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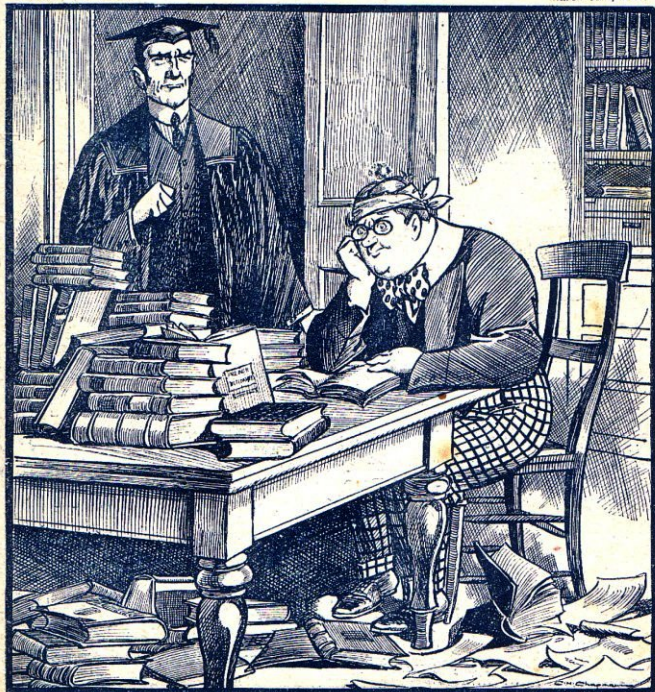
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WHO SAID THE AGE OF MIRACLES WAS PAST?

(A surprise for Mr. Quelch in the long complete school story, "Bunt'r the Swat!" inside.)

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Bunter — the Swot!

:: A Magnificent Long ::
Complete Story of Harry
Wharton & Co., and Billy
Bunter of Greyfriars School.

By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Alarming News!

"WONDER if it's arrived at last?"

Billy Bunter, the Owl of the Remove, and the editor of the wonderful weekly bearing his name, went eagerly towards the post-rack, with an expectant gleam in his little round eyes.

In the pigeon-hole marked with the letter "B" there was quite a pile of letters. And Billy Bunter hoped that one of them would be for him, and that it would contain his postal-order—which had been due to arrive ever since the Flood, as Bob Cherry was wont to remark.

Billy Bunter raised himself on tiptoe, and his plump hand closed over the pile of letters. He pulled them down, and glanced at them one by one.

"Bull, Bolsover, Brown, Bulstrode, BUNTER!"

The fat junior uttered his own name with a whoop of delight.

Had his ship come home, so to speak, at last? Had one of his "titled" relations turned up in rumps?

The handwriting on the envelope seemed familiar, but for a moment Bunter could not recall whose it was.

Then he gave a sudden cry of recognition.

"Uncle Joe!"

Mr. Joseph Percival Porkins was a prosperous city man, who took a mild interest in his nephews and nieces. He was by way of being a skinflint, however, for his monthly letters to Billy Bunter were barren of remittances.

Uncle Joe was in the habit of giving valuable advice, but he gave nothing of intrinsic value.

However, Billy Bunter always lived in hope. And it was quite on the cards, he reflected, that the letter which had just arrived contained a fat remittance.

So eager was Billy Bunter to investigate the envelope, that he scattered the rest of the letters on the floor of the hall. What did other fellows' letters matter, at such a moment?

There was a tramping of feet in the hall, and a howl of wrath from Bolsover major, as he stooped and picked up his letter.

"Bunter, you worm! I'll teach you to snoop my correspondence about like this!"

"Oh, really, Bolsover—"
The bully of the Remove seized Billy Bunter by the collar, and shook him like a fat rat.

"Yow-ow-ow! Dud-dud-don't shake me like that, you beast, or you'll b-break my glasses, and then you'll have to pip-pip-pay for them!"

Shake, shake, shake!
"Yaroooooh!"

At this juncture the Famous Five of the Remove arrived on the scene.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "What's the game, Bolsover?"

"Bunter's been littering the floor with other fellows' letters," growled Bolsover. "And now I'm going to start littering the floor with pieces of Bunter!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a snort of wrath from Johnny Bull.

"There's a letter for me here!" he said. "In another jiffy, it would have been blown away! Bunter, you fat toad—"

"Yow! Make him leggo!" gasped Billy Bunter, referring to Bolsover.

Harry Wharton & Co. laughingly dragged Bolsover away from his victim, and then Bunter was ordered to collect the scattered correspondence and restore it to the post-rack. The Famous Five stood over him while he did it.

"There's still another letter to put back, Bunter," said Harry Wharton.

"Oh, really, Wharton! This is mine!"

"Gannons!"

"It's mine, I tell you! It's from one of my titled relations!"

"The one that keeps the Bunter Arms, or the fried-fish shop proprietor?" inquired Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's from my Uncle Joseph!" said Billy Bunter, with dignity.

"Lord Joseph de Porkins, if you want his real title."

"How's he getting on at Colney Hatch?" asked Nugent.

"Oh, really, Nugent, he isn't at Colney Hatch at all. He's in the City—an outside broker, I think he calls himself."

"More likely a broke outsider!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He's sent me a whacking remittance," Bunter went on. "I can tell by the size of the envelope. I shouldn't be surprised if there was a wad of bank-notes inside!"

"We should!" murmured Harry Wharton.

"The surprisefulness would be terrific!" said Huxey Singh.

Billy Bunter ripped open the envelope with trembling fingers. He was quite prepared to see a little shower of notes go fluttering to the floor.

But the fat junior's gaze was not gladdened by any such welcome sight.

"The only thing that fluttered to the floor was a thick sheet of notepaper."

"Hallo! Where are the merry fivers?" exclaimed Bob Cherry, in mock surprise.

"Must have been left out by an over-sight!" said Nugent, with a grin.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter picked up his uncle's missive, and proceeded to read it. An expression of alarm spread over his plump countenance as he did so.

The letter ran as follows:

"Paradise Place,
Pimlico, S.W."

"My dear William.—I was delighted to get your letter, telling me what rapid strides you have been making in your Form work.

"If all that you say is correct, I cannot understand your being in such a comparatively low Form as the Remove. You ought to be in the Fifth—or at least the Upper Fourth.

"However, the fact that you are at the top of your class proves that you possess considerable scholastic ability—a fact which is all the more gratifying

when one recalls that a year or two ago you were a dunce and a dunderhead.

"And now I have some splendid news for you, my boy! As you know, I have never yet paid you a visit at Greyfriars, but I intend to do so on Wednesday afternoon next.

"If your Form-master satisfies me that you have made such wonderful progress with your lessons, I shall have pleasure in handing you a substantial 'tip' as a token of my appreciation.

"Until Wednesday afternoon, then; and thereafter, I hope, I remain,

"Your affectionate
"UNCLE JOSEPH."

By the time he had waded through that letter, Billy Bunter's alarm amounted almost to panic. The look in his eyes was one of terror.

"Oh crumbs!" he gasped.

Harry Wharton & Co. were impressed by their fat schoolfellow's agitation. They thought at first that he had received tragic news. As a matter of fact, he had!

"What's up, Bunter?" asked Wharton, in concern. "Nothing wrong at home, I hope?"

"None!"

"You're Uncle Joe's not crippled with rheumatism, or anything?" suggested Bob Cherry.

Billy Bunter shook his head.

"He—he's coming here to see me," he faltered.

"Well, I'm dashed if I can understand why you should pull a face as long as a fiddle," said Johnny Bull. "Faint every day that a fellow receives a visit from his uncle. You ought to be awfully bucked."

But Billy Bunter's face wore a woe-begone look. He seemed to regard the advent of Uncle Joe as a dire calamity.

"You seem to be afraid of this uncle of yours, Bunter," said Harry Wharton.

"I am!" growled the fat junior.

"But why?"

"I wish he wouldn't show his face at Greyfriars. He might—ahem!—find out things, you know!"

The Famous Five stared blankly at Bunter. They wondered what he was driving at.

"I'm afraid I've led Uncle Joe up the garden," explained Bunter. "I've written to him several times this term, and mentioned that I was top of the class, and the finest scholar in the Remove."

"My hat!"

"It's a fact, of course," said Billy Bunter. "I never tell a whopper. I'm easily the brainiest fellow in the Form!"

"Then why are you afraid to meet your uncle?" demanded Nugent, with a grin.

"Because he'll make inquiries of Quelch, and Quelch might not agree that I'm the best scholar in the Remove. He might tell my uncle that I'm the worst."

"You mean he might tell him the truth?" said Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Cherry?"

"You're a silly young ass!" growled Harry Wharton. "You've been telling your uncle a lot of fairy-tales about your being top of the class, and so forth, and now you're afraid he'll discover the true facts of the case, and give you a jolly good licking. Well, you deserve it! You've exaggerated and told fibs, and when your uncle starts making inquiries you'll be bowled out right away!"

"And Uncle Joe will administer the licks and chastisement," said Hurrece Singh.

Billy Bunter groaned.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 664.

He was in a tight corner, and for the moment he could not think of a way out.

Time after time he had "told the tale" to his uncle. He had represented himself as being the most brilliant and brainy scholar in the Greyfriars Remove. He had said that when it came to Latin and Greek, history and geography, maths and science, there wasn't a fellow in the Form who could hold a candle to him.

And now his Uncle Joe was coming to Greyfriars to verify his nephew's statements!

Verily, the outlook was anything but rosy so far as Billy Bunter was concerned. How could he possibly avoid the coming crash?

He could not prevent his avuncular relative from coming to Greyfriars, nor could he prevent him from having a chat with Mr. Quelch.

The truth would come to light, and Billy Bunter, instead of receiving a substantial "tip," would find himself brought into close and painful contact with Uncle Joe's walking-stick.

The fat junior shuddered at the thought.

And then the sound of the breakfast-gong curtailed Bunter's meditations.

The fact that he was in an awkward tangle did not affect his appetite. He demolished four kippers and unlimited rounds of buttered toast.

After all, Bunter reflected, as he helped himself to Bob Cherry's kipper when Bob wasn't looking, there was an interval of several days till Wednesday, and in that interval the Owl of the Remove hoped to hit upon a way out of the little difficulty which had arisen.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Billy Bunter Astonishes the Natives!

"IT—it must be a joke!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Absolutely!"

"I guess that fat clam's pulling our legs!" said Fisher T. Fish.

Quite a crowd of Remove fellows were clustered around the notice-board, on which the following announcement appeared:

"NOTICE TO THE REMOVE FORM!

"The Governors' Examination will take place on Wednesday morning next. Those who intend to compete are requested to sign their names hereunder."

"(Signed) H. H. QUELCH,

"Form-master."

There was nothing startling in this announcement. The startling thing was that a spewy signature appeared immediately beneath it—the signature of William George Bunter!

Some of the juniors were amused; some were angry. Some rubbed their eyes and asked themselves if they were dreaming; others declared that they would bump Billy Bunter for attempting to have them on toast. For it seemed incredible that the Owl of the Remove really and seriously intended to enter for the Governors' Exam.

"William George Bunter!" ejaculated Frank Nugent. "Well, I'm bent!"

"The fat duffer's queer sense of humour will land him into trouble," said Harry Wharton. "If Quelch sees Bunter's name on the list he'll go up in the air!"

"And so will Bunter!" chuckled Squiff.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

For some time Billy Bunter's was the only signature on the sheet. It remained there in solitary state until Mark Linley came up and added his.

Then Dick Penfold and Peter Todd affixed their signatures. And after some hesitation the Famous Five followed suit.

"What's all this about?" inquired Vernon-Smith, elbowing his way to the notice-board.

"List of entrants for the Governors' Exam," said Bob Cherry. "Going to sit for it, Smithy?"

Vernon-Smith nodded.

"Might as well follow in Bunter's footsteps," he said, with a grin.

"Shure, an' I'm wid ye, Smithy," said Micky Desmond. "I can't possibly finish last, if Bunter's sittin' for the exam."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The list of signatures grew rapidly. But Billy Bunter's name took pride of first place. It was scrawled right across the sheet, and it eclipsed all the other signatures.

"I can't think what the fat dummy means by it!" said Harry Wharton. "He ought to know that he hasn't an earthly chance of finishing anywhere but last."

"Perhaps he thinks there's a booby-prize?" suggested Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look outfully!" muttered Hurrece Singh. "Here comes the salub Quelchy!"

Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, bore down upon the crowd of juniors at the notice-board. He was anxious to see how many names appeared on the list of candidates.

"Make way for his Royal Highness!" murmured Skinner.

The juniors formed a gangway, through which Mr. Quelch strode. He halted in front of the notice-board, and frowned.

"Bless my soul! What does Bunter mean by defacing the list in this manner?" he exclaimed. "Do surely cannot have any serious idea of taking part in the examination! If this is a joke on his part, he shall pay dearly for it!"

"I knew the chopper would come down!" muttered Bob Cherry.

"Silence, Cherry!" snapped Mr. Quelch. "Does any boy know where Bunter is at the moment?"

Nobody seemed to know.

"I will trouble you to go and find him, Wharton," said the Remove-master. "I desire an explanation from him at once!"

The captain of the Remove promptly went in search of Bunter.

He went first of all to the tuckshop—a very natural place to look for the Owl of the Remove—but he drew blank. Then he tried Study No. 7.

The door was locked, and Wharton knew there must be someone within. So he knocked loudly.

There was no response.

Wharton knocked again, with renewed vigour. His clenched fist thumped upon the panel.

Still no response.

The captain of the Remove gave a snort of impatience.

"Bunter!" he exclaimed.

No answer.

"Bunter!" roared Wharton, at the top of his lungs.

There was the sound of a movement inside the study, and a voice—the voice of William George Bunter—requested Harry Wharton to go and consume coke.

The captain of the Remove tugged at the door-handle.

"Unlock this door, you fat duffer!"

"Rats!"

"Quelchy wants you!"

"He'll have to wait!"

"He's waiting for you in the hall!" shouted Wharton.

"Br-r-r!"



Hazeldene looked up from his cards and caught sight of the intruder. His heightened colour became even more pronounced, and he jumped to his feet. "Smith!" he exclaimed, "What do you want here?" "You!" answered the Bounder, grimly. (See Chapter 5.)

Harry Wharton stamped his feet furiously.

"What are you doing in there with the door locked?" he demanded.

"Mind your own bizney!"

"You're not smoking, I hope?"

"Of course not!"

"Or imbibing?"

There was a chuckle from within.

"Yes, I'm imbibing, certainly!"

"My only aunt!" ejaculated Skinner, who had come up behind Wharton unobserved.

"You—you don't seriously mean to say that you're imbibing, Bunter?"

"Yes, rather!"

"Quelchly wants you!"

"Tell him to go and chop chips!"

"My hat!"

Skinner hurried away to the hail, where Mr. Quelch was standing in a Napoleonic attitude, waiting for Bunter.

"If you please, sir," said Skinner breathlessly, "Bunter's in his study."

"Has Wharton told him to report to me at once?"

"Yes, sir. But he won't budge."

There was a gasp from the assembled juniors.

"What is the absurd boy doing, Skinner?" asked Mr. Quelch.

"Imbibing, sir!" said the cad of the Remove.

"Wh-a-t!"

Mr. Quelch nearly fell down.

"As for the Removees, they uttered startled exclamations."

"Are you presuming to joke with me, Skinner?" demanded the master of the Remove, at length.

"Nunno, sir! I'd as soon joke with my own grandmother, sir!"

"How do you know that Bunter is—er—imbibing?"

"He told me so himself, sir!"

Mr. Quelch frowned. With rapid

strides he went off in the direction of the Remove passage.

The juniors followed behind at a discreet distance.

Harry Wharton was still outside the door of Study No. 7, expostulating with Billy Bunter. But his expostulations seemed to be having no effect.

Mr. Quelch rapped sharply on the door.

"Bunter!" he exclaimed.

"Gerraway!" came the exasperated voice from within.

The Remove-master turned purple.

"Boy! Are you aware to whom you are speaking?"

"No offence meant, sir," said Billy Bunter. "But I'm fed up with these interruptions!"

There was a titter from the juniors in the passage.

"Open this door, Bunter!" roared Mr. Quelch.

"Sorry sir, but——"

"Obey me instantly!"

"Oh dear! I wish you'd go away, sir! I can't imbibe properly when people are interrupting—all the time!"

The thunderclouds gathered on Mr. Quelch's brow.

"Unless you admit me into this study immediately, Bunter, the consequences will be serious in the extreme!" he exclaimed.

Billy Bunter hesitated no longer. There was an insistence in Mr. Quelch's tone which the fat junior dared not ignore.

There was a sound of shuffling footsteps within the study. Then the key grated in the lock, and the door was thrown open.

Mr. Quelch retreated a pace in astonishment. And from the juniors in the passage came exclamations of wonder.

Billy Bunter presented an extraordinary appearance. His forehead was swathed in bandages, from beneath which

a pair of spectacled eyes blinked at Mr. Quelch.

"Bless my soul!" gasped the Remove-master. "What—what does this mean? Have you met with an accident, Bunter?"

"Nunno, sir——"

"Then why is your head bandaged in that ridiculous manner?"

"I—I'm sweating, sir!" explained the fat junior.

"Oh!"

Mr. Quelch looked beyond Bunter, and saw that the table was piled high with books, while the floor was strewn with sheets of foolscap.

Seldom had Study No. 7 been in such a congested state.

Volumes of all sorts and sizes, some open and some closed, some dusty and thumb-marked, and others spotlessly clean, were piled up in pyramids on the table.

Latin primers, history books, volumes of poetry, and so forth, had been begged, borrowed, and stolen from the various studies. And Billy Bunter was literally knee-deep in classic lore.

Mr. Quelch stood dumbfounded.

"I've made up my mind to turn over a clean sheet, and to start with a new leaf, sir," said Bunter, getting slightly mixed.

"I know I've been rather backward in the past—you've often said that I'm the stupidist fellow in the Form—but I'm not going to wallow in ignorance any longer. I've become ambitious, sir, and I mean to swot and swot until I've swotted my way to the top place in the class!"

For a moment Mr. Quelch was too thunderstruck to speak. And Billy Bunter went on:

"I've put my name down for the Governors' Exam, and, what's more, I

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 681.

mean to pull it off! I haven't got much time, but I shall work like a nigger! I wish you hadn't interrupted me, sir. The interruptions put me off my stroke, and—"

"Bunter!" gasped Mr. Quelch, finding his voice at last. "Are you—er—having me on a portion of string, as the saying goes?"

"Nunno, sir! I'm in earnest—deadly earnest. I've soaked these bandages in cold water, and they help me to concentrate. I suppose you haven't a lump of ice on you, sir?"

"No, Bunter, I have not!" roared Mr. Quelch. "I am not in the habit of carrying lumps of ice on my person!"

"Well, it doesn't matter, sir. Only I thought a lump of ice would help me to freeze on to things better."

There was a cluck from Harry Wharton & Co.

"I was informed, Bunter," said Mr. Quelch, "and you yourself confirmed the information, that you were imbibing!"

"That's so, sir!"

"What were you imbibing?"

"Knowledge, sir!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was an uncontrollable burst of laughter from the crowd in the passage.

Mr. Quelch looked sternly and searchingly at Billy Bunter.

"The fat junior was looking perfectly serious, and the Remove-master saw that he was not joking."

"You should have come to me immediately you were summoned, Bunter!" said Mr. Quelch.

"Yessir! But I was busy swotting, sir—up to my eyes in it—"

"In those circumstances, I shall not punish you," said Mr. Quelch. "It is so rarely that you show a desire to imbibe knowledge, that you are deserving of every encouragement. But there is no need for you to apply damp bandages to your forehead. Remove them at once, or you will catch a severe cold!"

Reluctantly, Billy Bunter wrenched off the bandages.

"I will now leave you to pursue your studies, Bunter," said Mr. Quelch. "Should you be in need of assistance at any time, you have only to come to me."

"Thanks awfully, sir!"

And Mr. Quelch, still feeling very much amazed—and a trifle suspicious—turned on his heels, and strode away through the throng of wondering juniors in the passage.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The Swot's Progress!

IT was during morning school that Billy Bunter had made up his mind to blossom forth into a swot.

The fat junior had weighed the situation in his mind, and he had come to the conclusion that the only way to appease his Uncle Joe was by making meteoric progress in the Form-room during the next few days.

If only he could get to the top of the class, and win the Governors' Exam, into the bargain, Billy Bunter reflected that it would be well.

He did not realise, at first, the magnitude of the task he had set himself. He did not stop to consider that if he swotted day and night for months he could never hope to vie with such brilliant scholars as Mark Linley, Dick Penfold, Harry Wharton, and Vernon-Smith.

Billy Bunter was inherently stupid, and a few days' strenuous swotting was not likely to transform him into a first-class scholar.

In his colossal conceit, however, the fat junior imagined that it wouldn't take

him long to jump from the bottom of the class to the top.

After lessons he had inscribed his name on the list on the notice-board. Then he had raided the Remove studies, collecting all the volumes he could lay his hands on.

And now, in the interval between morning lessons and dinner, Billy Bunter was swotting furiously.

The crowd of Removites in the passage blinked at their plump schoolfellow in amazement.

Billy Bunter had played many parts in his time. He had taken up boxing, he had championed the cause of Bolshevism, he had followed in the footsteps of Skinner and become a gay dog, until such nonsense was knocked out of him; and on one memorable occasion he had been a genuine hero.

But Bunter, the Swot, was something new and strange. And it was not surprising that Harry Wharton & Co. pinched themselves to make sure they were awake.

"Hold me up, somebody!" implored Bob Cherry. "Bunter—a giddy swot! Did you ever?"

"No, never!" said Johnny Bull solemnly.

"It beats the band, takes the cake, and prances off with the whole box of tricks!" said Nugent.

Billy Bunter, who resembled a human island in a sea of volumes and papers, looked up irritably.

"Wish your fellows would clear off!" he grumbled. "I can't fix my mind on Shakespeare with all this jaw going on."

Harry Wharton advanced into the study as far as he was able. The congested state of the apartment made it impossible for him to progress very far.

"Look here, Bunter," he demanded, "what's the little game?"

"Eh?"

"Were you pulling Quelch's leg?"

"Certainly not! I've got no time for leg-pulling. I'm going to be top of the class by Wednesday, and on the same day I shall pull off the Governors' Exam."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors were immensely tickled at the thought of a hopeless dunce like Billy Bunter winning any sort of examination. The only sort of contest which Billy Bunter could be safely backed to win was an eating contest.

"But why this sudden burst of ambition, Bunter?" gurgled Bob Cherry.

"I want to please my Uncle Joe," was the reply. "When he arrives on Wednesday afternoon he'll go and have a jaw with Quelch. 'How is my nephew William on progressing?' he'll ask. And Quelch will say, 'Splendidly, my lord!'"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blest if I can see anything to chuckle at!" said Bunter peevishly. "I tell you, my Uncle Joe will be awfully bucked! Quelch will say, 'Not only has your brilliant and brainy nephew won the Governors' Exam, but he's top of the class, and I'm proud to possess such a pupil, my lord!'"

"But why should he say 'my lord' to a fishmonger?" asked Squiff in puzzled tones.

"Ea, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Squiff! My uncle's not a fishmonger! He's Lord Joseph de Porkins!"

"Bow-wow!"

"Are you really in earnest about this swotting stunt, Bunter?" asked Mark Linley.

"Of course! Why?"

"Because if you are I'll let you go on using my Latin primer that you've borrowed without permission."

"Faith, an' you can keep my volume

of Moore's poems!" said Micky Demmond.

"And I won't trouble to reclaim my 'History of the Ancient Britons,'" said Vernon-Smith. "As Quelch says, it's so rarely that Bunter shows a thirst for knowledge that he deserves every encouragement."

"Yes, rather!"

"There's no doubt about Bunter being in earnest," said Harry Wharton at length. "All the same, it fairly takes your breath away."

"I'm going to stick to that motto of Shakespeare's," said Billy Bunter. "There is a tide in the affairs of men, which, taken at the flood, is worth two in the bush."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

At that moment the dinner-gong sounded.

As a rule, the sound of the gong had an electrifying effect upon Billy Bunter. He was generally the first to arrive in the dining-hall, and the last to leave.

On this occasion, however, he was unmoved.

"Dinner, porpoise!" said Bob Cherry.

Bunter went on working.

"Dinner!" roared Bob in his stentorian tones. "Not getting deaf in your old age, are you?"

And then Billy Bunter made a startling and dramatic statement—a statement which he had seldom been known to make in the whole course of his school career.

"I don't want any dinner!"

There was a gasp from the juniors.

Bob Cherry fell swooning into Johnny Bull's arms. Frank Nugent clutched at Harry Wharton's shoulder for support. Wharton himself stood with open mouth and staring eyes, goggling like a country yokel.

"At a time like this trivial things like meals must take a back seat," Bunter went on. "Thank goodness, I've got a soul that rises above eating and drinking!"

There was another gasp from the juniors.

Bob Cherry still lay in an imaginary faint. Peter Todd called upon his only aunt, Vernon-Smith asked Bunter in a hoarse whisper if he was sure he felt quite well.

Billy Bunter waved his hand impatiently.

"Cut off, you fellows!" he said. "I'm glad it's dinner-time. I shall be able to work in peace."

Harry Wharton & Co. said nothing further. They were too flabbergasted to speak. They turned, and tottered away in the direction of the dining-hall.

The fact that Billy Bunter, the school's biggest gourmandiser, was missing a meal of his own accord caused quite a sensation.

Mr. Quelch, who presided at the head of the Remove table, noted Bunter's absence.

"Where is Bunter?" he asked testily.

"In his study, sir," said Ogilvy.

"Has he not heard the dinner-gong?"

"Yes, he heard it all right, sir; but he—"

"Well!"

"He doesn't want any dinner, sir!"

"Bless my soul!"

Mr. Quelch nearly fell out of his seat in his astonishment.

"This is a most unusual proceeding on Bunter's part!" he gasped. "I will go and speak to the extraordinary boy."

And the Remove-master quitted the dining-hall and went along to Study No. 7.

The door was again locked. Mr. Quelch applied his knuckles to it.

"Keep off the grass!" came a petulant



Mark Linley was at the Eounder's side in a twinkling. He bent over the fallen junior, and his face was very grave. "He's unconscious; his head struck the stone pillar," he said, as Harry Wharton & Co. came running up. (See Chapter 7.)

voice from within. "Go and stuff yourselves like pigs, and leave me in peace!"

"Bunter! It is I—Mr. Quelch!"

"Oh crumbs! I—I'm awfully sorry, sir! I didn't know it was you. I thought it was some other pest!"

Mr. Quelch frowned. "What is this nonsense about your not requiring any dinner, Bunter?" he exclaimed.

"It isn't nonsense, sir. I'm frantically busy, and I've decided to give dinner a miss."

"Very well," said Mr. Quelch after a pause. "You have over-eaten yourself on so many occasions that it will do you no harm to miss one meal. But you must not prolong this fast, Bunter. You will need nourishment in order to apply yourself successfully to your studies."

"That's all right, sir," said the Owl of the Remove. "I'll try and squeeze in a meal to-morrow, if I find time."

"You are really a most extraordinary boy, Bunter!" said Mr. Quelch.

And he went back to the dining-hall. It was a half-holiday that afternoon.

The Remove had a football fixture with Highlife, and the early spring sunshine attracted nearly everybody out of doors. But Billy Bunter remained behind the locked door of Study No. 7, making copious notes, and covering sheet after sheet of foolscap with his spider-like scrawl.

It was well known that the Owl of the Remove could be determined on occasions. And he was very determined now.

For hour after hour he remained in his study, sweating industriously.

But he made very little real progress.

The store of fresh knowledge which he acquired was likely to evaporate long before the day of the Governors' Exam. For Bunter—like most people addicted

to telling "whoppers"—lacked a retentive memory.

However, the fat junior kept pegging away. And at five o'clock, when the football match was over and won, Billy Bunter was still going strong.

Presently there was a tramping of feet in the passage, and the voices of Peter Todd and Tom Dutton—two of Bunter's study-mates—were heard clamouring for admission.

"Unlock this door, porpoise!" shouted Peter Todd.

"Rats!"

"Let us in!" hooted Tom Dutton.

"It's tea-time!"

"Bottle tea!" growled Billy Bunter.

"Eh? Who's talking about poverty?" said Dutton, who was somewhat hard of hearing.

"I should be a mug to let you in!" said Bunter.

Tom Dutton gave a snort.

"Who's as ugly as sin?" he demanded.

"You're not coming in this place!

You can scoot!"

"I've got a face like a hoof, have I?

My hat! Wait till this door's unlocked!

I—I'll burst you!"

Peter Todd pushed the indignant Dutton aside, and applied a well-shod foot to the door.

"If you don't let us in, Bunter," he said in measured tones, "I'll jolly well wipe up the floor with you! We want our tea, you champion chump!"

"Run away and pick flowers!" said Bunter.

"You—you—" Peter Todd was nearly choking with rage. "If you don't unlock this door at once I'll collect a crowd of fellows to bash it in!"

There was no movement within the study. Billy Bunter went on working.

Peter Todd clenched his hands with rage and impotence.

The next moment the Famous Five, muddy and dishevelled after their exertions on the football-field, came along the passage.

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

"What's up, Toddy?"

"I'm locked out of my own study!"

howled Peter.

"My hat!"

"Bunter won't unlock the blessed door, so the only thing to do is to bash it in. Will you fellows lend a hand?"

"With the greatest of agony!" said Nugent.

The Famous Five made ready to charge, and Peter Todd rapped out a sharp command. Tom Dutton failed to hear it, but he could see what was going on, and he promptly joined in.

Crash!

A number of sturdy human forms hurled themselves upon the door, which shook and quivered ominously before the onslaught.

"Again!" panted Peter Todd.

Crash!

"Here, I say, wharrer you chaps up to?" came an expostulating voice from within.

"Once more!" muttered Peter Todd.

For the third time the juniors pitted their united weight against the door, and it seemed certain that the door would be swept off its hinges.

But it held firm. And the juniors, panting from their exertions, nerved themselves for yet another charge.

Before a further onslaught could be made, however, a figure in gown and mortarboard loomed into view.

"Boys, what does this mean?" demanded Mr. Quelch.

"Ahem!"

"I—I—"

"We—we—"

"We're seeking admission, sir," said Peter Todd breathlessly.

"Indeed!" said Mr. Quelch drily. "You appear to be seeking it in a very noisy and destructive manner. Can you not enter your study in the usual way?"

"Nunno, sir! The door's locked."

"Oh!"

"I locked it, sir," volunteered Billy Bunter from within. "I'm fed-up with these constant interruptions! It's not giving a fellow a fair chance to svot, sir."

Mr. Quelch turned to Peter Todd.

"Is it essential that you should go into the study at this moment, Todd?"

"We want our tea, sir," said Peter.

"There is an excellent tea prepared in the hall," said Mr. Quelch. "I must request you to go there, and not subject Bunter to these constant annoyances."

"Oh, crumbs!"

"If any further effort is made to force open this door I shall punish you. It is no hardship for you to remain out of your study for an hour or two, and it will give Bunter an opportunity to concentrate on his work. I can understand his feelings on the subject."

It was not often that Mr. Quelch studied Billy Bunter's feelings. But he did so now, for he felt very pleased to think that Bunter was endeavouring to better his position in the class.

The juniors turned away, Peter Todd looking very wrathful and crestfallen.

"It's coming to something when a fellow's isolated from his own study," he growled.

"Cheer up, Toddy!" said Bob Cherry.

"There's a jolly tempting tea waiting for you in Hall. Stale bread and margarine and weak tea!"

"Grog!"

Vernon-Smith came along the passage, humming a merry tune. He broke off on catching sight of Peter Todd's woe-begone expression.

"What's up, Toddy? Going to your own funeral?" he asked.

Peter Todd gruffly explained the situation.

"Never mind," said Vernon-Smith.

"You and Dutton can come and have tea in my study. So can you fellows," he added, turning to Harry Wharton & Co., "unless you've made other arrangements."

"Thanks awfully, Smutty!" said Wharton.

"There happens to be a famine in the land at the moment."

"We could only muster fivepence between us," said Bob Cherry, "and we'd resigned ourselves to having a hunk of bread and a prehistoric sardine."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I've got a visitor coming," explained Vernon-Smith, as he led the way to his study.

"Marjorie Hazeldene wants to jaw with me about something."

"If it's private, we'll keep off the grass," said Nugent.

"Rats! Marjorie can say what she wants to say after you fellows have gone. Here we are!"

And Vernon-Smith ushered the Famous Five, Peter Todd, and Tom Dutton into his study, where a magnificent spread had been prepared, in Vernon-Smith's usual lavish style.

And as they gazed upon the array of good things, Peter Todd and Tom Dutton felt glad, after all, that they had been refused admission to their own study.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Help Wanted!

MARJORIE HAZELDENE, the charming sister of Hazel of the Remove, smiled as she stepped into Vernon-Smith's study.

The Bouncer's observant eyes, however, saw that the smile was forced.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 684.

Marjorie was pale, and it was apparent to Vernon-Smith that trouble of some sort was weighing on her mind.

The juniors rose to their feet, and greeted the Cliff House girl with great cordiality. They liked Marjorie immensely, and they often regretted that they could not say the same of her wayward brother.

"I've got quite a party, Miss Marjorie," said Vernon-Smith, placing a chair for his guest. "Hope you don't mind!"

"Not in the least," said Marjorie.

"We're on the rocks," explained Bob Cherry, "and Smutty's opening a soup-kitchen for our benefit."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you refer to my study as a soup-kitchen, you'll get it in the neck!" said the Bouncer warmly.

Vernon-Smith did the honours, and he kept up a running fire of conversation. Otherwise the feed would have been rather a fizzle for it was obvious that Marjorie Hazeldene was not in a conversational mood. When the juniors looked directly at her she smiled. But when they happened to glance at her out of the corners of their eyes they saw that she was sorely troubled. But they were too polite to question her as to the why and wherefore.

When the meal came to an end the Famous Five promptly rose. They thanked their host, nodded cheerfully to Marjorie, and withdrew.

Peter Todd and Tom Dutton followed suit, and Vernon-Smith and Marjorie Hazeldene were alone.

The Bouncer offered Marjorie a chair near the fire. He glanced keenly at his fair guest.

"You're worried about something, Miss Marjorie," he said.

The girl nodded.

"How did you know that?" she asked.

"You've given yourself away a dozen times during tea. I'm not blind, you know," added Vernon-Smith, as he poked the fire into a blaze.

"The real reason I came over this afternoon," said Marjorie, "was to ask your advice and help."

Vernon-Smith gave a start. He wondered why Marjorie had come to him, of all persons. She had often taken Harry Wharton & Co. into her confidence, but she had seldom unburdened her mind to the Bouncer, who had the reputation of being hard and cynical, rather than sympathetic.

"I'll help you with pleasure, if I can," said the junior.

"But knew you would say that?"

"Because you'll understand better than anyone else. It's about Peter that I wish to speak to you."

"Oh!"

"I'm dreadfully afraid that he'll be getting himself into serious trouble," said Marjorie, her face clouding. "He's struck up a companionship with Ponsobny, of Highlife, and no good can possibly come of that. On the contrary, it may lead to a lot of harm."

Vernon-Smith nodded.

"Ponsobny's a cad of the first water," he said.

And he remembered how, earlier in the year, he, too, had got into the clutches of the black sheep of Highlife.

"In Courtfield," Marjorie went on, "there's a precious society known as the Good Sports, and Ponsobny is a member."

"So was I, once," said the Bouncer. "It was a bad day for me when I got mixed up with that shady mob. The place where the society holds its meetings is nothing more or less than a gambling-den. It was smashed up once—Wharton & Co. wrecked the whole show

—but the president of the society, a bouncer called Beverley-Brooke, is rolling in quids, and he's refurbished the place."

"Do you know," said Marjorie, "I believe Ponsobny has persuaded my brother to join the society."

"What?"

Vernon-Smith jumped up from his chair.

"I really believe that is the case," Marjorie went on. "Peter has been behaving very queerly of late, and he will tell me nothing of his movements. Whenever he starts being secretive, I know that there must be something seriously wrong."

Vernon-Smith gave a low whistle.

"Jove! I didn't think Hazel would go to those lengths!" he exclaimed.

"Ponsobny has twisted him round his finger."

"But are you sure of this, Marjorie? You may be jumping to conclusions, you know."

"Peter has been so often in Ponsobny's company just lately that I feel sure my fears are correct," said Marjorie. "Where is Peter this afternoon? In the ordinary way he would be here, having tea with us."

"He went out after dinner," said Vernon-Smith.

"Exactly! And it is not difficult to guess where he went. It is a half-holiday, and we are safe in assuming that the Good Sports, as they call themselves, are holding revel at their headquarters."

"Great Scott!"

"Think of the risk that Peter is running!" said Marjorie. "At any moment a master, or someone in authority, might visit the place. And what then? It would be all right for Beverley-Brooke and the others, who have left school and have nothing to lose by being detected. But Peter—why, if he were caught at a place of that description, he would be expelled!"

"I'm afraid he would," said Vernon-Smith grimly. "He's sailed pretty close to the wind before, and the Head wouldn't be likely to give him another chance."

Marjorie lifted her troubled face to the Bouncer.

"If only I could reason with my brother, and get him to abandon this folly, I should have no need to ask your assistance," she said. "But he wouldn't listen to me. He would regard it as interfering."

"The sooner somebody interferes, the better it will be for Hazel!" said Vernon-Smith. "I know what you're going to ask me, Marjorie, and I'll save you the trouble. You want me to get Hazel clear of the clutches of this precious society?"

The girl nodded eagerly.

"It shall be done," said the Bouncer, pacing to and fro. "But I'm afraid a little violence may be necessary. It isn't likely that I shall be able to get Hazel away by pleading with him. I shall probably have to use forcible persuasion. You understand?"

"Quite!" said Marjorie.

"And you won't be angry if I find it necessary to give your brother a licking?"

"It will be no more than he deserves," was the reply.

"Then you can leave it to me," said Vernon-Smith, glancing at his watch. "It's half-past five now. If Hazel hasn't returned by six, I'll go over to Courtfield and make investigations."

"This is immensely good of you!" said Marjorie, rising.

"Rats!"

(Continued on page 9.)

The Greyfrians HERALD

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March 19th, 1921.



The

Staff



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.

(NOTE.—The Editor does not necessarily share the views of zilly asses who do not know what they're talking about.—Ed.)

COKER LETS OFF STEAM.

To the Editor of the "Greyfrians Herald." You Cheeky Yung Cubb,—You're always saying sarcastic things in yore paper about me and my motor-bike. This practice must cease forthwith, as they say in the Army.

You try to make out that I've got no control over a machine. On the contrary, if you were to screech all England you wouldn't find a more skillful driver. I could ride my motor-bike blindfolded, and I can do almost anything with it. I can make it perform jimmy-nasticks, and all sorts of wonderful feats!

Just you keep a sivil tung in yore head in fiewher!

Yores wrathfully,

HORACE COKER.

(We are quite prepared to believe that Coker can make his ancient grid-iron perform "jimmy-nasticks." Only the other day he cased it to take a flying leap into the duck-pond. He also attempted to knock down the brick wall which surrounds Cliff House school. Potter and Greene were on board at the time, and they are now hobbling about in splints!—Ed.)

PHYLLIS HOWELL'S LATEST!

To the Editor of the "Greyfrians Herald." Dear Harry,—You will be interested to hear that I have got up a football eleven at Cliff House, and we hereby challenge you to a match on Saturday next, under the following conditions:

- (1) The match to be played on our own ground.
- (2) We are to have eleven players, and you are to field not more than six.
- (3) We are to be allowed to handle the ball as well as kick it. Your team, of course, will stick to the usual rules.
- (4) The referee is to be a Cliff House girl (a mistress), and if she sees any of your players charging any of ours, or trying to take the ball away from them, she will send the offenders off the field.
- (5) The losing team is to treat the victors to a tip-top tea.

There, I think I have made myself clear. Do you accept our challenge? Yours sincerely,

PHYLLIS HOWELL.

(Well, accept the challenge cheerfully enough! but are you sure, Miss Phyllis, that you wouldn't like us to play only two men-one back and one forward? And if either of them happens to kick the ball, shouldn't he be sent off the field? That would simplify matters for you more than ever!—Ed.)

CHINESE CHATTER.

By WUN LUNG.

Me tinkee the "Greyfrians Herald" would be much improved if little Wun Lung got a place on the staffee. (Me no savvy.—Ed.)

Me tinkee Hop III ought to take a handee, too. (He'll take a boot if he comes noosing round this establishment!—Ed.)

Me suggestee that handsome Bob Chelly use his influence and get us both a jobee on the staffee.

Me contribute lovely bloodthirsty stollies about my native countrie. (Gross!—Ed.)

Me manage the paper velly muchee better than that fool Hally Wharton. (You wait till I get hold of you, you pigtailed pest. I'll flay you alive!—Ed.)

Me expectee to getee at least five bobee for these notes. (Blessed is he who expecteth nix; and then he won't find himself in a fix.—Ed.)

Me simply must getee jobee on staffee somehow. If wicked Hally Wharton say no, me hopee office pigtail in disgust! (Go ahead with the merry execution!—Ed.)

Me blingee out "Weekly" of my ownnee, and then the "Greyfrians Herald" will have to shut up shoopee! (Me givee Wun Lung a taste of my dissee, and then he will have to put up the shutters!—Ed.)

OUR WEEKLY CARTOON.



"BUNTER MINOR."

EDITORIAL!

By Harry Wharton.

My postbag is weightier than ever this week; in fact, it required the united efforts of Gosling the porter, Trotter the page, and the postman to drag it through the Close!

I have answered as many of the letters as possible in this issue; but there are several others which call for comment.

Bernard Hawkes, of Bristol, has sent me a very chatty and interesting letter, in the course of which he says:

"Billy Bunter has stolen a march on you, Harry. He frequently brings out Special Numbers of his 'Weekly'—a Sports Number, a Tuck Number, and so forth. Why haven't you given us some special numbers of the good old 'Herald'?"

Friend Bernard has apparently forgotten all about our Special Verse Number, published a short time back, which I venture to think tickled all Bunter's Special Numbers into fits!

But I can see what my Bristol chum wants, and his request will be granted. I hope in the near future to produce some Special Numbers of the "Greyfrians Herald," and I know that the majority of my chums will welcome them with open arms.

A good many readers have clamoured for another issue in verse, but I am afraid I must disappoint them. Such a task puts a great strain upon our hard-working staff.

From one of my sporting readers—"Enthusiast," of Portsmouth—comes a query as to which is the best junior football eleven that could be picked from Greyfrians, St. Jim's, and Rookwood.

This is a delicate responsibility—not because I want to shirk the responsibility, but because Sully, being our Sports Editor, is in a better position to answer it.

This is Smithy's selection of an ideal junior eleven:

- Fatty Wynn (St. Jim's), J. Bull (Greyfrians), G. Figgins (St. Jim's), R. Redfers (St. Jim's), R. Cherry (Greyfrians), T. Dodd (Rookwood), E. Talbot (St. Jim's), Tom Merry (St. Jim's), H. Wharton (Greyfrians), J. Silver (Rookwood), Haree Singh (Greyfrians). Reserves: Jack Blake (St. Jim's), Kit Erroll (Rookwood), and Frank Nugent (Greyfrians).

There may be some who will disagree with Smithy's selection, but I consider (not merely because he has put me at centre-forward) that it is a very sound one. Anyway, I'd be prepared to back the above team against all comers.

Harry Wharton.

HOW TO FURNISH A STUDY!

By Tom Brown.

(The Editor accepts no responsibility for what happens to any silly asses who attempt to carry out Browney's suggestions!—H. W.)

A home away from home. That's what every schoolboy study should resemble. They should be cheery, cosy apartments, where you needn't be ashamed of inviting your aristocratic aunt or your highly-connected great-grandmother.

As it is, most of the Remove studies resemble scrap-heaps. They are eyesores—places of chaos and confusion. I went into Wharton's study just now, and I was appalled! The table had only three legs, the book-case was on its back; the linoleum hadn't been scrubbed for six months, and the mantelpiece hadn't been dusted for a decade. How Wharton and Nugent can exist in such a hovel passes my comprehension.

Now, we will assume that the reader of this article is a new kid, just arrived at Greyfriars. He is allotted a study in the Remove passage. Well, he must first set about making his study habitable.

The most important thing is the colour scheme of the study. If he decides on pink, then everything in the study must be pink—the walls, the ceiling, the floor, and every article of furniture.

We will suppose that our friend decides on white. This is the most convenient colour, because whitewash is awfully cheap—in fact, you can get a pair of it for six from Gosling's woodshed.

Well, first of all, our friend makes a tour of all the other studies, and loots all the furniture he can lay his hands on.

In looting the furniture, our friend must keep his wits about him. To walk again with the table under one arm and the book-case under the other is simply asking for trouble. The looter must select his furniture from empty studies—senior studies for choice, because these are always tastefully furnished.

Having got all he wants in the way of furniture—a table, a sofa, a book-case, and half a dozen chairs—our friend must obtain a pair of whitewash, and lay about him with a liberal brush. It's no use doing things by halves. The ceiling, the walls, the floor, the furniture, the fire-places—all must be whitewashed. And don't forget the window-sill and the mantelpiece.

Even the picture-frames and the ornaments should receive a coat of whitewash. There will be an unpleasant odour hanging about the study for a few days, but it will soon disappear.

Of course, if the new kid dresses in white, with a white tie and white spats, and if his name happens to be White, so much the better. He will fit in with the colour scheme of his own study. If his name happens to be Black, or Green, or Grey, he should select his colour scheme accordingly.

I once knew a fellow called Orange; and by the time he had made everything in his study the colour of his name, it fairly gave you the pip!

Bob Cherry, who has been beside me while I've been writing this article, asked me how a fellow would proceed if his name happened to be Reginald Blue-Black. He would simply smother everything in his study with ink!

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 604.

THE WRECK OF THE HESPERUS!

A very modern version, describing the misadventures of the River and Sensing Bunter on the Billy Sark.

By Dick Penfold.

It was the good tub Hesperus
That sailed the River Sark;
And Billy had taken his minor Sammy
A-cruising after dark.

Blue were his eyes as the fairy flax,
And plump was each arm and leg;
And his chivvy resembled the fishing-smacks
That sail in the bay of Pegg.

"Oh, Billy! I hear a dreadful roar!
Oh, say, what may it be?"
But Billy leaned heavily on his oar,
And a scornful laugh laughed he.

"Oh, Billy! I hear a frantic din!
My hat! What can it be?"
"Some silly young ass has fallen in!"
Said Billy, in tones of glee.

"But, Billy, the current is sharp and strong,
And the roar grows louder still!"
"Cheer up, young Sammy, there's nothing wrong;
You trust your Uncle Bill!"

The boat rushed on at a breathless speed,
And great was Sammy's fright.
But Billy was dreaming of the feed
He had on his birthday-night.

"Oh, Billy! Again that noise is heard!
Oh, say, what may it be?"
But Billy he answered never a word—
A frozen porpoise, he!

He gazed aghast with bulging eyes,
And he shook with sudden fear.
And the brothers breathed their last
Good-byes,
As the boat rushed over the weir!

A deafening crash and a mighty splash,
And both were in the water;
And they thought they'd share, as in a flash,
The fate of Lord Ullin's daughter!

But Wingate stood on the grassy bank,
With a bathhook in his hand;
'Twas the Greyfriars skipper they had
to thank
For heaving them to land.

It was the good tub Hesperus
That sailed the River Sark;
But never again will the Bunter twain
Go cruising after dark!

OUR WEEKLY LIMERICK.

No. 12.

A lanky young prefect named Knox,
Who stood six-foot-one in his socks,
Was out "razzing" one night,
When the head came in sight,
And he had the most startling of
shox!

HARRY WHARTON REPLIES TO HIS READERS.

Address all communications to: The Editor, c/o THE MAGNET, The Plectevay House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

"Spring Poet" (Bloomsbury).—"I enclose a poem entitled, 'A Rumble in the Country,' and shall expect to see it in your next issue."—Afraid your expectations won't be realised, old chap. If your 'Rumble' were printed, it would extend through at least six columns! Cut out about three hundred stanzas, and then submit the ode again, and I'll see what I can do for you.

"Irish Mollie" (Belfast).—"I think you are rather hard on Bunter. You don't give him a fair chance. He's an awfully nice kid, and it isn't right that you should be jealous of him because his appetite happens to be bigger than your own. When are you going to give him another game with the Remove football-team?"—Quoth the raven, "Never more!"—Afraid you don't know Bunter as we know him, Mollie!

Jack Roberts (Summerstown).—"Please send me your photograph for my album."—How can I, when you don't give your full address?

Tom Manners (Highbury).—"You are a dud editor, and I think there is room for improvement in the GREYFRIARS HERALD."—There is also room for improvement in your manners, Manners! Evelyn Hartley (Blackpool).—"I think the HERALD is simply sweet!"—That's because you send us such sugary compliments, dear lady!

"A Bunterite" (Raynes Park).—"Why is Billy Bunter trodden on so much?"—Because he's a worm!

Roy Bennett (Manchester).—"I feel that I should like to shake you."—We felt quite alarmed until we turned over the next page of your letter, and saw that the completed sentence was, "I feel that I should like to shake you by the hand!"

J. Rood (Derby).—"You seem to make a practice of ticking your correspondents off."—Not unless they're Rood, dear boy!

R. Kingston (Salisbury).—"When you have a Special Gardening Number of the GREYFRIARS HERALD it will be very appropriate if it is edited by Rake."—Hoc, hoc!

Eric Clarke (Worthing).—"You are an awfully fine sportsman, Harry! 'Pon my soul, I love you!"—Sorry, but we lent our last bob to Billy Bunter half an hour ago!

Fred Pearce (Hoxton).—"Are Peter and Alonzo Todd related to Sweeney Todd, the demon barber of Fleet Street?"—I put your question to Peter, and he fairly foamed at the mouth! He wants to know if you are in any way related to the notorious Charlie who bore your surname!

"Battling Mike" (Poplar).—"I could lick any member of the Famous Five into a cocked hat!"—Then you'd better come along to Greyfriars and do it!

Jimmy R. (Repton).—"I love the good old GREYFRIARS HERALD; and so does my young brother Gerald. We both get walloped every week, for reading it and dodging Greek!"—I well recall one class I sat in. I read the HERALD during Latin. When Quelch had flogged me, with a frown, I couldn't read it sitting down!

(A further budget of replies will appear next week.)

BILLY BUNTER'S ANNUAL BATH!

A story that will create a great splash! - - By BOB CHERRY.

CLANG, clang! The harsh notes of the rising-bell penetrated into the Removo dorm.

I hopped briskly out of bed—as is my custom—and proceeded to arm myself with a soaking sponge.

"Bunter's benefit, Bob?" asked Nugent, with a grin.

I nodded. These drastic measures are necessary in the case of born-ired slackers who take no notice of the rising-bell. He's curled up like a fat dormouse. And his snoring's enough to raise the roof!

Crossing over to Billy Bunter's bed, I squeezed the wet sponge over his far from beautiful face.

"Oooooooh!" With a wild gurgle the sleeper woke. His head was like a wet mop, and the water streamed down his face. He looked like a fellow who had been blubbing for twenty-four hours at a stretch.

"Up you get, my fat tulip!" I said grimly. "Oh, really, Cherry! I wish you wouldn't be such a leeching-bully, Bulsy! I—I feel quite damp!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" With many-grumbings and expostulations, Billy Bunter rolled out of bed and donned his trousers, his shirt, and his collar and tie. Then he crossed over to the washstand, with the intention of having a "cat-lick."

The majority of us always wash down our waists. But not so Bunter. He doesn't even get so low as his neck. Just a few dabs with a sponge at his plump countenance, and he starts towelling himself.

"When did you last wash your neck, Bunter?" asked Harry Wharton.

"It must have been before he came to Greyfriars," said Squiff. "I've never seen him do it here."

"Ha, ha, ha!" "Oh, really, Field—"

"When did you last wear a clean collar?" I demanded, taking up the cross-examination.

"He's worn the same collar for at least a fortnight," said Bolsover major. "It was a fortnight ago to-day that I spilled some ink over it, and the inkstain's still there."

"Bunter's like a railway passenger who means to travel direct to his destination," said Toddy. "He doesn't believe in making changes!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" And then Johnny Bull suggested a really brilliant where.

"What do you fellows say to giving Bunter a regular spring-clean, to get him ready for the holidays?" said Johnny. "We'll bath him and brush him and disinfect him, and go over him with a vacuum-cleaner!"

"Ripping!" "Don't be a beast, Bull!" protested Billy Bunter. "I'm quite capable of looking after myself."

"I don't agree," said Johnny. "If you were left to look after yourself, you'd never apply any soap and water to that fat neck of yours, and you'd never, under any circumstances, take a bath—unless it was to celebrate the arrival of your postal-order!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "I'll pop down and get one of the baths ready," said Nugent.

Billy Bunter tried to bunk, but Bolsover major's burly form barred the exit. "No, you don't, my pippin!" said Bolsover. "There's no escape for you. You're going to have your annual tub, and you'll be as clean as a new pin by the time we've finished with you!"

Nugent returned in a few moments. "All the bath-rooms are booked up," he said. "There's even a perfect mania this morning for batis."

Billy Bunter looked greatly relieved. He thought that he would be able to dodge the ordeal.

But Johnny Bull was not to be denied. "Collar him!" he rapped out. "We'll take him along to the masters' bath-room!"

"Good egg!"

We were feeling just in the mood for giving Bunter a jolly good spring-cleaning. Personally, there's nothing I dislike so much in a fellow as dirtiness and slovenliness. I don't mind what sort of togs a fellow wears, but he's no pal of mine unless he washes his neck.

Billy Bunter's fat face was filled with alarm as we closed in upon him. "Stand back, you rotters!" he exclaimed, blinking at us through his big glasses. "I refuse to be spring-cleaned! If there's any overhauling to be done, I'll do it myself!"

We paid no heed to Bunter's expostulations. He was swung off his feet, and Smithy and Wharton grabbed his legs, while Johnny Bull and I seized his shoulders. In this way we bore him off to the masters' bath-room. A grinning crowd followed.

Nugent cautiously opened the bath-room door and peered within.

"Anybody there?" murmured Wharton. "No; but Prout's togs are here."

"My hat!" Mr. Prout, the master of the Fifth, was in the habit of taking a regular tub every



Splash! The fat junior landed fairly and squarely in the bath. "Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors.

morning. It was his custom to leave his togs in the bath-room while he went back to his bed-room in his dressing-gown to smoke a pipe and glance at the morning paper. Then he would return to the bath-room and dress.

"We shall have to look slippy," said Johnny Bull. "Prout may come back at any moment."

"Turn on the hot-water tap, and bung Bunter in with all his togs on," was Bolsover's brilliant suggestion. "We'll bob him first, and then scrub him."

"Ha, ha, ha!" "No use, rolling him in his clothes," said Wharton. "We shall never get him clean. Off with your togs, porpoise!"

"Won't! Shan't! Lemme go!" howled Bunter.

"Then we shall have to forcibly undress you!" We wrenched off Bunter's garments, and Johnny Bull held them, while Nugent turned on the hot-water tap.

And then Toddy came on the scene with a long-handled scrubbing-brush. Squiff came along with a chisel, and Micky Desmond produced a gardening-rake!

"Faith, an' this ought to get the worst off No use," roared Toddy.

"Ha, ha, ha!" The Owl was divested of all his garments by this time.

"Heave-ho!" said Wharton. "Arroooooh!" roared Bunter, as he was swung off his feet. "Leggo, you beasts! If I get drowned, I shall report you to Queefy afterwards!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Splash!

The fat junior landed fairly and squarely in the bath, and Toddy, having applied soft soap to the business end of the scrubbing-brush, got busy.

Billy Bunter was soon in a lather. Toddy scrubbed away with great vigour, and the air was full of steam—and the lamentations of the victim.

Scrub, scrub, scrub! "Yow-ow-ow! You're taking all the skin off me, Toddy, you rotter!"

"I don't mind that," said Toddy, "so long as the dirt comes off as well!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" Suddenly there was a warning exclamation from Dick Russell, who was on guard in the passage.

"Gave! Here comes Prout!" We promptly melted away. In his hot haste, Johnny Bull took Bunter's togs with him!

When Prout arrived at the bath-room door in his dressing-gown there wasn't a soul to be seen. Directly we had gone, Billy Bunter had hopped out of the bath and locked the door.

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated Prout, trying the handle. "The bath-room appears to be tenanted by some interloper. Who is there?"

No answer. "Who is within?" roared Prout.

Billy Bunter was too busy travelling himself to answer Prout's questions.

"Is it you, Queefy?" roared Prout, in tones of exasperation.

Silence. "Twigg! Capper! Lascelles! Which of you is in the bath-room. I require my clothes at once! Do you hear me?"

Still no answer. "Very well," snapped Prout. "I will find means of forcing open the door. I will summon the prefects, and get them to haul their united weight upon it!"

Billy Bunter quaked with alarm. He shuddered to think of what would happen if Prout discovered him in the masters' bath-room.

There was only one thing to be done in the circumstances, and Bunter did it. He donned Prout's togs and proceeded to clamber out of the window.

It wasn't a very great drop into the Close; and Billy Bunter landed on all-fours on the flagstones. Then he picked himself up and scuttled away.

We were exploring the post-rack in the hall when Bunter rushed in. And on catching sight of him we promptly went into hysterics. Prout's coat came down nearly to his knees, and the trousers were about a yard too long.

"Ow! Oh dear! I've had a terrible time!" wailed Bunter. "Bull, gimme my togs!"

Johnny Bull handed them over, and Billy Bunter rushed away to his study to change. Having donned his rightful attire, he took Prout's clothes to his bed-room, and left them there.

Meanwhile, Prout had summoned the assistance of Wingate, Faulkner, Gryme, and the corner-ster, of the Sixth, and was exhorting them to break open the bath-room door. After a series of fierce onslaughts, they succeeded in doing so.

With a snarl like that of a wild beast, Prout stepped into the bath-room—to find it empty!

"You must have been mistaken, sir," said Wingate. "There's nobody here."

"But there was—there must have been! How could the door have become locked otherwise? And my clothes—good gracious!—they have disappeared!"

Prout found them shortly afterwards in his own room. And when he had dressed, made strenuous efforts to discover who had been in the bath-room.

But the mystery remained unsolved. And Prout never suspected for one moment that Billy Bunter had had his annual bath in the masters' bath-room!

THE END.

THE MAGNET LIBRAET.—No. 634



THE Greyfriars Sketch Club—of which I have the honour to be president—held a meeting in the Remove Form-room on Wednesday evening.

We've got heaps of talented artists in our Sketch Club. They can draw anything, from a cross-stitch to a cut-throat, at a moment's notice. And we generally have great fun on the evenings we meet.

"Now, kiddets," I said, placing a blackboard and easel in front of the assembly, "we'll get to business! Who's going to set the ball rolling?"

"I will!" said Johnny Bull.

And he promptly did a lightning sketch of Billy Bunter.

It was Bunter to the life, with his enormous circumference, and his spectacles perched on his snub little nose, and Johnny Bull's effort evoked roars of laughter.

Then Tom Brown did a sketch of a fellow receiving a public flogging in Big Hall.

The culprit was hoisted on Gooling's shoulders, and the Head, with a fearful frown on his face, was wielding the birch like a blacksmith swinging his sledge.

"Bravo, Browney!" said Bob Cherry.

"That's a jolly good one!"

"Better rub it out, in case the Head comes along!" said Bulstrode hurriedly. "It's a ripping good sketch, but 'raps the Head might miss the finer points."

"Ha, ha! P'raps he might!" chuckled Toddy.

Tom Brown's sketch was erased, and then we each took a turn at the blackboard.

The last fellow to demonstrate his ability as a lightning artist was Skinner.

The cad of the Remove was chuckling as he picked up the chalk, and we could see that he had something up his sleeve.

"What are you going to do, Skinner?" asked Bob Cherry.

"I'm going to illustrate a little incident that happened in Courfield High Street last night," said Skinner.

We could see at once what he was getting at.

On the previous evening Quelchey, our respected Form-master, had been taken suddenly queer while walking in Courfield. He had become so dazed that he had been obliged to clutch at a lamp-post for support, and he had come back to Greyfriars in a taxi.

Skinner and Bolsover, and a few of the meaner spirits in the Remove, had suggested that Quelchey was in a state of intoxication at the time. This was not only childish, but absurd, for Quelchey takes nothing stronger than soda-water.

"You—you're not going to draw Quelchey clinging to a lamp-post?" gasped Bob Cherry.

Skinner nodded coolly.

"That's not playing the game!" said Bob warmly.

And there were cries of "Kick the rotter out!"

Skinner faced his audience fearlessly.

"You fellows seem to have forgotten the rules of our Sketch Club," he said. "They provide that a fellow may select whatever subject he likes, without interference from the other members."

"That's perfectly true, you chaps," I said. "Skinner's a low-down cad, but, strictly speaking, he's within his rights! The rules say that a fellow is perfectly at liberty to choose his own subject."

"Then the sooner the rules are altered the better!" growled Johnny Bull.

Skinner had won his point, and he went ahead with his sketch. He isn't a bad artist, and his caricature of Quelchey was really

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 684.

Skinner's Lightning Sketch!

By FRANK NUGENT.

brilliant. There could be no mistaking whom it was meant to portray.

The sketch showed Quelchey hugging the lamp-post, with his legs flying in the air, and a look of utter helplessness on his face. His mortar-board had fallen into the gutter, and his gown was flapping wildly behind him.

Underneath the sketch Skinner inscribed his initials, as is his custom, and also the following libretto:

"WE WON'T—HIC!—GET HOME TILL MORNINSH!"

"There!" said Skinner, with a grin of triumph. "What do you think of that, you fellows?"

"I think you're a beastly outsider!" said Mark Gimley.

"You know jolly well that Quelchey hadn't been drinking," said Bob Cherry. "He was ill."

"That's what they all say when they're unsteady on their pins!" said Skinner. "You don't suppose Quelchey was going to tell every body he was tight, do you?"

"Dry up, you cad!"

"Let's bump the rotter!" said Wharton. Skinner promptly fled for his life. He streaked out of the Form-room before you could say "Knife."

The next moment Wingate of the Sixth looked in, to announce that it was bed-time.

Skinner promptly fled for his life. He streaked out of the Form-room before you could say "Knife."

"What are you kids doing?" demanded Wingate.

"We're having a meeting of the Sketch Club, please, Wingate!" said Bob Cherry meekly.

"Well, out off to bed at once!"

We had planned a pillow-fight that evening against the Fifth, and we forgot all about Skinner and his sketch.

Next morning, however, we had a forcible reminder of the affair.

First lesson was over, and Quelchey suddenly took it into his head to reverse the blackboard. When he had done so, his eyes nearly goggled out of their sockets. The picture of himself, clinging to a lamp-post, and with his legs wildly thrashing the air, nearly sent him into an apoplectic fit.

"Whose handiwork is this?" he thundered.

"And then he caught sight of the initials, 'H. S.'"

"Hurree Singh!" he roared. "Am I to understand that you have caricatured your Form-master in this libellous manner?"

"No, honoured sahib!" said Iuky. "The guiltfulness is not on my esteemed shoulders!"

"Then Skinner must be the culprit!" said Quelchey in terrible tones. "Stand out, wretched boy!"

Skinner's face was like chalk as he tottered out in front of the class. He, too, had forgotten all about the sketch he had drawn overnight, but his memory was refreshed now with a vengeance.

Quelchey didn't spare the rod. He gave Skinner six real stingers on each hand, and the rod was filled with music.

Skinner looked very sorry for himself as he crawled back to his place. But nobody else was sorry for him. We unanimously agreed that he had received his just deserts!

THE END.

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MY FOOTBALL

KOLLUM.

By Billy Bunter.

I was stooping down outside the door of Wharton's study the other day, in order to tye up my bootlaces (which has an unforchunite habit of coming undone), when I happened to here Bob Cherry say that the English Cup Final was taking place in April, at Stamford Bridge.

This set me thinking.

Being a keen footballer, I was natcherally eager to go and see the Final, if at all possible.

After waying the matter in my mind for sun time, I decided to write to the Football Assosiasium for a free ticket. (Of course, I shouldn't dream of paying several bobbs for admishun, like so mervny thousands of people do yeeer after yeeer.)

Having borrowed a pen from Toddy, a sheet of notepaper from Tom Dutton, sum ink from Inky, some blotting-paper from Squiff, and a stamp from Mauly, I dispatched the folloing letter:

"Greyfriars Skool,

"Friarade, Kent.

"To the Prezident, Sekkretary, or Head Kook & Bottle-Washer, of the Football Assosiasium.

"Deer Sir,—I shall esteem it a grate faver if you will reserve me four seats for the Cup Final neckst month.

I write menshun that I am comin' to play for Woolidge Arsenal, Chelsea, Footpurs, and I myself am a 1st-class player.

"Please be certain to reserve me the four seats, bekaws I don't want to fag; all the way up to London for nothing.

"Yores in antissiasium.

"W. G. BUNTER."

Well, deer readers, I didn't here anything for a few days; and then, just as I was beginning to think the Football Assosiasium had forgotten all about me, I was sent for by the Head.

"Come in, Bunter!" he said. "I here just received a letter from the English Football Assosiasium."

"Oh, yes, sir?"

"It appears that you wrote and asked for sum seats to be reserved for you for the Cup Final. The Sekkretary of the Assosiasium has riten to say that it is not usual to reserve seats for unknown public skool boys; but in this case he is kwite willing to do so."

"Oh, good!" I said, klapping my hands.

"Here is the letter, Bunter," said the Head. "That is all, you may go."

"Eggcuss me, sir," I said, "but did the Sekkretary of the Football Assosiasium enkluse my ralewar-fair?"

"No, Bunter, he did not! You will have to pay yore own."

"Oh, crumms!"

"You cannot go thre w life eggpecting other people to pay for all yore plezures, Bunter. I trusted you will enjoy yoreself at the Cup Final."

"Thank you, sir!"

And I bowed joyfully out of the study.

In dow course, deer readers, I will tell you all about my adventures at the Cup Final. Watch this Kollum weak by weak!

(And it will grow weak-er and weak-er each time.—E.D.)

"BUNTER THE SWOT!"

(Continued from page 8.)

"But it is! You will be running a risk yourself, by going to that place—"
"I should be a poor sort of wofm if I funked taking a bit of risk," said the Bounder. "And you mustn't think that I'm doing you a big favour. I'm not. I've got a bone to pick with the Good Sports, and I'm very keen on getting to grips with them."

"You will be careful, won't you?" said Marjorie. "I don't want you to run into trouble."

Vernon-Smith grinned.
"I fancy I know how to look after myself," he said. "You can rely on me to get Hazel away from those gambling bounders—if he's joined them, that is. Good-bye, Marjorie!"

They shook hands; and for a brief moment Marjorie allowed her hand to rest in that of the Greyfriars junior.
"Thank you ever so much!" she murmured. "I know you wouldn't fail me."

Then she was gone, and Vernon-Smith, with a grim expression on his face, resumed his seat by the fire.

"Fancy that mad duffer getting mixed up with the Good Sports!" he muttered. "I must have been going about with my eyes shut, not to notice that there was something wrong. If Hazel isn't back by six, there'll be ructions! I'll go over to Courtfield, and drag the silly chump back to the school by the scruff of his neck, if necessary!"

Vernon-Smith felt glad that Marjorie Hazeldene had taken him into her confidence, and entrusted to him the task of dragging Peter Hazeldene out of the mire. It showed that the girl had faith in him—that she trusted him. And the Bounder resolved, as he sat gazing into the fire, that he would not abuse that faith and trust.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

The Price of Silence!

BOOM!
It was the first stroke of six, sounding from the old clock-tower.

Vernon-Smith rose to his feet, and stepped along to Study No. 2.

Bulstrode and Tom Brown were seated at the table, playing chess.

"Hazel in yet?" inquired the Bounder.

Tom Brown shook his head.
"We never see anything of him, these days," he said. "Goodness knows where he gets to!"

"He went out after dinner, and he's not come back," said Bulstrode.

Vernon-Smith nodded, and withdrew. Five minutes later, he was walking over to Courtfield in the gathering dusk.

The Society of Good Sports had their headquarters at No. 99, High Street, the club-room being situated over a shop.

As he approached No. 99, Vernon-Smith saw a light gleaming from the upper window. He also heard the sound of singing. The Good Sports were chanting a satirical drinking-song.

"We'll drink, my boys, to earthily joys,
Away with care and woe!
So uncork the Bovril, lad,
And let the lime-juice flow!"

Evidently some of the Good Sports were under the influence of stronger potions than Bovril and lime-juice, for the din they made was uproarious.

Vernon-Smith lingered on the pavement for a moment. Then he entered the building, and mounted the rickety stairs.

There was nobody on guard, and the Bounder had free access to the club-room.

He opened the door without knocking, and found half a dozen fellows gathered round the table.

Hazeldene's flushed and excited face was the first he saw. Then his gaze rested, in turn, on Ponsonby of Highcliffe, Beverley-Brooke, the president of the society, Percy Carfax, the Honourable Freddie Stacey, and another fellow whom he had not the misfortune to know.

So sudden and unexpected had been Vernon-Smith's entry that for a moment he stood on the threshold unnoticed.

Hazeldene was the first to catch sight of the intruder. His heightened colour became even more pronounced as he jumped to his feet.

"Smith!" he exclaimed. "What—what do you want here?"

"You!" answered the Bounder, speaking in tones of quiet emphasis. "I've come to take you back to the school."

Beverley-Brooke uttered an imprecation.

"Confound you, Smith!" he said thickly. "It's like your cheek to come bargin' in here!"

"We'll give you ten seconds to put yourself on the other side of that door!" said Ponsonby.

Vernon-Smith stood his ground.

"I haven't walked over to Courtfield merely for the benefit of my health," he said. "I've come to fetch Hazel, and I'm not going back empty-handed."

"How did you know I was here?" demanded Hazeldene.

"Never mind how I came to know. You're a price-less young ass, and you're going the right way to get fired out of Greyfriars! If you've an ounce of common-sense, you'll chuck this sort of thing for good."

"Dashed if I'm going to be dictated to by you, Smith!" flashed Hazeldene, feeling unusually brave in the presence of Beverley-Brooke and the others.

"Good man!" drawled Percy Carfax.

"Don't take any notice of this bounder. He deserves a thunderin' good hidin' for interferin'!"

"An' he'll get one, too!" said Beverley-Brooke, rising to his feet.

Vernon-Smith pushed back his cuffs.

"I'm quite ready," he said.

The next instant a wild and whirling fight was in progress.

Beverley-Brooke had very little knowledge of the noble art. On the other hand, he was a head taller than the Greyfriars junior, and several years his senior. He attacked fiercely, and landed a somewhat lucky blow on his opponent's jaw.

"Splendid, begad!" chortled the Honourable Freddie Stacey. "Go it, Brookie! Dust the floor with the cheeky cad!"

Vernon-Smith reeled from the blow, but he quickly pulled himself together. And now it was his turn to attack. He fought coolly, but forcefully, and Beverley-Brooke retreated a couple of paces, vainly endeavouring to ward off the blows which rained upon him.

"Up till now, the rest of the Good Sports had been content to play the part of spectators. But when they saw that their precious president was getting the worst of the encounter, they swarmed to his assistance.

"Stand back, you cad!" panted Vernon-Smith. "Haven't you any sense of fair play? You're six to one!"

The reply took the form of a mocking laugh.

The Good Sports were in reality very bad sports, for they were not disposed to let Vernon-Smith tackle them one at a time. They made a combined rush at him, and the Bounder's legs were swept from under him, and he went crashing to the floor.

But he was up again like a jack-in-the-box. He stationed himself with his back to the wall, and hit out fiercely.

"Yaroooooh!"

There was a roar of anguish from Beverley-Brooke as the Bounder's fist found a billet on his nose.

The president of the Good Sports was bowled over like a skittle, and the Honourable Freddie Stacey rolled over on top of him.

Vernon-Smith's blood was up now, and he was fighting like a tiger.

But he saw that he must soon be overpowered.

He had nothing to fear from Hazeldene, who was a poor fighting-man. But the other three, who were still on their feet, were attacking him aggressively.

The strain was beginning to tell, and Vernon-Smith realised that in order to get Hazeldene away from the place he would have to resort to some subterfuge.

He was standing near the window, and presently he paused and glanced down into the street. Then an expression of alarm came over his features.

"Oh crumbs!" he gasped. "The police! Hope they don't think I'm a member of his society!"

The words had an electrifying effect upon Beverley-Brooke and the others.

They gathered that the police were about to make a raid on their gambling-den, and they scuttled like frightened rabbits towards the back exit.

As they did so Vernon-Smith sprang at Hazeldene and gripped him by the collar.

"This way!" he panted.

Hazeldene was dragged out of the room and hustled down the wooden staircase.

"Hold on, Smith!" he exclaimed, in terrified tones. "You—you don't want me arrested, do you?"

"You can set your mind at rest," said the Bounder contemptuously. "The police aren't here."

"But—but you said—"

"I had to get you out of this place somehow."

Hazeldene struggled to free himself, but he was helpless in his school-fellow's tenacious grasp.

As the two juniors emerged into the street they were startled by the sound of a fat cluckle close at hand.

"Hi ho, ho! So this is the little game, is it?"

"Bunter!" muttered Hazeldene, turning pale.

And Vernon-Smith bit his lip with annoyance.

Billy Bunter was the last person in the world whom the Bounder wished to encounter at that moment.

The harm which Bunter's wagging tongue might do was incalculable. He had only to breathe a word to one of the masters or prefects to the effect that he had seen Vernon-Smith and Hazeldene coming out of a disreputable gambling-den in Courtfield, and serious results would follow. Whether Vernon-Smith managed to clear himself or not, Hazel would certainly be sacked.

Never had Billy Bunter turned up at such an inopportune moment.

"He, he, he!" cackled the fat junior again. "I really think I shall have to do my duty, you know, and report this to the Head. Can't have Greyfriars fellows going the pace like this! I

thought you'd chucked this sort of game long ago, Smithy?"

"You—you spying toad!" growled the Bounder. "I thought you were in your study, swotting."

"No, I chucked it," explained Billy Bunter. "The strain was too much for my delicate constitution. I should have developed a form of wasting disease if I'd kept on missing my meals. Besides, I've now come to the conclusion that I sha'n't be able to win the governors' exam, and get top of the class, off my own bat."

"What do you mean by that, porpoise?"

"I mean that I want your help," said Bunter calmly.

"What?"

"Help me to become the leading scholar in the Remove," Bunter went on, "and my lips will be sealed concerning what I've just seen."

"You—you blacknailing worm—"

"Oh, really, Smithy? If you call me names like that I shall go to the Head right away! It'll mean the order of the boot for both of you!"

Hazeldene was white to the lips. "Best to humour the fat rotter, Smithy," he muttered in his companion's ear. "If he walks, it'll be all up!"

"Let's split back to the school," said Billy Bunter, "and I'll explain my conditions as we go along."

Vernon-Smith snorted. For two pins he would have rolled the Owl of the Remove in the gutter. But he realised that the only way he could save Hazeldene from disgrace, and Miss Marjorie from grief, was to close with any conditions that Billy Bunter might propound.

The trio set off together in the direction of Greyfriars.

"Now, look here, Smithy," said Billy Bunter, "you're quite a brainy sort of fellow—one of the brainiest in the Remove, in fact—"

"Cut it out!" said the Bounder shortly.

"You could knock spots off Mark Linley and Dick Penfold, if you liked to try," Bunter went on.

"Well?"

"That being so, you'll come in jolly useful to me. You'll be able to help me no end."

"In what way?"

"You sit next to me in class, and you'll be able to prompt me. Whenever Quelch asks me a question you will whisper the answer, without moving your lips or arousing suspicion in any way."

"My hat!"

The Bounder stared blankly at Billy Bunter, who prattled merrily on:

"And when the governors' exam comes off you can sit next to me and put me wise on the various subjects."

"Oh, can I?" growled Vernon-Smith. Bunter nodded.

"Those are my conditions," he said. "I'm out to win the governors' exam, and to get top of the class. If I could do it off my own bat I shouldn't bother you, Smithy. But I'm sick and tired of swotting; and it'll be much more simple, and save me a lot of trouble, if you'll do this prompting stunt." "And supposing I refuse?" said Vernon-Smith.

Billy Bunter shrugged his shoulders significantly.

"I shall go straight to the Head and tell him where you've been this evening," he said.

"And what if we denied it? We would be two against one, and the Head would take our word in preference to your own."

Billy Bunter chuckled.

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he said. "Locked up in my study desk there's a letter written by Hazel to Ponsobey arranging to be at 99, High Street this afternoon."

"What?" shouted Hazeldene. "How did you get hold of that letter?"

"Pon must have dropped it on the road. Anyway, I found it between here and Courfield, and it's safely stowed away in my desk. I've only to show it to the Head, and you'd be kicked out right away!"

Hazeldene groaned. He was in a very tight corner, and he realised that unless Vernon-Smith chose to conform to Bunter's conditions he—Hazel—would be exposed and expelled.

"Give in to him, Smithy!" he muttered pleadingly. "Do what he wants!"

"I will," said the Bounder. "Not for your sake, but for your sister's. She would be awfully cut up if you were fired out—as you deserve to be."

"You'll give me a helping hand in the Form-room?" said Bunter eagerly.

"Yes."

"And you'll help me to win the governors' exam?"

"Yes. But I should like to impress on you that there are two sides to this compact. If I keep my part of it, you must keep yours. If you breathe so much as a whisper about this affair your life won't be worth living!"

"I sha'n't tell a soul," said Bunter—"unless you let me down, that is."

"You needn't have any fears about that. I'll prompt you in the Form-room, and back you up all I know."

"Good!"

"You're a toad and a worm and a blacknailer, and I hate to give in to you? But it's the only way!"

"He, he, he! You know which side your bread's buttered, Smithy!" cackled Bunter.

The trio tramped on in silence.

Vernon-Smith was feeling savage and furious. It was as much as he could do to keep his hands off Billy Bunter. It humiliated him intensely to feel that he was in the fat junior's power.

But he had done the only thing possible. He had consented to Bunter's terms. After his promise to Marjorie Hazeldene, he could do no other.

The task which the Bounder had undertaken to perform was not an easy one. It was risky in the extreme, for Mr. Quelch was as sharp as a needle, and he might speedily discover that Billy Bunter was being prompted in the Form-room.

Still, Vernon-Smith was very astute, and he determined to carry out his share of the compact to the best of his ability in order that Marjorie Hazeldene might be spared the shame of her brother's expulsion.

Whether or not he would carry the thing through successfully remained to be seen.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Billy Bunter Again Astonishes the Natives!

"YOU fellows awake?"

It was Billy Bunter who asked the question.

Eleven had just boomed out from the clock-tower, and the Remove dormitory was in darkness, save for a shaft of moonlight which fell across Bunter's bed.

There was no response to the fat junior's softly-uttered question.

Billy Bunter slipped out of bed, and proceeded to put on his clothes.

As a rule, he was sleeping soundly at this hour. But on this occasion the pangs of hunger had kept him awake.

Bunter had "cut" dinner, and he had

had no tea. And on his return from Courfield with Vernon-Smith and Hazeldene, he had found the tuckshop closed.

The result was that the fat junior was simply ravenous. In vulgar parlance, he could have eaten a donkey's hind leg off.

He had waited until eleven o'clock, and he was now about to pay a visit to the domestic regions, in the hope of finding a rabbit-pie or some similar luxury.

Having donned his clothes, the Owl of the Remove crept stealthily out of the dormitory, and plunged down the dark stairs.

Once or twice he paused and listened.

"The coast is clear," muttered Billy Bunter. "By Jove! I shall faint if I don't have something to eat soon!"

He made his way to the kitchen without mishap.

This was not his first nocturnal expedition of this sort, and he was intimate with the geography of the kitchen. He groped his way to the cupboard, and opened it.

"Ha! This feels good!"

Bunter's fingers had closed over the very thing he sought—a rabbit-pie. He hauled it out and placed it on the table. Then he foraged in the table drawer for a knife and fork, and his jaws were soon clamping vigorously.

"This is prime!" mumbled the fat junior, with his mouth full.

He could not see what he was eating, but this did not detract from his enjoyment of the meal.

Bunter had a big void to fill, and the rabbit-pie grew smaller and smaller, until it finally disappeared altogether.

"That's tons better!" muttered the nocturnal raver. "I feel like a giant refreshed!"

He didn't feel like going back to the dormitory for a few minutes. He didn't feel like exertion of any sort. He dropped into a chair, breathing rather heavily, and soon his head nodded on his chest, and he fell asleep.

Boom!

The first stroke of midnight caused Billy Bunter to sit up with a start. His limbs were stiff and cramped, and he rose and stretched himself.

"Groo! It's jolly cold down here!" he grumbled. "I must have dozed off. Time I got back to bed."

He stumbled out of the kitchen, and mounted the stairs.

On reaching the floor above he received a rude shock.

An electric torch flashed through the gloom, and a stern voice exclaimed:

"Bunter! What is the meaning of this?"

The fat junior gave a gasp of dismay.

A few yards ahead of him stood Mr. Quelch, attired in dressing-gown and slippers.

"Do you hear me, Bunter? What is the meaning of this?"

Inspiration came to Billy Bunter. He blinked drowsily at Mr. Quelch.

"That you, sir? I didn't recognise your voice. I'm just off to bed, sir."

"Where have you been?" demanded the Remove-master gruffly.

"In my study—swotting."

Mr. Quelch's frown at once relaxed.

"You have been working very late, Bunter," he said.

"Yessir. It's necessary, if I'm to win the Governors' Exam. You know what Longfellow said, sir?"

"The heights by great men gained and kept.

Were not attained by sudden flight; But they, while their companions slept,

Were swotting half the blessed night!"

"I am certain that the last line, at any rate, is not Longfellow's," said Mr. Quelch, with a smile.

"I expect I've got it a bit mixed, sir," said Bunter; "but the fact is, I'm dog-tired. I've been working like a nigger, sir."

Mr. Quelch held his electric torch closer to Bunter's face.

"You certainly look rather pale, my boy," he said, little dreaming that Bunter's sickly complexion was due to the consumption of a whole rabbit-pie. "I should advise you not to overdo it. The consequences of over-study are sometimes serious. I should not like to see you develop brain-fever."

"Oh, I shall be all right, sir!" said Billy Bunter confidently. "I simply love studying. It's meat and drink to me, sir."

Mr. Quelch looked hard at the fat junior. It passed his comprehension that Bunter, of all people, should suddenly show a frantic desire to acquire knowledge. The Remove-master regarded it as one of the greatest wonders of modern times.

"I am delighted beyond measure to observe this welcome change in you, Bunter," said Mr. Quelch. "I sincerely trust that you will maintain this spirit of industry, and get away from the bottom place in class. Good-night, my boy!"

"Good-night, sir!"

Billy Bunter drew a deep breath of relief as he mounted the stairs to the Remove dormitory.

"It worked like a charm!" he muttered. "Trust me to be able to wriggle out of a tight corner!"

He endeavoured to enter the dormitory quietly, but he made as much noise as a hippopotamus would have done.

However, the Removites were sleeping soundly, and Bunter's movements did not rouse them.

Five minutes later the fat junior was sleeping the sleep of the unjust.

He was up next morning, not exactly with the lark, but with the rising-bell. And his unusual energy astonished his schoolfellows.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "Bunter's up and doing! I shan't have the pleasure of squeezing a cold sponge over his chivvy!"

"He really seems to be reforming," said Harry Wharton. "Wonders will never cease!"

"I say, you fellows! I mean to set an example to the Form!" said Bunter.

"My hat!"

"I'm going to wash my neck regularly every morning, and turn out at the first clang of the rising-bell."

"Hold me up, somebody!" said Johnny Bull.

"I've been a beastly slacker," said Bunter, as he bent over the wash-basin, "and I'm covered with shame."

"And soapuds!" murmured Skinner.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm going to reform, and be a credit to the Remove," gurgled Bunter, cleansing himself vigorously. "By the time my Uncle Joe arrives, I shall be top of the class. You'll have to look to your laurels, Linty!"

The Lancashire lad smiled.

"If I'm deluged from top place, it won't be by you!" he said.

"To which Billy Bunter replied:

"Wait and see!"

The Removites received a staggering surprise that morning.

When lessons began, Billy Bunter sat in his usual place at the foot of the class. And Vernon-Smith, who had been slack and indolent of late, was bottom but one.

Within half an hour, however, Vernon-Smith had gone up six places. And Billy

Bunter had automatically gone up with him.

When the eleven o'clock break arrived, Bunter and the Bounder were half-way up the class.

Mr. Quelch was amazed, but he had no suspicion that Billy Bunter was receiving assistance.

The juniors were amazed also; and they, too—with the exception of Vernon-Smith and Hazeldene—had no notion that the thing was being "wangled."

When lessons were resumed, the class was examined on the subject of English poetry.

"Now, Bunter," said Mr. Quelch, "who wrote 'The Charge of the Light Brigade'?"

"Tennyson," whispered Vernon-Smith, scarcely moving his lips.

"Tennyson, sir," answered Billy Bunter promptly.

There was only one topic of conversation in the Remove that day—Billy Bunter's amazing reform.

Harry Wharton & Co. were simply thunderstruck.

"The fat bounder must have been spoofing us all the time!" said Frank Nugent. "He's been pretending he's awfully ignorant, when all the time he's as brainy as—"

"Ourselves?" suggested Johnny Bull.

"Exactly!"

The juniors were surprised. They were staggered. But when Wednesday morning came, they were paralysed!

For William George Bunter, who had always given his schoolfellows the impression that he had a head full of saw-dust, was top of the class. Not second, or third—but first—ahead of every other fellow in the Form.



"Carry on, sir," said Uncle Joseph. "Give it to him hot. The young rascal! He has deceived his Form-master; he has deceived me; he has deceived everybody. You will oblige me by laying it on thick!" And the Head commenced to lay it on thick. (See Chapter 8.)

"Very good," said Mr. Quelch. "Where did that historic charge take place?"

"Balaclava," whispered Vernon-Smith.

"Balaclava, sir," answered Billy Bunter.

And so the amazing "wangle" continued, until Billy Bunter found himself eighth from the top, while Vernon-Smith was seventh.

The Bounder had had a difficult part to play, but he had played it well.

Before dismissing the class, Mr. Quelch publicly congratulated Billy Bunter upon the excellent progress he had made.

"I confess I am astonished, Bunter!" he said. "At the same time, I am delighted that a boy who has hitherto been a dunce and a dullard, should get out of the rut. I hope this splendid progress will continue."

And Billy Bunter beamed cheerfully and triumphantly at his schoolfellows.

It was amazing—it was incredible!

Such a thing had never happened before. The brainy men of the Remove—Lintley and Penfold and Harry Wharton—had been outstripped by Billy Bunter!

Vernon-Smith had had to work very hard, and very discreetly, to bring about Bunter's promotion to top place. More than once he had come within an ace of being detected, but fortune had favoured him.

Lessons finished at ten-thirty on Wednesday morning. There was to be a break of half-an-hour, and then the governors' examination would take place.

Mr. Quelch gave the word of dismissal, and the Removites trooped out of the Form-room, with dazed expressions on their faces.

"Do I dream, do I wonder and THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 694.

doubt?" said Bob Cherry. "Is things what they seem, or is visions about?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The age of miracles has come back," said Peter Todd. "Bunter's top of the class. Bunter! It-it fairly beats the band!"

Mark Linley was looking very grim. "We shall have to regard Bunter as a really serious rival in the governors' exam," he said. "A fellow who is clever enough to get to the top of the class is clever enough to pull off an exam."

"Yes, rather!"

"Come along, you fellows!" said Harry Wharton. "We've half-an-hour to kill. Let's punt a footer about in the Close."

"Good wheeze!"

"Going to join us, Smithy?" asked Frank Nugent, as the Bouncer came along the passage.

"Yes, rather!"

After his strenuous ordeal in the Form-room, Vernon-Smith felt the need of a spell of exercise.

"Let's have sides," suggested Dick Penfold. "Wharton's team versus Smithy's!"

"Ripping!"

It was arranged that the door of the tuckshop should comprise one of the goals, and one of the school gates the other.

Vernon-Smith spun a coin, and Harry Wharton called—correctly.

"We'll kick towards the tuckshop!" he said, with a grin.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The next moment the fun raged fast and furious. And the Close was the scene of one of the most novel football matches ever played at Greyfriars.

It was also destined to be one of the most tragic!

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER. The Fall of the Mighty!

"ON the ball!"

"Go it, ye cripples!"

The footballers were urged on by a cheering crowd.

Harry Wharton gained possession, and he sped away like a hare. His goal was the wide door of the school tuckshop.

"Go it, Wharton!"

"Shoot, man!"

Bulstrode, who was on Vernon-Smith's side, was defending the tuckshop door. He was a clever and resourceful goalie, but he had no chance with the shot that Harry Wharton fired in.

The muddy ball whizzed over Bulstrode's shoulder, and crashed against the door with a sounding impact.

"Goal!"

"Hurrah!"

"Bravo, Wharton!"

For a long time the ball hovered about in the centre of the Close, neither side being able to obtain an advantage.

Ten minutes passed, and Vernon-Smith's team was still a goal to the bad.

"Something will have to be done about this!" panted the Bouncer. "We shall have to pull up our socks!"

Shortly afterwards Dick Penfold, muddy and breathless, emerged from a sort of scrum, with the ball at his feet.

"Pass!" rapped out the Bouncer.

Penfold swung across a beautiful pass, and away went Vernon-Smith, like a champion of the cinder-path.

Opponents loomed up in his path, but he cleverly eluded one after the other. And now he had only the goalie to beat.

The school-gate was being guarded by Mark Linley. He saw the Bouncer coming, and he rushed out to meet him.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 684.

Vernon-Smith saw the danger, and he put on a terrific spurt.

"Shoot, Smithy!"

The ball whizzed in like a pip from an orange, and crashed against the bars of the gate.

"Goal!"

A mighty roar of applause went up, but it subsided almost as soon as it began. And a sudden hush fell upon the assembled juniors.

Vernon-Smith had scored all right. But his magnificent solo effort had cost him dear. He had been running so hard that he was quite unable to pull up in time. The result was that he crashed into one of the stone pillars of the gateway, and then collapsed, in a huddled heap, to the ground.

Mark Linley was at the Bouncer's side in a twinkling. He bent over the fallen junior, and his face was very grave.

"He's unconscious," he said, as Harry Wharton & Co. came running up. "His forehead struck the pillar. Look! There's a tremendous bump forming already!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Poor old Smithy!"

Bob Cherry dashed into Goaling's lodge, returning a moment later with a cup of water. He dashed the water into Vernon-Smith's face, and the Bouncer revived. He sat up, and passed his hand across his forehead in a dazed sort of way.

"By Jove!" he murmured. "Has an earthquake happened, or what?"

"You came a nasty cropper," said Harry Wharton. "You'll have a bump the size of a pigeon's head on your forehead. Does it hurt?"

"Like fury!"

"We'd better get him along to the sanny," said Nugent.

"No, no!" protested Vernon-Smith.

"I mustn't miss the governors' exam!"

"But, my dear fellow, you're not fit to take part in any sort of exam!" said Harry Wharton. "You're badly crooked, and—there you are, you see! You can't stand!"

Vernon-Smith had risen to his feet, but he swayed, and would have fallen had not Mark Linley reached out an arm to support him.

"I—I shall be all right in a jiffy!" muttered the Bouncer.

"Rats! You'll have to see the matron and perhaps the doctor," said Bob

Cherry. "As for the governors' exam, you'll have to give it a miss."

Vernon-Smith groaned.

"Surely it won't be a frightful hardship!" said Nugent. "You weren't crazy keen on winning the exam, were you?"

"Not exactly. But—"

"Come along!" said Wharton firmly.

"It's not a bit of use you turning up in the Form-room. Queelch would only order you off to the sanny."

The captain of the Remove took one of Vernon-Smith's arms and Bob Cherry took the other. And in this way the Bouncer was piloted to the sanatorium.

The matron, judging the injury to be rather serious, put the junior to bed, and summoned the doctor.

Billy Bunter, who had not been present at the football-match, knew nothing of the mishap to Vernon-Smith.

The fat junior was all smiles when the bell rang, summoning the candidates to take their places in the Form-room.

As he rolled into the room with the rest of the fellows, Billy Bunter blinked round for Vernon-Smith. And the smile suddenly faded from his face.

"Where's Smithy?" he asked.

"Croaked!" said Peter Todd tersely.

"Eh?"

"He came a cropper just now, playing footer, and he's been taken to the sanny."

"Oh crumbs!"

Billy Bunter recoiled as if he had received a stunning blow.

Vernon-Smith was absent! And the Owl of the Remove would have to tackle the examination alone and unaided.

Bunter tottered towards his seat. His head was in a whirl. Without the assistance of his prompter he would be all at sea. He would be unable to answer even the simplest questions that were set before him.

The fat junior's cherished hopes of winning the governors' exam vanished into thin air. He looked the picture of misery as he dropped into his seat.

"What's up, porpoise?" whispered Peter Todd.

"Ow! I—I feel quite ill!"

"Serves you jolly well right for over-stuffing!" was Peter's unsympathetic comment.

Mr. Queelch rapped on the desk for silence. Then he personally distributed the examination papers.

"You may begin, my boys," he said, looking at his watch. "The first subject is, as you will see, English poetry. The time allowed for answering the questions goes on one hour."

Billy Bunter gave a hollow grin. The sound echoed through the Form-room.

Mr. Queelch looked up sharply.

"Bunter!" he exclaimed.

"Yessir!"

"Why did you make that ridiculous articulation?"

"Ow! I feel faint, sir!"

The Remove-master looked grave.

"I told you what would happen, Bunter, if you persisted in studying to excess. You have only yourself to blame. But try and pull yourself together and proceed with your work."

Then came an interval of silence, save for the steady scratching of pens, as the competitors tackled their task.

At the end of five minutes Billy Bunter rose in his place.

"Well, Bunter?" said Mr. Queelch.

"I—I can't go on, sir," stammered the fat junior. "I'm feeling worse every minute! I've got shooting, stabbing pains all over me, sir, as if I'm being licked by about a dozen masters at once!"

There was a titter from the rest of the juniors.

"I'd like to be relieved from taking



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part in the exam, sir, if you don't mind," Bunter went on. "May I leave the Form-room, sir?"

Billy Bunter seemed so eager and flustered that Mr. Quelch became suspicious.

"You will remain where you are, Bunter," he said.

"But I'm ill, sir, seriously ill! I've got a touch of lumbago, and I'm doubled up with what those aviator fellows get, sky-attica, I believe it's called!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!" thundered Mr. Quelch. "I am afraid I cannot accept your statements, Bunter. However, you shall be given a fair chance of proving your assertion. Dr. Short, of Friarade, is at the school. He has been summoned to see Vernon-Smith, and I will get him to examine you."

"Oh, rumbus!"

Mr. Quelch rang a bell, and Trotter, the page, appeared.

"Ask Dr. Short if he will be good enough to come and see me," said the Form-master.

"Werry good, sir."

The medical man arrived a few moments later.

"Good-morning, doctor!" said Mr. Quelch. "I wish you to take Bunter along to the sanatorium and examine him, with a view to ascertaining if he is sufficiently well to sit for an examination."

The doctor nodded, and beckoned to Billy Bunter.

"This way, my boy!" he said.

The fat junior followed reluctantly in the wake of Dr. Short.

After a brief absence he returned, accompanied by the doctor.

"I have thoroughly examined this boy, sir," said Dr. Short, "and I find that he is physically and organically sound. There is a tendency to obesity, but apart from that Bunter is in perfect health. There is certainly no reason why he should not take part in an examination."

"Thank you, doctor!" said Mr. Quelch.

The medico smiled and withdrew. And Billy Bunter was ordered to resume his seat.

These country practitioners are no good, sir!" he grumbled. "They don't know their jobs. I'm suffering awful agony, sir!"

"Be silent, Bunter!"

"But I'm in pain, sir!" persisted the fat junior. "Every time I look you in the face I feel quite ill!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Quelch had great difficulty in subduing the merriment which followed Billy Bunter's tactless remark.

"If you utter another word, Bunter," he thundered, "I shall cane you!"

"Oh crumbs!"

Fortunately Mr. Quelch failed to hear Bunter's muttered ejaculation.

The unhappy Owl darted a wild glance round the Form-room. But there was no possible avenue of escape. The plea of illness had failed, and there was nothing for it but to go through the ordeal of trying to answer questions which appeared like so many Chinese puzzles.

Billy Bunter had a sheet of foolscap in front of him, but it was blank. At the end of half an hour it was still blank.

The perspiration stood out in beads on Bunter's brow. And his mind was filled with gloomy forebodings.

At last, in desperation, he nudged Peter Todd, who sat next to him.

Peter looked up irritably.

"I say, Toddy, who wrote 'The Lay of the Last Minstrel'?"

No answer.

"Well, me, Toddy, for goodness' sake! I—I'm fairly stumped!"

"Dry up, you fat duffer!" hissed Peter Todd. "Quelch will hear you in a minute!"

"Oh, really— Be a sport, Toddy! Lend me your paper, so that I can copy out the answers!"

Peter Todd gave a gasp. He could not understand why Bunter, who had made such rapid strides of late, should appeal to him for information. And he had no intention of giving Bunter his assistance.

"Dry up, porpoise!" he muttered.

"But I want you to help me—"

"Nothing doing!"

Billy Bunter was in deep despair by this time. And then he caught sight of Mark Linley seated directly in front of him.

If only he could steal a glance over Mark's shoulder!

With this object in view, the fat junior slipped down from his seat, and attempted to squirm his way underneath the desk.

Mr. Quelch glanced to look up at that moment. He leaned towards the place where Bunter ought to have been, but where Bunter was not.

"Bless my soul! Where is Bunter?"

"Yaroooooh!"

A piercing yell rang through the Form-room.

"I've located him, sir," said Bob Cherry, with a grin.

"Yow! Cherry, you rotter, you kicked me in the face!"

"Bunter!" roared Mr. Quelch. "How dare you grovel on the floor in that manner? Get up at once!"

The grimy face and dusty hair of Billy Bunter bobbed up above the desk.

"Why were you crawling about underneath the desk, Bunter?" demanded Mr. Quelch.

"Ahem! My—my bootlace came untied, sir, and I stooped down to do it up."

"Get on with your work, and do not let me have to speak to you again!"

Billy Bunter turned his attention to the examination-papers. He wrote down random answers to the questions that were set, and trusted to luck that he would get them correct.

The papers were collected at length, and a fresh lot distributed.

This time the subject was history.

Among other things, an essay had to be written dealing with the Tudor period. Billy Bunter knew as much about the Tudors as he did about the inhabitants of Mars. But he made some sort of a show, again trusting to the elusive imp known as Luck.

Science and mathematics followed history, and Billy Bunter was completely fogged. He would have given all his worldly possessions—they were not numerous—for Vernon-Smith to be at his elbow.

But the Bounder was in the sanny, and the Owl of the Remove was thrown upon his own resources.

The examination came to an end at last, and the competitors, feeling unusually fagged after their ordeal, trooped out into the bright spring sunshine.

The next two hours were like a nightmare to William George Bunter.

He knew in his heart that he had put up a shocking performance—a performance that would have disgraced a Second Form fag. He had no hope whatever of being in the first flight of successful competitors. And yet he spoke and acted as if he had beaten all comers.

The other candidates were in a state of suspense, but Billy Bunter was suffering absolute torture.

At last a bell rang, summoning the candidates to the Remove Form-room, where they would learn their fate.

"Now we shall see what we shall see!" said Bob Cherry.

The Head himself swept into the room, with a sheet of paper in his hand.

There was no need for Dr. Locke to command silence. The juniors were all attention.

"My boys," began the Head, "the checking of the examination-papers is now complete, and the results have been duly tabulated."

Billy Bunter licked his dry lips. He dreaded what was to follow.

"Upon the whole," continued the Head, "the results are very satisfactory. Out of a possible 250 marks the winner has gained 244. Mark Linley, I congratulate you upon attaining top place!"

The news was out now, and a cheer went up on Mark Linley's behalf—a ringing, rousing cheer, for the Lancashire lad was justly popular with his schoolfellows. "Second on the list," said the Head, when the applause had died away, "is Harry Wharton, with 241 marks. Then come Richard Penfold and Peter Todd, bracketed together with 240 marks each. Frank Nugent comes next, followed in turn by John Bell, Donald Ogilvy, Robert Cherry, and Michael Desmond."

"Also ran—W. G. Bunter!" murmured Bob Cherry.

Further names were read out, but Billy Bunter's was not among them.

Hazelene, Morgan, Kipps, Wibley, Newland—everybody, it seemed, but Bunter.

Never had the fat junior felt so decidedly uncomfortable. He was forcibly wishing that the floor would open and swallow him up.

Presently the Head said:

"I regret, my boys, that the examination has been marred to some extent by the entry of a practical joker. I refer to William Bunter. Although I understand that he is top of his class, he has chosen to regard the Governors' Examination as an outlet for his humor. He has written down the most ridiculous answers to the questions given, and in some cases he has given no answers at all. The total number of marks this wretched boy has obtained is 12."

There was a gasp of amazement from the Removites. Some of them had expected Bunter to fare badly, despite his recent improvement in the class. But no one had expected him to fare so badly as this.

As for the fat junior himself, he sat as if turned to stone.

He had scored twelve marks out of a possible 250!

The Head's brow was very stern. His gaze was focussed upon Billy Bunter, who was quivering like a fat jellyfish in his agitation.

"Now, Bunter," thundered Dr. Locke, "I demand an explanation immediately. And unless you can render me a satisfactory one you will be punished with the utmost severity!"

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

The Woes of a Junior "Wangler!"

BILLY BUNTER tottered to his feet.

The fat junior's complexion was a sickly yellow.

"I—I—," he stammered.

The Head frowned.

"Am I to understand, Bunter," exclaimed the Head, "that your failure was due to ignorance?"

"Yes, that's it, sir," said Bunter eagerly. "I'm fearfully ignorant, sir. It's a sort of deformity with me. I've been like it from birth, sir."

"In that case, how comes it that you are top of your class?"

"Well, it's like this, sir," said Billy Bunter, growing very confused. "I should have won the exam hands down if Smithy hadn't been such a duffer as to go and get crooked!"

"Are you suggesting that Smith would have helped you, Bunter?"

"That's it, sir! He's an awfully brainy fellow, and he can whisper things without moving his lips, sir. He kept his part of the bargain quite well, and then he goes and crooks up!"

Billy Bunter paused. He was afraid he had said too much.

The Head looked thunderstruck.

"Am I to understand, Bunter, that you and Smith had some mutual arrangement whereby he was to help you to become top of your class and to win the Governors' Examination?"

"Yesir—I mean, no, sir—that is to say, I don't know, sir!"

Dr. Locke's frown at that moment was even more impressive than the celebrated frown of Napoleon Bonaparte.

Billy Bunter was getting deeper and deeper in the mire. He was so confused and bewildered that he scarcely knew what he was saying.

Hazeldene of the Remove was looking pale and uneasy. He realised that in a few moments Bunter would break down completely before the Head's cross-examination, and he compelled to tell the truth.

Hazel did not wait for this to happen. A momentary struggle went on in his mind. Then he rose to his feet.

"Well, Hazeldene," said the Head sharply.

"I can tell you all about this, sir," said the junior, speaking in faltering tones, but gaining courage as he proceeded. "Vernon-Smith certainly helped Bunter to get top of the class, but he did it to save me!"

There was a buzz of amazement in the Remove Form-room.

"Are you talking in riddles, Hazeldene?" said the Head. "You say that Smith saved you?"

"Yes, sir."

"Frost what?"

And then Hazel explained everything. He made a clean breast of his folly, and he did not spare himself. He told the Head of his adventures with the Good Sports in Courtfield, and he described how Vernon-Smith had visited the society's headquarters and got him away. He then revealed the nature of the contact which had been formed between Vernon-Smith and Billy Bunter.

The Head sat spellbound whilst Hazeldene made his confession.

As for Harry Wharton & Co., their amazement knew no bounds. They understood now how Billy Bunter had contrived to get to the top of the class. They understood, also, the reason for his signal failure in the Governors' Exam. Without Vernon-Smith's help he had been utterly helpless.

Hazeldene was looking very downcast when he came to the end of his confession. He felt certain that he would be "sacked."

But it was a day of surprises.

"I am astounded at what you have told me, Hazeldene," said the Head. "The whole situation is made clear by your confession. I trust you have abandoned your folly?"

"Absolutely, sir," said Hazeldene. "I'm sick of the whole wretched business. I vowed the other day, after Smith

had got me away from that—that place, that I'd never go there again."

"You have acted very wrongly," said Dr. Locke. "You have violated one of the most stringent rules of this school. On the other hand, you have made a full and frank confession, and, in these circumstances, I feel disposed to give you another chance."

The words were like music in Hazel's ear. He could scarcely credit his good fortune. He had expected marching orders, but his confession had saved him.

"Although it is not my intention to expel you, Hazeldene," said the Head. "I cannot allow your conduct to go unpunished. You will remain within gates for a week."

"Thank you, sir!"

"Bunter!" thundered the Head.

"Ow! Yesir!"

"I consider you have acted outrageously!"

"Oh, really, sir—"

"Your conduct has been most despicable! In the first instance, you have blackmailed Vernon-Smith; and, secondly, you grossly deceived your Form-master by pretending to have knowledge which in reality you did not possess."

"Oh, crumbs! It was all Smith's fault, sir!"

"It was not Smith's fault at all. He acted from a desire to save Hazeldene from getting into serious trouble. It is you, Bunter who are most to blame in this matter, and I intend to deal severely with you. I will administer condign punishment here and now. Wharton would you be good enough to fetch the birch-rod from my study?"

Harry Wharton returned with the birch-rod, and the Owl of the Remove was ordered to place himself in a convenient position over one of the desks.

The next moment piercing yells rang through the Form-room.

Dr. Locke was just getting his hand in, so to speak, when the door opened, and a portly gentleman, with a round, red face, puffed his way into the room.

"Good gracious!" he exclaimed, confronting the Head. "Why is my nephew being chastised in this manner, sir?"

Dr. Locke paused.

"I have not the pleasure of your acquaintance, sir. Are you Bunter's uncle?"

"I am."

"Then I must inform you that your nephew has been guilty of the most heinous conduct!"

The Head then explained what Billy Bunter had done, and Uncle Joseph heartily agreed that his nephew merited a severe flogging.

"Carry on, sir!" he said. "Give it to him hot! The young rascal! He has deceived his Form-master; he has deceived me; he has deceived everybody! You will oblige me by laying it on, sir!"

The Head did. And the victim was gasping and groaning piteously by the time the ordeal was over.

Billy Bunter got no sympathy either from his uncle or from his schoolfellows.

Uncle Joe made a great fuss of Sammy Bunter and "tipped" him liberally. But William George was left out in the cold, and he had no reason to look back with pleasure upon his uncle's visit to Greyfriars.

And the next day, when Vernon-Smith was released from the Sanny, he found everybody excitedly discussing the misadventures which had befallen Bunter the Swot.

THE END.

EDITOR'S CHAT.

Write to me if you want any help, boys and girls.

FOR NEXT MONDAY

We have a magnificent complete school story of Harry Wharton & Co., entitled,

"RIVALS OF THE RIVER!"

By Frank Richards.

Everybody at Greyfriars is interested at this time in boat-racing, but no one for a moment dreams that Sir Hilton Popper, the peppery baronet who has so often brought trouble to Removites, is also keen on the sport. Great is their surprise, therefore, when Sir Hilton offers a silver challenge bowl to be competed for on the River Sark!

Owing to the fact that Sir Hilton intends leaving the district for a few weeks' holiday, two races have to be decided in the course of a few days. The Remove, Upper Fourth, and the Fifth compete, and the

"RIVALS OF THE RIVER"

put up a great show. Dicky Nugent, the hero of the Third Form at Greyfriars, plays a prominent part in the races, and is highly praised by juniors and seniors alike. All my chums will thoroughly enjoy reading this splendid story, and will sympathise with Harry Wharton when they read of the predicament in which he is placed—all on account of Sir Hilton Popper's dislike of trespassers on his land.

THE "GREYFRIARS HERALD" SUPPLEMENT.

There will also be another grand four-page supplement in our next issue, and will, as usual, be packed full of fun and fiction contributed by the boys of Greyfriars. Billy Bunter has his wack, too, so my chums can prepare themselves for a real hearty laugh.

Altogether, next Monday's issue of the MAGNET LIBRARY is one that will be remembered for many weeks, so don't be disappointed. Order your copy in advance!

Correspondence.

Miss Isabel Thorn, 71, Green Street, North End, Port Elizabeth, South Africa, wishes to correspond with girl readers about seventeen years of age.

A. J. Laurentz, Goldschneider Villa, De Aar, Cape Colony, South Africa, wishes to hear from readers of the Companion Papers in England.

Edgar Lockyer, 175, Newtown Row, Birmingham, wishes to correspond with Colonial and foreign readers interested in stamp-collecting. All letters answered.

Amateur Journalism.

All those interested in the above fascinating hobby, and wishing to become better acquainted with it, should communicate with R. Le Cocq, 26, Richmond Road, Worthing, Sussex, who would gladly give all particulars desired, provided a properly stamped addressed envelope is enclosed with all inquiries.

Your Editor

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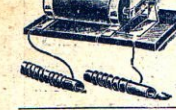
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