arrangements?"

"Mum-um-um-um-ooooh!"

"I wish you could see your face, Bunt. Talk about a kaleidoscope! Kaleidoscopes ain't in it! It's yellow now, with a little olive green."

"Wow-wow-ow-ow—ooooch!"

The cigar dropped from Bunter's lips. Even the dog-whip had no terrors for him now. His internal sufferings were worse than many dog-whips. His eyes half closed, and dreadful convulsions proceeding in his inside, he rocked himself to and fro on his seat, clasped his hands to his waistcoat

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"THE LAST PLUNGE!"

and groaned deeply. Peter Todd released him. He felt that Bunter had smoked enough.

"Now, that's really goey," said Peter admiringly. "You'll be able to tell Skinner and Snoop and the other goers that you've smoked a cigar from start to finish, Bunter. How do you feel?"

Groan!

"Feel like eating a fat pork-chop?"

"Grooh!"

"I'll leave you to enjoy yourself," said Peter. "Don't forget to call on me whenever you want to go it—when you want to go it really strong, you know, like a real goer. I'll always stand you a threepenny cigar. Good-bye!"

Groan!

Peter Todd walked away whistling cheerily. He felt that he had done his duty—a painful duty. Feeble groans and moans followed him. Bunter sat rocking himself to and fro, every now and then bending almost double, his complexion changing with astonishing rapidity to almost all the colours of the rainbow.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" chirruped Bob Cherry, looking in with his chums. "What a niff of burnt cabbage!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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"There's a goer here, and he's been going strong," grinned Squiff. "Hallo, Bunter! You look as if you have been enjoying yourself."

Groan!

"Is this the high old time you were telling us about?" asked Nugent.

Groan!

"Pat him on the back," said Squiff.

"Ow! Lemme alone! I—I'm dying!" said Bunter faintly. "Todd has poisoned me! I'm dying! Tell Todd I hope he'll be hanged—Grooh! Groogh! Oooooooooch!"

The Famous Five trotted off. The scene that followed was really heart-rending.

It was nearly an hour later that Bunter emerged from the old tower. His fat face was waxen in colour, his eyes looked hollow, and his general expression was that of a fellow who found life too great a burden to bear. And when Skinner met him, and asked him to come up to the study for a smoke, Bunter glared at him like a basilisk, and rolled away without a word—leaving Skinner greatly astonished.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Going Stronger!

HURREE JAMSET RAM SINGH came in No. 1 Study, a couple of days later, with a very peculiar expression upon his dusky face. The rest of the Co. were there, discussing a forthcoming match with Rookwood School. Inky's expression attracted their attention at once, and they ceased "footer jaw," and looked at him inquiringly.

"Well, what's on, you black tulip?" asked Bob Cherry.

"I am concernfully worried about our esteemed and idiotic Bunter," explained Hurree Singh.

"Oh, my hat! Bunter again! Surely he hasn't been doing any more smoking!" said Harry Wharton, laughing. "I thought Toddy had cured him of that."

"The smokefulness seems to be off," said Inky. "But the esteemed Bunter is several sorts of a silly idiot. This time it is the boozefulness."

"Wha-a-at!"

"I have been down to Friardale on my jigger," Inky explained, "and I spotfully discovered the egregious Bunter purchasing a bottle of whisky."

"Great Scott!"

"He is asking for the sackful push," said Inky. "Of course, it would be a pleasant and boonful blessing if the esteemed Bunter were ejectfully booted out of the school. But perhapsfully it is up to us to save him from the esteemed boot!"

The chums of the Remove looked aghast.

Bunter in funds had surprised them, and disgusted them. The vicious leanings of his character had come unexpectedly to light. His utterly ridiculous ambition to shine as a doggish blade amused them while it excited their contempt. But that the fat junior would have the unexampled idiocy to proceed to this length, quite took their breath away.

"Whisky!" said Frank Nugent faintly.

"Oh, the crass idiot!" said Wharton. "Why—why, the utter imbecile is simply asking for the sack. And he can't like the filthy stuff. It's only some more of his rot. I don't suppose he's ever tasted it."

"I inquired of the esteemed Bunter what he intended to do with the excellent and disgusting whisky, and he called me a nigger," said Inky. "But I do not wishfully want to see the fat burler pitched out neckfully from the school. I have reflectfully propounded an idea."

"Go it?"

"The esteemed idiot has hidden the bottle in his study. If he should drink some of the delightful and filthy booze, he will get screwfully squiffy, and he will be sacked."

"Not much doubt about that," said Nugent. "Why, if the Head knew he had it there, he would sack him—let alone if he drinks any of it."

"He's simply asking for it," said Squiff.

"And as the esteemed idiot has never tasted the beastly and excellent stuff, he will certainly get screwed," said Inky. "We do not wish the chopper to come down full on the wretched and beastly Bunter. It is up to us to look after him as long as his money lasts. He will soon get rid of it Skinnerfully and Snoopfully—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And when it is all gone, he will be safe againfully. My wheezey idea is to disgust him with the pleasure of boozefulness. If you esteemed sahibs will get Bunter out of the way, I will look for the bottle in his study. He has taken the cork out. I heard him draw it corkfully a few minutes ago."

"Well?"

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"I have here a packetful amount of nice medicine," said Inky, holding up a little paper packet. "I purchased it at the chemist's for the sole and esteemed benefit of the filthy boozeful Bunter. It is very strong—as strong as Toddy's cigars—but it will act internfully. It is a compound of the esteemed salts of Epsom—"

"My hat!"

"And if it were introducefully put into the whisky, it is probable that the fatheaded Bunter would dislike the esteemed whisky as much as he dislikes smokefulness."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We're on!" exclaimed Bob. "We'll ask him down to the tuckshop for a feed. He'll jump at that."

"I will remainfully stay here, and slipfully enter his study when you have taken him awayfully," grinned Inky.

"Good egg!"

Harry Wharton & Co. hurried down the Remove passage to Billy Bunter's study. They heard a sound of liquor gurgling into a glass. Harry Wharton kicked the door open.

Bunter started up with a guilty look.

There was a bottle of whisky on the table, and a glass half full. Bunter was sniffing at it when the door opened. The latest departure of the Blade of the Remove was about the most idiotic of all his new departures. He had a tumbler half full of potent liquor—enough to knock over a hard drinker. The four juniors came in, and closed the door behind them. They did not want Bunter's whisky to be seen.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What have you got there?" asked Bob.

Bunter recovered himself, and blinked defiantly at the Co.

"Whisky!" he said.

"You like that stuff?" asked Wharton genially.

"Well, I—I've never tasted it before," confessed Bunter. "But—but I'm jolly well going to get into the habit, you know. All go-ahead chaps drink whisky. Don't be surprised if you see me come into the dorm some night squiffy. I'm going to have a ripping time, I can tell you. I'm going to paint the town red."

The juniors looked at him, hardly knowing whether to laugh at his stupidity, or to bump him for his rascality.

"I'm going the whole hog, you know," said Bunter.

"None of your blessed Eric bizney for me. Of course, you soft chaps don't understand a real goer. You can keep your blessed football. Pah! Kids' game! Why don't you try to be a man, like me?"

"A man—like you!" murmured Wharton.

"Yes, rather! Go the pace, you know. You're not hard up. You could afford to go on the razzle, if you had the spirit. Don't be a silly duffer, you know. I can't stand a fellow being soft. Have some with me. Drink up, boys!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Don't be spoonneys!" urged Bunter. "Be men! Like me!"

"Like you! My hat!"

"I'll tell you what," said Bunter. "If you like I'll take you fellows with me down to the Cross Keys. I'm going one of these nights."

"Thanks!" said Harry Wharton. "You'll put us through our paces—what? Show us how to paint the town red, and—and razzle! I think you call it razzle!"

"That's it!" said Bunter loftily. "I'll take you under my wing. I'll show you how to see life! Of course, you will have to pay your own whack! I'm not going to lend you any money. I've only got ten pounds left now. But that's enough for a fellow to have a high old time—what?"

"We looked in to ask you to come down to the tuckshop," said Nugent.

Bunter shook his head.

"Not good enough! I'm not standing any feeds!"

"But we're going to stand the feed," said Harry.

"Oh!" Bunter's expression changed. "Mind, I'm not going to lend you any money."

"That's all right."

"What's the feed going to be like? I want to get on with this whisky."

"Yes, I know you must be awfully keen on that—an old toper like you!" agreed Wharton. "Do you know what would happen to you if a prefect found that bottle here?"

"Oh, rats!"

"Jam-tarts and cream-puffs," said Bob Cherry. "Come on, Bunter!"

The bait was not to be resisted. Billy Bunter replaced the bottle and the glass in the study cupboard and trotted out after the Co. A feed for nothing was always an irresistible attraction to Bunter.

In the midst of the smiling juniors the Owl of the Remove

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rolled away to the tuckshop, and when the coast was clear Hurree Jamset Ram Singh slipped into the study.

The dusky hands of the nabob worked quickly. He promptly poured the contents of the glass and the bottle into the thick ivy under the study window. Then he proceeded to refill the bottle with water from the study kettle. He added a little ink to darken it, and mixed in the Epsom salts. Then he replaced the cork and the bottle. He had left enough of the whisky in the bottle to give the concoction a flavour and a smell, but not enough to do Bunter any damage. The Epsom salts would do that.

There was a beatific smile on Inky's dusky face as he slipped out of the study.

Ten minutes later he joined his chums in the tuckshop. Billy Bunter was tucking into jam-tarts at a rate that threatened bankruptcy for the Famous Five. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh closed one eye at his chums.

"Time we were off," remarked Bob Cherry. "How much is that little lot, Mrs. Mimble?"

"Three shillings, please."

"I say, you fellows, I haven't finished yet!"

"Your mistake—you have!" said Bob.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Keep on as long as you like, Bunter," said Squiff liberally.

"Thanks, Field. I will!"

"And foot the bill when you've done."

"Eh?"

The Famous Five, having settled the three shillings, walked out of the tuckshop.

Billy Bunter suspended operations at once. He had had enough, if he had to pay for further supplies himself. He grunted and rolled out of the shop and headed at once for his study. His feed had made him thirsty, and he was going to quench his thirst—after the manner of a "dog, a blade, and a goer."

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Flowing Bowl!

SNOOP was standing before the study cupboard staring in astonishment at the whisky-bottle when Bunter came in. The fat junior blinked at him suspiciously.

"You let my whisky alone, Snoopey!"

"Your whisky?" said Snoop faintly. "You fat idiot! Did you bring that bottle here?"

"Certainly! I'm rather a toper, you know," said Bunter airily. "Always feel better for a pick-me-up!"

"My hat!"

"You can have a tommy-dodd with me if you like, Snoopey," said Bunter.

"No jolly fear!" said Snoop promptly. "I may be an ass, but I'm not a silly ass! And you'd better leave it alone, too, Bunt. You'll get screwed!"

"Nothing new," said Bunter. "You should see me sometimes on vacation. Rolling round the town, you know. Simply blind!"

"Rats!" said Snoop. "I don't believe you've ever tasted it before."

"I'll jolly well show you!" said Bunter. "Just you watch me mop it up, that's all. Hallo! Who's taken my glass away? I left a glass here half-full, after—after a deep drink. You've taken it."

"I haven't seen any glass," said Snoop; "and I don't believe you've had a deep drink. You'd be snoring on the floor if you had!"

"Somebody's been here and scoffed my whisky!" growled Bunter. "Pretty rotten that a chap can't keep whisky in his study cupboard without fellows coming and scoffing it!"

"You're jolly well not going to keep that here!" said Snoop warmly. "I'm not going to get the sack, if you do! Why, if a prefect spotted it—"

"Oh, you've got no nerve!" said Bunter contemptuously. "Not much of a blade about you! You just watch me mop it up!"

"That's a jolly queer colour for whisky!" said Snoop, as Bunter lifted the bottle to the table and found the empty glass.

"Rot!" said Bunter. "It's prime—the very best! What do you know about whisky?" He blinked at the bottle with great satisfaction. If there was a slight change in the hue of its contents the Owl of the Remove was too short-sighted to notice it. "Just smell it! That's the genuine niff—what?"

"Smells like whisky," admitted Snoop. "My hat! Suppose somebody should come along and smell whisky in this study!"

"Oh, have a little pluck!" said Bunter, with ineffable scorn. "A short life and a merry one, you know."

"You're not really going to drink that stuff?" said Snoop, aghast.

Snoop was not a nice youth, by any means; but he was not a perfect idiot, and so he drew the line at this kind of thing. "What do you think I've bought it for?" sneered Bunter.

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"THE LAST PLUNGE!"

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ONE
PENNY.

"You've got no nerve. Take a drink, and get some Dutch courage. Here you are!"

Bunter swamped out a tumbler nearly full.

"You duffer!" shrieked Snoop. "That's enough to make a grown-up man drunk!"

"Bosh!" said Bunter. "I'm pretty hardened, you know! Besides, I don't care! If I get screwed you and Skinner can carry me up to bed. Blades often have to be carried up to bed. It's rather doggish, you know."

"Catch me!" said Snoop. "If you're going to play the giddy ox like that, Bunter, you can do it in some other study. I'm not going to have whisky in my quarters. But I don't believe you're going to swallow any of it. You're spoofing!"

Bunter snorted angrily.

"You watch me!" he said.

He sipped at the glass, and made a wry face. Snoop burst into a roar of laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha! You look as if you were enjoying it—I don't think!"

"Groooh! I—I mean, ripping! It's topping!" said Bunter, recovering himself. "I—I really like the flavour, you know."

"Liar!" said Snoop.

"Well, look here!"

Bunter gulped down quite a third of the glass, and Snoop jumped. The fat junior tried to look as if he enjoyed it. It was difficult to do so. He had not expected the whisky to taste nice; but he had never dreamed that the flavour was quite so horrible as that. But not for worlds would the Blade of the Remove have admitted that he did not like it!

"You idiot!" said Snoop, in almost an awed voice. "You'll be squiffy now. You'll be rolling. Don't you feel it coming on?"

"No, I don't."

"But—but you must!" said Snoop, in amazement. "You're not used to spirits, I know that; and you've drunk enough to turn your head round."

Bunter grinned with satisfaction. The flavour certainly was deadly. But he did not feel the slightest symptoms of intoxication. Evidently it was an opportunity to impress upon Sidney James Snoop his great powers as a toper.

"Just you watch me!" he said; and he gulped again at the glass.

"Oh, crumbs!"

Bunter finished the glass. He felt as if the flavour would finish him. But certainly he was not intoxicated.

"What do you think of that?" he demanded vauntingly.

"You—you're not squiffy?" stuttered Snoop.

"Rather not!"

"Well, my hat!"

Bunter put the bottle away in the cupboard. He was feeling very satisfied with himself, though there was a taste in his mouth that he would have given a great deal to get rid of.

"Well, that beats the band!" said Snoop. "You must have been at this game before, Bunter. You disgusting beast!"

"Oh, draw it mild, Snoopey! I'm rather a dog, I admit," said Bunter airily.

"A hog, you mean!" said Snoop. "And I tell you what—if you don't take that filthy bosh out of this study I'll pitch it out, and you after it! You can find somewhere else to keep your whisky, you fat toad. If I find it here when I come to do my prep you'll hear of it! I'm not going to be sacked!"

And Snoop went out and slammed the door.

Billy Bunter snorted. His new study-mates did not prize his company now so highly as at first. Since the lesson from the Bounder, Bunter had steadily declined to play pitch-and-toss—somehow gambling seemed to have lost its attractions for him. He declined with equal steadiness to stand more than his just "whack" in the study feeds.

Indeed, it was not very easy to get him even to stand his "whack," in spite of the fact that he was the wealthiest member of the study.

Snoop and Stott were growing fed up. And Bunter's latest example of doggishness put the lid on, as Sidney James Snoop expressed it when he told Stott about it.

When the two of them came up to the study later in the evening to do their preparation they had agreed to make short work of Bunter's whisky bottle, and of Bunter himself if he raised any objections, although he still had ten pounds left.

But when they entered the study they found an unexpected sight to greet their eyes. Billy Bunter was there! He was lying in the armchair, with his face screwed up and both fat hands pressed upon his waistcoat. He was groaning deeply.

"Hallo!" said Snoop. "What's the matter now?"
 "Oh, oh, oh!"
 "Doesn't booze agree with you?" jeered Stott.
 "Oh, oh, oh!"
 "Got a pain?" chuckled the two juniors together.
 "'Tain't a pain; it's a horrible agony!" moaned Bunter.
 "Shooting agonies, like red-hot daggers and things! Oh, oh, oh, oh!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 That yell of laughter was all the sympathy Billy Bunter received from his study-mates. Certainly, it was all that he deserved.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Kill or Cure!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. looked in cheerily. Snoop and Stott had sat down to do their preparation to an accompaniment of dismal groans from the Owl of the Remove.

"Look here, Bunter, shut up that row!" said Snoop. "You can't expect to be allowed to make a row like that in a fellow's study."

"Oh, oh, oh!"

"If you've got a pain, go and have it somewhere else," said Stott indignantly. "Blessed if I ever heard of such cheek!"

"Oh, oh, oh! Ooop!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" said Bob Cherry affably. "Anything the matter with Bunter?"

"The filthy brute has been guzzling spirits, and they don't agree with him," said Snoop. "Blessed if I understand why he isn't screwed, considering the amount he scoffed. But it seems to have taken him another way. He's got pains and things, and he thinks we're going to let him make that awful row in our study."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter groaned dismally.

"Listen to him!" exclaimed the exasperated Snoop, jumping up in wrath. "I tell you I won't stand it, Bunter! Is that what you call being a goer?"

"Oh, oh, oh!"

"What's it like, Bunter?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Like red-hot swords and bayonets!" said Bunter, with a groan. "Kind of burning daggers shooting about, you know."

"My hat! It must be a regular ripper!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "Perhaps you'd better have a little more whisky. Hair of the dog, you know."

"Oh, don't!"

"Pour out the Rhine wine, let it flow," you know," said Squiff encouragingly. "Perhaps you haven't taken quite enough."

"Oh, oh, oh!"

"Will you stop that thundering row?" shrieked Snoop. "I've told you I won't stand it. As for your blessed whisky, I'll jolly soon settle that!"

Snoop whipped the bottle out of the cupboard, and smashed it in the grate, pouring the liquid over the ashes. Billy Bunter watched him with a lack-lustre eye. He did not care in the least what became of the whisky. He would have given his remaining ten pounds if he could have got rid of the quantity he had swallowed so gaily a few hours before.

"Oh, oh, oh!"

"Hark at him!" howled Snoop. "I'm fed up! You make another row like that, Bunter, and out you go on your neck!"

"Oh, you beast!" groaned Bunter. "Can't you have a little sympathy for a chap when he's seriously ill? Ow!"

"Didn't I tell you it would make you ill?" snapped Snoop. "If you will be a blithering chump, it serves you right. You a blade! You a goer! Ha, ha, ha! Look at the groaning fathead! Looks like a goer, don't he?"

"Oh, oh, oh!"

"That's done it!" said Snoop. "Out you go!"

"Grooh! Leggo!"

Sidney James laid violent hands on Bunter and whirled him to the doorway. The Famous Five, grinning, made way for him, and Bunter rolled helplessly into the passage, and collapsed there.

"You can come back when you've done kicking up a row," said Snoop. And he slammed the study door.

Billy Bunter did not move. He lay on the linoleum, where he had fallen, and groaned from the depths of his heart.

The Famous Five looked down on him, half laughing and half compassionate. The stupid fellow deserved his lesson, but certainly he was suffering severely. It was not likely

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that in his most doggish moments he would indulge in whisky again.

"Feel bad, old chap?" murmured Squiff.

"Ow! I'm dying! This—this is worse than the cigar?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, buck up!" said Nugent. "Be a man, you know! What about painting the town red?"

"Oh, oh, oh!"

"What price cutting a dash," said Bob Cherry, "and going on the razzle, Bunter?"

"Oh, oh, oh!"

"This is what comes of being a sad dog," said Squiff, with a shake of the head. "I don't think I've ever seen a sadder dog than Bunter at this moment."

"Oh, oh, oh!"

"Sadder and wiser, perhaps," grinned Wharton.

"I—I say, you fellows—oh, oh, oh!—they oughtn't to be allowed to sell that stuff—oh, oh, oh! There ought to be a law against it! Oh, oh, oh! I know I shall never recover! Oh, oh, oh!"

"Let's give you a hand to the dorm," said Wharton. "You'd better lie down for a bit. It will pass off in time."

"Leave me alone!" moaned Bunter. "I can't move! I'm dying! I—I shall be glad when it's over! Don't touch me! Oh, oh, oh!"

"Dash it all! You can't lie there," said Bob Cherry. "We'll help you along, Bunter. Suppose Quelch should spot you? He'd want to know what was the matter."

"Let him! Oh, oh, oh!"

"You'd be flogged, you fathead!"

"I don't care! Oh, oh, oh! I'm past caring for little things like that! Oh, oh, oh!"

But the Famous Five raised him up, groaning dismally, and helped him away to the dormitory. They left him on his bed in a state of collapse, and returned to their study.

"Inky, old man, you're a giddy black genius!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "I feel quite sure that Bunter won't go gin-crawling again. We'll offer him some whisky presently, and see how he takes it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter was not seen again that evening, but when the Remove went up to bed they found him, turned in already, but not asleep. He blinked at the juniors dismally and morosely.

"Feel better?" asked Squiff.

"Yes, a bit!" gasped Bunter. "I—I don't think it will be fatal after all. It's upset my tummy frightfully. The pains were like flaming darts—"

"And burning arrows and bayonets?" asked Bob.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"I'll tell you what," said Bob Cherry, taking a flask out of his pocket and speaking in a mysterious whisper. "What you want is a deep drink to set you up, Bunter."

"Yow! Gerraway!"

"It's all right—splendid stuff!" urged Bob. As a matter of fact, the flask was one used for cold tea, but Bunter was not aware of that. The mere sight of a flask made him feel ill. "It'll make you right as rain. A good, steady drink—"

"Grooh! Go away!" said Bunter faintly.

"But whisky, you know—prime whisky—"

"Lemme alone, you beast!"

"Half a glass!" urged Bob. "Take it down, you know—like a regular blade."

"You—you rotter! Go away! Take that filthy flask out of my sight!" moaned Bunter. "I—I—I'll tell Wingate if you don't take it away!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bob Cherry slipped the tea-flask back into his pocket. It was evident that Billy Bunter's craving for drink was completely cured.

The Removites turned in, and for some time occasional moans were heard from Billy Bunter's bed. But they died away at last, and were replaced by his deep and sonorous snore.

In the morning Billy Bunter was still looking a little pale and worn.

"You feel betterful this esteemed morning, my dear and idiotic Bunter?" purred Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Rats! I'm all right!" grunted Bunter. "There's nothing the matter with me. I was a bit squiffy last night—"

"What!" howled Bob Cherry.

"A bit squiffy," said Bunter coolly. "But bless you, that's nothing new! I'm quite an old hand at that kind of thing. You should see me on vacation sometimes—rolling round the town. Simply glorious!"

"Well, my hat!"

It was on Bob's lips to explain to the Blade of the Remove what he had really consumed, and which certainly could not

have made him "squiffy," whatever other effect it might have had. But he refrained. If Bunter had known the trick that had been played with his precious whisky-bottle, the lesson would have been wasted. So Bob held his peace, and allowed the fat junior to "swank"—and Bunter swanked considerably on the strength of having been "squiffy," which was, of course, an extremely doggish condition to get into. But the Owl of the Remove was not likely to attempt to get squiffy again, however doggish it was. He had had enough.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER. Help Required!

"YOU'LL be nailed!" said Skinner.

"Oh, rot!"

"Nailed as safe as houses—a silly ass like you," said Skinner.

Bunter blinked at him angrily.

"Well, that's my business," he said. "I suppose it doesn't matter to you if I'm nailed, Skinner?"

"Not a bit," said Skinner cheerfully. "But you're such a sneak you'd give me away for helping you out of the dorm. I'm not taking any, thanks!"

"Look here—"

"Bow-wow!" said Skinner. And he walked away whistling.

Bunter grunted discontentedly. It was two or three days after the last lesson the Blade of the Remove had received, and Bunter was feeling his old self again. True, he no longer smoked, and he had made no further attempt to smuggle spirituous liquors into the school. Those lessons had been lasting.

But the new blade and goer was not discouraged yet from following the new path he had marked out for himself. He was as determined as ever to be a "goer," though certain methods of "going it" no longer appealed to him.

His stock of money was dwindling down. Frequent visits to the tuckshop made deep inroads upon it. Sammy Bunter's fiver was gone already, and he had sought to raise a loan from his major. But none of Billy Bunter's money went in that direction. The chief road for his sovereigns lay through the tuckshop, and Mrs. Mumble was doing quite a big business with Bunter. The good lady was very careful to see that Bunter paid for everything he had, and, as a result, as he generally fed till he could feed no more, he was approaching nearer and nearer to his former state of impecuniosity. Only seven pounds remained; the money was going, and the Blade of the Remove hadn't yet had his "fling."

That fling Bunter was determined to have. Smithy had cured him of wanting to play cards for money. Peter Todd had cured him of smoking. Inky had cured him of the desire to "booze." But there were other ways in which a fellow could be a blade, a dog, and a goer. Betting on horses, and breaking bounds at night, appealed to Bunter now with an irresistible attraction.

Bunter quite fancied himself, so to speak, as a dashing fellow getting out of the dormitory of a night, passing a wild time at the Cross Keys, and coming home just before the milk in the morning.

As for the risk attached to those proceedings, he thought very little about it. Other fellows broke bounds without being found out, and they weren't such clever chaps as Bunter—in Bunter's opinion. Bunter had lately purchased a certain pink paper, and "mugged up" a lot of knowledge on the subject of races. He could talk about "dead certs," and "sure snips," and "knowledge straight from the horse's mouth," and handicaps, and weights, and owner's selected, in quite a doggish manner. He knew there was a certain disreputable bookmaker named Banks, who had his headquarters at the Cross Keys, and, in fact, had seen him about Friardale many times, with his silk hat on the side of his head, and smoking a big cigar. That gentleman's acquaintance now seemed desirable to Billy Bunter. Through Mr. Banks, he could put a "thick 'un" on a "gee-gee," using his experienced judgment in the selection of the gee-gee, and then all he would have to do would be to wait for the money to roll in.

Selecting a winner seemed easy enough to Bunter. The pink paper stated quite plainly that Smuggler's chance for the Swindleton Handicap was practically certain. Then Red Rose was a dead cert for the Mugg's Plate. Evidently the fellows who gave those tips must know something about it, having been at it all their lives. All Bunter had to do was to select his winner, put his money on, and—and there he

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was! It seemed so easy that Bunter felt inclined to kick himself for not having tried his hand at the game before. All this time he might have been rolling in money, and he had let dead certs and sure snips pass him unheeded.

But he was going to make up for lost time now. Besides, being a blade and a goer, he would make money out of it—heaps of money!

Mr. Banks was always to be found at the Cross Keys late in the evening, and Bunter knew he would be welcome if he came with money in his pocket. There was still seven pounds, shortly to be multiplied into seventy, and later into seven hundred or so, by a succession of dead certs.

With fortune almost within his grasp, in this way, it was natural that Bunter should be exasperated now. His "pals" declined to lend him a hand in breaking bounds. Other fellows, when some nocturnal "jape" led them to get out of the dormitory after hours, were used to climbing from the box-room window; but Billy Bunter was not equal to that. He was too fat and clumsy for athletic performances of that sort. But to his suggestions that Skinner should lower him from the dormitory window with a rope, Skinner turned a deaf ear.

Billy Bunter tried Snoop next, and Snoop declared that he couldn't undertake to lower an elephant from a window, and moreover, he didn't believe there was a rope made that would stand Bunter's weight. And he wasn't going to have a hand in it, anyway. Stott made the same reply, with some forcible expressions added. Vernon-Smith told him to go and eat coke. Hazeldene called him a silly ass. The gentle Alonzo, when Bunter tried him desperately as a last resource, gave him a long lecture, and told him what his celebrated Uncle Benjamin would have thought of him.

To be beaten at the start like this was exasperating. In desperation Bunter thought of visiting the Cross Keys in the daylight—but duffer as he was, he had just sense enough to realise that that was too risky. He had to get help to get out of the dormitory; and where to obtain that help was a perplexing question. And every day that passed saw his capital diminishing in the tuckshop, and deprived him of the wealth it was so easy to pick up by means of dead certs and sure snips.

It was Squiff to whom he turned in his extremity. Sampson Quincy Ifley Field was a good-natured fellow, and Bunter

decided to throw himself on Squiff's good nature. He visited the Australian junior in No. 14, when Fish—Squiff's study-mate—was not there, and put it to Squiff.

Sampson Quincy Ifley Field listened to him with a blank stare.

"My only hat!" was his remark.

"I'll let you into the game, if you like, Squiffy," urged Bunter. "I'll stand you something handsome out of my first winnings. I want to see Banks in time to put some money on Snooker's Pride for the Wplshem Cup. It's practically a cert. Five to one against, you know. Think of that! And Hawk-Eye in the pink paper says he knows it's a cert—and he ought to know! I shall get back twenty-five pounds by risking a fiver—not that there's any risk about it."

"So you're not cured yet," said Squiff. "Well, you fat idiot, you let me catch you getting out of the dorm, that's all! I'll take a cricket-stump to the dorm with me in the future. And if I catch you sloping—my word!"

"I say, Field, be a pal, old man!" urged Bunter. "Can't you see it's a sin and a shame to let money go by like that? Look here, you're not going to stop me, anyway. If I can't get a fellow to help me out of the dorm, I'm going to chance it by the box-room window. You can't stay awake all night to watch me!"

Squiff looked reflective.

"Well, that's so," he remarked. "What do you want; to be let down on a rope from the dorm window?"

"That's it!"

"I'm on!" said Squiff. "Anything to oblige a silly idiot. I'll let you down!"

"Thanks awfully!" said Bunter. "Come along to the tuckshop, Squiffy, and—and I'll stand you a—a bun."

"Thanks," said Squiff; "I'm not keen on a bun! You're too generous, Bunter! Cut along! I'll get some of the fellows to help, and we'll lower you down, and pull you up, if you like."

"Of course, I should have to be pulled up again, when I got back," said Bunter. "I'll remember you when the money comes in, Squiffy."

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Squiff chuckled, and Billy Bunter rolled away in a state of complete satisfaction. Squiff looked into Study No. 1 a little later. He had a coil of rope on his arm, and Harry Wharton & Co. regarded it curiously.

"What's that for?" demanded Bob Cherry.

"Bunter's breaking bounds to-night," explained Squiff calmly.

"What!"

"I'm going to lower him from the dormitory window."

"My hat!"

"I want you fellows to help. I don't think I could negotiate his weight all on my lonely own."

"Why, you fathead—"

"I've promised to let him down, and pull him up," said Squiff. "I fancy Bunter thinks there's going to be an interval between the letting down and the pulling up, while he trots off to the Cross Keys. But there isn't!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"In fact, I fancy that after to-night, Bunter will be quite fed up with breaking bounds in the small hours," grinned Squiff. "If I don't help him, he's going to risk it by himself, which means that he will be nabbed by a prefect and flogged. Not that he doesn't deserve it, but we won't bother Quelch to flog him, we'll give him a lesson ourselves—what?"

"Hear, hear!"

And having made that arrangement for the benefit of William George Bunter, Squiff proceeded to the Remove dormitory and concealed the coil of rope under his mattress. And the juniors waited for bedtime—the Famous Five with suppressed merriment, and Billy Bunter with eager anticipation.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Night Out!

"SQUIFF, old man!"

It was a mysterious whisper in the Remove dormitory.

Lights had long been out. The school was buried in silence and slumber. Half-past eleven had sounded from the clock-tower.

Squiff sat up and yawned as a fat hand shook him. Billy Bunter blinked at him in the shadows.

"It's time, Squiff—more than time. I meant to go earlier, but I dropped off to sleep somehow. Got the rope?"

"Oh, yes."

"Buck up, then!" said Bunter.

Squiff yawned again, and turned out of bed. Billy Bunter was dressing himself in the darkness, and he blinked at Squiff in alarm as the Australian junior proceeded to awaken Harry Wharton & Co.

"I—I say, Squiff—What the thunder—"

"They're going to help," explained Field. "I couldn't stand your weight by myself, Bunter. I'm not a steam-derrick."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" yawned Bob Cherry. "Right-ho! Turn out, Inky, you black slacker! This is where we help the Nut to go nutting!"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Groo! It's cold!" said Harry Wharton. "Wait till we get some clothes on, Bunter."

"Don't jaw and wake all the fellows!" growled Bunter.

"Oh, that's all right. No sneaks here excepting yourself," said Harry. "And you won't sneak about yourself, I suppose?"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Begad!" said Lord Mauleverer, sitting up in bed. "What's all that cackle? Wharrer you fellows up for—ch, what?"

"Come and lend a hand, Mauly. Bunter is going out on the tiles, and we're helping him."

"Begad!"

"Bunter going out?" ejaculated Bolsover major. "And you helping him? You ought to be ashamed of yourselves!"

"Rot!" said Squiff. "Why shouldn't we help Bunter? It's up to common persons like us to help a real blade and a dog and a goer. Come and lend a hand, and don't jaw!"

"Well, my word!" said Skinner. "This is a new departure for you chaps. I've refused to help the fat idiot."

"We're more good-natured," said Harry Wharton. "Turn out, Toddy! Bunter's a good weight, and he only wants to break bounds, not to break his neck. All hands to the mill! I'm not sure whether we shall get him up again, anyway."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Shush!"

By this time all the Remove were awake, and all the Remove, excepting Bunter, understood that the fat junior's leg was being pulled. That obvious fact never dawned upon

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Billy Bunter, however. He finished dressing, and Squiff tied the rope round his fat person under the arms. He tied it very securely, and Wharton examined the knots to make sure. He wanted to give the Blade of the Remove a lesson, but not to the extent of an accident. Bunter's bad habits were to be broken, but not his neck. The rope was of tremendous thickness, more than equal to the strain. Squiff had taken care of that.

"All ready?" murmured Bob Cherry. "Feeling funky, Bunter?"

"Certainly not!" snapped Bunter. "I dare say you chaps would—you're not goers. Mind you listen for my signal when I come back. I'll whistle. I may be a bit squiffy."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Don't cackle, you silly duffers! You'll have a prefect here! If I'm tight," said Bunter loftily, "one of you can come down the rope and tie it on to me."

"Done!" said Bob Cherry solemnly. And Bob opened the window, and Billy Bunter mounted and blinked out into the darkness.

"Get out!" said Squiff.

"Ahem! Wait a minute!" muttered Bunter. As a matter of fact, the gulf of darkness under the window did not look inviting. "I—I say, you fellows, mind you d-d-don't let that rope slip, you know!"

"Why not?" asked Bob.

"You—you thumping ass, I should break my neck!"

"Well, that would make an awful muck in the quad," agreed Bob. "All serene, Bunter, we won't let you slip. Why don't you start?"

"I—I—ahem!—I—I'm going!" stammered Bunter, blinking out and liking the hollow space below less and less with every blink. "I—I say, don't push me, Bob Cherry! Oh!"

"Can't wait here all night!" said Bob. "Are you going or not?"

"Ye-e-es. But— Oh, crumbs, don't—d-d-don't push— Yow!"

Billy Bunter slipped off the window-sill and hung on the rope, spinning like a very fat humming-top. Half a dozen faces looked down at him and grinned.

"All serene?" asked Bob.

"Yow-ow!"

"If you make that thundering row, Bunter, you'll have Quelch after you!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

Bob reached out and caught hold of Bunter's ears and steadied him. The fat junior got a grip on the rope with both hands, above his head. Then he felt safer.

"Lower away!" he growled. "I'll whistle when I'm on the ground."

"Then I don't think we shall hear you whistle to-night," said Bob Cherry cheerfully.

And before Billy Bunter could understand what that mysterious remark might mean, he was lowered away.

He shot downwards at a rate that took his breath away, and a squeak floated up in the darkness. The juniors chuckled gleefully.

Down past the window of Study No. 1 he went, and bumped on the window-sill, then lower down past a blank wall, and then the rope stopped with a jerk.

Bunter steadied himself against the wall, gasping for breath. He blinked downwards, and in the dim starlight he could make out the ground a dozen feet below. Then he blinked upwards, and faintly discerned the heads sticking out of the window high above. He thought he could hear the sound of a subdued chuckle.

"Lower away!" he exclaimed, in a fierce whisper. "I'm not on the ground yet."

Thud! The heads were withdrawn, and the window closed. Bunter gasped.

"My—m-my word! I—I—I say, you fellows! Oh, my hat!"

Not a sound came from above. Billy Bunter hung suspended like Mahomet's coffin, between heaven and earth. The cold night wind blew upon him unpleasantly, and a few drops of rain trickled down his neck. The rope fastened round his fat body was beginning to hurt him a little. He wriggled at the end of the rope, and blinked despairingly upward.

What had happened? He could only conclude that some sound had been heard in the Remove quarters, and a master or a prefect had come investigating. In that case, of course, the juniors would naturally bolt back into bed. Had they tied the rope safely, or—might it slip? Bunter felt a shiver run through his fat body.

"Oh, crumbs! Oh, dear! Oh, my hat! Ow!"

After some minutes it dawned upon the fat junior that there was no light shining from the dormitory window above. It could not be a visit from a person in authority, evidently. Mr. Quelch or a prefect would not come there in the dark.

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It had not been an alarm. Then why on earth had his helpers abandoned him in this manner?

Billy Bunter wriggled and writhed at the end of the rope in helpless rage as the truth dawned upon his mind. Squiff had said that he would "let him down," and the double meaning of that phrase dawned upon Bunter's mind now. He had been "let down" with a vengeance.

"Oh, the beasts!" groaned Bunter. "Ow, the rotters! It's a beastly j-j-jape! Oh, crumbs! They c-c-can't leave me here all night! Ow! I'll jolly well yell! Ow!"

But he did not yell. To be found there by a master would have led to too painful consequences. In his mind's eye he could already see the terrific frown of the Head and the birch in the doctor's hand.

Ten minutes—which seemed like ten years, if not ten decades, to the unhappy Bunter—passed, and still there came no sign or sound from the dormitory.

Bunter's feelings were not expressible in words, even if he had dared to utter any words. His teeth were chattering, and his eyes simply glittered behind his spectacles. How long was this going to last? He was not thinking about the Cross Keys now, or Mr. Banks, or the dead certs and sure snips. He felt that he would have given the whole of his seven pounds, and abandoned the career of a gay dog for ever, to get back safe into his warm bed in the dormitory.

The window above opened at last, with a faint creak. A head was put out into the starlight, and Bunter heard a suppressed chuckle.

"Still there, Bunter?" came a subdued voice.

"You—you beast! Of course I'm still here!" hissed Bunter. "If you don't pull me up I'll yell and wake the house!"

"Pull you up! Don't you want to be let down any more?"

"Ye-e-es; let me down, then."

"How far?"

"To the ground, of course, you villain!"

"Can't be did! Any old thing but that," said Squiff, with a shake of the head. "You can choose your own level, anywhere between here and the ground."

"You—you beast! Pull me up, then!"

"You don't want to break bounds any more?"

"N-n-no."

"Sure you've repented?"

"Yes," breathed Bunter sulphurously.

"Good. Then you can come up!"

Many hands dragged on the rope, and the fat junior was slowly swung up to the dormitory window. He gasped with relief when he got his hands upon the window-sill again. Half a dozen grinning faces looked out on him.

"Help me in, you beasts!"

"No hurry," said Squiff. "You haven't thanked us yet."

"What!" howled Bunter.

"You've got to thank us for helping you," said Squiff severely. "We've prevented you from playing the giddy ox, and if you've got any gratitude in your composition, you'll thank us."

"Beast!"

"Well, you won't come in till you do! Lower away, you chaps!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hold on! I—I— Thank you!" panted Bunter.

"Thanks awfully! Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The fat junior was dragged in and landed on the floor with a bump. Bob Cherry closed the window. Squiff unfastened the rope, and pushed it out of sight under his mattress. Billy Bunter sat on the floor and gasped. He scrambled up at last, and began to undress himself, breathing fury.

"Not going out?" yawned Squiff. "You can still try the box-room window, you know. If you do, I shall trot out and fasten it after you. It will be a regular night out. You can come home with the milk in the morning—what!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter did not reply. Words failed him. He turned in, and his deep snore soon resounded through the dormitory; and he dreamed of dead certs, sure snips, and heaps of golden sovereigns.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Also Ran!

HARRY WHARTON & Co. were smiling serenely the next morning. Billy Bunter was not smiling. He was in a state of suppressed fury. But the Famous Five thought it likely that the fat blade would not make any further attempts to break bounds at night. As Peter Todd remarked, Bunter was getting a lot of valuable lessons for nothing, and though gratitude was not to be expected from him, there was no doubt that the lessons were doing him good.

Where the Owl of the Remove would "break out" next was an interesting question. His money was still melting away, in the usual quarter—the tuckshop. When once he

NEXT
MONDAY—

"THE LAST PLUNGE!"

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ONE
PENNY.

was in his usual state of impecuniosity, his kind friends would be able to relax their kindness—it was impossible to be a blade, a dog, and a goer without a supply of cash.

But Bunter's final lesson was destined not to come from his kind friends in the Remove. The following afternoon was a half-holiday, and the Remove were playing a football team at Rookwood School, and naturally they forgot all about Bunter. But when, after the football match, the brake came rolling home through the village of Friardale, Hurreo Jamset Ram Singh uttered a sudden exclamation, as he pointed to a fat figure that came rolling out of the path beside that disreputable establishment, the Cross Keys.

"Bunter!" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

Billy Bunter blinked round as he heard the brake. He stood in the road and held up a fat hand.

"Gimme a lift to Greyfriars, you fellows."

The blade was allowed to clamber into the brake. Then Harry Wharton & Co. gave him stern looks.

"So you've been pub-haunting, after all," said Vernon-Smith.

Bunter grinned.

"Oh, just a little run in, to see a friend of mine!" he said airily.

"Suppose a prefect had spotted you coming out, instead of us?" said Harry Wharton.

"A goer has to take some risks. Bless you, I'm a sport!" said Bunter. "A fellow has to take chances when he goes on the ran-dan."

"You silly piffler!" roared Bob Cherry, exasperated. The self-satisfaction of the utterly ridiculous Owl got on Bob's nerves.

"And what have you been doing?" asked Peter Todd grimly. "Boozing?"

Bunter shuddered.

"Ow! No."

"Playing cards?"

"No fear!"

"Smoking?"

"Grooh! No."

"Then what have you been there for?" demanded Todd. "Simply for the pleasure of getting sacked if you happened to be spotted?"

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"I don't mind telling you about it," said Bunter loftily. "I'm having a plunge."

"A—a—a—what?"

"A plunge. You see, I had only six quid left out of my money," said Bunter. "But it will be all right—I shall have thirty-six pounds to-morrow."

"My hat! How—when—where—why?"

"I've put six quids on Snooker's Pride."

"What!"

"Six to one against, and a dead cert," explained Bunter.

"A dead cert!" said Bob Cherry dazedly.

"Yes, rather. Snooker's Pride is a geegee you could bet your shirt on," said Bunter. "And he will simply romp home in the Mugford Plate. I've laid six quids on him, and getting thirty-six pounds to-morrow when he wins."

"Oh, crumbs!"

"That will give me some capital to work with, and I'm going in for racing extensively," said Bunter. "In future, I shall have a drag to the races on half-holidays. I shouldn't mind making up a party, and taking you fellows, if you're game. Of course, you would have to pay your whack."

The juniors stared at Bunter. They could scarcely believe that even the Owl of the Remove was so utterly obtuse as to suppose that he would get thirty-six pounds from the book-maker on the morrow. Mr. Banks was generally, judging by appearances, in want of thirty-six shillings, let alone pounds. But Billy Bunter was evidently quite satisfied with his prospects.

"You—you've handed six pounds to that man Banks?" stuttered Peter Todd, at last.

"Certainly. Can't bet on the nod," said Bunter. "There's practically no risk—I've been studying the matter, you see, and Snooker's Pride is generally considered a cert—Banks himself said that he didn't see how he could be beaten."

"Well," said Peter, "that beats the band! I was going to rag you when you got home, Bunter—I was going to larrup you with a cricket stump. But I won't! I fancy you'll get your lesson from Banks."

"Rot!" said Bunter. "You mind your own business, Toddy. You'll sing a different tune when I show you the evening paper to-morrow. I've ordered the evening paper to be sent to the school. If Quelch sees it, he'll only think I'm keen on the war news. And when I show you Snooker's Pride a winner—six to one against—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, you can cackle!" growled Bunter. "I've got a lot of judgment in these matters. Banks said I was the cut of a real sportsman. He said he hardly cared to take me on, really, because he knew he would have to pay out; but he wouldn't refuse, because he could see I was a real sport."

"Don't say any more, Bunt," murmured Bob Cherry. "You quite overcome me. Of course, Banks would tell you the frozen truth. He didn't want your six quid. I'll let you off the thick ear I was going to give you."

"Oh, rats!" said Bunter.

Billy Bunter rattled on quite cheerfully till they reached Greyfriars. As for the blackguardism of his conduct, that did not seem to occur to him at all. All he was thinking of was the thirty-six pounds he was to finger on the morrow. As soon as he saw the announcement of the winner in the evening paper, he was going down to see Mr. Banks to claim his winnings. And, disgusted as the juniors were with the fat boulder, they could not help feeling sorry for him.

A painful surprise was awaiting him on the morrow. That Mr. Banks would have taken his bet, if the horse had the remotest chance of winning, they did not believe for a moment. The price against that geegee, being six to one, showed what opinion the "bookies" had of his chances. The horse was evidently a rank outsider. True, rank outsiders sometimes "romped home" unexpectedly; but it was not probable that Billy Bunter had spotted one of those outsiders. His "dead cert" was pretty certain to come in sixth or seventh or eleventh, if he came in at all.

But the Blade of the Remove was simply walking on air for the rest of that evening. On the morrow morning he was all smiles.

In the morning paper he found, as he informed the Famous Five, that Snooker's Pride was marked "A," which meant that he had arrived. He was going to run, and he was going to win. There was no perhaps about that. Bunter's faith in his own judgment as a spotter of winners was unbounded.

After lessons, Bunter haunted the school gates, waiting for the newsboy to arrive with the early edition of the evening paper. It arrived about six o'clock. Quite a crowd of the Removites gathered round Bunter, with keen interest. Most of them were grinning.

The Owl of the Remove opened the paper with fingers trembling with eagerness. He found the column of the racing results, and blinked at it through his big spectacles.

"Here it is—Muggford Plate!" said Bolsover major, pointing it out.

"Good!" and Bunter read, "Bonny Boy—Langford—Hurlingham. What the dooce does that mean? Snooker's Pride ain't mentioned!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter blinked round angrily.

"There's nothing to cackle at. There's some mistake. I don't see what they mean by putting those three names there—"

"You fathead!" roared Squiff. "Those three names mean that Bonny Boy has won, and Langford and Hurlingham came in second and third."

"But—but—but Snooker's Pride was going to win—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But—but they ain't mentioned him!" howled Bunter. "It's a mistake! It's a swindle—"

"He's mentioned," chuckled Bob Cherry. "There he is, in smaller print underneath."

Bunter read the paragraph in smaller type eagerly. It was as follows:

"ALSO RAN: Hookey, Catford II., Roanoke, and Snooker's Pride."

"Also ran!" chirruped Squiff. "He was an also ran, Bunter. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Then—then he hasn't won?" shrieked Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha! It doesn't look like it."

"Then—then my six quid—" said Bunter, aghast. "I—I don't even get that back?"

"No fear! You can ask Banks for it. Ha, ha, ha!"

The expression on the blade's fat face was excruciating. The Removites yelled with merriment. Bunter's dead cert had turned out an "also ran"; and Bunter's last six quids were reposing safely in Mr. Banks's pockets. Bunter had dreamed golden dreams, but they were not coming true. It was all the better for him, as a matter of fact; but he did not feel it so. He gave a deep groan.

"Oh, crumbs! I've lost!"

"Ha, ha, ha! What did you expect?"

"It—it's a swindle!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"This—this rotten, blackguardly horse-racing ought to be prohibited—"

The juniors simply shrieked. Billy Bunter's opinion of horse-racing had taken a sudden turn. The fat junior flung the paper savagely away, and rolled off, looking utterly woe-begone. He rolled, from force of habit, into the tuckshop, to seek comfort in jam-tarts and ginger-pop. But there was no comfort for him, for he was "stony" once more, and jam-tarts and ginger-pop were not forthcoming except for cash. So Bunter rolled out again, more woe-begone than ever.

Harry Wharton & Co. were having tea with Peter Todd in No. 7 Study, and the room was crowded with a cheery party, when Billy Bunter rolled in. The Blade of the Remove was looking very subdued. All his late swank and importance were gone. Peter Todd gave him a cheerful glare.

"Hallo! What do you want?"

"I say, Toddy, old man—"

"Don't call me Toddy. You've told me you don't want my acquaintance," said Peter severely. "Only my pals call me Toddy."

"Oh, really, Toddy, I—I—I—I've come back."

"Come back!"

"Ye-es. That—that beast Snoop has turned me out of his study!" said Bunter pathetically.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"So you've come back!" growled Peter Todd. "Just when we were getting on comfortably, and hoping we were done with you."

"Oh, really, Toddy—"

"No goers wanted in this study," said Peter. "I'm sorry, but—"

"I—I—I'm not going it any more, Toddy. I—I've chucked it up. I—I don't want to be a blade!" stammered Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Make room for the beast," said Peter Todd. "I suppose we've got to stand him."

And room was made for Bunter, and his fat face cheered up a little as he proceeded to clear the tea-table of its good things. Billy Bunter was a member of No. 7 once more, but he was no longer a Blade.

THE END.

(Next week's "Magnet" Library will contain another of Frank Richards' fine tales of the chums of Greyfriars entitled "THE LAST PLUNGE!" Order your copy at your newsagent's well in advance, and so make sure of getting it!)

The EDITOR'S WEEKLY CHAT WITH HIS READERS.

FOR NEXT MONDAY:

"THE LAST PLUNGE!"

By FRANK RICHARDS.

Next Monday's splendid story of Greyfriars School is one of the most absorbing yarns which has ever come from the inspired pen of famous Frank Richards. It describes how Vernon-Smith's restless nature, always seeking excitement and adventure, causes him to break away once more from the genial society of Harry Wharton & Co., and indulge in one of those rash escapades which invariably end in disaster. But somehow the old life of dissipation has lost its charm, and the Bounder resolves to keep straight thereafter. Unfortunately, however, he has placed himself in the power of an unscrupulous alien; and this man, failing to enlist Smithy's services in a piece of shady work, turns blackmailer. At this juncture, the Bounder takes the only honourable course open to him by confessing his foolish misdemeanour to the Head. So strong is the appeal in Smith's favour that the maximum penalty of expulsion is withheld; nevertheless, it has been such a close call that the Bounder is grimly resolved that he has taken

"THE LAST PLUNGE!"

FORGING AHEAD!

I think this is absolutely the only way in which I can describe the astonishing progress of our now famous companion paper, the "Dreadnought."

Every reader of the "Magnet" is by this time fully acquainted with the fine fare now being served up every Thursday—at least, if he isn't, he ought to be.

For the benefit of those who may not yet have included the "Dreadnought" in their list of weekly periodicals, I would commend to their notice, not only the splendidly-written stories of Harry Wharton's early schooldays, which world-famous Frank Richards writes each week in the "Dreadnought," but also the novel new serial.

"TWO OF THE BEST!"

the author of which, Jack Lancaster, is one of the brightest stars in the literary world.

These two features alone, replete as they are with dramatic and humorous incidents, are well worth a penny of one's pocket money; but they are supplemented by many other good things, chief among which is a powerful new story of Sexton Blake, the world-famous detective.

Time was when I considered the "Magnet" and "Gem" Libraries to be the last word in boys' literature; and although my opinion still holds good, it is a trifle shaken when I realise the high standard of excellence to which the "Dreadnought" has risen.

There are certain periodicals now in existence, the chiefs of which are ever adjuring their readers to "order in advance," or "get their copy to-day." These injunctions, repeated from week to week in a stereotyped sort of way, have no more impression on the boy who reads them than an insect on a brick wall. But when I emulate my worthy rivals, and voice the wish that my chums will "order to-day," they may rest assured that the paper referred to is worth ordering.

This being the case, all Magnetites should present themselves at their newsagent's every Thursday with "shining morning face," as Shakespeare has it; and they will find that the remarks made on my Chat Page this week are borne out to the very letter.

REPLIES IN BRIEF.

J. O. C. and F. G. (Lancaster).—Thanks very much for your encouraging letter.

Ray Simonds.—Thanks for your cheery greeting. The word "sic" means "so," and is of Latin derivation.

Miss E. Lamb (Hastings).—Your continued loyalty to my journal is much appreciated. Best wishes to yourself and brothers.

John Rowland (Hartlepool).—By the time these lines appear, the East Coast bombardment will be a thing of the past; nevertheless, I thank you for your description of the unfortunate event.

The Editor

Our Grand Ferrers Lord Serial Story.



THE UNCONQUERABLE.

A Magnificent Story of Thrilling Adventure.

By SIDNEY DREW.

Plans for Escaping are Discussed.

"It can't be done, Simpson," said Ching-Lung. "I absolutely refuse. I know your position. You daren't leave my fellows outside, but must fasten them up in the shed, which means that you'll have to stay outside yourself. Charming weather for camping out, isn't it?"

"I don't want to treat you badly, if you don't force me," growled the negro. "You know that."

"I know a good many things, my dusky friend. What more do you want to tell me?"

"Only that you'll all go into the shed together, and some of your white friends'll kick at that. Two of you made a mighty fuss when axed to sit down to dinner with some clean coloured folk, so I guess they won't relish bein' packed in to sleep with a gang of Chins, like sardines. I ain't struck with the notion myself, and I don't like to force it on you. There won't be room to swing a cat, and the ventilation's pretty vile. You've got to go through it, unless you meet me 'bout the parole. Them Chins are as wet as water now, and they'll steam. That shed'll be a little Black Hole of Calcutta, but in you go. Some of us must sleep, and it's the only way I see of guarding you and keeping the upper hand."

"I was expecting that, lads," said Ching-Lung, when the door had closed behind the big negro. "Simpson isn't as black as he looks. What he says is quite true. He's got his hands full. I almost wish I hadn't given my parole at all."

"Och! Phwat does it matther, sor?" said O'Reoney. "Here's a dark noight comin' and bringin' the bhoys wid ut. Phwat's to worry us?"

Ching-Lung did not think it worth while to undeceive them just then.

"Und in dot case ve gannod gif der plack insegt our barole," added the cook. "Ach, Gan-Vaga, you haf make me break mine nose many dimes, and mine heart almost vonce or dwice, but ven you gone pack to der rescue, I for-gif und vorget. Shaf! Mine prafe Gan-Vaga! I press you to mine bosom, und gall you ein vat hero. Yes, I cram you mit butter und treacle und sossitches. A-r-r-r! I efen kees you in mine choy."

"Yes, and sling saucepans at him the next minute," said Barry, as he wrung out his wet shirt. "Oi mane av your kiss doesn't kill the haythen stone dead. Oi'll have a sioice of toast wid the fish, Shorts, as we're out of bread. Boiled fish and cowl'd wather for lunch! Troth, whoy did Oi ever come to say?"

It was wretched food and wretched weather. Sencor Diaz cultivated flowers in his garden, but no vegetables. Schwartz might have improved the flavour of the fish by boiling it in salt water. They had no lid to the saucepan, and the fish tasted smoky. Barry gave it up.

"Oi'll be the hungriest Oirishman aloive afore Oi ate that muck," he said, in disgust. "Ut tastes just loike soot and wet flannel."

They could hardly look at one another without laughing, for the rain had taken all the starch out of their shirts and dress waistcoats.

"Well, we are a pretty set of scarecrows," said Ching-Lung. "Here come more of the ragged brigade. Oh, you dirty boys!"

They were wearing the clothes they had been captured in, and in the case of Schwartz, Kennedy, and Thurston, these happened to be evening-dress. Nothing could have been more unsuitable or ridiculous.

"Have a stroll round, Tom, and see if anyone is watching,"

(Continued on page iv of cover.)

said Ching-Lung. "There may be a nigger skulking to listen to what we are saying."

The steersman failed to unearth any eavesdropper.

"Now, come to the point, lads," said Ching-Lung. "We mustn't put all our eggs in one basket, which means that we mustn't rely on Gan and Hendrick altogether. When they get to Scarran, you see, the others may be off fishing. There are many things that might cause a hitch or delay, so we must play off our own bat. Those who help themselves get most, as a rule."

"Faith! Ben can answer for the thruth of that, sor," said Barry. "He helped himself, and— How many years was ut ye got, Benjy?"

"Oh, bother your nonsense!" said the prince. "Be sensible for a few minutes, if you can. We're going to make a dash for liberty early in the morning. I've had a look at the shed. It's little better than matchboard. Chan-Song-Pu has told the crew all about it. There's fun coming. It will be as dark as pitch about three o'clock, and if we have the slightest luck, we'll give them a terrific surprise."

Luckily a good supply of fern had been brought in before the rain commenced. They discussed their plan in whispers, and then, tired out after an almost sleepless night, they lay down on their sweet-smelling beds and slept comfortably. It was still raining when their captors roused them.

"It will be dusk in ten minutes, gentlemen," said Simpson, "and your parole has expired. Line up and be searched!"

Tells How, after Digging Their Way to Freedom, the Late Prisoners Effected a Huge Surprise, and Witnessed a Thrilling Scene by Chan and His Partner.

"Poor beggars!" chuckled Ching-Lung to himself. "I hope they're enjoying it!"

The rain was clattering down like a shower of pebbles on the zinc roof of the stuffy shed. It was as black as pitch, but in the darkness the men were working with infinite patience. Bricks had been prized up, and Chinamen clawed up the earth with their fingers and with bits of pointed stick. The hole grew larger and the water trickled in. Capfuls of mud were passed from hand to hand.

"Look out!" came the swift warning.

A light flashed through the open door. The drenched, miserable sentry who glanced in saw nothing to arouse his suspicion. The hole had been filled up with fern and a Chinaman lay curled up across it, snoring heavily. The door was closed and locked.

"Troth, that was quick and nate!" said Barry O'Rooney. "Get on wid the grave-diggin', ye miseries, for the darkey has gone to foind an umbrella!"

That breath of fresh air had done them good, for the heat of the shed was becoming intolerable. Once more they began to scoop out the mud.

"Ol'ri, ol'ri, ol'ri! There is loom, son of the stars!" said Chan-Song-Pu.

"And mighty sloppy room, I'll wager!" said Ching-Lung. "I shall ruin my nice suit! Ugh! It's like having to crawl down a drain!"

He crept into the hole, and wriggled out; then he rubbed a handful of mud over his face. It was a little lighter outside than in the shed. He listened, rose to his feet, and ran briskly away. One by one the others followed. Tom Prout came last. The burly steersman found it difficult to squeeze through, but he succeeded in the end. As he stood there to take his bearings he heard a squelching footstep. Prout moved hastily back. The footfalls ceased.

"By honey, I can see you," muttered Prout, "and if you see me, I'll quickly be ready for my funeral! You'll shoot first, and then inquire what I'm doin' out so late all alone! If that rifle's loaded— Oh, murder!"

"Who dat?"

Prout gave himself up for lost. The indistinct figure of the man seemed to lurch. He staggered forward and tumbled into the startled steersman's arms, a limp weight.

"Bart!" gasped Prout.

"That you, Tom?" said the voice of Kennedy. "I thought it was another nigger! I've quieted that beggar, and barked my knuckles over it! Clean him out, before he wakes and begins to yell! Here's one rifle and revolver, anyhow! I'll take the revolver. Hallo, they've tumbled to it!"

"Help!" came a startled voice. "Help!"

Prout crept forward with clubbed rifle and struck. The running fugitive dropped like a log. All was still again, except for the hiss of the falling rain. Then they heard a low, peculiar whistle, and a gull screamed loudly through the darkness.

"That's Chan-Song-Pu, Tom," said Kennedy. "He's shut his man up! Chan knows how to do it, but the old rascal generally does it in a way that would not suit our tastes. I believe we've bagged the lot! Hold still, and keep your eyes open. Chan isn't a boy, but knows all his old tricks!"

The whistle sounded again, but in a different note.

"Ol'ri, ol'ri, ol'ri!" said a soft, chuckling voice. "Only flee on guardee, and we bagged dat lottee! Bolt! Ol'ri, ol'ri!"

Chan-Song-Pu carried something on his back which he flung down like a sack of potatoes. It was the third sentry.

"I afflaidee I hultee him," said the fat but powerful Chinaman. "Ol'ri, ol'ri! De son of de stars say no killee, so I only killee as near as I can without killee. Ha, ha! I getee a life and calldidges! Ol'ri! Topside velly good! I lookee aftel them, so you lunnee!"

"Don't hurt them, you savage!" said Kennedy. "Tie them up, but none of your soothing-syrup, Chan! We won't have murder! Come on, Tom!"

One revolver was enough for Chan-Song-Pu, so they seized the other weapons they had captured. Had any of the negroes been sleeping in the rough shelters, the call for help must have aroused them, unless— Prout did not like to think of it. He did not relish the picture of the lithe Chinaman creeping noiselessly down on the sleepers. It was not a white man's way. He hoped in his heart that none of the wretched shelters were tenanted.

"Who's that?"

"Prout and Kennedy. That's you, isn't it, Ben?"

"Who else, d'ye think, souse me?" growled the bo'sun's voice. "How goes it? I'm the rearguard, and waiting for you."

"All the Chings have gone ahead, then?" asked Prout, with a gasp of relief.

"All but Chan-Song-Pu. You knowed the orders, didn't you? What's this, a rifle? Souse me, have you bowled 'em over, then?"

"Three of them," said Kennedy. And Ben chuckled.

"All the others are down in the engine-house, for money. Trust a nigger to know enough to go indoors when it rains! Niggers are good enough when they've got a white man to lead them, but a poor lot 'otherwise' at anything!"

They reached the bottom of the steps. The boiler-house was already surrounded. A red light gleamed from the window. It was as Kennedy had said. The negroes had crowded in there for the sake of warmth. They were the sons of a warm land, and they hated damp and cold. The leaping flames of the fire showed them lying on the beds of fern. Ching-Lung tried the door. It was unfastened.

"Call them round here, Kennedy," he whispered. "Rifles and revolvers to the window. When I break the glass, make your rush!"

Crash, crash! Ching-Lung's rifle-barrel knocked the glass to splinters.

The Chinamen poured in and hurled themselves upon the sleepers. With a bloodthirsty shriek, Herr Schwartz alighted on the chest of Simpson. He shrieked louder when the big negro locked his arms about him. Except for the dog, the cook would have had several ribs cracked; but the dog, remembering that the cook was the dispenser of succulent bones and other good things, bounded to the rescue—for a dead cook meant no more bones. With the dog's teeth on his wrist, Simpson relaxed his grip and cried for quarter, and a moment later the terrified negroes were huddled together, holding up their trembling arms, weaponless and overawed.

"Ol'ri, ol'ri, ol'ri! I leftee de odders alle safee!" said Chan-Song-Pu, thrusting his head through the shattered window. "Ol'ri; velly muchee ol'ri! Velly, velly muchee so! Ha, ha, ha! I bling some jewellery. Ha, ha, ha! Dey lookee topside nicee!"

Chan-Song-Pu threw in an assorted collection of handcuffs—the very handcuffs that the present victors had been compelled to wear.

"Good on your pluck, Chan!" laughed Barry O'Rooney. "March them along to be decorated, Tom, me bhoy! Simpson, ould sport, allow me to present ye wid a pair of diamond bracelets!"

"Ol'ri, ol'ri, ol'ri!" howled Chan-Song-Pu.

He waltzed into the engine-house, scattering the manacled niggers right and left, and nearly overturning the bucket which held the fire. His glossy pigtail whirled in the air. Chan was not performing his dance alone, for his arm encircled the waist of another stout gentleman, who was yelling in tones which would have cracked the window had any window remained.

"Heres we come gatherings nutses in May—nutes in May—nutes in May! Ho, ho, hoo! Waltz me around agains, Willie! Ho, ho, ho-oo-ooh!"

It was Gan-Waga. The red flames shone on bronzed and bearded faces and on the wet barrels of fowling-pieces. The staunch and gallant fishermen of lonely Scarran Island had answered to the call. Soaked with salt spray and driving rain, they stood there laughing merrily as Chan-Song-Pu and his partner whirled and howled in the glow of the firelight.

"Go ut, ye cripples! Fut ut—fut ut!" thundered Barry O'Rooney. "Hurroo! Bad luck to the wan who gives in first! Break the flure!"

(A splendid instalment of this grand serial next Monday. Order your copy now.)