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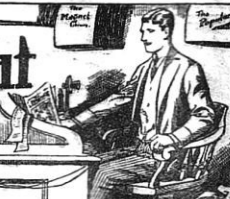
THRILLING INCIDENTS FROM "THE SKIPPER'S BAT!"

(A Splendid Story of Greyfriars School in this issue.)

The Editor's Chat



Address all your letters to:
The Editor, "The Magnet Library,"
The Fleetway House, Farringdon St., London, E.C.4.
I am always pleased to hear from my chums.

FOR NEXT MONDAY.

The title of the long complete tale of Harry Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars for next week will be

"THE SOCIETY FOR THE REFORMING OF BILLY BUNTER!"

By Frank Richards.

As the title of the story suggests, Billy Bunter, the fat junior of Greyfriars, is again very much to the fore. The Society consists of a few fellows, who, under the leadership of the energetic Bob Cherry, the slacker's greatest enemy, decide to reform Bunter and make him a "little gentleman." The majority of the Remove are of the opinion that it will be a waste of time and energy, but the Society sticks to its guns and commences its operations on the Owl of the Remove in a very enthusiastic manner. Billy Bunter protests, but is not heeded. By the end of the first day there is a change seen in the Porpoise, which is remarked upon with some surprise on the part of the disbelievers.

To all appearances Bunter falls in with the plans of the reformers, but that he has much chance to do otherwise; but inwardly he is worrying his brain for some plan whereby he can escape from "their cruel clutches," to use his own expression.

At last he alights on a plan, and the next day disappears from the school. What happens to him, and the events which follow, you will be able to read about in next week's story. Do not miss it!

As usual, there will follow

"THE GREYFRIARS HERALD"

Supplement, crammed full of bright and breezy stories and articles written and compiled by the chums of Greyfriars. It will be a SPECIAL MASTERS' NUMBER, and will contain contributions from the Head, Mr. Prout, Mr. Quelch, and other masters of the school. I can safely say that it is the best issue of the "Herald" we have had so far, and I warn my chums that unless they order next week's issue in advance, they stand a chance of missing this splendid treat.

OUR COMPANION PAPER.

I cannot close this Chat without reminding you that our grand companion paper, the "Popular," is on sale every Friday morning. There are two grand school stories, one about Greyfriars and the other about Rookwood.

Billy Bunter places before you his famous "Weekly," in which there is a host of stories and articles which will send you into roars of laughter. Then there will be the Weekly Popleta Competition, in which I am offering ten splendid money prizes, and lastly another thrilling instalment of the popular cinema serial, "The Dare-devil Schoolboy!" Altogether there is a treat in store which is too good to miss, so I advise my chums to go straight to their newsagents and put in an order for the "Popular" right away.

Correspondence.

William Pennel, 59, Main Avenue, De Aar, Cape Province, South Africa, wishes to correspond with readers, 15-16.

Thomas McIntosh, Bellambi, Illawarra Line, N.S.W., Australia, wishes to hear from readers interested in the stage, also in postcard views and wild flowers.

Gordon A. Chenell, 30, Verdun Street, North Kensington, Adelaide, South Australia, wishes to correspond with readers, ages 15 upwards.

C. F. Reed, 68 Sprules Road, Brockley, S.E.4, wishes to hear from amateur writers who would contribute school, cricket, detective, and humorous stories, also poetry, etc., to his amateur magazine, the "Champion."

Lewis Levi (Scout), 34, Chilton Street, St. Pancras, N.W.1, would like to hear from readers interested in stamps and in the Boy Scouts. All letters answered.

Miss D. Hawkins, 22, Elmsleigh Road, Weston-super-Mare, wishes to correspond with readers, ages 15-19.

J. Mas, Busselton, Western Australia, wishes to correspond with readers anywhere.

W. H. Duncan, 25, Beechfield Street, Cheetham Hill, Manchester, wishes to correspond with readers abroad, 14-16; all letters answered.

Miss Myrtle Redman, Clyde Street, Maclean, N.S.W., Australia, wishes to correspond with readers.

Pte. J. McAdam, 3122447, Fire Station, Longmoor Camp, Hants, wishes to correspond with MAGNET readers.

W. T. Jaggers 105, High Street, Battersea, S.W.11, wishes to hear from readers interested in his correspondence exchange, which covers cricket, amateur editing and photography.

Miss Joan Dumaresq, Eden Berry House, Duckenfield Park, Morpeth, N.S.W., Australia, wishes to correspond with readers keen on the Navy.

Stanley G. Kitchell, 21, Westhamplett Road, Chichester, Sussex, wishes to hear from reade's re his correspondence club, of which there are members in Holland and the Colonies.

Your Editor.

The Skipper's Bat!

A Magnificent, Long, Complete School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co., at Greyfriars.

By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Wingate in Form!

"MY hat! Old Wingate's going it some!" remarked Harry Wharton.

The Famous Five of the Remove at Greyfriars were performing an act of great condescension.

They had actually given up an afternoon's cricket on their own account to watch a school game.

It was true that it was an extra special game. Never before had Greyfriars met a M.C.C. side, though the great club annually sends teams to many schools of no more importance—of less importance, indeed, as any loyal Greyfriars fellow would have assured you.

The premier club had paid Greyfriars the compliment of sending along quite a strong side, too. Nolts chanced to have no match on, and among the M.C.C. pros. were little Hardstaff and the veteran stumper Oates. Then there was old Jack Hearne—so-called, not because he looks old, but to distinguish him from young Jack, the crack of to-day. Old Jack has lost something of the bowling powers that enabled him to take more wickets in first-class cricket during his long career than any other bowler except Wilfred Rhodes has ever done; but he is still a pretty good man for school batsmen to face. So is Welder, not so very long ago Kent's fast bowler. With these four were seven amateurs; three of them well over forty, but still able to get them, and four of them well under twenty-five, and hard hitters.

But Greyfriars had got out that hefty team for 167, Wingate, Gwynne, and Faulkner all bowling well, and the whole side fielding splendidly. Walker, in the long-field, had taken Hardstaff a fine style off a big hit. Loder, in the slips, had held one from John Gunn that he might well have been excused for dropping. Wingate had been responsible for two beautiful c. & b's.

After that three Greyfriars wickets had gone for only 10. Hearne taking them all. Then Wingate, who had been one of the first pair in, had been joined by Gwynne, and those two had made a capital stand.

"Gwynno's scoring just as fast," returned Frank Nugent.

"But not batting half as well," said Johnny Bull. "He's been missed twice, and he didn't know anything worth mentioning about several balls that very nearly had him."

"Old Wingate's in great form," Bob Cherry said. "Do you know, you chaps, he says it's all his bat? I think I shall get one of the same make, if I can scrape up what Fishy calls the necessary spondulics."

"You may get the bat. You won't get the runs," replied Johnny oracularly.

"I don't know. There is something in a really first-class piece of willow," said Harry.

"But there's a lot more in a first-class batsman," answered Johnny.

"Wingate could get 'em with a broomstick in his present form," Frank said.

"There's the 100 up!" exclaimed Harry. "Good going! They haven't been much over an hour getting them."

The Famous Five were enjoying themselves. Inky had contributed to the afternoon's entertainment a large box of mixed sweets—chocolates of many kinds in gilt and silvered papers, toffee, peppermint creams, and various other sorts. They had a bench all to themselves in a comfortable corner on Big Side. Greyfriars was showing up finely, and Wingate, whom they all admired and liked, was playing a great game.

Billy Bunter came rolling up. Bunter did not look like a vulture, for those horrible birds have a scraggy appearance, and no one could accuse William George of scragginess.

But even as the vulture scents out carrion from afar, so did Bunter seem to be able to scent out anything good to eat; and, though Bunter's taste in food was choicer than that of the bird of prey, his greed was no less great.

"I say, you fellows——"

"Roll on, thou deep and dark blue porpoise, roll!" Bob interrupted him.

"As Byron might have said if he'd thought of what was in the sea, instead of the ocean itself," he added.

"Bunter isn't dark blue; he's a sort of dirty yellow," said Frank.

"Oh, stop talking rot, Nugent, do!" protested the porpoise plaintively. "Move up a bit, and let a fellow sit down."

"It's no good my moving up, unless I move up far enough to shove Harry and Bob and Inky off the other end. This bench takes five ordinary members of the Remove; but at least three of them would have to be removed to make room for the incubus of the Form."

"Well, I can sit on the grass. It's quite dry, and I don't mind making myself agreeable," said Bunter. "I could do with a chocolate or two, Harry, old pal. You might pass the box."

"Hallo! There's Gwynno out!" exclaimed Harry, taking no notice of the fat junior's request.

"I say, gimme a chocolate, Cherry!" answered Bunter, taking no notice of the Irish senior's departure.

Cricket meant nothing to Bunter. He could not have told anyone what M.C.C. meant.

"They're Inky's!" said Bob, clapping lustily as Gwynne broke into a run, making for the pavilion, bare-headed, amidst plaudits from all round the ground.

"Well, what does that matter? Inky's one of my best pals."

"The jolldtfulness of the other dear and esteemed pals must be terrific, if I am one of the best, Bunter," said Inky. "The sightfulness of your ludicrous and disgusting dial makes the acute painfulness in my interior arrangements."

"Open your potato-trap, Bunter!" said Johnny Bull.

Bunter, seated on the grass at the end of the bench, did as he was bid, exposing an orifice that could hardly be missed at that distance.

Johnny chucked a peppermint into it, and the Owl bolted it at a gulp, and gaped for another, like a fat young fledgling in a nest.

A chocolate-cream followed. That went the same way.

"Stop it, Johnny!" said Harry, wrinkling his brows. "It's disgusting that any fellow should be such a pig, and you're only pandering to him."

"Here's Loder coming in," remarked Bob. "And I must say he's taken long enough about it! Jolly sight more than the two minutes allowed."

"Shut your eyes, Porpoise!" commanded Johnny, paying no heed to Harry's protest.

Bunter shut his eyes. Johnny picked up a pebble—though how a pebble came to be on the carefully tended turf of Big Side at Greyfriars was a mystery. The groundman would have had a fit if he had discovered one within ten yards of the pitch.

"Don't!" snapped Harry, catching at Johnny's arm. "You might choke the greedy rotter!"

"Mind your own bizney, Wharton!" said Bunter. "I don't mind being choked that way, let me tell you."

"Right-ho!" exclaimed Johnny Bull.

He lobbed the pebble. But it hit Bunter on the fat little nose instead of getting rooted in the slit below.

"There! I lost that one!" burbled Bunter, opening his eyes and blinking round him through his big glasses for the supposed lost chocolate.

"Loder's out!" cried Bob.

"Where's it gone?" asked Bunter anxiously.

"Can't say I'm sorry!" growled Johnny.

"Well, it was a bad shot, and it might have broken my glasses," said Bunter. "As it didn't, there's nothing to be very sorry about. You can chuck me another. I'll open my mouth. Don't take any notice of Wharton. They're not his choes, anyway. And there are plenty of pigs about besides me. I could mention one or two."

"Look at Loder!" said Frank Nugent. "Blessed bad form, I call it, to go out slashing with his bat like that, as though he'd like to knock the bowler's head off!"

It was bad form, undoubtedly. But the bowler, who was Jack Hearne, paid no heed, and Wingate, though he frowned for a moment, brightened the next moment. For the Greyfriars skipper did not care for Loder as a partner —Loder, who might have been a fine cricketer but actually was only a moderate one, because he put so many other things before the game, was not to be trusted not to run a fellow out if he happened to dislike him. And it was something much stronger than dislike Loder felt for George Wingate.

Blundell of the Fifth succeeded Loder at the wicket. Skinner came up to the Famous Five and Bunter.

Now the Famous Five barred Skinner as completely as Wingate barred Loder. As for Bunter, he did not bar Skinner, not having enough discrimination; but it would have been better for him had he done so.

"Hallo, Skinney!" he said. "Thought you never bothered about watching cricket. Come and sit down here with me. Inky's got some ripping choes. Pass those choes along here, you fellows, will you?"

"The answer is in the negative," replied Frank.

"Oh, don't be mean, Nugent—especially with another chap's choes! Do you grudge Skinney one?"

"Practise the selfhelpfulness, Skinner," said good-natured Inky, extending the box.

"But don't let the box get near Bunter," added Bob.

Skinner, rather surprised, took a couple of chocolates, and sat down on the grass, but not by Bunter.

"My hat!" he ejaculated, as Wingate made another slashing drive to the boundary. "I'm beginning to think that there's something in what Wingate says about that bat of his. Jolly like magic, I call it."

"You'd better get one of the same make, and start in to play cricket, Skinney," said Bob.

"I'm thinking about it," replied Skinner.

He spoke as if he meant it. They all stared at him. Harold Skinner cared as little as Bunter did about cricket.

"You don't mean it, do you?" Harry inquired.

"Why shouldn't I mean it? I suppose you don't imagine you are the only fellows who can play the game?"

"No," answered Johnny Bull drily. "There's Squiff and Toddy and one or two more besides us."

"I wish I could get a look at that bat," remarked Skinner, not heeding the innuendo.

"What for?" asked Frank.

"To see what make it really is, that's all."

"Hurrah! There's another four for Wingate!" shouted Bob.

The captain was between sixty and seventy now. Blundell had evidently come in with intent to stick there and let his partner do the scoring. The Fifth-Former was playing very carefully indeed.

"I can tell you that," said Harry. "It's a Power. New firm, but they seem to be turning out some ripping good stuff!"

"I heard it was a Power," Skinner answered. "That's not enough. They have more than one brand, I suppose?"

"Yes, of course. Come to that, I shouldn't mind knowing what special make this is myself. I could do with one, and so could the rest of the Remove team. We don't make so many runs that it would really hurt us to make a few more."

"It wouldn't hurt us to make a heap more," agreed Bob. "I dream sometimes of making a century, but that's the nearest I ever get to it. Tell you what, Harry, when old Wingate's out, just you cut along and ask him to lend you his bat. He won't mind; everybody knows you're a careful bounder, and wouldn't hurt it."

"Yes, do, Wharton," chimed in Skinner, showing an earnestness unusual in him where anything in the way of games was concerned.

"I'll do it. But he isn't going to get out yet."

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Wingate's Bat!

AND the skipper did not get out yet.

His score leaped up to the eighties, swept on to the nineties, there checked for a bit, because it would be no small honour to make a hundred in the first match ever played by the school against the M.C.C., and Wingate would risk nothing at that stage; then went into three figures from a full-shouldered drive right over the ropes off a slow from Hardstaff amidst a perfect pandemonium of yells.

The lags shouted themselves hoarse; the Removites yelled till they could yell no more; even the lordly Cecil Reginald Temple, glass of fashion and mould of form to the Upper Fourth, let himself go; and Horace Coker was heard amidst all the din to tell Potter and Greene that he had seldom made a better stroke himself, though why Potter should wink at it Greene and Greene wink back at Potter upon hearing that was, of course, a deep mystery.

"Now Blundell's started in!" said Johnny Bull.

It was even so. Victory for Greyfriars could hardly be in doubt now, for only a dozen runs were wanted.

Blundell, facing the veteran Fielder, got him nicely through the slips for a four, cut him for four more, and put him to leg for a single.

That brought Wingate to the batting end; and, with another mighty lifting swipe, he won the game for the school!

"Now then, Harry!" said Bob.

Harry Wharton bolted for the pavilion. In that sacred edifice no junior might set foot unless with good cause, and it was doubtful whether a request for the loan of Wingate's bat would be considered sufficient excuse for an intrusion.

So Harry ran hard, for now, amid the thunder of the shouting, Wingate had broken into a run, too, his rugged face wreathed in smiles as he saw that the Head himself, Mr. Quelch, Mr. Prout, and Mr. Capper were all clapping their hands. It was not often so many masters watched a match; and it did Wingate good to see how genuinely pleased they were.

Harry reached the pavilion gate just as the skipper got there.

"I say, Wingate!"

"Well, Wharton?"

"I'm jolly glad! We're all jolly glad, and proud, too! I say, would you lend me that bat of yours for ten minutes or so? I don't want to use it; I know you wouldn't care for that. But some of us would like to have a look at it."

Hammersley passed on his way to join Blundell, for Wingate had halted at the gate.

"Congrats, old top!" said Hammersley in passing. Then, turning his head and half stopping, he added: "You wouldn't like to lend me that magic bat of yours, I suppose?"

"You could have it, but Wharton here asked first," replied the captain.

And Harry thought he detected in his tone some reluctance to lend the bat for use. A good many cricketers who are not at all selfish feel like that about their bats.

"I didn't really mean it," said Hammersley. "I'll stick to my own little bit of stuff, though there's no magic in it—and no centuries in it, as far as I've gone."

"Good luck!" Wingate said cordially. Then: "Here you are, Wharton. I know I needn't tell you to be careful with it. I mean to keep that bat as long as I live."

He smiled as he handed it over. Wingate knew the capacity for hero-worship that the healthy-minded junior possesses, and thought he had no particular desire to be worshipped in person, he did not mind Wharton and his chums getting any satisfaction they could out of gazing at the bat wherewith that memorable century had been made.

Harry went off delighted. He swung the bat as he made his way back. It was beautifully poised, with plenty of wood in the driving part, where a hitter like Wingate needed it. A fellow who, for a junior, maybe, since an ounce or two makes a difference in such cases, but not feeling the weight—2lbs. 4oz.—which was stamped upon it.

Bob Cherry, Inky, Frank Nugent, Johnny Bull, and Skinner gathered round him. Peter Todd, Squiff, Tom Brown, Delarey, and Bulstrode came up to see. Coker, getting behind them, made hay with the chocolates.

One after another they handled the bat, almost with reverence.

"See how old Wingate gets 'em in the middle!" said Bob. "There's hardly a mark at the edges; they're all near the middle. That shows first-rate batting!"

Skinner had the bat by this time.

"I never saw anyone look at a bat before that way in all my life!" said Squiff.

"But you've heard of fellows who

The rest of the Co. and Skinner gathered round as Harry Wharton came up with the bat under his arm. One by one they handled the bat with care. Then Skinner took it in his hands and turned it upside down, and peered at the bottom of the blade. "I never saw anyone look at a bat before that way in all my life," said Squiff. *(See Chapter 2.)*

don't know one end of a bat from another, haven't you?" said Peter Todd.

For Skinner had turned the bat upside-down, and was peering at the bottom of the blade. Only Peter Todd, of them all, noticed that there were dim figures —1342, Peter made them out to be, looking over Skinner's shoulder—burned into the willow as if with a hot branding-iron.

"I was looking at the thickness of it down here," said Skinner, holding the bat up now and squinting along the back of it.

Peter knew that he was lying, but said nothing. Peter Todd had an inquiring mind, and he wondered why Skinner should be interested in those figures. It was not like Skinner to take any interest at all in a bat. A pack of cards or a set of dice would have been more in Skinner's line.

Inky gently relieved Skinner of the bat, which he let go readily enough now, Peter observed.

Half a minute or so later he also observed that the black sheep of the Remove, having withdrawn himself from the growing crowd of juniors, was making a note in his pocket-book. It looked to Peter as though he were putting down figures, not words. He could almost have sworn he saw the pencil shape a three.

It was queer. What could those figures mean, and what was Skinner's interest in them? Peter wondered. But he said nothing.

"I'd better take it back now," said Harry. "You all know what make it is —a Power Ne Plus Ultra—and if every chap in the Remove team gets one for himself I reckon it won't do our cricket any harm."

"Rough on Skinney if we do," answered Bob, with a grin. "If he gets one, as he talked of doing, he'll expect to walk into the eleven through having it. But if we've got one each, or even if we get a couple among us, and all use them—that's off."

No, that was not it, Peter decided. Skinner's interest in the bat, whatever it might be, had no such foundation as that. If the Remove had had a third eleven—and the Form had not even a second team—Skinner, like Bunter, would still have been left out.

Skinner had gone now. Bunter was just about to go. He was smeary round the mouth, and he exhaled an odour of pep-permint. Moreover, he was not at all sure that he felt quite well. Given time, the Owl could have mopped up five times the quantity of sweetmeats he had dealt with inside those hurried few minutes. But he had known that time was limited.

"Hallo, where are our chocs and things—Inky's, I mean?" demanded Johnny Bull, glancing round.

"There's the box," answered Squiff, grinning as he pointed to it, where Bunter had dropped it under the bench.

"But the box is no longer the containing vessel," Peter Todd said. "I don't want to be suspicious, but I should say that my porpoise is now the containing vessel, and that your chocs and things have become a beautiful dream to you and an undigested mass in the internal economy of William George Bunter."

"Here, come back, Bunter!" yelled Johnny.

"Too late, too late, most worthy Bull!" said Peter, shaking his head. "Sad the words, but true. Too late!"

Johnny bolted after Bunter, and caught him up in a dozen strides.

"Lemme be, Bull!" gasped the Owl. "Oh, don't be a beast! I'm not feeling very well—I'm not, really. I—I don't believe it's good for a fellow to have sweets chucked into him like you did it. Wharton told you about it at the time, and I think now Wharton was right. Ow! Yow! Lemme be!"

"If the Head wasn't just across the pitch I'd jolly well slay you!" hissed Johnny in his ear. "You fat thief!"

"What are you making all that fuss about?" returned Bunter, made bold by knowledge of the Head's presence on the ground. "They weren't your sweets, they were Inky's. It's just like you to butt in where you're not concerned, Bull!"

And the Owl rolled away, feeling that he had scored, for Johnny could not retaliate effectively then. Words—mere words—were altogether inadequate to express his feelings.

"Mustn't go into the pavilion, Harry," Frank Nugent warned his chum, as Wharton started back with the bat.

"Oh, yes, I can! Wingate's bat will be a passport," replied Harry.

But he did not find it so. Several seniors looked at him as he walked through the gate, but none of them said anything. The masters were not in the pavilion, but together on a garden seat to the right.

Inside, Harry paused irresolutely. Wingate was not visible.

Then Loder came out of the dressing-room.

He scowled as he saw the junior. Gerald Loder had a down upon all the Famous Five, and paid Wharton the compliment of hating him poisonously.

"What are you doing here, Wharton?" he snapped.

"I came to bring Wingate's bat back," answered Harry. "No harm in that, I suppose?"

"That's a mere excuse for intruding where you have no right. This is just like your confounded cheek!"

"I don't see that it's any business of yours at all, Loder. If Wingate objects, he'll say so. Is he in the dressing-room, do you mind telling me?"

"He is. But you're not going in there!"

And Loder barred the way, his back against the dressing-room door.

On a sudden it opened, and the Sixth-Former lost his balance completely and staggered back, nearly tumbling Wingate over.

"Here, hold up!" said the skipper genially, catching him round the body. Then he saw who it was, and his face and his tone changed on the instant. "What's the matter now?"

"I object strongly to any junior goin' into our dressing-room," replied Loder savagely.

"Well, it's not according to rule; but Wharton was bringing my bat back, and I don't think you need have stopped him, Loder."

"That's for me to judge!"

"Is it? I'm not so sure. Not while I'm here, anyway. But the thing's not worth having a fresh row about, is it?"

It was plain to Harry that the two had just had words in the dressing-room. It was not the first time, by long odds, he knew. Loder had been a thorn in Wingate's side for terms past.

Loder saw that it was useless to say more. But he scowled at Harry as he departed.

"Going to get one just like it?" asked Wingate, smiling down upon the junior.

"I thought about it, Wingate. Several of us thought of doing that."

"Well, don't, that's my advice. The only one of you who could make much use of this particular bit of willow is Cherry—or Field, perhaps. Cherry's a bit of a village blacksmith, and I've noticed that Fields's biceps and shoulder muscles are a bit out of the ordinary. But for any of the rest of you a couple of ounces lighter—or even a bit more—would be better."

"Thanks, Wingate!" said Harry. "I'll tell them that. I say, if all of us get Ne Plus Ultra bats because of what you've done with that one, the makers ought to send you another one or two as commission, I reckon."

"Don't want 'em," answered Wingate. "I wouldn't change this for the best three they could pick me out of all their stock. This bat, Wharton, is IT!" And he patted the blade lovingly.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Rogues in Council!

"DASH everything!" said Carne sullenly.

Loder's lowering face seemed to speak agreement without need of words.

The two Sixth-Formers sat together in Loder's study. It was a hot evening, but the window was closed, to prevent the smoke from two cigarettes floating out into the quad, and, of course, the door was closed also.

"It's no use my tellin' him I won't play if he leaves you out again, Carne," said Loder. "It's odds against my playin' in the next match, anyway."

"Well, you certainly didn't do much to secure your place to-day," Carne replied, with a sulky grin. "Just like Wingate to leave me out of the best match of the season!"

"If we're goin' to be candid, I might say that you haven't done very much this season to suggest that you're worth playin'," retorted Loder nastily.

"Oh, drop that! Fact of the matter is, cricket an'—well, other things don't run nicely in harness together," said Carne, chucking his half-smoked cigarette into the empty grate.

Like Loder, Carne was a possible good cricketer spoiled.

"Do you want to chuck the other things?" demanded Loder.

"No-o-o." Carne seemed just a trifle doubtful. "We can't, really. Unless we spot a winner or two, or have some luck with the handicaps, within the next week or so we shall be up a gum-tree. If we could do that I shouldn't much mind goin' slow for the rest of the term, an' stickin' to cricket."

Loder's face did not brighten at that notion. Loder always wanted to have it both ways. He must play the gay dog, and get himself into constant trouble. But all the time he expected members of junior Forms, who knew perfectly well what a bad egg he was, to treat him with the same respect they accorded to straightgoers like Wingate and Gwynne and Faulkner, and he resented strongly any hint that loss of form on his part could be due to the life he lived.

He lied now.

"Hefty lot of use your stickin' to cricket would be!" he sneered. "Are you aware, dear boy, that you're so deeply in Wingate's black books that he's made up his mind not to play you again this term?"

"Who says so?" asked Carne, looking truculent.

"I say so. Do you want any better authority? I had a row with him in the dressing-room to-day about it."

Loder had had something approaching a row with Wingate. It was that which had helped to make him so sour with Harry Wharton.

But Carne's name had not even been mentioned. Loder had known that it was of no use mentioning it, for Wingate had made it clear to him some time earlier that, as captain of the school and the cricket eleven, he proposed to go his own way, and, though he might tell a player left out of the team why he was omitted, he would not discuss such matters with any third person.

The row, which had since developed farther had not Wingate kept his temper better than Loder, had been only indirectly connected with cricket. Wingate had said that no fellow could hope to do himself justice if he went off night after night to drink, smoke, and gamble in low bar-parlours. That applied to Carne as well as to Loder; but Wingate was not talking or even thinking about Carne. It was a particular piece of news he had heard about Loder which had prompted his remonstrance.

"What did he say about me?" inquired Carne eagerly.

"That you were a duffer as well as a rotter! That he hadn't much patience with rotters, anyway, an' he had none at all with the combination."

"Swankin' idiot! I wish I knew how to put a spoke in his wheel!" snarled Carne. "But the only way I can think of is to get Walker to refuse to play unless he is, an' I'm not sure Walker would be on."

"An' I'm dashed sure he wouldn't," said Loder quickly. "Why, you know as well as I do that Walker hasn't been out with us for weeks past, an' it hasn't been for want of askin'. When he got that remittance a fortnight ago we did all we knew to get him on for a little flutter, but he wouldn't risk a sou of it. He's keepin' in with Wingate an' that crowd."

Carne nodded. Carne had felt as sore as Loder with Walker's selfish refusal to chance his remittance in an effort to repair their dilapidated fortunes. It was the kind of thing Loder and Carne thought low.

"There's one thing we might do," continued Loder, "an' in the long run it might be of some use in connection with our places, too."

"What's that?" asked Carne eagerly.

"Wingate can do nothin' wrong just now. He's makin' them every time he goes to the wickets, battin' as he never has batted before, an' all the dashed silly asses are ready to worship him. They agree with everythin' he says. But if he had a bad spell it would be different. When you get right down to bed-rock, it's that confounded bat of his we're up against."

"Oh, quite! You don't mean to say you're fool enough to believe that the thing has magic in it?"

"Of course I'm not! Come to that, neither has Wingate. That's only his blether. But he believes in it as a luck-bringer. He has never failed with it yet, an' he's made three centuries in the last five matches. Look at to-day!"

Carne groaned. That had been a big day for Greyfriars, but Carne had had no share in the school's pleasure. His envious nature found little to rejoice over even in the success of a pal, and Wingate had never been a pal of his.

Wingate's century had done more than give the school a victory over the M.C.C. team. It had paved the way to a really glorious success. Blundell and Hammond had batted better than they had ever done before, and taken over 50 each, and the M.C.C. side had been beaten by 151 runs. More than that, the Greyfriars captain, who had captained the side, had inquired of Wingate what county he had a qualification for, and had made a careful note of his answer. The whole school knew that, and most of them had designs upon it, too.

"There's somethin' in it, I'll admit," said Carne. "When I was a kid at my prep school I had a bat that brought me no end of luck—an' runs, too!"

"Pity you didn't keep it!" Loder returned, rather nastily.

"It got too small for me, idiot! A chap close on six feet can't use a kid's bat!"

"If we could only get hold of Wingate's bat——"

"We could, I suppose. But if we did what could we do with it?"

A look of hatred spread over Loder's face.

"Smash it up! Weight it down with bricks, an' drown it in the Sark! Take dashed good care he never used it again, anyway!"

"It's an idea," said Carne thoughtfully. "It would put him off his play for a dead cert, I should say. We'll talk further of this, Gerry. No immediate hurry. It's four days before the next match."

"You bet it would do more than put him off his play, though that would be somethin' to be goin' on with. It would have no end of effect on the other fellows. First time Wingate fails there will be a ghastly slump, an' they'll be horribly disappointed. Second time, an' they'll begin to think, an' some of them will begin to wonder whether he's such a perfect skipper after all. Not Gwynne, of course. Wingate can't do wrong in his eyes. Not one or two of the rest, though for our purpose, I fancy."

Carne agreed that that was more than probable, and the conversation turned to the desperate state of their finances, a topic that was becoming wearisome, yet was difficult to avoid.

Meanwhile, two more very black sheep were discussing Wingate's bat.

Prep was over in the Remove studies, and Sidney James and Snoop had left Skinner and Stott to themselves.

Snoop was not yet, as Squiff put it, the absolute clean potato; but he often

The juniors came out of the outfitter's shop with their bats and fixed them on to the handlebars of their bikes. Lurking in a doorway, Skinner & Co. watched them go to a teashop some little distance down the street. *(See Chapter 4.)*

kicked in these days against the schemes of Skinner, and it was seldom he could be induced to take part in them.

Stott, without the brains to originate anything, was generally ready to fall in with anything that Skinner proposed, and the special scheme in hand appealed to him greatly. For Stott and Skinner, like the two Sixth-Formers, had been working overtime betting on "also rans," and their affairs were in as bad a condition as those of Loder and Carne. They owed less, it was true, but that was only because their credit was shorter. Messrs. Jerry Hawke and Banks knew pretty well where to draw the line.

"You're sure it's right?" said Stott, as soon as the door had closed behind Snoop.

Skinner produced from his pocket a pink sporting paper.

"These Power people are a new firm in the trade," he said. "If they weren't they'd know better than to waste their money advertising in this giddy rag. I know there are some cricketers who go in for racin'; but I don't think there are many of them who buy the 'Sporting Post.' I haven't seen their ad. in any of the daily papers, though I've looked through them all."

"Let's have a squint at it," said Stott.

He pored over the displayed advertisement, his dull, heavy face with more life in it than usual.

Messrs. Power Brothers, a new firm in the bat trade, had hit upon a new way of advertising their wares, it appeared. Their specialty was the No Plus Ultra bat, for which they charged a pretty stiff price, though, if all the bats turned out were equal to that which Wingate had bought from a shop at Courtfield, they were worth the money.

Each bat, the advertisement said, was marked on the butt with a number. Certain numbers, all belonging to bats already sent out to dealers, carried valuable cash prizes. Four numbers would be announced in the "Sporting Post" each week for an indefinite period, and the persons producing the bats bearing those numbers would receive the prizes to which they were entitled.

Skinner, who was not without his shrewdness, was quite right in his theory that the "Sporting Post" was not the best medium for the advertisement, since the great bulk of cricketers never saw the paper, whereas nearly all who play the game glance at least at one or another of the old-established and recognised sporting dailies. But Skinner was not aware that Roger Power was a particular pal of the personage who ran the "Sporting Post," and owned a big block of shares in that enterprise.

"No. 1,342, twenty-five pounds," read out Stott. "Are you sure that's the number of Wingate's bat, Skinney?"

"Am I sure? What do you think? I was tryin' hard to scheme out some way of seein' the giddy thing without riskin' my head in Wingate's study when I happened on Wharton and that crowd, and found them more pally than usual. I said a thing or two about the bat, and that ass Cherry rose to the bait, and suggested that Wharton should get Wingate to let us have a look at it. Wharton, bein' so virtuous, and all that —makes me sick!—was the right person, of course; kind of white-headed boy with the prefects and masters, and beasts of that sort. He'd no difficulty at all. And I made a note of the number in my pocket-book as soon as I got away from them; it wasn't a hard one to remember. Here it is."

Stott's eyes gleamed as he looked at the figures.

"It's halves, of course, Skinney?" he said.

"Halves your grandmother!" replied Skinner elegantly. "Where do I come in like that? Why, I needn't have told you at all!"

"Still, it ought to be halves. If there's any risk I shall have to share it, I suppose?"

"There won't be any risk, an' there won't be any halves. Look here—we owe Hawke four-ten between us, and Banks two quid, don't we? That's six-ten, and we'll pay that off. We'll put another three-ten jointly on Bird of the Wilderness for the Barnham Stakes—I've a sure tip about him. Halves so far, all serene. Then there will be thirty bob for another bat; that leaves, let's see, oh, thirteen-ten. You can have three-ten of that, and I'll have a tenner. That's fair. Any other expenses there may be must be shared between us."

"Hope there won't be much, then. A fat lot I shall have if there should be," grumbled Stott. "And what do we want another bat for? You don't really mean to play cricket, and if you did any old bat would do to get a duck with. That's about all you ever will get, I'll bet!"

"I certainly don't mean to play cricket. I wouldn't waste my time on any such silly rot. But you must be an idiot if you can't see the use of another bat!"

"I can't, then."

"Why, to put in the place of the one we bag, fathead! There you are—we haven't done anybody down, and Wingate will never know the difference."

"Not so sure of that. I don't suppose he's twigged the number or seen this advertisement. But there's something about the feel of a bat that the chap who's played with it knows. It comes up differently in his hands—oh, you know the rot these games fanatics talk! Anyway, there's the marks on it. Every bat gets marked in playing, and I'll bet Wingate knows every giddy mark on that one."

"We can imitate them," said Skinner.

"We could try, and perhaps it might be done, though I don't know how you can make marks on bats that look just like those the ball makes. Anyway, I see now why you want another bat. Look here, you don't expect me to bag the thing from Wingate's study and put the other there instead, do you? Because I'm not on that for anything less than halves."

"No. You won't do it, and I shan't do it. I've a better scheme than that."

"What is it?"

"I'm going to make Bunter do it!"

At that intimation something happened outside the study door.

A fat ear was unglued from the keyhole. A fat form rolled down the passage.

Billy Bunter chuckled as he went. He had heard enough—or, he thought he had.

No sooner had Snoop left the study than Bunter had applied his eye to the keyhole, to make certain that Skinner and Stott were there. He had his own reasons for believing that those two young gentlemen were weaving a plot, and he was always curious about such things.

The eye had been succeeded by an ear. Now Bunter rolled away, murmuring to himself:

"Spending Post—twenty-five quid—number 1342—oh, my hat! I'm on this! I don't see why those two mean rotters should keep such a thing to themselves. And Skinney's quite correct—as long as Wingate gets another bat he'll be all right, so 'tain't dishonest. If it was I wouldn't touch it, of course. But 'tain't!"

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

The Bat Bob Cherry Wanted!

"HERE'S luck, Harry, old pal! I've had a remittance this morning—a regular, whacking one—the sort that doesn't come my way very often! Two quid, chappie! Two whole quids!"

It was Bob Cherry who made this announcement, bursting into Study No. 1 on the Remove passage, where Wharton chanced to be alone, just before breakfast.

"Glad to hear it, Bob. Now you'll be able to get one of those bats," said Harry.

"You bet! Look here, have you got enough for one? Because if you haven't I can help you out, you know. I shan't need the whole two quid, and you can have ten bob or so on loan, and pay back when you like. I'd say take it as a gift, only—"

"Can't be did, Bob, though it's jolly good of you. 'Tisn't necessary, as a matter of fact. I've just about enough. So has Frank. And Johnny and Inky can manage it, of course; they have lots more than we have. Now that you've got the cash we can go in for a No. 1 Ultra each, and set up a record by making a century each in our next game—I don't think!"

"You didn't say anything about that yesterday when we were out," replied Bob. "Look here, I believe you fellows were holding off because you knew I was too hard up to get one; now, weren't you?"

"We didn't care about it unless you could have one, and we knew you wouldn't borrow as much as that," Harry answered, flushing.

"My hat! You're pals, all of you. But it's all right now. Wonder whether they'll have ordered off the bats already all five of us, though? Courtfield isn't much of a place for shopping in—not when you want anything really important."

"They can send for them if they haven't got them in stock."

"But I can't wait!"

"I guess you'll have to wait till this afternoon—or till after morning classes, anyway. There goes the breakfast bell. Now you aren't reckoning on cutting brekker and classes to go and get the bat, were you?"

"Fathead! Of course I wasn't. Come along and see whether I look as if I wanted to cut brekker!"

Bob was in wild spirits. That was rather unfortunate, as it chanced, for it prevented the Famous Five from getting to Courtfield between morning classes and dinner. Mr. Quelch failed to appreciate Bob's wild spirits, which caused him to be altogether too conversational in the Form-room, and Inky suffered also, though it was hardly his fault.

With Bob and Inky kept in, the other three went in for net practice in lieu of going to Courtfield. And Bob was less talkative in the afternoon, not so much excited, and apparently as fearful that he might have to go to bed that night without a Ne Plus Ultra bat in his possession if he were not careful.

Directly afternoon classes were over—the two hours seemed like two months to Bob, and a good deal longer than usual to the other four—they hurried to the bike-shed, got out their machines, and took the road to Courtfield.

"It's that new shop just in the middle of the High Street, you know," said Bob. "I should think they'd have five, shouldn't you? They've a fine show of bats and things in the windows. I thought when I saw them a few weeks ago that there wasn't much chance of business in a sleepy hole like Courtfield. But it looks different when they can sell cricket bats at every window, it! The chap that keeps the shop ought to be jolly well pleased, I should think!"

"He'll sell more if we can only do what you fancy we're going to do with them!" answered Johnny Bull, grinning. "I know a good bat does make a heap of difference; but if these bats are good enough to make century scorers out of all five of us—well, I reckon there will be such a run on them that you never was on anything before at Greyfriars!"

"Wingate has made three centuries with his," said Frank Nugent, who was very nearly as hopeful, though hardly as excited as Bob.

"But nobody ever doubted that Wingate was good enough for a century," Harry rejoined. "We'd better not put our hopes too high."

It would have taken more than that to damp Bob's enthusiasm, however.

He was first in the shop, and had picked up a bat from the counter before Johnny, who came last, had got inside.

"I say, this one ought to suit me!" he said, swinging it as if at the crease.

Harry took it from his hands.

"Too heavy, Bob," he said.

"Not a bit of it! Didn't Wingate say that I could use a heavier bat than the rest of you?"

"Sorry, sir! You can't have that one. It's sold," said the man behind the counter. "But we have plenty more to select from."

"Bring 'em out!" cried Bob. "We're going to have one each, if we can all suit ourselves."

A dozen or more were brought—all of the Ne Plus Ultra make.

"We are making a special line of these," said the shopman. "I believe that in a year or two they will be recognised as absolutely the best bats on the market."

All five poised and swung and stroked and inspected one bat after another. Johnny Bull found one to suit him first, and made haste to pay for it, lest anyone else should take a fancy to it, and want to argue the question.

But Bob came back to the one he had first handled.

"Pity this is sold!" he said. "I like it so much better than any of the rest. For one thing, it's an ounce or two heavier, and old Wingate said I ought to use a heavier bat."

"No. He only said you might," Harry corrected him.

"Same thing! I say, I suppose there's no chance that the fellow who bought this won't want it, after all, is there? I know jolly well that if I'd bought it I should have taken it away with me!" Bob said.

"I don't think it's likely, sir, though, of course, it's possible, as he did not pay at the time. Said he had not quite enough money, but would come for the bat this afternoon. It was a young gentleman from your school. I haven't been here long, but I know the Greyfriars colours."

"Hear that, you fellows? Somebody else on the job! Wonder who it was? He gave his name, I suppose? No harm in telling it, is there?"

"I don't see any no harm, but, as a matter of fact, he did not give his name. It was not of any special consequence, as he was to pay for the bat before taking it away. Ours is a ready-money trade, for the most part."

"What was he like?" asked Frank Nugent, also interested.

"I should say that he might be about the same age as any of you, though his face was somewhat older," answered the man. "He had rather a prominent nose, long and sharp—not exactly a cheese-cutter nose, as you might say, but something between that and a fox-terrier nose."

"Skinner—I'll bet ten to one on it!" whispered Johnny Bull to Bob.

"Not likely, Johnny! You wouldn't catch Skinney buying a bat!"

Bob would have thought otherwise had he seen something that anyone might have seen by turning round sharply at that moment. For a nose not ill described as something between the cheese-cutter and the fox-terrier types was pressed for a second or two against the window, and then withdrawn.

Harold Skinner was behind that nose, and Stott was behind Skinner.

"Cheese cutter, sharp!" hissed Skinner. "Wharton and those bounders are in there, and I don't want them to know anything about my buying a bat!"

So Skinner and Stott vamoosed unseen, just as Harry said:

"He talked about buying one, and the description sounds very like Skinner, anyway."

"There's only the nose to go upon," replied Bob.

"Well, Skinner's nose is no trifle!" Johnny said.

"The nosefulness of the esteemed and disgusting Skinner is of the quite-enoughfulness, truly!" observed Inky.

"Yet if the said Skinner were to negotiate purchasefully for a bat the surprisefulness would be, to my mind, terrific!"

The man behind the counter looked puzzled by Inky's weird and wonderful English. But the name mentioned awoke a chord in his memory.

"Now that I come to think of it," he said, "the other young gentleman addressed the one who chose the bat as 'Skinney.'"

"What was the other fellow like?" asked Bob.

(Continued on page 9.)

SPECIAL "JAPING" NUMBER!

The Greyfriars HERALD

SUPPLEMENT No. 30.

Week Ending July 23rd, 1921.

Assisted by BOB CHERRY (Fighting Editor), VERNON-SMITH (Sports Editor), MARK LINLEY, TOM BROWN, and FRANK NUGENT.

Address all letters to HARRY WHARTON, c/o The Magnet Library, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, E.C. 4.

JAPING JOTTINGS!

By Frank Nugent.

Who was the merry japer who tied Billy Bunter in a sack, and rolled him from the top of Courtfield Hill to the foot thereof?

* * *

Who, on that occasion, described Billy Bunter as "a rolling stone"? A more apt description would have been a rolling 14-stone!

* * *

Those who are familiar with Billy Bunter's habits have often remarked that he is "going rapidly downhill"!

* * *

Who was the fellow who crept downstairs in the middle of the night, took Quelchy's typewriter to pieces, and then found himself unable to put it together again?

* * *

Who made Skinner an "apple pie" bed, and then said that he was getting his just "dessert"?

* * *

Who was the public benefactor who stopped up the interior of Hoskins' cornet with cottonwool?

* * *

Can anybody beat Bob Cherry's record of playing a dozen japes per day right through the term?

* * *

It is said that Bob always gets up in the morning with a jape in his mind. Personally, I never get up with a "jape"; but I frequently rise with the "lark"!

EDITORIAL.

By Harry Wharton.

It seems curious to think that we have not had a Special Japing Number up till now, for japes play a large part in our routine at Greyfriars.

Bob Cherry declares that japes are the very spice of life, and I am inclined to agree with him—always provided that the japes are of the healthy order.

There is a very sharp distinction between a jape and an outrage. For instance, if a fellow wrecks Bolsover major's study, that is a jape. But if a fellow wrecks the editorial sanctum of the "Greyfriars Herald," that is an Outrage (capital "O," please, printer!).

I really don't know how we should jog along without an occasional jape.

Life would be fairly dull if there were no legs to pull and no practical jokes to play.

Japing is great fun—for the japer! The victim of the jape takes a somewhat different view.

I have been asked over and over again to produce a Special Japing Number of the "Greyfriars Herald," and I herewith "deliver the goods."

If some of these contributions in this week's issue don't cause tears of merriment to splash down your cheeks, then I'm a pretty dud sort of editor!

I hope you will like this number, anyway, and that you will commend it to your non-reader friends.

ANOTHER TREAT IN STORE!

I have been besieged with requests for a Special Scouting Number of the "Herald."

I am always willing to meet the wishes of my chums in every possible way, and their latest desire shall be gratified without delay.

As most people are aware, we have a Scout Patrol in the Greyfriars Remove, and I shall have pleasure in persuading some of the "tenderfoots"—and others—to prepare some novel contributions for our Special Scouting Number.

Look out for it!

HARRY WHARTON.

P.S.—Billy Bunter has asked me to tell you that his old "Weekly" appears every week in the "Popular." I think it's frightful cheek on his part to ask me to do this, but, being good-natured—as I am!—I can't refuse him. He said it would be a special number. I think he's been having a lot of special numbers lately, all sorts of tommy-rot, not a bit like our own special numbers—far from them, in fact.

THE PRINCE OF JAPERS!

By Bob Cherry.

I really am a lively spark!
I often set out, after dark,
In ghostly raiment, for a lark,
And cut peculiar capers.
I'm always eager for a spree
(The nature of the beast, you see!)
And some young wag has christened me
The Prince of Modern Japers!

At wheezes, tricks, and stunts I shine.
The booby-traps which I design
Are voted absolutely fine
By all except the victim!
The pranks I play on other chaps
Have often brought me into scraps,
And many a bully snarls and snaps
To think how oft I've licked him!

I care for no one—no, not I!
No skylark soaring in the sky
Is happier; and that is why
I've gained a reputation
For hearty jest and cheery chaff,
For sunny smile and hearty laugh,
Of cheery mortals I (not half!)
Stand first in all the nation!

A MASTERS' NUMBER!

The Masters of Greyfriars are having a special number of their own next week. Look out for this splendid treat. — H. W.

The JAPE That FAILED

By Peter Todd.

LODER, of the Sixth, and Skinner, of the Remove, can hardly be styled a David and Jonathan, or a Damon and Pythias.

Skinner likes Loder like prussic acid. Loder regards Skinner as one of the meanest worms that ever squirmed on this planet.

Loder is always giving Skinner lines. Skinner is always neglecting to do them. Consequently, Loder's ashplant is constantly brought into play, and Skinner gets it in the neck—or, to be more precise, on a lower portion of his anatomy.

The curtain rises, dear readers, on a scene in Skinner's study.

Skinner was in his shirt-sleeves. On the table was a capacious paper bag, into which the end of the Remove was placing a most hideous and messy concoction.

There was glue, paste, blue-black ink, red ink, soot, syrup, and all the ingredients which go to make a successful booby-trap.

Needless to state, the booby-trap was being arranged for Loder's benefit.

Loder had given Skinner a hundred lines for insolence, and had said that he would come to Skinner's study and collect the impot at four o'clock. It was now three-thirty.

"When he does turn up," murmured Skinner with a diabolical grin, "he'll get the shock of his life! He's been asking for this for a long time!"

Having filled the paper bag to his satisfaction, Skinner mounted a chair, and balanced it—the bag, not the chair—on the top of the door, which was slightly ajar.

When Loder came along to collect the imposition, he would push open the door, and thus—— Swish! Swoosh! An avalanche of glue, paste, blue-black ink, etc., would descend upon the prefect's head!

Perhaps!

The worst of booby-traps is that they sometimes miss their objective entirely, and sometimes they descend upon the wrong person!

Skinner seemed to have left these possibilities out of his calculations.

When he had successfully balanced the paper bag on the top of the door, Skinner dismounted from the chair, surveyed his handiwork with a chuckle of glee, and then quitted the study—not by the window, of course. He could not get out through the doorway without disturbing the booby-trap.

Skinner stepped down lightly into the Close, and, thrusting his hands in his pockets, strolled away whistling, and looking quite unconcerned.

There was a scrap going on outside the tuckshop between Bolsover major and Bob Cherry.

Skinner quickened his pace, and joined the group of fellows who were watching the combat.

In the general excitement he almost forgot the booby-trap which he had devised for Loder's benefit.

"Go it, Bolsy, old man! Give him beans!" cried Skinner excitedly.

"Smash him, Bob!" came the answering cry from Bob Cherry's supporters.

Nobody seemed to know what the fight was about, and nobody seemed to care. It was enough to know that two of the sturdiest fellows in the Form were at loggerheads.

Skinner grew so excited that the booby-trap faded completely from his mind.

Bolsover major was having the better of the argument—but only for a time.

Bob Cherry began to force the fighting. Cheered on by his chums, he rushed at the bully of the Remove, and put out right with left. And presently Bolsover went down, with an impact which shook every bone in his body.

"Hurrah!"

"Bravo, Bob!"

Skinner turned away, disappointed at Bolsover's defeat.

"I say, Skinney!" It was Bunter minor who spoke. "The other day you were advertising a penknife for sale."

"That's so," said Skinner. "I want half-a-crown for it, though."

"I'll buy it," said Sammy.

"Show me the colour of your money first."

To Skinner's surprise, the fag produced a florin and a sixpence.

"You really want to buy my penknife—honest Injun?" said the cad of the Remove.

"Of course!"

The prospect of receiving half-a-crown for his blunt and ancient penknife filled Skinner with delight.

"The knife's in my study," he said. "I'll run along and get it."

Skinner sped swiftly on his errand, fearful lest Sammy Bunter should change his mind about making the purchase. He raced along the Remove passage like a champion of the cinder-path.

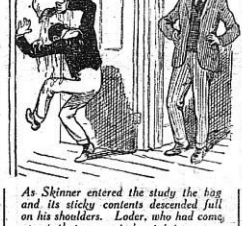
Loder of the Sixth was coming along the passage from the opposite direction, evidently bound for Skinner's study.

In his hot haste, Skinner did not even heed the prefect. He pushed open his study door, completely forgetting the paper bag which was poised on top of it. And then——

Swoooooosh!

Skinner was caught in the trap which he had set for another. He had arrived at the study just before Loder, and the contents of the paper bag rained down upon his head.

"Gug-gug-gug!" spluttered Skinner wildly.



As Skinner entered the study the bag and its sticky contents descended full on his shoulders. Loder, who had come up at that moment, burst into a roar of laughter.

His face was a picture. Rivulets of red and blue-black ink were streaming down it; and the soot and glue and paste did not add to Skinner's natural beauty.

The sight of his youthful enemy, wildly gesticulating in the doorway, with the messy concoction clinging to his face, was too much for Loder.

The prefect leaned against the wall of the passage, laughing uproariously.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Dashed if I can see anything to cackle at!" snarled Skinner.

"Ha, ha, ha! You look a pretty picture, and no mistake! It'll take about a week's scrubbing to get you normal again!"

Skinner made no reply. He was trying to remove a stringy mass of syrup from his left ear.

"Where are my lines?" demanded Loder.

"Blow your lines!"

"I shall expect you to do them as soon as you've had your bath!" said the prefect.

As for Skinner, he remarks he made, as he crawled away to the nearest bath-room, would have got him sacked on the spot had they been overheard by anyone in authority.

Once again the cad of the Remove had failed to score off his old enemy.

When Skinner had had his bath he found that Sammy Bunter was not in a position to purchase his penknife, the fat fag having "blued" his half-crown at the tuckshop during the interval.

That was the last straw!

NOT KRICKET!

By BILLY BUNTER.

Japing is not kricket. It is not fare to the person who is japed. As for this Speshul Japing Number of "The Greyfriars Herald," I think it ought to be Deprecated. (Sure you don't mean "suppressed," Billy?—Ed.)

Japing is a crool sport. It was invented meany years ago by a fello called Juck Japer, who was always pulling people's legs when he was a skoller at Greyfriars. He was eventually sacked from the school. And serve him jolly well rite!

Of all narsty, low-down trix, japing is the worst. I think it ought to be regarded as a krimminal offense, and the offenders klapped into prizzen.

The two biggest japers in the Greyfriars Remove are Bob Cherry and William Wibley. This preshus pear of plotters are always making my life a mizzery.

Only this mourning, Bob Cherry dragged me out of bed, and had me chucked into a hot bath. I wunder I didn't eggspire with shock! You see, I am not used to hot water, and I hadn't had a barf for many moons.

Then their's that hounder Wibley. On the last day holerday, he dress up in female attire, and past himself off as my Arnt Prudence. Being rather short sited, I didn't twigg the diaguise. I throo my arms luvingly round Wibley's neck (not knowing it was Wib, of corse), and said, "Come along to No. 7 Studdy, dear Arnt, and I'll treat you to a stunning tea!"

A cupple of bob which I had on me came in very useful. I blued it at the tuckshopp, and spelled my Arnt—as I thort—with a ripping meel. And as soon as it had been devoured, the feester said, with a mocking larf:

"Har, har! Ever been had, Bunty? I'm Wibley!"

If looks could have killed, the japer wood have eggspired on the spot!

I'll tell you another thing that happened to me the other day.

As you no, I am the edditer, boss, and soul proprieter of the "Weekly," which bares my name.

Well, I was called to the tellyfone in the prefect's room.

"Major Moggs, of Courtfield, speaking," said a voice. "I am an Old Boy of Greyfriars, and I am grately interrested in yore 'Weekly,'" Bunter. So much so, that I wish to buy fifty koppies of this week's issew. Will you send them round to my plaice—the Millitery Barrex, Courtfield?"

"Oh, certainly, sir!" I replide, delited at the prospect of getting rid of fifty koppies of my "Weekly."

The papers were sent round, but a lass! They were nevver delivvered. For it terned out that their were no millitery barrex in Courtfield. It was all a hoaks, and if it wasn't for the fact that I was able, with some difficulty, to sell them to someone else I might have been in the soup, as it were.

Needless to say, Wibley was at the bottom of it.

Why don't I get my own back by playing a jape on Wibley?

Bekawse, as I said at the kommencement of this artikle, japing is not kricket!

The Jape that Desmond Played

By Monty Newland.

SOME people like Sunday afternoon walks; others don't.

Micky Desmond, of the Remove, belonged to the latter class.

The junior from the Emerald Isle was no slacker. He worked hard and played hard all the week, but he liked to take things easy on the Sabbath.

The ideal way to spend Sunday afternoon, according to Micky Desmond, was to recline on a study sofa, and sleep solidly till teatime.

Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, held different views. Walking was a delight to him—a positive mania, in fact.

It wouldn't have been so bad if Quelchy had been content to walk alone; but he wasn't. He must needs drag the whole of his pupils out with him.

To make matters worse, the walk—Bolsover major called it a "slave drive"—was compulsory. You simply had to go, whether you liked it or not. If you were halt, maimed, or blind, it made no difference to Quelchy. On Sunday afternoons, so far as the Remove master was concerned, it was a case of "Fall in, and follow me!"

On this particular Sunday, Micky Desmond was taking forty winks on his study sofa. He had eaten a substantial dinner—the Greyfriars meals on Sundays are jolly good—and he felt drowsy and disinclined for action.

Micky was in the middle of a pleasant dream, when the door of his study was thrown open, and the stentorian voice of Bob Cherry made itself heard.

"Buck up, Desmond! Quelchy's waiting for you!"

Micky opened his eyes.

"Faith, an' what do you mean by disturbin' me like this?" he growled.

"It's a walk, fathead! All the fellows are lined up in the Close, in their Sunday togs and toppers. Quelchy's called the roll, and you're the only one absent. So he sent me along to put you out."

"Those Sunday walks," said Micky Desmond, "are a bigger plague than all the plagues of Egypt."

"I agree with you, old son. All the same, you can't wriggle out of it, and I shouldn't advise you to keep Quelchy waiting."

Micky Desmond yawned.

"Give Quelchy my compliments," he said, "and tell him to go and eat coke!"

"Boy! Desmond! How dare you?"

The two juniors started violently, and no wonder. For Mr. Quelch stood framed in the doorway!

"Oh, be jabbers!" gasped Micky Desmond. "I didn't know you were there, sir!"

"Apparently not, Desmond," said Mr. Quelch drily, "or you would have spoken of your schoolmaster with more respect. I decline to go and masticate coke; and I must also insist upon your joining my party without delay. Go to the head that I is Sunday, I should feel inclined to chastise you for your insolence!"

Micky Desmond heaved himself off the sofa, and slowly followed Mr. Quelch from the study. Bob Cherry walked beside him.

"How are we going sir?" Micky ventured to ask.

"Eight miles," said Mr. Quelch.

"Groo!"

"Do not utter such ridiculous ejaculations, Desmond! An eight-mile walk will do you a world of good. It will be infinitely more beneficial than wallowing in a state of somnolence on your study sofa."

Micky Desmond grinned.

"Catch me tramping eight miles!" he muttered, under his breath.

"You'll have to, you silly duffer!" whispered Bob Cherry.

"Rats!"

"It's no use kicking against Quelchy!"

"I wouldn't tramp eight miles for a dozen Quelchys!" muttered Micky Desmond, with emphasis.

"Needs must where the devil drives!"

"Shush!" said Micky, with a grin. "You mustn't speak of Quelchy in that way, Bob."

Out in the Close, the rest of the Removites were waiting. They looked like sheep about to be led to the slaughter. On every face there was a fed-up-to-the-hilt expression.

"Before we start, my boys," said Mr. Quelch, "is there anything you would like to ask me?"

"Yessir!" piped Billy Bunter, in his high-pitched tones.

"Well, Bunter—what is it?"

"May I be excused from the walk, please, sir?"

Mr. Quelch frowned.

"On what grounds?"

"My delicate constitution won't stand it, sir!"

There was a titter from the rest of the fellows. Mr. Quelch raised his hand for silence.

"Do not be absurd, Bunter! A good walk will possibly reduce some of your superfluous flesh. In any event, it will do you no harm."

Billy Bunter gave a hollow groan at the prospect of trudging eight miles. And then Skinner came limping up to Mr. Quelch, with an expression of anguish on his sallow face.

"What is the matter with you, Skinner?" demanded the Form-master.

"I've sprained my ankle, sir."

"Indeed! When did this calamity occur?"

"Yesterday afternoon, sir. I was playing cricket, and——"

Desmond gave a groan, and fell to the ground in a huddled heap.

"Enough!" said Mr. Quelch sternly. "Only this morning I saw you racing down the stairs three at a time. You could not possibly have performed such a feat with a sprained ankle."

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Go back to your place, Skinner! Well, Bolsover, what is wrong with you?"

Bolsover major looked the picture of abject misery.

"I've got hefty great corns on my feet, sir!" he whined.

"Very well, Bolsover, I will arrange for you to visit the chiropodist in Courtfield tomorrow, and have the corns removed."

Horrified at this suggestion, Bolsover major admitted that he hadn't any corns at all!

"You are an utterly deceitful boy, Bolsover!" said Mr. Quelch sternly. "Go to your places! I will listen to no more excuses." And, as everyone follows came limping towards him. "The walk will now commence."

Muttering savagely amongst themselves, the fellows trooped out of the school gateway.

"This is the limit!" growled Johnny Bull. "I guess it's the absolute outside edge!"

groaned Fisher T. Fish.

"As if we don't get enough walking during the week!" grumbled Dick Rake.

There were loud murmurs of protest on all sides; but Mr. Quelch did not seem to hear them.

It was a blazing hot afternoon, and what with the clouds of dust and the mosquitoes, we were just about fed up to the teeth.

We were proceeding along Friardale Lane, close to the Cross Keys Inn, when Micky Desmond was seen to stagger. Bob Cherry threw out an arm to support him, but he was too late. Micky fell to the ground in a huddled heap.

"My only aunt!" muttered Bob Cherry, stopping short. "He's got sunstroke, or something."

Micky Desmond's sudden collapse caused a profound sensation.

Everybody stopped short, and Mr. Quelch came panting up.

"Bless my soul! What is the matter with Desmond?"

"It's the heat, sir, I think," said Harry Wharton.

"Is the boy unconscious?"

"Yes, sir; he's in a state of coma," said Skinner. "In other words he's come to a full stop."

"Be silent, Skinner! This is no time for coarse witticisms. Desmond! Desmond, my boy!"

Micky lay motionless.

"This is really very distressing!" said Mr. Quelch, in agitated tones. "Cherry, I think you had better run across to the inn, and obtain a little brandy."

Bob Cherry was about to comply with this request, when he saw Micky Desmond open one eye, and wink at him.

Nobody but Bob noticed the wink—which was extremely fortunate for the winker!

"Well, I'm jiggered!" murmured Bob, as he made his way to the Cross Keys. "Micky's shamming! What a nerve!"

Bob entered the inn by the side door, but he did not buy brandy. He persuaded the landlord to let him have a little ginger-ale in a bottle.

Having obtained this peculiar restorative, Bob hurriedly returned, laid down beside Micky Desmond, and forced some of the liquid between his lips.

Micky gave a shudder, and opened his eyes.

"Ah, he is coming round," observed Mr. Quelch. "How do you feel, my boy?"

"Simply awful, sir!" groaned Micky. "I—I've had a sort of sun-stroke, I think."

"Can you walk?"

"I'll try, sir."

The attempt was not a success. Micky Desmond managed to struggle into a sitting posture, only to fall back again.

"He's a hopeless crock, sir, I'm afraid!" murmured Bob Cherry.

Mr. Quelch nodded.

"See! There is a hurdle lying in yonder meadow!" he exclaimed. "Wharton and Cherry, you will place this unfortunate lad on the hurdle, and take him back to the school. He must be handed over to the matron's care."

Scarcely able to conceal their merriment, Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry fetched the hurdle, and Micky Desmond's inert form was laid upon it.

"Up with him very gently, my boys!" said Mr. Quelch.

The two juniors lifted their burden, and set off in the direction of Greyfriars.

It was not until the school gateway was reached that Micky Desmond became suddenly endowed with legs off the hurdle, executed a sort of glee-dance in the Close, and chortled:

"How's that for a wangle, you fellows? Faith, an' I spoofed Quelchy cutirely!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I didn't know you were play-acting until I saw that wink you gave me," said Bob Cherry.

"Well, we've dodged the eight-mile tramp successfully" said Wharton.

"An' I'm goin' to make a rapid recovery!" said Micky Desmond. "I shall slumber on the study sofa for the rest of the afternoon, and when Quelchy comes in I shall be as right as ninepence!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Micky Desmond's amazing jape is now the talk of the whole Remove. It shall slumber on, But let us hope, for the sake of Ould Ireland, that it doesn't get to Quelchy's ears!

THE COMPLETE JAPER!

By Tom Brown.

Another excellent jape is to deposit a number of frogs in your form-master's desk.

It is the ambition of every youth to become a successful japer—to pull the legs of his schoolmates and to display his sense of humour.

Being a celebrated japer myself, I'm going to show you how to set to work, if you want to follow in my footsteps.

We will assume that you are a new boy, just arrived at a big public school. Your name is Johnny Jones. But you won't tell your schoolfellows that. You will pass yourself off as Lord Thingummyjob de Vere Thingummyjig. You will then receive a cordial welcome on all sides. The best study will be allotted to you; the kids will fall down and worship you.

That's jape number one. Of course, your real identity will probably be discovered before you've been half an hour at the school. Nobody will fall down and worship you then. In fact, you'll be the one to fall down, with a crowd of furious fellows on top of you! Still, a japer should always be ready to pay the penalty for his japes.

Having got over your first bumping, you will begin to devise further japes.

Another excellent jape is to get a large, empty tuck-hamper, fill it with bricks, and tell your school chums that the hamper is resting at the station to be brought home. They will, of course, rush to bring it, eagerly anticipating a splendid feast. When they have arrived home they will discover the joke, and you will very likely be mobbed by an irate crowd for having raised false hopes. But there is always a price to be paid for these jokes.

The following morning—if you are still alive—you will go on a frog-hunting expedition, and will deposit a number of live frogs—the more the merrier—in your Form-master's desk. He will be tickled to death when he raises the lid, and will probably invite you to have tea with him. It is even more likely, however, that he will request you to touch your toes! But if you are wise you will have barricaded your "hops" with a copybook!

If your capacity for playing japes is not yet exhausted, you can disguise yourself as an ancient female, visit the school on a half-holiday, and lovingly embrace a prefect or a senior whom you are up against, in the presence of scores of enthusiastic spectators.

It is possible that the prefect may remember you, in which event you will not be able to sit down for some days!

Still another excellent jape is to mix up all your schoolfellows' togs and shoes in the dormitory whilst they are asleep. This will lead to frantic rushing in the morning, and you will enjoy the fun immensely—always provided you are not discovered. Of course, if anybody finds out it was you who juggled with the togs, your life won't be worth a groat.

There are many other kinds of japes, but most of them are copyright by me in the United States of America, and I cannot make them public in these pages.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 702

Impertinent Interviews

By our Special Representative.

No. 4.—WILLIAM GOSLING.

NOTEBOOK in hand, I stepped into the editor's sanctum.

"What is my next job, mighty chief?" I inquired.

The editor paused in the act of sketching an sturdy, athletic figure on his blotting-pad.

"Gosling's the next on the list," he said. "And mind you write up a really interesting interview. Your article generally wanders from the point. It deals with your own trials and tribulations instead of the person you are supposed to be interviewing."

"Pardon me," I said, "but your readers are interested in my troubles—"

"Rats!"

"They are, I tell you! They love to read about me being kicked out of studies, and given umpteen strokes with the cane by ferocious masters, and all that sort of thing. During the summer vac, when I was in London, I overheard a couple of fellows jawing on the top of a tramcar. One of them had a copy of the 'Greyfriars Herald.' 'The poor old special representative's got it in the neck again!' he said gleefully. And his chum said, 'Serve him jolly well right!' That proves that they simply love to see me fall in the mulligatawny!"

The editor snorted.

"What do I pay you for—to write articles about yourself?" he growled.

"Nunno!"

"Well, give yourself a rest for once, and deal with the person you're interviewing. The subject of this week's interview, for instance, is Mr. William Gosling. Your own woes and worries can take a back seat. Do you get me, you pudding-headed chump?"

"You you're being rude!" I said. "Still, it shall be as you wish. An editor's word is like unto the laws of the Swedes and Nasturshums. I'll pop down to the porter's lodge, and see what old Gosling's got to say for himself."

I found Gosling dozing on a chair in his doorway in the bright July sunshine. It was necessary to rouse him. This I did by the simple expedient of potting him in the ribs with a pencil.

Gosling awoke with a yell.

"Young rip!" he growled. "Which I'll report you yer!"

I righted Gosling's chair, which had toppled back, for him, and bade him be seated.

"Before you put my name on the crime-sheet, and take it to Quelchy, I want to ask you a few questions," I said. "Are you ready?"

If looks could have killed, Gosling's glare would have finished me on the spot.

"First of all," I said calmly, "what is your age? Ninety-nine?"

"Which I'm only seventy!" said Gosling wrathfully.

"I see. A mere stripling. How long have you been at Greyfriars?"

"Forty years come Michaelmas!" growled Gosling.

"My hat! And you're still a porter! Why, you ought to be headmaster, at least, by this time!"

"Look 'ere, you young warmint—"

"Still, I admit that it's very difficult to get on in life if you lack both brains and intelligence!" I said.

I thought Gosling was going to jump at my throat. His face was working convulsively. (I might say that his face was the only part of him that ever did work! Gossy's a lazy old thing!)

"Are you an athlete?" was my next question.

"Nor. Which I'm getting too old to run about like you young warmints!" he roared.

"I see. Now, what are your views on the Irish troubles?"

"I've got enough troubles of me own, without worryin' about Ireland!" was the reply.

"What did you do in the Great War?" I murmured sweetly.

"Look 'ere—"

"I've heard that you gained the D.C.M. I suppose that means that you Drank Cocoa Moderately?"

"You—you——"

Gosling was nearly foaming at the mouth by this time. I did not require second sight to see that he resented my presence, and the questions I was putting to him.

"I shan't keep you much longer," I said. "Who do you think will win the next Test Match?"

Gosling pondered over this for some moments.

"It will be either England or Australia," he said, at length, "or a draw."

"Good! Your prophecy's bound to come true, Gossy. By the way, how often do you trim your beard? If you trim it as often as you trim the hedge round the Head's garden, it never gets trimmed at all!"

"You—you imperent young raskil——"

I scribbled rapidly in my notebook, chuckling softly the while.

Gosling seized a broom and attacked me fiercely in the ribs.

"Just one more question, old bean?" I said.

"What is your pet aversion?"

"My pet aversion," said Gosling slowly, "is a young rip wot comes an' disturbs my 'ard-earned slumbers."

Then, with surprising agility for a man of his years he sprang to his feet, and seized a broom which was standing against the door.

"What are you going to do with that?" I asked, in alarm.

"Which I'm going to sweep away the rubbish."

So saying, Gosling prodded me fiercely in the ribs with the business end of the broom.

I promptly beat a retreat, and the wrathful Gosling chased me through the Close, occasionally catching me a terrific swipe across the shoulders as I ran.

I am now a mass of bruises from head to foot, and I believe they're going to send for the stretcher-bearers soon.

(Dry up! Didn't I tell you to give your own trials and tribulations a rest?—Ed.)

THE HOLIDAYS!

By a Fellow who Means to Use Them Well.

Oh, for the hol-days!
Just one long, restful laze—
Lying full-length by the murmuring sea,
To doze till the rooks fly home to tea.
That's the slacker's notion, don't you see?
And it's no sort of use for you and me—
Not our kind of holidays!

Oh, for the hol-days!
The good, hard-working, jolly days!
Tying up sleaves in rough straw bands,
Or pitching till blisters come out on one's hands,
Or leading gees where the big rick stands,
Or any old thing that the farmer commands—
That's our sort of holidays!

"The Skipper's Bat!"

(Continued from page 8.)

"Rather a dull, heavy-looking chap!" added Johnny.

"With pimples?" suggested Frank.

"What would describe him," agreed the shopman.

"Stott! The other would be Skinner," said Harry. "Well, it's no affair of ours, and I, for one, should be glad to see Skinner looking cricket seriously. I'll have this bat, I think."

Frank and Inky had also chosen now, and Bob reluctantly picked another, instead of the one he wanted.

"You'd change it if I brought it back unused and that one was still on your hands, I suppose?" he said.

"Certainly, sir! Or perhaps Mr. Skinner might exchange with you when he found that you were so keen on that particular one."

"I'll bet he wouldn't!" said Bob in Johnny's ear. "Catch Skinney doing anything to oblige any of us!"

"Offer him your bat and half-a-dollar to boot, and he might be on," Johnny answered. "Skinney has a keen eye for the main chance, and one bat must be very like another to him."

"Don't bother about wrapping them up," said Harry to the shopman. "We can fasten them to the handles of our bikes if you'll let us have some string."

"Fetch a ball of string, Tom," said the man to the boy at his side. "I finished the last a few minutes ago."

The boy was some minutes gone, and the bats had all been paid for before he returned. The shopman took up the bat Bob wanted, and began to pack it between two long slips of thin wood, round which he wound the string. He was waiting for the string before Tom returned, and Bob noticed that Skinner's bat, thus packed, did not look like a bat at all; it might have been almost anything. A new and excited thought, who had bought such a blade as was that should want to carry it hidden from sight. He and his chums would ride back with their new bats openly displayed.

Lurking in a doorway, Skinner and Stott watched them come out of the outfitter's with their bats, and go to a tea-shop some distance down the street.

Then Skinner popped into the athletic outfitter's

"Got that bat ready for me?" he asked. "Here's the money. It was quite an accident that I hadn't it with me this morning."

He put down a pound-note and some silver, and the bat, now tied up, was handed to him. It was only a chance which prevented his hearing of the fancy Bob Cherry had taken to his property. A customer with a tennis racquet that needed restringing, and in a desperate hurry, engaged the shopman's attention, and Skinner and Stott walked out.

"Let's slide off before those bounders have finished tea!" said Skinner. "I don't want them to spot me with this. Dashed flush they must be, to be able to buy a bat each, and then go off to a teashop! Wish I was half as well-heeled, as Fishy says. Rotten Shylock, Fishy is! Half-a-dollar for the loan of half-a-crown for less than a week! He ought to be ashamed of himself!"

He had mounted while talking, and by the time he ceased to speak he and Stott were round a corner and out of sight from the High Street.

"It was the only way of raising the wind," replied Stott. "But I don't agree with sharing what he charges. After all, I've pouied up as much as you have to buy the bat, and I'm not going to get nearly so much out of the deal as you are!"

"Are you going to be rotten mean about a trifle like fifteenpence?" snarled Skinner.

"It's you that are being mean, if you ask me!" retorted Stott.

"I'm sorry I let you in on this at all!"

"You wouldn't have done if you could have worked it alone. But it's no use squabbling. I did think for a moment this morning that that fellow in the shop was going to let you have it on deposit of a part of the amount, as you asked him to. But he looked jolly hard at you, and then he said he was really afraid he couldn't do it. He, he, he!"

"If I'd gone in alone I should have got it all serene," said Skinner. "It was the sight of your mug put him off, I reckon!"

"I haven't a nose like yours, anyhow!" retorted Stott.

"An' I haven't pimples like yours!" snarled Skinner.

A row between the two black sheep seemed impending. But at this moment there was a crack like a pistol-shot, and Skinner's back tyre went flat.

Mending it in haste, they forgot their quarrel. But they were not very skilful at repairs. By the time they had finished the Famous Five had done tea and were not half a mile behind them.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

The Bold, Bad Bunter!

SKINNER and Stott rode their hardest, glancing over their shoulders now and then to see whether Harry Wharton & Co. were in sight. They were not more than half-way back when they saw the five in the rear.

"Lam on the pace, Stott!" said Skinner.

"Can't—go—any faster!" panted Stott. "And if I could, you couldn't!"

That was true, and Skinner knew it. He also knew that the Famous Five could travel very much faster.

"Jump off, then!" he said. "I'm goin' to hide this thing in the hedge till they're past. We'll pretend to be restin'."

He dismounted. Stott followed suit. With trembling fingers Skinner unfastened the parcel from his handlebar.

"Keep a watch, an' tell me if they're comin'," he said nervously.

"Hurry up!" answered Stott. "They'll be here in a jiffy. The silly asses are ridin' as if they'd a race on."

"I've got it! Catch hold of my jigger!"

Stott did as ordered. If he had been less dull or Skinner had been less nervous, it might have occurred to one or the other of them that the untying could have been accomplished more easily had Stott caught hold of Skinner's machine earlier.

As it was, they had hardly a second to spare. The parcel was thrust into the hedge, and their bikes were laid on the ground, but they themselves were still on their feet when the five rode up.

They threw themselves down on the grass.

"Hallo! You chaps been getting a Ne Plus Ultra each?" asked Skinner, in his most off-hand manner.

Bob Cherry slowed down. He glanced at the two machines on the grass, and a look of surprise came into his face.

Bob was in a hurry. He wanted to suggest that exchange to Skinner at once.

"Yes," he answered. "Where's yours?"

"My what?" returned Skinner.

Bob jumped from his machine.

"Oh, come on, fathead!" shouted Johnny Bull, twenty yards ahead by this time. "We meant to try these bats before prep."

"Catch you up in a minute!" roared Bob.

He did not want to depreciate the value of his bat by using it before making sure that there was no hope of an exchange. If there was ever so slight a mark on its new virgin surface, Skinner would hold out for more money, he was sure.

"Your bat, of course!" he said.

"My bat? You don't really suppose I should go wastin' my tin on anything like that, do you?" replied Skinner. "What I said on Saturday was only a joke."

"Then it wasn't you who bought a bat at Warder & Whiteley's, and said you'd call for it and pay this afternoon?" Bob said, half disappointed, half doubtful.

"No. We haven't been to Courtfield, have we, Stott? Only round by Highcliffe."

"That's all," lied Stott readily. "Catch me going to Courtfield to buy a bat on a broiling hot day like this! I leave that kind of thing to cricket maniacs!"

"Oh!" ejaculated Bob, too puzzled to bother about resenting the sneer. "Then—— But, of course—— Oh, I suppose it must have been somebody else."

And he mounted and rode on again.

But he could not understand it. Whose nose but Skinner's? Whose pimples but Stott's? Those were the questions that came to his mind.

"We shall have to be jolly careful smuggling it in after that," said Stott, when he had gone.

"Oh, they'll be on Little Side by the time we get in!" replied Skinner. "We've no need to hurry."

They rested for a quarter of an hour or so, and then the remainder of the journey at a leisurely pace.

Billy Bunter stood at the gates, contemplating existence lugubriously. Tea in Study No. 7 had been rather a lean meal, Bunter didn't feel that if he could hold out until supper it was as much as he would manage to do.

Skinner and Stott jumped off, and Skinner hailed him.

"I say, Bunty, carry this parcel to my study, will you?" he asked.

"Why can't you carry it yourself?" inquired Bunter, with a sniff.

"I'll tell you presently. It's a secret, but we're goin' to trust you, aren't we, Stott?"

"Rather! We don't keep old Billy out of our secrets," said Stott.

In that case I don't mind taking it in for you, though in a general way I don't demean myself by carrying parcels. It's not the sort of thing that should be expected of a gentleman," replied the Owl loftily.

He took the parcel, and rolled away in haste. A scheme was working in his mind.

"Fat chump!" sneered Skinner.

Unfortunately Bunter was fat, and on general grounds the statement that he was a "chump" had some measure of justification. But, though as fat as ever, Bunter might fairly have been accounted rather less of a fool than usual at that moment, and rather more of a knave.

"It's the bat!" he muttered to himself. "I'm sure of it! They've got it wrapped up like this because they don't want anyone else to twig. And they mean to tell me because they think I'm going to do their dirty work for them!

That's where they slip up. It's my own dirty work I'm going to do—at least, it isn't really dirty work at all, because Skinney was quite right in saying that Wingate wouldn't lose anything as long as he got another bat instead of the one with the number on it. But they're rotters, and they think I'm a silly ass, and that's where they're bad. I'm going to be one too many for them this time!"

He blinked into Study No. 7. The study, which he shared with Peter Todd, Peter's cousin Alonzo, and Tom Dutton, chanced to be empty at that moment. Peter and Tom were on Little Side, and Alonzo had taken improving volume to read under the trees in the quad.

Bunter's fat fingers trembled a little as he untied the parcel. He found it possible to draw out the bat without displacing the strips of wood. Then he looked round.

An old bat of Peter Todd's, discarded by reason of a badly sprung handle, lay under the bookshelves. Bunter snatched it up, and thrust it between the wooden strips. He hid the new bat in the cupboard, tied up the parcel again, and took it to Skinner's study.

"Toddy won't miss that old thing of his," he muttered, "and most likely those two cunning ways won't open this till they want me to go and get Wingate's bat for them. I can put them off if they're in a hurry. It isn't telling lies to say I'll do it, because I'm going to do it, but not for their giddy profit! I know a trick worth two of that! He, he!"

"What are you cackling at, porpoise, and what's that you're taking into Skinner's study?"

Bunter stumbled a step backward behind him at that moment, and he turned in alarm.

But it was only Bob Cherry. Bunter thought it easy to take in the frank and candid Bob. Peter Todd or Johnny Bull would not be so easily beguiled.

"I was laughing at my thoughts, Cherry," he said. "And I'm not taking anything to Skinney's study."

"Well, I dare say your fat thoughts were silly enough for anyone to laugh at," replied Bob. "But if you weren't going into that study, what had you your paw stretched out to grab the knob for—eh?"

"I didn't say I wasn't going in. I only said that I wasn't taking anything there, Cherry. It's rather a pity you can't mind your own business, I consider!"

"Say that again, you fat fraud, and I'll pull your ear for you!" snorted Bob. "Whose is that parcel?"

There was a label on the parcel, and the label bore the names of Warder & Whichely. Bob was puzzled again, and very curious.

"Mine," answered Bunter.

"Oh, I don't believe that, porpoise! But, after all, I suppose it's not my bizney."

And, half ashamed of his curiosity, Bob hurried away. He had only come in to fetch a batting glove.

Bunter put the parcel on the table in the study. A partially open drawer gave him a glimpse of a pink-hued paper.

"That's the 'Sporting Post,' I should think," he said to himself. "I'd better collar it. Then I shall know where to send Wingate's bat when I get it."

As he lugged the paper out of the drawer, he heard the voices of Skinner and Stott in the passage, and he thrust it hastily inside his jacket—he was wearing no waistcoat.

But it would show there. He pushed it down between his shirt and his trousers with fumbling fingers.

It was out of sight when the conspirators entered.

"Here you are, then, Bunty!" said Skinner cheerily. "Do you want to hear all about it?"

"I should like to, Skinney, but I really haven't time just now. I find I've an important engagement that I simply must keep."

"Right-ho! Later on will do just as well. Look in after prep, will you?"

Bunter nodded away, feeling all over a bold, bad Bunter, proud of his own craftiness.

Skinner hid the parcel in the cupboard without opening it.

"Where's that paper?" asked Stott. "I'm not quite sure what we have to do with the bat—when we've got it."

"I put it in the drawer. Snoopy must have had it," answered Skinner.

"Or do you think that fat toad bagged it?" returned Stott suspiciously.

"No. Why should he? He doesn't twig anything."

For once Stott was more suspicious than Skinner. And Stott was right.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.
The Gay Bunter!

"BUNTER!"

Mr. Quelch's voice rang out sharply through the stillness of the Remove Form-room.

It was not often that the Remove was as silent as just then. Mr. Quelch was not the sort of master to tolerate constant whispering, of course. But the Remove was hardly an easy Form to manage; and impositions for talking were frequent.

Not a single one had been given that afternoon, however. It was an intensely hot day, and peculiarly the whole Form felt drowsy. In the circumstances the task they had had set them suited them. It did not call for immediate exertion, mental or physical. Some twenty lines of "Paradise Lost" had to be committed to memory; and the great majority of the Remove sat with their heads between their hands, apparently staring at the printed pages before them, but actually letting their thoughts roam where they would—to the green turf of the playing-fields, or the cool waters of the Sark, or the breezy top of the downs, or the waves breaking on the shore not far away.

They did not want to talk. They were for the most part content to take their chances of being called upon to prove that they knew the lines, all hoping that it would fall to someone else to make that proof.

A few were trying. Harry Wharton was, for one. But the stuff did not seem sense to him. Hilary was trying, and fancied that his brain must have got addled by the weather. Even Mark Linley, usually foremost in the Form at any really difficult task, found this too hard for him.

"His spear, to equal which the tallest pine,
Hewn on Norwegian hills to be the mast
Of some great Ammiral, were but a wand——"

That was bad enough, but Mark had got over that, knew every word of it, and what it meant, which was perhaps rather more than could be said for any of the others. Mark had got past—

"Thick as autumnal leaves that strow the brooks
In Vallombrosa, where the Etrurian shades
High overarch'd embower——"

and had more or less got the hang of that also. But even he boggled and stuck at—

"When with fierce winds Orion arm'd
Hath vex'd the Red Sea coast, whose waves o'erthrew
Busiris and his Memphian chivalry,
While with perfidious hatred they pursued
The sojourners of Goshen."

Something to do with Pharaoh and his hosts when they were drowned in the Red Sea, Mark supposed; which was more than any of his comrades had guessed. But who was Busiris, anyway, and what had Orion to do with it?

So even Mark Linley nodded. He could have taken greater interest in the task had Mr. Quelch read out the lines and explained them at the outset. He usually did that. It was the best way. But perhaps even Mr. Quelch felt the heat, though he sat upright at his desk without propping up his head.

Bunter had been caned for snoring, and Bunter was consequently not only more awake than usual on a hot afternoon, but more awake than most of the others.

But Bunter had given up Milton as a bad job after the merest glance. Silly stuff, Bunter called it; worse even than Shakespeare; and goodness knows he was bad enough! Bunter had extracted from his trouser-pocket the "Sporting Post," and was reading for about the fiftieth time the advertisement of the Ne Plus Ultra bats, gloating over the thought of what he would do with the twenty-five pounds, which he regarded as all but in his possession.

Then Mr. Quelch's voice rang out.

"Bunter!"

Half the Form looked up. The other half looked down, pretending a sudden interest in Milton, or galvanised into an attempt to get interested, for Mr. Quelch's sarcasm when someone of whom he had hoped better things seemed stupid was not pleasant to the more sensitive of them.

"Yes, sir," replied Bunter meekly. "I wasn't sleeping, I assure you, sir."

"I am aware of that, Bunter! Come here!"

The Owl stuffed the pink paper into the top of his trousers again, but failed to get it quite out of sight. He lumbered out of his seat and rolled towards the rostrum. The perspiration was trickling down his face, and he wiped it off with the sleeve of his jacket, having forgotten his handkerchief.

"Have you lost your waistcoat, Bunter?"

"It's so hot, sir," whined the Owl.

Strict Form etiquette did not allow of a fellow's coming in to classes without a waistcoat, even on the hottest day. But few masters dropped on to anyone who infringed etiquette in this way as long as he buttoned at least one button of his jacket.

Bunter had not done this, and Bunter without a waistcoat looked less clothed than a glimmer fellow, and certainly less decent. Moreover, the pink paper showed up against his shirt, though of this fact he was quite unconscious.

"What were you doing when I spoke to you, Bunter?"

"Learning poetry, sir."

"Out of what?"

"The book, sir—Shakespeare—no, Millington, I mean."

"Repeat what you have learned!"

"I haven't got it properly yet, sir. I know it's something about the Black Sea and Buswell."

"And what, Bunter—and what?"

"Buswell, sir. That's the name, isn't it? I know it's something like that, anyway."

"Do you mean 'Busiris,' Bunter?"

"Yes, sir; that's it, sir! But, of course, you would know better than I should."

The Form was tittering now. Mr. Quelch frowned blackly upon the Form generally, and yet more blackly upon Bunter.

"What is this, Bunter?"

Mr. Quelch spoke in an awful voice, and as he spoke he leaned suddenly forward, and plucked the pink paper from its place.

"I—oh, really, sir, I don't know a bit what it is! Someone must have put it there when I wasn't looking."

"You are an abominable prevaricator, Bunter! I saw you reading this wretched publication; I saw you hide it away when I spoke to you; and you tell me a flagrant untruth! Hold out your hand, Bunter!"

Stott nudged Skinner.

"That's where it went!" he whispered. "I told you so, Skinney! The fat beast is up to some artful game!"

"Oh, please don't, sir! It's so hot! This sort of weather makes me feel quite unwell. I hardly know what I'm doing in this weather, really, sir!"

"I know a cure for that complaint, Bunter. I am about to administer it. Hold out your hand!"

The fat and grubby right hand of William George Bunter was thrust forward tremblingly.

The cane descended.

"Yoooop!" howled Bunter. "Ow! Yow!"

"Now the other hand, Bunter!"

"Yow! Ow! Yoooop!" Bunter howled.

"Cease making those absurd noises! Anyone might imagine that you were grievously hurt!" snapped the master.

"So I am!" wailed Bunter.

"Nonsense! Now, where did you procure this degraded sheet?"

Mr. Quelch tapped the "Sporting Post" with his cane.

"I—I picked it up just outside the gates, sir. I didn't know there was any harm in it," burbled Bunter.

"That, I fear, is no more true than the rest of your statements. It is plain to me that you have given no more than a cursory glance at the task set you, but have wasted your time in reading this pernicious stuff about what are called, I believe, Turf matters. What was the name you mentioned in connection with the Black Sea, which should have been the Red Sea, by the way?"

"The one you said or the one I said, sir?" countered Bunter feebly.

"Both. What did I say?"

"Busteritis, or something like that, sir."

"Dear me, Bunter, your stupidity is positively appalling! It was Busiris. What did you call it?"

"Buswell, sir."

"That is the name, I surmise, of some jockey or trainer about whom you had been reading in this low sheet!"

"No, sir. I got it out of Shakeston—I mean, Millingspeare, sir—even if I didn't get it quite right," answered Bunter, in an injured tone.

"Buswell keeps wicket for Northamptonshire, sir," said Squiff.

"Oh!" Mr. Quelch's interest in county cricket was about equal to that of Bunter or of Squiff in "Paradise Lost." But he ceased to search the pink paper for the name of Buswell.

"I say, Bunty, you mustn't—you really mustn't!" gibed Bob Cherry, when classes were over.

"Mustn't what?" returned Bunter.

He saw that Skinner and Stott were lurking near, ready to pounce upon him at the first opportunity, and he did not want an interview with those two hopeful young gentlemen. So he dallied with Bob.

"Go in for the Turf. It's not worthy of you, Bunter!"

"Well, a chap feels a bit sporty sometimes, y'know, Cherry," replied the Owl, with a fatuous smile. "There's no real harm in having a quid or two on a geegee."

"Whose?" snapped Vernon-Smith.

"Oh, anybody's, Smithy!"

"Don't tell us any," Ogilvy interrupted him. "You told Quelchy enough. Oh, you sporty Bunter!"

Then the crowd dispersed. Bunter tried to hang on to the Famous Five, but they were not having any, and Skinner and Stott headed him off.

"You fat robber!" said Skinner hotly. "You took that paper out of the drawer in my study!"

"Well, what if I did?" retorted the Owl. "There's no harm in borrowing a giddy paper, is there?"

Bunter thought he know enough about Skinner's plot to take a high hand with him.

But Skinner seized him by the collar.

"Oh, you admit that you did, do

Wingate dashed up the passage, and thumped at Carne's door. From the inside of the study came the sounds of sawing and the low murmur of voices. Then the sawing ceased. "Open this door!" roared Wingate. "Put all this away!" hissed Loder, his face going white. "Hide everything!"
(See Chapter 8.)

"Anybody's but your own, you mean, you fat fraud!"

"Well, I haven't any horses at present, though I may go in for a training-stable some day, if my family comes into its rights."

"I didn't mean horses, you porpoise! I meant quids!"

"Hn, ha, ha!"

"The gay Bunter!" snarled Skinner. "I'll make him gay when I get hold of him! That was my paper, I know."

"Told you so," said Stott.

"I say, Bob, old pal, I don't mind coming with you to the nets," Bunter said affably.

"Will you give me some coaching?" asked Bob innocently.

"Yes, I should like to; and you will be the better for it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't know what you silly asses are cackling about!" howled Bunter. "Let me tell you——"

you?" he snorted. "Take that, and that!"

"Skinner!"

Skinner let go of Bunter's collar as though it had burnt his hand, and turned to face Mr. Quelch.

"You are the real owner of that racing sheet, then, Skinner? Do not deny it. I quite accidentally overheard all that you said just now."

"Yes, sir; it was Skinner's, sir. If it hadn't been for Skinner I should never have——"

"Be silent, Bunter! You lied to me! You told me that you picked it up outside the gates."

"That was only—only a manner of speaking, sir. I naturally did not want to give Skinner away. I hope I'm above sneaking, sir!"

"Come with me, both of you! You also, Stott! You appear to have been a party to this."

When, five minutes later, the three left

Mr. Quelch's study, they were all pressing their hands under their armpits.

"We shall have to do it ourselves. There's no trusting Bunter a yard!" said Skinner to Stott an hour or so later.

"If you mean you expect me to do it you're jolly well off it, for I won't!" replied Stott morosely.

"I don't, but haven't pluck enough. Get that parcel out of the cupboard, and let's have a look at the bat."

"Get it yourself!" growled Stott. "I'm not taking orders from you!"

Skinner got it, opened it, and found himself staring at Peter Todd's old bat with the sprung handle, with a feeling of wrath and consternation!

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Exchange No Robbery !

BUNTER saw his chance. A tour of the Sixth Form study passage convinced him that there was no one about in that direction. The Remove passage was silent. In fact, everyone seemed to be out, and it would be at least half an hour before the stream invaded for tea began.

He got the new bat out of Study No. 7, borrowed a raincoat of Peter Todd's, and went along to Wingate's study with the bat concealed under it.

His luck was good. Wingate might have taken the No Plus Ultra bat to the nets, but it chanced that he had not. He was saving it for matches.

Bunter slipped it into the other in its place, and hurried off to Study No. 7, again unseen by anyone. There he hid the bat inside the stuffing—what was left of it—of the sadly dilapidated couch.

Then he went out, left Peter's raincoat, and took Peter's bike from the shed instead. He wanted another copy of the "Sporting Post," and he hoped to get one in Friardale.

Until he had that he could do nothing to obtain the twenty-five pounds, nothing more than he had yet done, that is.

Meanwhile, the Famous Five were busy on Little Side, and four No Plus Ultra bats were in evidence.

Peter Todd had been allowed to try both Wharton's and Johnny Bull's, and had pronounced them tiptop blades.

"Where's yours, Cherry?" he asked.

"You've got an old one, I see."

"I don't know that I'm going to keep it," replied Bob. "There was one I liked a bit better, a couple of ounces heavier and more wood in the driving part. I couldn't have that. It was sold to Skinner—at least, we reckoned it must be Skinner the chap at the shop meant, though Skinner says he hasn't bought a bat, and doesn't mean to buy one. Queer thing, though, I saw Bunter go into Skinner's study with a parcel that looked just like the one the fellow at Warder & Whichely's was packing the bat into."

Peter was interested, and his long, lean face showed it. They stood some, what apart from the rest, who were all intent on the net-practice, and Peter said:

"I shouldn't wonder if there was more in this than meets the eye, old top; but I'm rather sorry if my porpoise is in it, though I've had to give up the hopes I once had of making a man if him in time."

"It's a bit mysterious," answered Bob. "Rummy Skinny should think of buying a bat. You'd never imagine he'd care about having one. But if he has bought one why should he throw it? And if he hasn't what was in that parcel with Warder & Whichly's label on it?"

"Blessed if I know! But if the fat villain is in the game you bet I'll find out, Bob."

Peter said nothing of Skinner's suspicious movements on the Saturday. He did not know yet how to piece things together. But vaguely he had begun to fancy that the skipper's bat came somehow into the matter.

The question was, how?

Bunter might know; but direct questioning of Bunter only meant hearing a succession of clumsy lies.

So Peter Todd wandered off from Little Side to think things out.

"Just like Toddy!" said Hazeldene. "Has his knock, and then goes off without doing any bowling or fielding!"

"If you want me, Hazel, I should say it's a deal more like you," answered the outspoken Squiff. "Toddy's never a hog. But I've often known you to get tired pretty soon after you'd had your knock."

"I wasn't asking you," Hazeldene returned nastily.

"Then you've got something without asking for it, and ought to be grateful," said Squiff.

"Here, come along and take your turn, Hazel. You can try my bat," put in Wharton, the peacemaker.

Peter Todd found himself at the gates a few minutes later. He was there when Bunter came back, with a very disgruntled look on his fat countenance.

"What's the matter, porpoise?" asked Peter.

"Nothing," grumbled Bunter. "At least, nothing much. I say, do you know whether Quelchy's about?"

"I don't. Do you want him?"

"Of course I don't want him! What should I want Quelchy for? I only want to keep out of his way. He isn't in the Form-room, I suppose?"

"Not known, can't say. It's my belief, you podgy villain, that you're meditating some evil deed!"

"Oh, really, Toddy, what rot you do talk!"

Then Peter's eyes roved from the moonlike visage of Bunter to the bike from which the Owl had just dismounted, and he gave a start of surprise and wrath.

"My jigger!" he cried. "And after what I told you I'd do to you next time you borrowed it!"

"Is it yours, I see? I thought it was Lonzy's," answered Bunter. "He said I might have his—at least, he didn't say so, because I couldn't find him; but I quite intended to ask him, only I was in a hurry."

"It's a blessed good thing for you you haven't damaged it!" growled Peter. "Just you take it back to the shed this instant!"

"You might as well take it for me, Toddy. It's your jigger, anyway, and I'm busy just now."

To Bunter's intense surprise, Peter Todd took the machine and walked off with it meekly.

Peter had his reasons. He wanted Bunter to believe him safely out of the way.

But directly he had stabled the bike he made his way to one of the windows of the Remove Form-room.

And he saw what he had expected to see—Bunter at Mr. Quelch's desk!

Bunter had failed to get another copy of the paper at Friardale, and was trying to retrieve that which had been confiscated.

He got it. Peter saw a grin of satisfaction spread over his face as he slipped it under his jacket.

Then Peter slipped away, and waited for Bunter in Study No. 7.

But Bunter did not go straight to the study. He went to a box-room, studied the announcement in which he was interested there, and left him like the paper.

He came in to tea, and the head of the study provoked him to impudence, and castigated him for being impudent, making sure that the paper was not anywhere about him while sitting upon him as part of the castigation.

Peter was puzzled. But he did not give up the problem as hopeless.

Skinner and Stott had taken counsel between them, and prep, while Snoop was absent from the study.

"There's only one thing to be done," said Skinner. "We must bag Cherry's bat. That's the heaviest of the five. We can't buy another, it's a dead cert, and I'm not going to risk taking Wingate's without leaving another in its place."

"I say, though, Cherry will kick up no end of a row!" objected Stott.

"Besides, there's no difference between taking Wingate's without leaving another in its place and taking Cherry's, not that I see."

"Oh, Cherry can have the one I bought when we get it from Bunter," replied Skinner airily.

"Best plan would be to get it from Bunter now, don't you think?"

"I don't. How can we? The fat sweep knows there's something in the wind—he knows what, too—and if we jumped on him he'd give the whole show away in a jiffy. He thinks he's got us on a string, but that's where he's mistaken. They say the bat I bought is the one the boundin' Bob wants, and I'm sure he's welcome to it—when we get it back. Then he'll have one, and Wingate will have one, and we shall have one—and the one we shall have will be worth a dozen of theirs!"

"I'm not going to bag Cherry's bat," said Stott.

"Have I asked you to? I'll do that. Before to-morrow's over I'll get the other one from Bunter, too, you bet! I shall keep an eye on the fat worm!"

When the Remove went up to bed that night Skinner hung behind the rest, and paid a visit to Study No. 14, which Bob shared with Mark Linley, Wun Lung, and Inky, before hurrying up to the dormitory.

A couple of hours later Skinner stole out of bed, went to his own study, fetched Bob's bat, and proceeded with infinite caution to Wingate's apartment on the Sixth passage.

All lights were out. Skinner stole

inside, struck a match, and effected the exchange. He failed entirely to notice that the bat he took showed no sign of having been used at all. That it was the right one he felt sure, for none of the other three visible looked at all new. They were all bound around the blades with waxed cord.

So, carrying his own bat, Skinner returned to his study, and hid it behind a row of books.

Bob's purchase was now in Wingate's study, while Wingate's own treasured bat was hidden amidst the horsehair of the ramshackle couch in Study No. 7 in the Remove passage.

Skinner had not been gone ten minutes when Wingate's study was again invaded.

It was a risky proceeding, for the Sixth-Formers at Greyfriars did not herd together in a dormitory. Each occupied a small bed-room leading off from his study.

But Loder, who came now, knew the captain to be a sound sleeper, and had faith in his own ability to move noiselessly with nothing but socks upon his feet.

Carne was outside, breathing hard, far more nervous than Loder.

Loder did not strike a match. He flashed an electric torch.

Like Skinner, he took it for granted that the newest bat he saw was the one he wanted. He collared it.

"Got it!" came Carne's excited whisper, as he reached the door.

Loder thrust it into his hand.

"Who's that? What are you after there?" sounded Wingate's voice.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

A Row in the Sixth!

"CUT!"

Carne heard that, and bolted, taking the bat. He locked the door of his study behind him, and thrust the bat between mattress and steel-spring frame of his bed.

Wingate neither saw nor heard him. He switched on the light, and saw Loder.

"Hallo! What do you want?" he asked sharply.

His tone was hostile. But that was hardly to be wondered at. When you know that a fellow hates you, and is capable of doing you any nasty turn he can devise, you are not likely to feel friendly towards him in such circumstances as these.

"Don't snap at me like that!" returned Loder. "I didn't come here for the pleasure of paying you a visit, you may be dashed sure! I was just takin' my boots off, when I heard a suspicious noise in the passage, an' came out to see what it was."

He had twigged Wingate's glance at his feet, and had accounted for the absence of slippers by this yarn. He thought he had accounted for more than that. When the skipper missed his bat, and inquired after it, Loder could refer to the suspicious noise he had heard, which must be put down to the thief, of course.

"Well, what was it?" demanded Wingate.

"I don't know. How should I? It seemed to me to come from your study, but I'd no sooner opened the door than you appeared."

"You seemed to me to be going out, not coming in," answered the skipper bluntly.

"Impossible for you to tell in the gloom. I couldn't have told which way you were frontin' when I first saw you. There doesn't seem to be anybody here, however, so I'll retire. I'm not askin' for thanks!"

"Just as well not," said Wingate.

He had no definite suspicion. He never thought of the bat, or glanced towards the place where it should have been. But he did not trust Loder, and he did not want Loder intruding upon him after he had gone to bed.

No good-nights passed. Wingate, tired out, got between the sheets again. Loder tapped ever so lightly at Carne's door.

"Who's there?" came the voice of the other conspirator.

"Loder," was the answer.

The door opened, and shut again the moment Loder was inside.

"Did he twig anything?" asked Carne nervously.

"Not a thing! He wasn't too pleasant, but I stuffed him up with a yarn about hearin' suspicious noises an' goin' out to investigate. Where's that dashed bat?"

"The bat's safe enough. Look here, Loder, do you think we had better go through with this? I'm not so sure myself. He will be on to you when he misses it."

"Confound him! I always did hate him, an' I always shall. Are you goin' to back out, Carne? You're in no possible danger. He didn't see you."

The sneer told. And Carne also hated Wingate.

"I won't back out," he said. "But if the thing's to be done, it had better be done at once. I'm goin' to keep the dashed bat about, an' I shouldn't advise you to. I've got a saw. Let's spoil it straight away!"

"That's the style, old chap. An' where's your saw?"

Two minutes later the bat was placed across a chair, with Loder's knee upon it, and the saw was eating into it. Beneath, a paper was placed to catch the sawdust.

"Oh, by gad, I hope that noise won't bring anyone along to see what's up!" said Carne, beginning to grow nervous again.

"There's nothin' that anyone outside would hear," replied Loder.

His dark face was exultant. It was a paltry revenge he was taking for his imagined wrongs at the hands of George Wingate. But Loder's was a mean and malicious mind, and the destruction of what he believed to be his enemy's most cherished possession appealed to it.

He was wrong. Faulkner, wakeful, heard. Faulkner wondered what the noise could be, made out at length that it was very like the sound of a saw, thought a saw rather an unusual thing in the way of burglars' tools, but not an impossible one, and turned out to investigate.

He located the sound. It came from Carne's, beyond doubt. A light showed under the door.

Faulkner looked into Loder's study. Loder was not there. Ergo, he was with Carne.

What could they be doing?

Faulkner prudently took that query to Wingate.

"Hang it all, old man, you're the second chap who has awakened me tonight!" said the skipper.

"Who was the other?"

"Loder."

"Whew! Wonder if that explains anything?"

"What do you mean, ass?"

Faulkner told what he had heard. Wingate rubbed his eyes and looked round his study.

"Oh, confound it all, that bat of mine has gone!" he exclaimed. "And you say they were sawing?"

"One of them," answered Faulkner.

But Wingate had not waited for that cautious answer. He was already in the passage, aflame with wrath.

He thumped at Carne's door.

On the instant the sounds of sawing ceased. Within, Carne looked at Loder, Loder at Carne; and Carne's face had gone deadly white, and Loder's mouth was twitching.

"Open this door!" roared Wingate.

"Put all this away!" hissed Loder. "Hide everything!"

But Carne's hands shook. Sawdust littered the floor as he tried to pick up the bat.

The door shook. Wingate's powerful shoulder had smitten it.

It was too late! The bat, half-sawn through, dropped from Loder's nerveless hands as the lock gave way, and Wingate burst in.

"You rotters! Put up your hands!" he shouted.

He had lost all coolness in his rage. He did not remember that he was captain of Greyfriars, that a row in the Sixth was a bad thing for the school—did not think of anything but vengeance.

Like a whirlwind his wrath he swept down upon Carne and Loder. Carne met him first—because Carne could not get out of the way—and went down before as hefty a punch on the point of the jaw as Faulkner had ever seen dealt out to anyone.

Then Wingate seized Loder by the collar, swung him almost off his feet, flung the black sheep forcibly from him, sending him out into the passage and the arms of Patrick Gwynne.

"Sure, there seems to be a disturbance of sorts here," said Gwynne, a lanky figure in his pyjamas. "What's the matter, at all at all, Win? If it's any help ye're needin', I'm your man!"

"Help? I could handle those two rotters without a hand's turn of help from anyone!" roared Wingate. "And, by the powers, I've a good mind to do it! Look at that, Pat! The best bat I ever had!"

Gwynne picked up the bat, sawn almost through.

"Now, do ye know, George," he said, "I'm doubtin' whether this is your bat at all at all. It looks as if it is ever had a ball against the face of it!"

Carne began to pick himself up. Wingate glared at him, and he subsided again. Loder, whose head had struck the opposite wall as he fell into the arms of Gwynne, sat huddled upon the floor, with his hands to his forehead, moaning with pain, half-dazed.

Wingate took the bat. A glance showed him the truth.

"It's not mine!" he said. "But what—look here, you fellows, I can't get at what's happened, but I'm dashed sure that these two were up to some dirty game!"

"Well, I should say myself that it's hardly likely they were taking a lot of trouble to destroy anything of their own," replied the careful Faulkner.

"I'll hold you to account for this, Wingate!" fumed Loder. "If the bat isn't yours—an' you admit it's not—then——"

"Don't open your mouth too widely, or you may be sorry for it later!" broke in the skipper. "We'll find out tomorrow whose it is, and how you came to have it. Oh, you needn't be afraid that I'm going to take this to the Head. We don't want a scandal in the Sixth; we've had enough of that since you've generally been at the bottom of them, Loder! Clear off, you fellows, will you?"

Others had come—North and Hammersley and Walker—but they cleared off, wondering, at the skipper's bidding. Whatever might have been the case had Loder's malicious trick succeeded, Wingate's hold over the majority of the Form was at least as strong as ever.

Loder and Carne were left to give each other what comfort they might. But that amounted to very little indeed. As a matter of fact, they parted on the worst possible terms, each blaming the other.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.
A Satisfactory Settlement !

"MY hat! What's this?"

It was Peter Todd who exclaimed thus.

He had caught sight of something—the top of a bat handle protruding from a rent in the horsehair of the couch in Study No. 7.

"It looks rather like a bat, Cousin Peter—a cricket bat," answered the meek and mild Alonzo.

"It certainly doesn't look like the sort of bat that flies by night, you silly ass!" snapped Peter, dragging it out.

"No, Cousin Peter; I did not think it did," said Lonzy.

"Whew! I've lunged if this isn't Wingate's bat!"

"Fat? Of course he's fat!" said deaf Tom Dutton, looking at Bunter, who stood in the doorway as if turned to stone.

"Just as fat as ever. Had I must say I never saw him look quite so blue before."

"You leave that bat alone, Toddy! That's mine!" burbled the Owl.

"Oh, it's yours, is it? Funny thing, then, that it should have the same number on it as Wingate's, tubby!"

"That's nothing—I mean, that doesn't mean anything. What I mean is, I don't believe there's a number on it at all, and if there is it can't be the same as Wingate's—stands to reason it can't. And if it is it ain't my fault. I didn't put the number on !"

"You say it's your bat, Bunter. Where did you get it?" asked Peter gravely.

"I—I bought it, Toddy."

"What with?"

"Money, of course !"

"Where did you steal the money?"

"Oh, really, Toddy! As if you didn't know that I'm above suspicion !"

"I don't—and you're not. Either you stole the bat, or you stole the money to buy it with. To my certain knowledge you were stony, as usual, yesterday, and for weeks past !"

"I—I ain't quite true that I bought it. As a matter of fact, I swopped another bat for it."

"Likely yarn, I don't think! Where did you get the other bat?"

"Oh, look here, Peter Todd, I don't see why I should tell you all my business !"

"You'll tell me this, or——"

At that moment the bell for classes rang.

"I can't stop. I'm not going to get into a row with Quelchy just to please you, Toddy, so you needn't think it!" burbled Bunter, as he rolled away.

Peter Todd's face was rather grim as he followed. Peter honestly did his best to keep Bunter out of mischief; but he had come to the conclusion that the Owl never would be anything but a disgrace to the fair fame of Study No. 7.

There was no doubt at all that the bat belonged to Wingate.

But why had Bunter bagged it? It was not like Bunter to want a cricket bat. In an ordinary way such a possession would have been about as useful to him as a sore throat. He could not hope to keep it, even if he wanted to do that, and it was almost inconceivable that he should want to.

The number—Skinner's interest in that—the bat which Skinner had bought—the paper which Mr. Quelch had confiscated and Bunter had retrieved from the Form-master's desk—all these things seemed to be mixed up with the affair.

Skinner ! Skinner was at the bottom of it somehow, Peter felt sure. He neglected his class-work assiduously that morning, and gave practically all his attention to that problem. By twelve o'clock he had arrived at the conclusion that if he could only see that pink paper he would have the whole mystery well on the way to solution.

But Bunter, not Skinner, had the pink paper. When classes were over Peter did not seek out Skinner, though he meant to see him later; and he did not look for the Famous Five, though he wanted to take counsel with them. He kept an eagle optic on Bunter, without letting Bunter suspect it.

The bat he had locked up. Wingate should have it in time for the match that afternoon, but Peter did not want to hand it over till he had straightened out the whole tangled skein. For it was inevitable that Wingate would demand an explanation, and Peter wanted to have a full one ready.

By-and-by Bunter sidled off towards the gates, and Peter followed him stealthily, and pounced upon him just as he had taken the pink paper out of his box.

"You leave that alone ! Tain't yours, Toddy ! Besides, Quelchy says it's a low paper, not fit for us to read, and you're so particular——"

"I'm not so particular as all that comes to, perhaps. Why shouldn't I be sporty once in a way, like you? Oh, my hat! You thundering, bloated villain!"

Peter had seen the advertisement now, and had leaped to the right conclusion almost in a second.

"Twenty-five quid, eh, you compound of adipose tissue of original sin? So that was why you bagged Wingate's bat? It's the luck for you this time, as sure as eggs are eggs !"

"I—I—or, really, Toddy, it wasn't me !" wailed Bunter. "It was all that rotter Skinner. He wanted me to do it, and I didn't see why I should let him have the money—now do you? And Wingate hasn't lost anything—he's got another bat instead of that one."

"Whose bat was he going to get?"

"The one Skinner bought."

"And what about Skinner?"

"Oh, I let him have that old broken thing of yours instead. You don't mind, do you, Toddy? It wasn't a scrap of use to you. Look here, I'll go shares with you in the twenty-five quid—I will, honest Injun. You can't have half—that wouldn't be fair to me. But I'll give you a fiver."

Peter ignored that liberal offer.

"Does Skinner know that he's got my bat?" he asked.

"I expect he does by now. I know he's been looking for me. But you won't let him do anything to me, will you, Peter, old pal? We're pards in this, ain't we?"

"We—are—not !" answered Peter very slowly and distinctly. "You aren't fit for a decent fellow to touch with a barge-pole, Bunter, and Skinner's worse than you are ! Cut off, and don't say anything to anybody. I'll save you from the sack, if I can; but if Wingate doesn't half slay you for this you bet your shirt the Form will !"

And Peter went off to look for the Famous Five. It was best to see them—Bob Cherry in particular—he considered, before Skinner was tackled.

It was not until near dinner-time that he found them, for they had been to Friardale. And when he did find them Bob had just discovered that his bat had disappeared.

"Not much doubt who's had that !" said Peter. "Well, till you've heard my yarn, and you'll agree with me that Skinner must have bagged it."

"But Skinner's got one of his own—the one I wanted," objected Bob. "I don't see——"

"If you wait just about three minutes I think you will see," broke in Peter. "I don't know, but I'm pretty sure, for all that."

And he told his story well inside the time stipulated, showing them the advertisement that had aroused the cupidity of Skinner, and making it clear how Bunter had come to be mixed up in the affair.

"My hat! You'd make your giddy fortune as a detective, Toddy !" said Harry Wharton admiringly.

"There wasn't really anything very difficult about this case," replied Peter modestly. "You see—there goes the dinner-bell, and I haven't seen Skinner or, given Wingate his bat yet !"

"We'll all see Skinner," said Johnny Bull grimly. "This is a matter the Form's bound to take up. As for the bat, I'll see that it's handed over to Wingate just as he goes to the match. If he's missed it he'll be so bucked to get it back that he's jolly sure to take a century off the St. Jude's bowling with it."

"Right-ho! I'll do that," answered Peter.

The fellows who were playing in the match at the afternoon had a table in Hall before the rest; but Peter was in time to catch Wingate as he came downstairs in flannels and blazer, with one of his cricket bats under his arm.

"Don't you think you'd better see this one, Wingate?" asked Peter mildly.

"My No Plus Ultra? I say, though, Todd, where did you get that? If this is a pinch——"

"It's no joke, Wingate—anything but that," said Peter, shaking his head solemnly. "But it's a long story, and there isn't time to tell it now. You'll take my word for it that I didn't have anything to do with bagging your bat, I hope? Upon my honour I didn't."

"Of course I'll take your word, Todd, and I've no end obliged to you! I can't tell you how jolly glad I am to have this bit of willow back."

Peter thought he could understand, for he, too, had the heart of a cricketer, and to every true cricketer a good bat is something more than a mere thing of cane and willow. But Peter knew nothing about the row in the Sixth the night before. None of the Removes ever did hear about that—which made one outcome of the affair puzzling to them all though very pleasing to Bob Cherry.

Skinner and Stott were rounded up by the Famous Five, and the leaders of the Form sat in judgment on their case.

Skinner denied everything, and tried to brazen it out. Stott backed him up at first, but after Bunter had tearfully confessed, Stott gave way.

"It's for Wingate to settle," said the

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Bounder. "But I think we might ask him to leave these three criminals to be dealt with by the Form, an' I rather think he'll do it. Now let's get on down to Big Side, an' see whether he's makin' another century, with the magic an' valuable bat!"

Wingate was not making a century. St. Jude's were in. But it was not long before St. Jude's were out for a paltry total of eighty. Before the first Greyfriars wicket—Gwynne's—fell that score had been passed; and Wingate reached three figures after only three-quarters of an hour's batting.

That evening Skinner, Stott, and Bunter were brought before him by a deputation from the Remove, and Peter Todd told the whole story, while the three guilty juniors stood shivering—Skinner and Stott sullen, Bunter blubbering tears of contrition and fear, but mostly fear.

"Want me to leave them to you, do you?" said Wingate. "Well, I'll do that. Where's the bat Skinner bought to give to me?"

"Here it is, Wingate," replied Harry Wharton, producing it.

The skipper took it, and straightway handed it to Bob Cherry.

"You'll never see the one you had again, Cherry," he said. "No, I can't explain. That's my secret. But I understand you prefer this one. Well, it's yours! Skinner meant it for me. I accept it, and pass it on to you—see?"

Skinner quivered at Wingate and at Bob, but he dared not protest.

"As for the money, I don't want it," said the skipper. "These bats are good enough on their merits; they don't need cash prizes to advertise them, and I'm more than half inclined to tell the makers so. But I think you ought to have a share of it, Todd; the rest shall go to some local charity."

"Let it all go, Wingate," said Peter. "You'll accept a Ne Plus Ultra out of it, won't you, though?"

"Oh, rather! I'll do that, like a shot, Wingate! And thanks awfully!"

"Take them away and do what seems good unto you to them," said the captain, pointing to the guilty trio. "Clear out!"

They cleared. Skinner, Stott, and Bunter were marched off to execution. But none of them ever believed that Wingate, muscular as he was, could have done more to them than those who operated upon them did. For a week afterwards standing came more easily than sitting to all three. But lying was easiest of all: the punishment inflicted could not alter their natures.

Loder had not played against St. Jude's, and it was some little time before he reappeared in the team. But at that he got off far more lightly than he deserved. Wingate's silent contempt and the cold shoulder given them by the other Sixth-Formers were very galling to both him and Carne, however, and even between themselves the two plotters steered clear of any mention of the skipper's bat!

THE END.

(Turn to the "Chat" page for full particulars about next week's story of Greyfriars.)

Have you ever camped out and experienced the joys of cooking your own grub? Have you ever felt the desire to seek the woods and highway, to get away from the smoke of the city and town? In these splendid articles you can learn to do all these things. AN OLD HAND tells you how.

Article No. 8. - THINGS TO MAKE IN CAMP.

SOME folks go uncomfortable in camp just because they don't "savvy" how to make the useful little things which go to make a camp a camp.

Now, the old hand camper knows what to do and how to do it, so I propose to "tip you the wink" so that you'll know what to do when you get to camp.

How to Make a Toasting-Fork.

There's no need to carry a toasting-fork to camp—and yet you may wish to toast a piece of bread. What's to be done? Why, set to with a good clasp-knife and make a toasting-fork. Get a piece of green ash stick, about 2½ft. long, and cut it near a fork at the top. Point the two prongs at the top, and whittle out a pattern on the handle. Toasting-fork's ready for use! Simple, isn't it? And it works just as well as the factory-made article.

How to Make a Camp Candlestick.

Very often in camp you may want a candlestick. No need to take one along with you. You can make one in a few minutes. Get an old tin and cut it so that it makes a reflector, and wind-screen. See sketch. Fasten this tin to a block of wood. If you can't do this you can use the bottom of the tin as it is. Then drive a short nail in the centre of the stand. (See sketch.) Stick your bit of candle on the spike of the nail, and your camp candlestick is ready for use.

How to Make a Camp Barometer.

If you wish to know what the weather will be, make yourself a camp barometer. Take a piece of string, and fasten a button at one end. Tie this up to a tent-pole. Mark the place where the button is on the tent-pole with a pencil. If the string tightens it may mean rain. If it slackens out it may mean dry weather. A heavy dew will affect this barometer, so you must allow for that. At the seaside a good bunch of dry seaweed will do for your camp barometer. When the seaweed is very dry and brittle the weather will be fine. When it goes damp and flabby, look out for wet weather.

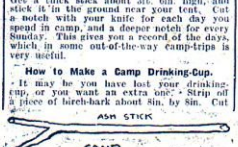
How to Make a Record-Post.

If you go to camp for two or three weeks on end you may lose count of the days, just as Robinson Crusoe would have done on his desert island.

The old hand sets up a "record-post." Get a thick stick about 3ft. 6in. high, and stick it in the ground near your tent. Cut a notch with your knife for each day you spend in camp, and a deeper notch for every Sunday. This gives you a record of the days, which in some out-of-the-way camp-trips is very useful.

How to Make a Camp Drinking-Cup.

It may be you have lost your drinking-cup, or you want an extra one? Strip off a piece of birch-bark about 8in. by 8in. Cut it as shown in the sketch. Now cut an ash stick for the handle of your cup 4in. long, and split one end. Curl your birch-bark round till it makes a cup shape, and then clip the ends together by slipping them into the cleft handle.

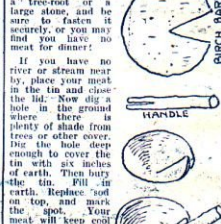


How to Keep Meat Fresh in Camp.

Many people don't know how to keep meat fresh in camp. Meat soon goes bad if you keep it in a tent during hot weather and, in any case, it is not the place to keep meat in camp. This also applies to fish. Get an old biscuit-tin, or any tin which has a lid.

If you are near a running stream or a river, put your meat in the tin and close the lid. Now fasten it firmly as if you were packing up a parcel. Then drop it gently into the shallows till the water runs over the top of the tin. Now fasten your rope to a tree-root or a large stone, and be sure to fasten it securely, or you may find you have no meat for dinner!

If you have no river or stream near by, then pour meat in the tin and close the lid. Now dig a hole in the ground where there is plenty of shade from trees or other cover. Dig the hole deep enough to cover the tin with six inches of earth. Then bury the tin. Fill in earth. Replace sod on top, and mark the spot. Your meat will keep cool and fresh in this underground larder. Many animals know this dodge—and from wild animals the old hand is able to learn a good many camping tips.



A Tent Trench.

When you are staying a long time in camp, to prevent the ground inside your tent from getting wet if it should rain, you should dig a small trench round the outside to act as a drainage for the water running off the sloping sides of the tent. I have known cases in which a tenderfoot made a great mistake by digging such a large trench that the rain ran about in pools under the flysheet, and consequently dampened the sleeping-bag. The smaller the trench the better. I advise you to make it about 4in. wide and 3in. in depth.