

SPECIAL DOUBLE-LENGTH STORY!
HARRY WHARTON & CO.

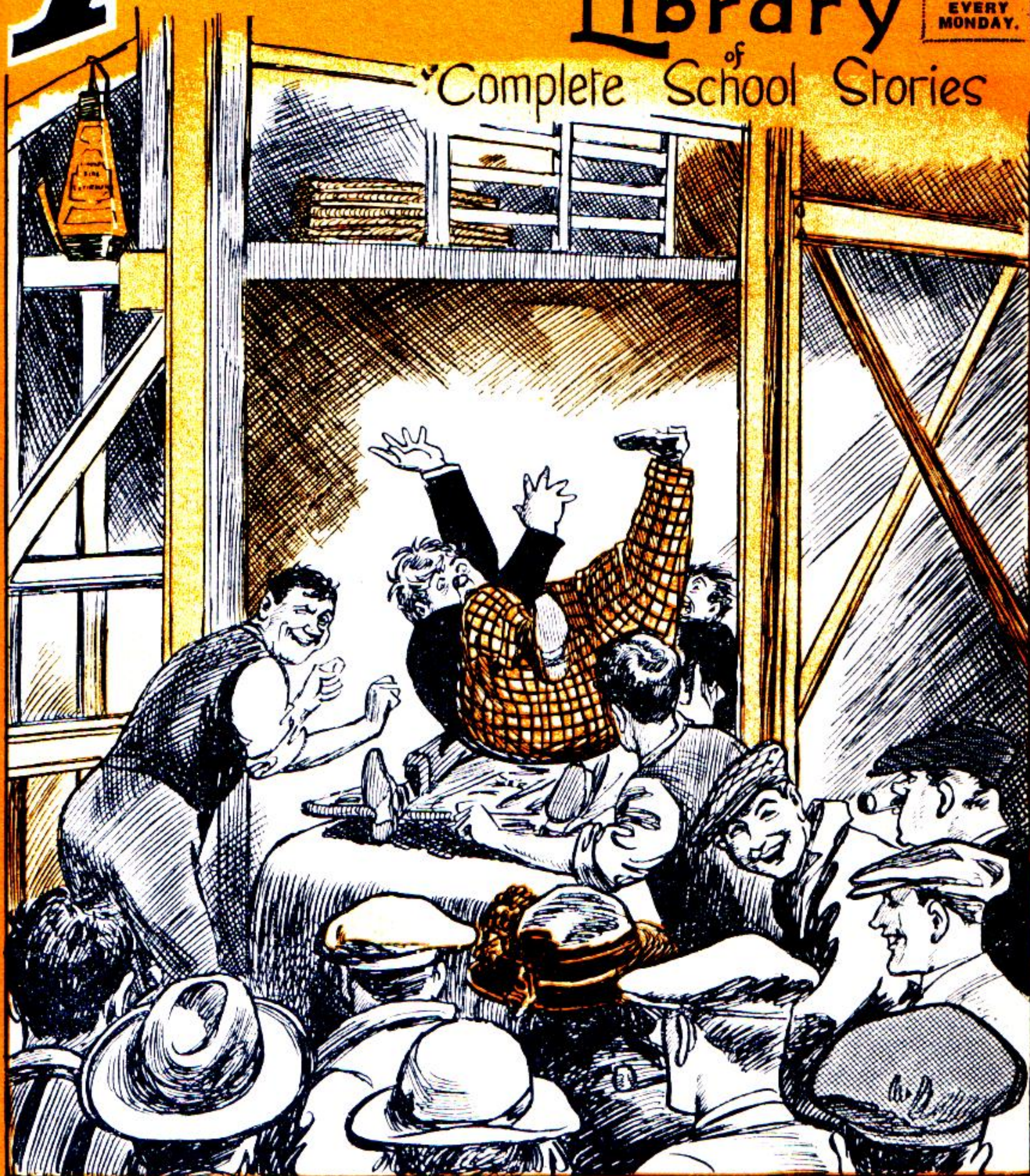
No. 870. Vol. XXVI. Week Ending October 11th, 1924.

The Magnet 2^d

Library

EVERY
MONDAY.

Complete School Stories



THE OWL OF THE REMOVE COMES TO GRIEF ON THE SLIDE!

BILLY BUNTER ENJOYS HIMSELF AT THE WEMBLEY EXHIBITION!

(A screamingly funny incident from this week's special double-length story of Harry Wharton & Co., of Greyfriars - inside.)

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Your Editor is always pleased to hear from his chums. Write to him when you are in trouble or need advice. A stamped and addressed envelope will ensure a speedy reply. Letters should be addressed "The Editor," THE MAGNET LIBRARY, The Amalgamated Press (1922), Ltd., The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

GRAND FREE PHOTOGRAVURE PLATES!

THAT'S caught your interest, hasn't it, chums? Jove, I'll wager you are all on tenterhooks to know more! Well, I won't prolong the agony any longer. These photogravure plates are for MAGNET readers—for my loyal chums who have kept the MAGNET flag at the top of the mast through these battling days of competition.

THE FLEET!

We are all proud of Britain's might at sea. We have lived through a time when the safety of us all depended in no small measure upon the monster walls of steel manned by the gallant men of our Royal Navy. And right well did they stand the test. There is always a feeling of awe and wonderment when we see the modern monsters of the ocean steam out for review. In every heart is the desire to get to closer quarters with these wonderful guardians of our shores—to learn something more about them. To many of us the latter presents some difficulty. We hear of a new departure in the way of battleships, submarines, cruisers, and the like, sometimes we see photographs of them in the pictorial newspapers; still, we are not as familiar with these ocean greyhounds as we would like to be.

A MAGNIFICENT COLLECTION!

For some considerable time past I have received letters from my loyal chums asking for a series of pictures dealing with the latest types of ships in the Royal Navy. Well, your Editor has gone one better. Instead of printing in the MAGNET pages a series of pictures dealing with types of craft in use in the Royal Navy, he has decided to present to every one of his loyal readers a series of gorgeous photogravure plates, featuring twelve of the latest types of ships at present on the Active List. How's that? Hurrah! I can hear the cheer in anticipation, at least, from where I sit. Make no mistake about it, boys, this Grand Free Gift is the real gilt-edged article. Pictures of prominent cricketers, boxers, footballers, etc., are being given away every day of the week, but nothing in the way of war ships—the very latest types at that!—has ever been given away free before.

SPOILING THE SHIP—

You are all acquainted with the old saying. Well, your Editor has seen in the past many free gifts spoiled simply on account of their meagre size. You won't be able to say that about OUR SPLENDID PHOTOGRAVURE PLATES! The size? Each photogravure is nine and a half by six and a half inches; large enough to be framed; certainly large and imposing

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enough to put into a special album. And each one of the series of twelve will be printed on Fine Art Paper. Space does not permit of my dwelling any longer upon this amazing offer, but I am sure my thousands of chums have already made up their minds to "bag" this wonderful collection of photogravure plates. The first of the series will appear very shortly. Look out for a Special Announcement next week. As there's bound to be an unparalleled rush for them, regular readers are advised to place their orders for the MAGNET with the newsagents AT ONCE!

"SIR HILTON'S NEPHEW!"

By Frank Richards.

That is the title of our next grand story dealing with Harry Wharton & Co. Most of you have been introduced to the peppery old martinet rejoicing in the name of Popper, and it remains to be seen whether his nephew is built on the same lines. His meeting with the chums of the Remove is an unexpected one, and in circumstances that are peculiar, to say the least.

THE HIGHCLIFFE NUTS!

As an interesting sidelight to this coming story your favourite author once again brings into play the unenviable characters of Ponsonby & Co.

They, too, meet the Famous Five, and, between you and me, the occasion is a stormy one. None of my chums should miss this fine story.

"FOUR AGAINST THE WORLD!"

By Hedley Scott.

There is another long, powerful instalment of this ripping serial for next Monday: This time the twins come into the picture. Beneath their irrepressible good humour there is a serious vein, and we get more than a glimpse of it next week. The twins are cast in the right mould; both are determined to do their bit in the great struggle of life under adverse conditions. How the family breakfast is brought into the combined room at Bloomsbury—the new and modest abode of the Meltons—makes stirring reading. Down and out, with but a few coppers between them and starvation, the twins surprise their elder brothers by putting their backs to the wheel. Pride takes a back seat. A hungry stomach knows no pride, and the twins prove it. How they "do their bit" you will learn next week.

"DRILL!"

Harry Wharton & Co. have hit on a brilliant subject for their next supplement, and the result is extremely fascinating and mirth provoking. Drill does not play a very important part in the lives of our Greyfriars heroes, although Mr. Prentiss thinks that it should. Important or not, the coming supplement redounds to the credit of the "Herald" staff, for it is exceptionally well handled. Look out for it!

BIKES FOR MAGNETITES!

Few words of mine are needed to express an opinion about our Characters Competition. The number of entries speak eloquently of its popularity. This par is in the form of a reminder that there are still more bikes waiting to be won. Grasp this wonderful opportunity now, boys—these £8 bicycles are really worth having!

ONE FOR GLAMORGAN!

Result of "Herbert Vernon-Smith" "Magnet" Characters Competition!

In this competition the prize of a Gent's "Royal Enfield" Bicycle has been awarded to:

F. SHAW,

61, Pontypridd Road,

Porth,

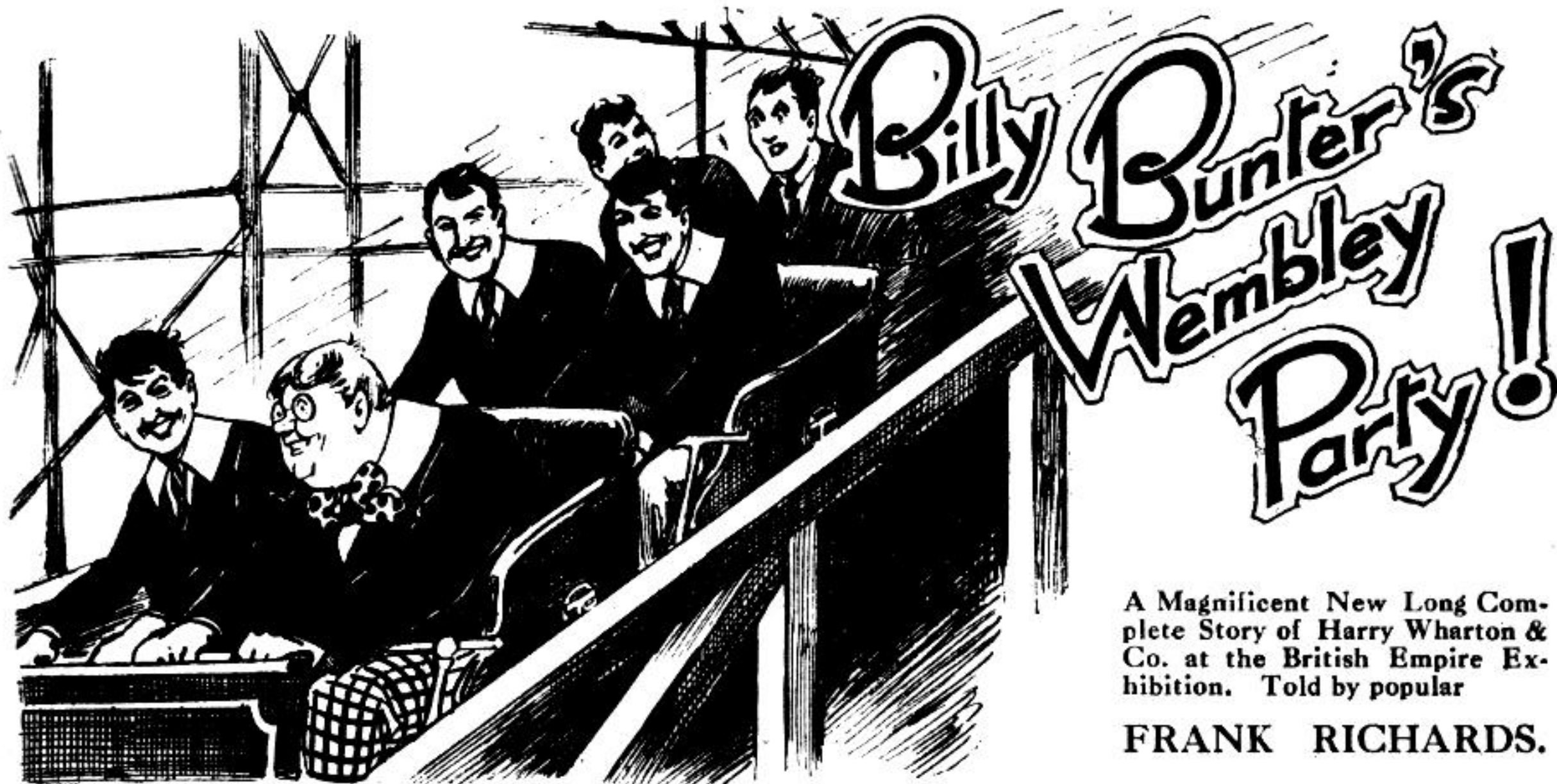
GLAMORGAN,

for the following line:

"'Enigma' to Schoolmates."

THERE ARE MORE BIKES WAITING TO BE WON! FILL IN THE COUPON ON PAGE 17 AT ONCE.

WONDERS WILL NEVER CEASE! Strange as it may seem Billy Bunter's magnanimous offer to take a party of his school-fellows to Wembley is founded on fact—not merely the product of a fertile imagination. For once in a way the fat Owl of the Remove is in the limelight. How long he stays in that exalted position is another matter.



A Magnificent New Long Complete Story of Harry Wharton & Co. at the British Empire Exhibition. Told by popular

FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Ungrateful!

"IT'S rather awkward," murmured Harry Wharton, rubbing his chin reflectively. "It wouldn't matter if it was one of us chaps. But we can't very well take advantage of Bob's aunt's kind invitation and leave Bob behind, can we?"

"Rather not!"

"What rot!" said Bob Cherry warmly. "You fellows shove off and leave me to it. I tell you my aunt will be jolly glad to see you whether I'm with you or not."

"Yes; but—"

"No; but—"

"You're like a lot of butting billy-goats!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "You've got to go without me, I tell you! My dear old aunt has invited us to tea to-day, and I've written back accepting the invitation. We can't back out now just because I've given my silly old ankle a twist. Rot!"

"We can't back out now, of course," agreed Harry. "I didn't mean that, you ass! I mean we've got to take you with us somehow, Bob. If we only had the cash to hire a taxi—"

"We haven't, though!" said Frank Nugent. "What about borrowing Coker's bike and sidecar?"

Harry shook his head.

"He's using it this afternoon—I heard him telling Loder. Loder wanted to borrow it. In any case, it isn't likely the mighty Horace would lend it to us. No; that's no go! Bob must come somehow, though."

And once again Harry Wharton rubbed his nose reflectively.

It really was rather awkward. Bob had received the invitation from his aunt only the previous day, and he had written accepting it the same night. And now, while larking in the quad before dinner, Bob had slipped and given his ankle a twist.

It was not a bad twist, certainly, but it had put a cycling spin out of the question for that afternoon. But, in Bob's view, that was no reason why

Harry and the others shouldn't go on their own.

But the others thought otherwise; Bob's aunt was a "distant" sort of relation, and Bob himself scarcely knew her. And in these circumstances Bob's chums hardly liked the idea of going without him, as was natural.

"It's rotten dashed luck!" said Bob, rubbing his injured ankle ruefully. "But my aunt isn't on the phone, and in any case it's too late now to draw back. She's expecting us, and we can't let her down, you know."

"We're not letting the old lady down," said Harry. "Is it far—Latchley, I mean?"

"About five miles, I think," said Bob. "It's only a tiny village. My aunt's taken a furnished house there for a few weeks, I believe. I've got the address—Hallo, what the thump did I do with that letter?"

Bob fumbled in his pockets, and then a puzzled expression came over his face.

"Perhaps dropped it in the quad when you went down before dinner—you came a tidy cropper, you know," suggested Frank Nugent.

"Must have done!" grunted Bob. "It doesn't matter, though. The Croft is the name of the house. You ought to be able to find it easily."

"We ought?" repeated Harry Wharton grimly. "My dear man, you're coming, too, Bob. If your foot isn't too bad I don't see why you shouldn't bike it even now. You can free-wheel all the way, and we'll push you along and help you on and off. And if—Hallo, what the—"

Crash!

At that juncture Billy Bunter of the Remove joined the discussion. Without warning the door flew open, and the fat Remove fairly shot into the room and fell sprawling across the carpet, yelling in alarmed surprise.

The Famous Five glared at Bunter's grovelling form, and then they looked up at Vernon-Smith, whose grinning face appeared in the doorway.

"Smithy, you ass—" began Harry Wharton.

"Sorry to startle you," chuckled the

Bounder, nodding grimly at Bunter, "but that fat earwig had his ear glued to your keyhole when I came along, so I booted him inside."

"Oh!"

The Famous Five understood now.

"Hope you weren't discussing anything confidential," grinned Smithy. "Anyway, there he is! I suggest twenty with a cricket-stump."

And Vernon-Smith closed the door and walked on. The Famous Five eyed the captured eavesdropper grimly.

"You—you fat worm!" snorted Harry Wharton. "Listening again, you Nosey Parker! Hand over that cricket-stump, Johnny."

"I—I say, you fellows—" gasped Bunter.

He scrambled to his feet hastily.

"I say, you fellows, don't take any notice of that beast Smithy!" he gulped. "He's telling whoppers, the awful beast! The—the fact is I just happened to be coming along when—"

"Your bootlace came undone and you stopped to tie it," remarked Harry grimly. "Well, we're going to teach you not to stop to tie your bootlaces under our keyhole, old lard-tub. We've heard that yarn before. That stump, Johnny?"

"Here you are, Harry."

"Here—hold on!" howled Bunter. "I—I say, it's true, you chaps! I was just coming to see you, you know. Honest Injun! I say, you fellows, how'd you like a trip to the British Empire Exhibition at Wembley?"

"The—the whatter?"

Harry lowered the cricket-stump in sheer astonishment.

"A trip to Wembley?" he ejaculated. "I should jolly well think we would like it! But—"

"Then I'll put you fellows down," said Bunter coolly. "Lemme see. Five of you, ain't there? Right! I'm just asking a select few—not more than a dozen or so—to join my party for Wembley, and—"

"Your party for Wembley?" yelled Bob Cherry.

"Exactly, Bob, old man," nodded

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Billy Bunter. "You fellows know that Wingate and several of the Sixth went there last Saturday. Well, why shouldn't some of us in the Remove go?"

"Echo answers why?" murmured Frank Nugent. "Ask Quelch, or the Head, Bunter."

"Oh, don't you fellows worry about that. Don't worry about anything," said Bunter coolly. "I'll arrange everything with the Head."

"You—you will?"

The Famous Five blinked at Billy Bunter. Whether this was a suddenly inspired stunt, thought of on the spur of the moment, to save him from the threatened licking with the stump, they did not know. Quite possibly it was not. Quite possibly this was one of Billy Bunter's usual stunts—partly pure swank, and partly started in the hope, on Bunter's part, of raising a small loan on the strength of his kind invite.

But whichever it was, it left the juniors cold. Much as they would like to visit Wembley, they had no desire to be members of Bunter's party—a party which they guessed existed only in Bunter's vivid imagination.

Yet they blinked at Bunter, impressed by his cheek in expecting them to believe such a yarn.

"You—you burbling chump!" snorted Harry.

"Oh, really, Wharton?" protested Billy Bunter, blinking seriously at the juniors. "I mean just what I say. I'm getting up a party to go to Wembley—probably on Saturday, or the Saturday after."

"This year, next year, some time, never!" sang Bob Cherry ironically. "I fancy it will be never, myself."

"Oh, really, Cherry?"

"My dear man, we can visit Wembley in imagination ourselves without having to join your imaginary party—see?" said Bob. "Hurry up with that cricket-stump, Harry, before Bunter starts asking us to join his Riviera party."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter blinked indignantly at the laughing juniors.

"Look here, you fellows!" he said warmly. "Can't you believe a chap? It's going to be a splendid treat; my pater's going to do the thing in style, you know."

"Your pater?"

"Of course," snorted Bunter. "I'm getting the party up, but the pater's footing the bill—"

"Does he say so?" inquired Bob.

"Ahem! You—you see, I haven't asked him yet. But he will, of course. I'm asking him to let me have the Rolls-Royce and the Panhard, and any other cars he can spare for the trip," explained Bunter calmly. "We shall probably call at Bunter Court first, and then, after a sumptuous repast, run on to Wembley."

"Then if we've got to run all the way from Bunter Court to Wembley, you can call it off for me, Bunter," grinned Frank Nugent. "It must be billions of miles from Wembley—"

"From the unreal to the real," said Bob.

"I tell you it's genuine!" howled Bunter. "Can't you fellows be serious?"

"We're going to start being serious now, Bunter," said Harry Wharton, tightening his grip on the cricket-stump. "We're going to give you twenty whicks for eavesdropping, and ten more for telling such frightful whoppers. Hold the fat—"

"Here, hold on!" yelled Bunter in alarm. "I—I say, you fellows, it's all right; I won't press you to join my

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Wembley party if you don't want to. I've got a suggestion to make to you fellows."

"You fat spoofer! If it's about your Wembley party—"

"Not at all," said Bunter, eyeing the cricket-stump warily. "I say, what about old Gosling's horse and trap?"

"Eh? What for?"

"To take Bob Cherry to his aunt's place, of course," grinned Bunter. "That would solve the problem, wouldn't it? You four could cycle to Latchley, and I'd run old Bob over in Gossy's trap. You fellows know how I can handle the ribbons—"

"Then you were listening at the keyhole, you fat toad!" hooted Johnny Bull. "Why—"

"Here, hold on," exclaimed Harry Wharton eagerly. "My hat, that's just the wheeze we want, you chaps! We'll tip old Gossy to lend us the trap. He'll do it for a tip."

"Just the very thing!" said Bob, his face brightening. "Bunter, you fat clam—"

"Not a bad suggestion—what?" grinned Bunter. "I say, you fellows, hadn't we better be starting out? It's after two now."

Apparently Billy Bunter took it for granted that after making that undoubtedly useful suggestion, he would be included in the party. But he was soon undeceived on that point.

"We'll adopt Bunter's suggestion—with one reservation," said Harry Wharton. "That is, we're not jolly well adopting Billy Bunter, too. We can't disgrace Bob by taking Bunter along."

"Rather not!"

"No fear!"

"Oh, really, you fellows—"

"But to pay Bunter for his useful suggestion," grinned Harry, "we'll let him off the licking. There's the door. Bunter! Good-bye!"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Good-bye, old fat pippin! Now, you chaps, buck up—"

"Call that gratitude?" howled Billy Bunter in great wrath. "After asking you fellows to my Wembley party, too! Offering you a splendid day's outing at my expense, and you won't even let me join a measly tea-party. Yah! Call that generous? It ain't even decent—"

"Bow-wow!"

"It was my suggestion," hooted Billy Bunter. "And I'm jolly well coming."

"You're not, old top!" grinned Johnny Bull. "You're going, though! The door, Franky!"

Frank Nugent opened the door. Johnny Bull grasped the protesting Owl, yanked him to the doorway, and planted a hefty boot behind him.

And Bunter went! He landed outside in the passage with a bump and a roar.

"Yaroooooh!"

"That's settled Bunter!" remarked Johnny Bull, closing the study door.

But Bunter wasn't "settled," had Harry Wharton & Co. only known it. For as the door closed upon him he scrambled to his feet wrathfully.

"Yah! Beasts!"

After hurling that elegant remark through the keyhole, Bunter rolled along the passage. At the end of the passage he stopped suddenly, his eyes gleaming behind his spectacles.

"M-my hat! Why not?" he murmured. "Yes! Blessed if I don't do it!"

He fumbled in his pocket and withdrew a letter. Bunter had found that letter in the quad an hour ago, and had Bob Cherry only seen it, he would have recognised it at once as his aunt's letter.

"The Croft, Latchley," murmured Billy Bunter, consulting the heading on the note-paper. "My hat! How lucky I found this! He, he, he! I'll teach those beasts not to be mean and ungrateful. And, after all, I'm entitled to join the party, as I thought of that splendid suggestion. Great Scott! Yes, I'll do it. Now for the cycle-shed!"

And Billy Bunter rolled on at top speed—apparently bound for the cycle-shed—and the open road!

Certainly Billy Bunter wasn't "settled" by any means!

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

After the Feast!

WHAT'S happened to the fat-heads?"

Harry Wharton asked Bob Cherry that question twenty minutes later. It was a question that Bob Cherry could not answer—though Harry had not expected an answer.

As the juniors had anticipated, Gosling, the porter, had raised no objections to loaning the horse and trap to the juniors. A little silver placed in his horny palms always worked wonders with Gosling. Moreover, he knew he could trust Harry Wharton & Co.

So now Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry were waiting for their chums to turn up with their bikes. The trap was standing in the road at some distance from the gates. Bob was seated in it, and Harry stood at the horse's head.

It had been arranged that Bob and Harry should travel in the trap, whilst the others followed on their bikes. There was room for four in the trap, but the juniors preferred the exercise of cycling.

Harry Wharton couldn't understand it. He had expected to find his chums waiting with their bikes; instead of which here was the trap waiting for them. There was no sign of them on the road towards the gates, either.

"Bother the dummies!" said Harry impatiently. "What on earth can be keeping them, I wonder? Here, just see to the gee-gee, Bob. I'd better trot back and see what's up."

"Right-ho!"

Harry ran back to the gates, and made his way to the cycle-shed in an exasperated mood. But his exasperation was as nothing to the exasperation that possessed Bull, Nugent, and Hurree Singh when Wharton found them in the cycle-shed. In fact, exasperation wasn't the word for it.

They were all three fuming with rage; they were also all three frantically mending punctures to their bicycle-tyres.

"What—what on earth—" began Harry.

Johnny Bull looked up, revealing a heated and angry face.

"I'll burst that fat toad, Bunter!" he hissed. "I—I'll puncture him! The spiteful, rotten little beast!"

"But—but—"

"Look at 'em!" hooted Frank Nugent, pointing to the upturned machines. "Punctured fore and aft—both tyres on all three bikes!"

"Great Scott!" stuttered Harry. "And you think—"

"It must be that fat cad!" snorted Johnny Bull. "He's punctured our tyres out of spite—just because we wouldn't let him come. We found 'em like this. Who else would—who else could have done it? The—the fat scoundrel!"

"Phew!"

Harry Wharton frowned angrily. It was just like one of Bunter's senseless tricks. It was obviously Bunter. But



"Help! Help!" Billy Bunter gasped with amazement and pulled up short. Before him, in the shady clearing, a desperate struggle was in progress. A well-dressed, middle-aged gentleman was struggling pluckily with two ruffianly scoundrels—obviously footpads. "Help!" "Oh, dear!" gasped Bunter, his podgy face turning white. (See Chapter 3.)

that Bunter had had any special reason for doing such a thing Harry did not dream, neither did his chums. They were yet to find that out.

"Well, it can't be helped!" said Harry grimly. "But why not repair just one machine. Two of you can take my machine and Bob's."

"Can we?" said Frank, with a faint grin. "If you'll open your eyes you'll see that Bob's machine is done in, too; and yours is missing altogether."

"What?" Harry Wharton jumped. As he glanced quickly round he saw Frank's words were true. Bob's bike rested on its rims; but his own bike was conspicuous by its absence.

"Well, this is the limit, even for Bunter!" gasped Harry Wharton. "What the dickens can the fat rotter have done with my bike, you chaps?"

"Taken it to Couetfield to pop, perhaps?" suggested Frank, with a grin. "He's not above doing that."

"The fat scoundrel!" exclaimed Harry hotly. "Anyway, it's no good looking for him now—or my bike. Look here, you fellows had better come in the trap, after all. It'll hold five at a pinch—three in the front and two at the back. We can't wait while you mend all these dashed punctures!"

"But—but—"

"We can't keep the trap waiting in the road, either," went on Harry. "Somebody may spot it, and we don't want to get old Gossy into a row. After all, it's frightfully close, and I fancy you chaps will be glad you didn't cycle when you've been on the road for a bit."

"Well, that's so!" grunted Johnny Bull.

The juniors agreed upon that. It certainly was a close afternoon, and they realised that cycling in such conditions had its drawbacks.

Hurriedly packing away their repair outfits, the three were following Harry a few seconds later towards the waiting trap at a run.

Harry Wharton hurriedly explained the situation to Bob Cherry as the juniors piled into the trap. A moment

later the trap was bowling along the dusty road, with Harry driving and Bob seated at his side. At their feet, on the floor, crouched Huree Jamset Ram Singh, and, seated at the back, were Johnny Bull and Frank Nugent.

"Well, my only hat!" breathed Bob Cherry, when he had heard the tale of Bunter's perfidy. "That fat clam is the absolute limit. We'll pulverise him for this when we land back!"

"We will!" said Harry grimly. "But I wish I knew what the idiot's done with my bike!"

"It's rummy—jolly rummy!" said Bob Cherry, wrinkling his brows. "I wonder—No, that's rot! He wouldn't dare—"

"Dare what?" asked Harry.

"Oh, nothing!" grinned Bob. "I thought—"

"Perhaps he's ridden into Friardale?" suggested Frank brightly. "We may see something of him on the road."

"Perhaps," said Bob doubtfully.

But they didn't. The trap rattled through Friardale village, and went bowling out into the open country beyond. But they saw nothing of Billy Bunter. And very soon the Owl of the Remove had passed from their thoughts.

"This is A 1, you chaps," remarked Bob Cherry. "We'll jolly soon be in Latchley at this rate!"

And the juniors agreed with Bob on both counts. The horse was fresh, and made light of its heavy burden, trotting along at a spanking pace.

It was close and muggy—there was no doubt about that. Frank Nugent, Johnny Bull, and Huree Singh felt thankful that they had not cycled the journey.

"After all," grinned Frank, referring again to Billy Bunter, "we ought to pass a vote of thanks to the fat rotter for suggesting the trap, and for doing in our bikes. I do, anyway."

"My vote of thanks," said Harry grimly, "will take the form of a hefty boot—in fact, quite a lot of hefty booting. Hallo, this looks like Latchley!"

His glance had fallen on a tiny shop in the village they had just entered, and

over the doorway was a notice, "The Latchley Post Office."

"Oh, good!" said Bob Cherry. "It's just past the church there, I believe. Look out for the name—the 'Croft.'"

The trap bowled on merrily, and very soon the juniors discerned the house they were seeking. It was a small, pretty house, standing back amid a cluster of trees. Harry Wharton drove in through the open gateway, having seen the name on the gatepost.

The horse trotted up the short drive, and Harry drew rein with a flourish before the door. As the juniors clambered out—Harry and Frank helping the crippled Bob to alight, a kindly-faced, grey-haired old lady appeared on the steps.

Immediately five caps were doffed in salutation.

Bob's aunt advanced and kissed her blushing nephew, smiling a greeting at the same time to his chums.

"I was afraid something had happened to you, my dear boys!" she exclaimed, leading the way indoors. "Your friend has been here some time, and has already started tea."

"Mum-mum-my friend!" ejaculated Bob blankly. "What—?"

"He was simply exhausted, and was certainly famished," went on Bob's aunt, with a smile. "We are having tea on the lawn, and I expect you are all ready for it. I'm afraid you will be disappointed with the tea, boys."

"But—but, aunt—" began Bob bewildered.

"I'm so very sorry," explained Aunt Martha. "But, really, I did not expect a schoolboy's appetite to be so hearty; it was most careless of me. I'm afraid all the cakes are gone, and there is scarcely time to get more from the village now. However, I have plenty of eggs, and salad—"

"But—but, aunt dear," stammered Bob, "don't worry about the tea. We'll enjoy just plain bread-and-butter!"

"Yes, rather!" came the chorus. "Please don't bother about us, ma'am!"

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6 LOOK OUT FOR THE "FRANK NUGENT" COMPETITION RESULT NEXT WEEK!

The old lady's face brightened. There was certainly no disappointment in the juniors' voices—only surprise.

"Oh, I'm so glad!" she smiled. "I was really worried. I know how boys love cakes, and sweet things. I'll just tell Jane to boil the eggs. Meanwhile, you can join your friend in the garden."

She bustled away, leaving the juniors to make their way through the open french window on to the lawn. Bob Cherry was looking bewildered. His aunt's distress concerning the lack of cakes and "sweet things" was obvious, and rather surprising. And what on earth did she mean about their "friend"?

It was really astonishing.

But Bob Cherry understood the next moment—they all understood.

As the juniors stepped out on to the lawn they got the shock of their lives.

At the edge of the well-kept lawn, in the shade of the trees, was a large rustic table and rustic chairs. A white cloth covered the table, and it glinted with silver dishes—cake dishes, all of them empty. Seated before the table was a familiar figure—a fat, familiar figure—William George Bunter!

The juniors stared at him, dumb-founded. They understood now Aunt Martha's remarks concerning their "friend"—they understood why all the cakes and sweet things had gone. They also understood in a flash why their bicycle tyres had been punctured—why Harry's bike was missing from the shed.

"Great Scott!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Bunter!" Bob Cherry fairly howled the name.

"Oh, really, you fellows—"

Billy Bunter blinked at Harry Wharton & Co. a trifle apprehensively, his fat, shiny features, smeared with jam and cream, wearing a sickly smile.

"I—I sus-say, you fellows—" he gasped.

"You—you fat poacher!" roared Bob Cherry. "You've had the thundering cheek—"

"Oh, really, Cherry!" gasped Bunter. "Hold on! I—I say, you know, you can't kick up a disturbance here. Don't—don't forget you're guests here. No larks!"

Bob Cherry, who had been about to rush at the fat junior, halted, his face crimson with wrath.

"Hold on, Bob!" muttered Harry. "We can't deal with the fat rotter here, you know. *Your aunt—"

"That's it!" said Bunter. He grinned coolly as he realised the juniors' helplessness. "I must say I'm surprised at you—shocked, in fact. Have you forgotten your manners? I rather feared this, you know. You're not at Greyfriars now, Bob Cherry."

"You—you—"

"I say, you fellows, where is the old girl?" demanded Bunter. "I asked her to let me have some eggs. Is she getting them?"

Bob Cherry almost exploded.

"Bunter!" he hissed. "If you dare to touch anything else—if you dare to scoff any eggs—"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Shush!" whispered Harry. "Here's your aunt, Bob. For goodness' sake keep cool! We can deal with Bunter later."

At that moment Aunt Martha came through the open french window. Behind her was a maidservant bearing a well-filled tray. Bob's aunt eyed the juniors' red faces in some alarm.

"Is—is anything the matter, dear—"

she began.

"Oh, not at all, aunt!" gasped Bob. "N-nothing!"

"Bob's a little excited," explained Bunter genially. "It's the weather, I think."

"The dear boy—"

"But he's all right now, ma'am—aren't you, Bob?" said Bunter cheerily.

"Right—right as rain, aunt," spluttered Bob, forcing a ghastly smile.

"Sit down, you fellows," invited Bunter. "Hallo, are those the eggs at last? Good! I'll take a couple."

And he did. There was really no doing anything with Billy Bunter after that. There was nothing else for it but to make the best of things. The Famous Five accepted Bunter's invitation to sit down, and they sat down. Aunt Martha also joined them, looking slightly puzzled. But she soon forgot her feeling that something was wrong. None of the party gave her cause to think anything was wrong after that—certainly not Billy Bunter. Not for worlds would Harry Wharton & Co. have given the kind old lady cause to worry or doubt. They even chatted genially with Bunter, and Bob Cherry actually forced a laugh at one of Billy Bunter's jokes.

Altogether it was a jolly meal on the lawn, under the shady trees. And the jolliest person at tea was Billy Bunter—at least, he appeared to be the jolliest. But whether he noticed the strange looks given him from time to time by the Famous Five, or not, he certainly showed no alarm. He had transgressed—he had committed offences which he must have known would scarcely be forgiven by Harry Wharton & Co. But Billy Bunter was not accustomed to looking ahead. He pinned his faith to the old saying: "Enough for the day is the evil thereof."

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

On the Highway!

"**T**IME'S up, you fellows: better be starting back," said Harry Wharton. "Hallo! Where's Bunter?"

Nobody seemed to know where Bunter was.

That jolly tea on the lawn had been over long ago, and the juniors had been strolling round the grounds in company with Bob's aunt. She was a gracious, charming old lady, and Harry Wharton & Co. had enjoyed every moment of their brief visit to the Croft. And all were sorry when Harry announced that time was up.

"Where's the fat clump got to?" said Harry, looking round the garden. "You fellows seen Bunter this last few minutes?"

"I spotted him in the conservatory some time ago," said Johnny Bull, grinning. "I think he was scoffing the grapes."

"Or the tomatoes," added Frank Nugent. "His chivvy was smeared with tomato-juice, anyway."

"Well, he's not there now," grunted Harry. "And—Hallo! My bike's gone."

"Well, my hat!"

They understood then.

Bunter's bike—or, rather, Harry Wharton's bike—had been leaning against the conservatory during tea. It was gone now; and evidently Billy Bunter had gone with it.

"Dished and done?" grinned Bob Cherry. "The fat frog knew we would give him a warm time on the way back. He hasn't waited for it."

"The crafty rotter!" breathed Harry Wharton.

Though the juniors could not help grinning, they felt savage and disappointed at the discovery. For the sake of the kind old lady they had concealed their real feelings towards Bunter; they had made a mighty effort to be even genial and cheery with him. And they had succeeded.

But only the promise of the vengeance to come, when once they were clear of the house, had enabled them to hold themselves in hand. They could forgive the trick Bunter had played with their bikes; they could almost forgive his astounding cheek in inviting himself to the Croft. They were used to that sort of thing from Billy Bunter.

What made them furious was the fact that Bunter—even for a time—had caused keen dismay and distress to the kind old lady by scoffing all the dainties she had provided for the tea—their tea! They could not forgive that. And they had arranged secretly to "rag" Bunter immediately on leaving the house, and to make the fat schemer tramp the five miles home to Greyfriars as a punishment.

It was obvious that Bunter had forestalled them; he had not waited for the reckoning. They admitted now that they might have expected such a proceeding from William George.

"Never mind," said Harry, grinning ruefully. "He's done us, but we'll perhaps catch the fat villain up; he can't have got far. Come on; the trap's waiting at the front."

The juniors hastened their departure now, eager to get on Bunter's track. All was soon ready for the start, and after thanking Bob's aunt for her kindness, and promising to come up again, the juniors piled into the trap. With the kind old lady waving good-bye from the steps, and the juniors waving their straw hats, the trap bowled merrily along the drive and turned out on to the broad highway en route for home.

"Well, it's been a topping afternoon, after all," said Harry Wharton. "Your aunt's a dear old lady, Bob."

"She is—a brick!" agreed Bob grimly. "She's too good a sort to be spoofed and deceived by that fat cad Bunter!"

"Yes, rather!" grunted Johnny Bull. "We'll soon catch the fat spoofer up at this rate, though."

It certainly seemed like it. The stable-boy at the Croft had fed the horse, and he was in fine fettle, and the trap fairly bowled along.

The juniors kept their eyes fixed steadily on the white ribbon of road ahead for a sight of their quarry. They could just imagine him scorching along for dear life, panting and gasping and perspiring and desperate.

But fully a mile had been covered before they did catch sight of Bunter. Then Hurree Singh's keen eyes glimpsed a podgy figure toiling up a steep hill some distance ahead.

It was undoubtedly Billy Bunter. He was pushing Harry Wharton's bike before him, and he appeared to be done to the world.

"Good egg!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "Got him at last!"

The trap rapidly overhauled the toiling fat junior. It was within a hundred yards of him when Billy Bunter heard the clatter of hoofs and turned a scared face to the juniors coming up behind.

Then he did what they had half expected him to do. He hesitated in terrified indecision for a brief moment, and then he dropped the bike and dived through the nearest hedge. At this point thick woods lined the lonely road, and next moment Billy Bunter's fat form was lost to sight.

"After him!" yelled Harry Wharton. "He'll do us yet!"

A moment later the trap reached the fallen bike, and as Harry Wharton pulled up, Hurree Singh, Frank Nugent, and Johnny Bull, followed instantly by Harry Wharton, dropped from the trap.

"Look after the horse, Bob!" yelled Harry.

He darted after the others and plunged into the wood. They could hear the fat junior crashing through the undergrowth ahead of them, and they crashed in pursuit, heedless of scratches, of tumbles, and collisions with tree-trunks.

But Billy Bunter was also heedless. He knew what to expect if he were caught; and Bunter had no intention of being caught—if he could help it.

He had already lost his straw hat, and he soon began to look and feel a wreck. Thorns and creepers tore at his face and his clothes, but he plunged on until suddenly something happened.

Without warning there sounded from somewhere ahead—quite close—a shout, followed instantly by sounds of a struggle. Then came another shout—a hoarse shout for aid.

"Help! Help!"

Bunter gasped in alarm, but before he could pull up he was on the scene, and the meaning of the cry for help was revealed to him.

Before him, in a shady clearing through which ran a woodland pathway, a desperate struggle was in progress. On the green path was a man—a well-dressed, middle-aged gentleman—and he was struggling pluckily with two ruffianly scoundrels—obviously footpads.

Bunter stopped dead in his tracks, and his podgy face went white.

"Oh dear!" he panted.

Even as he looked the gentleman glimpsed him, and he shouted again.

"Help! You—you scoundrels! Help!"

Heedless of the pounding footsteps behind him, Billy stared transfixed. He badly wanted to bolt for it, but he seemed rooted to the ground with sheer fright. And before he could move the worst happened.

One of the cowardly footpads struck

the old gentleman from behind with a stick, and felled him to the grass.

"What the thump—"

It was Harry Wharton. He plunged from the foliage behind Billy Bunter's shaking form, and stopped dead, as Bunter had done.

But not for long. There was no mistaking the meaning of the scene, and Harry took it in at a glance.

"Great Scott! Quick, you chaps!"

He hurled himself into the fray without hesitation, and at his heels went Singh, Bull, and Nugent, grim and resolute. They rushed past the quaking Bunter to the rescue.

One of the rascals had heard their approach, however. He glimpsed the juniors rushing towards them, and he bolted on the instant.

The other happened to be stooping over the still form on the grass, but he leapt up swiftly—just in time to take Harry Wharton's hard fist under his bristly chin.

Crash!

The ruffian measured his length on the grass with a husky oath.

"On him!" panted Harry.

But the burly rascal was too quick for them. He jumped up desperately, and his huge fist sent Harry Wharton spinning, his brain reeling under the savage blow.

The other three juniors made a combined rush at him, but he struck out right and left, and they scattered before the onslaught. Against those huge swinging fists the juniors were practically helpless—they could scarcely reach the rascal.

Both Johnny Bull and Frank Nugent went crashing to earth, and then the ruffianly footpad dived through them and vanished amid the thick trees.

"Hold on, you chaps!" panted Harry Wharton, as his chums started to follow the rascal. "No good going after him. Let's see to this poor chap."

It was wise advice, and together they stooped over the unconscious form on the grassy path. Bunter had vanished from sight, but they gave no thought to Bunter then.

In silence they examined the injured man. He was bleeding slightly from a wound on the temple; but he was breathing, and the juniors' grave faces relaxed a little.

"Only stunned!" muttered Harry. "We'd better carry him to the trap, I think."

It seemed the only thing to be done at the moment, and the four juniors lifted the unconscious form and staggered away, taking the woodland path that seemed to lead back to the road.

Even on the path it was hard and trying work. The man was no light-weight, and they had to rest time and again. But it was no great distance, and they emerged on to the road at last, quite close to where they had left Bob Cherry in charge of the trap.

And there yet another shock awaited the juniors. The bicycle still lay on the grass bordering the roadway. But the horse and trap and Bob Cherry had vanished.

"Well, my hat!" gasped Harry in alarm. "What—"

"Those brutes!" said Frank Nugent quickly. "They must have overpowered Bob and taken the trap. Oh, great Scott!"

It seemed the only possible conclusion, and the juniors lowered their burden gently on to the grass, and looked at each other with scared faces.

Harry made up his mind in a moment.

"We passed a big house lower down the road," he said swiftly. "One of you run there and bring help for this chap. I'm going after Bob."

As he spoke Harry ran to the bike, and, running it out on the road, sprang nimbly into the saddle and sped away up the hill, his face tense with anxiety on Bob's behalf.

"I'll go!" said Frank Nugent.

He was about to start off at a run in the opposite direction, when the sound of a motor was heard, and he stopped.

Grinding up the hill was a tradesman's motor-van. In the driving-seat were two men. As the van reached the spot the driver stopped his engine, and the two



"By gad!" exclaimed Mr. Pascall heartily. "So I am to have the opportunity of thanking my brave rescuer, after all. My dear lad!" "Oh!" gasped Bunter, almost collapsing with surprise. The Colonial grasped the fat junior's hand and shook it with bluff heartiness. "My brave fellow," he went on. "I recognised at once from the maid's description that you were the gallant lad who rescued me." "Oh!" gasped Bunter again. (See Chapter 4.)

men jumped down and ran over to the juniors.

"What's up?" demanded the foremost.

"Hallo!"

He seemed to recognise the injured man, for he stooped over him, his face concerned.

"Why, it's Mr. Pascall!" he ejaculated. "What—"

"You know him?" asked Frank.

"Yes; he's staying at the Gables just below there—Mr. Pascall's brother!" he explained. "But what's happened?"

"Attacked by footpads," explained Frank Nugent briefly. "We drove them off, though. If you could take him in the van—"

"Leave him to us, youngsters," was the willing reply. "We've just left the Gables, and we'll soon have him safe there."

"Oh, good!"

Frank Nugent, Johnny Bull, and Hurree Singh only stopped to help the two men to lift the injured gentleman into the van, and then, rather to the surprise of the men, the juniors tore off up the hill.

They knew the man they had rescued was in safe hands now, and they could do no more to help. Their chief concern was for Bob Cherry.

What had happened to him? They fairly flew along the dusty road, breathless with anxiety. They could see the wheel-marks of the trap plainly enough, and for twenty minutes or so they ran on, their anxiety growing with every minute that passed.

And then suddenly their fears left them, as a horse and trap, escorted by a solitary cyclist, appeared on the road ahead, speeding towards them.

It was Bob and Harry right enough, and in a few minutes they had met, the three runners panting and exhausted.

"What happened?" panted Frank in deep relief.

"Only this," said Bob Cherry, pulling up and pointing to a rapidly swelling eye. "It's all serene."

"But—but why—"

"It was those two ruffians," explained Harry, coming to the rescue. "They came charging through the hedge, and fairly took Bob by surprise. Before Bob knew what was happening one of the beggars had him down, while the other thrashed the horse to a gallop. They stopped at last, though—"

"I expect they didn't dare to take the trap through Courtfield," chimed in Bob. "Anyway, they jumped out suddenly and bolted into a wood. Then I turned the horse, and on my way back met Harry."

"Thank goodness!" breathed Johnny Bull. "We thought— But what on earth are we to do now—go back, Harry?"

"I don't see what we can do," said Harry. "I vote we make for home. We can't very well go back to the Gables. They'll think we are after a reward for what we did."

"That's so," agreed Frank Nugent, nodding. "In any case, that chap's in safe hands now, and we can do nothing. What about Bunter, though?"

"Blow Bunter!" snorted Harry. "He'll find his way home all serene, trust him. The tramp will do him good. Let's get back."

The Famous Five started back. The horse and trap was turned, and with Harry now riding his machine they sped home towards Greyfriars.

But for all his confidence in Bunter's ability to look after himself, Harry's face was not a little worried as the juniors rode through the peaceful countryside in

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the cool of the evening. They had seen nothing of the fat junior on the road. What had happened to him?

Harry Wharton need not have worried on that score. Billy Bunter was all right—very much all right!

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

In Clover!

"Oh dear!"

Billy Bunter of the Remove at Greyfriars sat up amid the thick grass of the wood and uttered a deep, hollow groan.

It was a groan of mingled pain and bewilderment.

Where he was or what had happened to him he hadn't the faintest idea. His head throbbed madly, and he felt confused and dazed.

But as he sat up and blinked around him beneath the trees he understood.

"Oh dear! The—the awful villain!" he mumbled, holding his aching head in his podgy hands. "He knocked me down, the awful brute! I—I must have been lying stunned!"

And that, in fact, was exactly what had happened to Billy Bunter.

Without moving Bunter had watched Harry Wharton and his chums rush to the rescue; he had seen the first footpad bolt across the clearing. He had witnessed that brief but exciting fight, and then the second rascal had, to Bunter's horror, come charging straight for him.

The Owl of the Remove had moved then quickly enough; he had wheeled and bolted for his fat life. But scarcely had he taken a dozen steps into the wood when the burly ruffian had overtaken him, and a fist like a mallet took Bunter at the side of his bullet head.

It was a brutal blow, and it sent the hapless junior headlong. As he fell his forehead had struck the root of a tree, and Billy Bunter remembered nothing after that.

It all came back to his fuddled senses now. How long he had lain there, hidden in the long grass and ferns, he had no idea; but as he blinked into the clearing a moment later he found it empty. All was silent in the dim recesses of the wood—silent save for the soft whisper of the warm breeze in the leafy branches.

"Oh dear!" groaned Bunter again.

He stumbled across the clearing towards the woodland path. He stopped suddenly, however, as his eyes fell upon something lying in the grass on the path.

It was a small pocket-book—a notebook—that had obviously fallen from the pocket of the attacked stranger as he fell.

Bunter opened it and glanced inside. It was full of figures and notes—business matters that did not interest Billy Bunter. But written in the cover was something that did interest Billy Bunter.

It was a name—Alfred Pascall—and an address in Melbourne, Australia. And underneath this another address—the Gables, near Courtfield.

As he blinked at the latter address sudden recollection came to Bunter. He remembered that just as he had dismounted from his bike at the bottom of the hill he had seen the well-dressed stranger emerge from the gates of a big house dimly seen through the trees. He had seen him a minute or so later cross a stile leading into the woods, and later still had seen him struggling with the footpads.

"My hat!" mumbled Bunter. "That house must be the Gables, then."

He blinked at the notebook again, and

then a sudden inspiration came to Billy Bunter.

"Mum-my hat!" he breathed. "The very thing! I'll take this along to the Gables now. That chap will have been taken there by this, I bet. After all, I saved him. If it hadn't been for me, Wharton and the other beasts couldn't have rescued him, anyway. In fact, I rescued him, really—saved his life, actually!"

The idea took Billy Bunter by storm. Billy Bunter always had an eye to the main chance. He reflected that here was a splendid chance to reap a bit of profit. Of course, Wharton and the others would have reaped the glory of putting the footpads to flight. But by taking the book back he could surely wangle something—at least the price of a fare from Courtfield to Friardale.

It was worth trying, anyway, thought Bunter. He knew he was stranded. He knew that unless he could "wangle" something he was booked for a weary tramp home.

The next moment Billy Bunter was stumbling along the woodland pathway. His hat was gone, his collar was loose from its moorings, and his clothes were rumpled and dirty. But Bunter recked nothing of this; he even forgot his aches and pains in his eagerness to reach the Gables.

He reached the stile merging on to the roadway at last. The road was deserted, and Bunter hurried along to the gateway of the house. He tramped boldly up the drive, and, mounting the steps, rang the bell.

He was cool and self-possessed now. Bunter had carried through bigger jobs than this in his time. He faced the trim maidservant who answered the door calmly.

"Mr. Alfred Pascall lives here?" he inquired curtly.

The girl eyed the disreputable-looking junior curiously.

"Mr. Alfred Pascall is staying here—yes," she said. "But—"

"Then give him this," ordered Bunter, handing over the notebook. "He dropped it when those footpads attacked him. Tell him that the schoolboy he saw has brought it, and would be glad to know if he is recovered."

Bunter knew that that would do the trick, and it did. The girl was absent two minutes, and when she returned she looked at Bunter quite pleasantly.

"Will you please come this way, sir," she said. "Mr. Pascall will be delighted to see you."

"Oh, good!" murmured Bunter.

All sorts of thoughts crossed Bunter's mind as he followed the maid. He wondered where Wharton and the others were. He wondered, rather uneasily, if they had told the full story. It struck him suddenly that he had scarcely shone as a hero in the matter.

But he soon knew that he had no need to worry about that.

He was shown into a luxuriously furnished room, and the maid withdrew. On a couch near the window a man was reclining, his forehead bandaged. Bunter recognised him in a flash.

At the same moment the man looked round, and he recognised the fat junior. He rose to his feet eagerly and held out his hand.

"By gad!" he exclaimed heartily. "So I am to have the opportunity of thanking you, after all. My dear lad!"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

He nearly fell down with surprise at the astonishing greeting. Almost mechanically Billy Bunter fumbled and

found the outstretched hand. His own was shaken with bluff heartiness.

"My brave fellow!" went on Mr. Pascall warmly. "I recognised at once from the maid's description that you were the gallant lad who rescued me. But, my dear fellow, why did you not accompany the van when the men brought me here?"

"The—the men?" stammered Billy Bunter.

"Of course! The tradesmen who brought me here in the van. I was unconscious, of course, and the silly fellows handed me into the care of the servants and drove away without explaining anything beyond the fact that I had been assaulted by footpads, and that some schoolboys had rescued me."

"Oh!" gasped Bunter again.

"I knew at once, of course," said Mr. Pascall, smiling, "that the plural—schoolboys—was an error. I remembered when that villain felled me, seeing you dash into the clearing, my boy. To attack those burly rascals was a splendid act of gallantry, my dear boy. I shall not forget it!"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter once again.

He began to understand now. What had happened after that fight in the clearing he had had not the faintest idea until now. In a flash something of the truth came to him. He knew that the Famous Five were not the fellows to seek glory or benefit for what they had done. They had evidently handed the rescued Mr. Pascall over to somebody else, who had obviously failed to explain exactly how matters stood.

The thought of this brought a sudden gleam into the crafty brain of Billy Bunter. If Wharton and the rest were fools enough to let a chance of reaping glory and profit slip by them, then Billy Bunter was not.

He beamed expansively at Mr. Pascall.

"It was nothing, sir—nothing at all!" he said modestly. "In fact, I'm used to going little things like that."

"I take a different view, however," smiled Mr. Pascall. "My dear boy, you have probably saved my life! In addition, I may add that I had a considerable sum in notes on me. You have undoubtedly saved me from a serious loss. But—but you are injured. You are terribly knocked about. I suppose you fought—"

"Like a lion, sir!" agreed Bunter calmly. "It was a terrific struggle. I struck out right and left." Bunter paused, warned by a sudden curious look in his hearer's eyes. He deemed it wiser not to lay it on too thick. He went on hastily: "But it didn't last long, sir. Luckily for me, they were cowardly brutes, and bolted almost at once. I got one fearful blow, though!"

And Bunter touched the bulging bruise on his head tenderly.

"How you managed to get me to the road puzzles me," said Mr. Pascall. "I suppose you shouted—"

"That's it, exactly," said Bunter. "I managed to get you some distance, though. I'm a pretty hefty fellow, you know. Then—then those—those men came up."

"And like a modest fellow you departed as if you had done nothing unusual. I am thankful, though, that you have come, after all, my dear boy, so that I can thank you for what you have done."

"I had to come, sir," explained Bunter coolly. "I fully intended to go my way. After all, sir, what I did wasn't anything to make a song about. But it was no good. I was deeply concerned about



"Who's this bloated aristocrat?" grinned Bob Cherry as the car drew nearer. "Why——" "Bunter!" yelled Johnny Bull. "Great pip! Bunter!" It was Bunter. The car drew up and the driver jumped from his seat. He leaped to the door and stood on one side, touching his cap respectfully. The fat Owl of the Remove stepped out with dignity. "M-mum-my hat!" gasped Wharton. "Am—am I dreaming this?" (See Chapter 4.)

you, sir. I simply had to know how you were progressing!"

"My dear fellow——"

"But that wasn't quite the only reason, sir," went on Bunter rather pathetically, his eyes fixed on his listener's face. "You see, it was like this, sir. After those—those men took you away I fainted—went clean off in the roadway. I was fairly done up. I was exhausted, and—and famished, sir. I hadn't had any grub for over an hour!"

"Then that can very easily be remedied," smiled Mr. Pascall. "You must have something to eat at once."

He touched a bell, and a few moments later he was giving a servant orders—orders that made Bunter's mouth water.

Apparently Mr. Pascall knew what schoolboys liked to eat.

Bunter fairly beamed at him. Mr. Pascall seemed a genial, good-natured gentleman. Bunter liked him immensely.

"But that, of course, wasn't why I had to come, sir," he proceeded cautiously. "The—the fact is, I'm stranded miles from school. I simply couldn't walk it. I—I thought that perhaps——"

"My dear lad, you certainly did right in coming here," said Mr. Pascall warmly. "Of course I can help you—gladly. I will arrange for the car to take you home after tea. It is not my car, of course," he explained, smiling. "It is my brother's car. I am only a guest at the Gables. My home is in

Australia. I am over here on holiday—for the British Empire Exhibition at Wembley chiefly. You have seen it, of course?"

Bunter caught his breath. A sudden dazzling idea flashed into his mind.

"No, and I'm not likely to see it, sir," he said sadly. "There's nobody likely to take me there. My hat! It must be ripping to go, though. Don't I just wish I could. Some of our fellows went, and they said it was top-hole. It's not my luck to go, though."

Bunter had scarcely dared to hope his hint would come off; but it did.

Mr. Pascall, who had lain down on the couch again, sat up suddenly.

"By gad!" he ejaculated. "The very thing, my boy! I have been wondering how I could reward you for what you have done without hurting your pride. You shall go, my lad, at my expense. It is the least I can do—the very least. You shall go, and your chums with you. I know how much more enjoyable an outing is when one's friends are with one. You have chums, of course?"

"Lots of them," gasped Bunter. His heart was leaping with joy. "I'm a popular fellow at Greyfriars, of course. But—but you can't mean it, sir. Why, that's simply ripping! But—but the Head may not——"

"I think I can arrange matters with your headmaster," smiled Mr. Pascall. "Did you say your school was Grey-

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friars? I know the school well, though I have been abroad for some years. Dr. Locke happens to have been an old friend of mine in past years. I will run over to-morrow and renew his acquaintance."

"Oh, sir!"

"Yes! I think you can rest assured that I can arrange that, my lad," proceeded the Colonial grimly. "I shall simply refuse to take no for an answer. You and your chums shall join me at Wembley for a day, and I will see you enjoy yourselves. Ah! Here are the refreshments! You had better get busy, my boy."

A maid entered bearing a loaded tray, and drawing a chair up to a small table, Billy Bunter lost no time in getting "busy." He was inwardly bubbling over with joy. He could scarcely believe his amazing good fortune. Only that afternoon he had bragged to Wharton & Co. about his Wembley party—a party that had existed only in his fertile imagination—and that he himself had never dreamed could ever exist anywhere else.

And now, here it was, a glorious reality—or practically so. That he had gained it by false pretences did not worry Billy Bunter in the slightest.

It was the Owl's lucky day. Certainly Harry Wharton had little cause to worry on Bunter's account, had he only known it.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Amazing!

"**P**ERHAPS he's got run in as a tramp!" suggested Bob Cherry. "Poor old Bunt!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Wharton & Co. were standing chatting by the old gateway of Greyfriars, waiting for Billy Bunter to return.

They had been back at Greyfriars some time now. And they had not yet forgiven Bunter. They were determined to have the satisfaction of seeing the scheming Owl of the Remove come tramping home.

Certainly Harry Wharton was not feeling quite happy about it. His heart smote him as he visualised the fat and fatuous junior trudging dismally along the dusty highway, footsore and weary.

"I hope the fat ass will come in soon, you fellows," said Harry. "It's getting close on lock-up, and we don't want the idiot to get into trouble with Quelch."

"He's asked for it; he jolly well deserves more than that," grunted Johnny Bull.

"The deservedfulness is terrific," grinned Hurree Singh.

"Hallo, here's a car coming," said Frank Nugent, gazing up Friardale Lane. "Perhaps it's the ambulance with Bunter on board."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But it wasn't an ambulance. The car came nearer, and proved to be a magnificent limousine, with a smart, liveried driver at the wheel. And leaning back negligently, amid the cushions at the back, was a fat, bare-headed form.

"Who's this bloated aristocrat?" grinned Bob Cherry. "Is he coming here? Why, what—Great Scott! It—it's—"

"Bunter!" yelled Johnny Bull. "Great pip! It's Bunter!"

It was Bunter! The glimmering car drew up at the gates almost noiselessly. Billy Bunter gave the group of staring, astounded juniors a lofty nod.

"Buck up, driver!" he called.

"Yessir! Certainly, sir!"

The driver jumped smartly from his seat on to the road. He leaped to the

door, opened it, and stood on one side, touching his cap respectfully.

Billy Bunter stepped out with dignity. He spoke to the driver, who touched his cap and took his place at the wheel again. The great car turned, and glided back swiftly.

"Mum-my hat!" almost gabbled Harry Wharton. "Am I dreaming this?"

The juniors were staggered.

"I say, you fellows—"

Bunter approached the astonished juniors. He blinked at them loftily.

"I say, you fellows!" he repeated coldly. "I've got something to say to you."

"Go on, say it quickly!" gasped Bob Cherry. "This—this suspense—"

"I made an offer to you fellows this afternoon," said Bunter. "I asked you if you would care to join my party—my party for Wembley."

"He—he's keeping it up!" stuttered Bob. "After seeing this, you fellows, I can almost believe—"

"You refused that offer," went on Bunter loftily. "You treated my kindness with base ingratitude and contempt. Well, that offer to you is now cancelled. After your rotten treatment of me this afternoon, I shall certainly not dream of including any of you in the party. That's all!"

And Billy Bunter rolled on across the quad to the School House.

"Well, my hat!" said Harry Wharton faintly. "What's it mean, you fellows? It's all bunkum, of course, about the Wembley rot. But—but the car?"

"It—it can't be one of the splendid cars from Bunter Court," grinned Frank Nugent.

"I'm blessed if I can make it out," said Harry.

Neither could the others. They went indoors for call-over puzzled and perplexed. Peter Todd met them in the hall.

"What's come over that fat ass, Bunter, you chaps?" he grinned. "He's swanking about like a giddy millionaire. I've heard he's come home in a whacking car."

"It's true enough," said Harry. "We saw it!"

"Oh!"

Like Harry Wharton & Co., Peter Todd eyed Bunter very curiously during call-over; in fact, Billy Bunter was quite an object of attention among the Remove. That Bunter had returned home in a magnificent limousine was certainly astonishing. And Bunter's lofty dignity was calculated to arouse curiosity.

The Famous Five did not see Bunter again until after prep. But when prep was over they strolled down to the Common-room.

A roar of laughter greeted them as they entered the room. They heard Billy Bunter's fat voice, raised above the hilarity.

"Oh, really, you fellows, I tell you it's genuine!" he was hooting. "It's absolutely true! I am getting up a party for Wembley. Can't you believe a fellow?"

"Oh, chuck it, Bunter!" implored Redwing. "You're screamingly funny; but you're overdoing it a bit. Let's have a rest, for goodness' sake!"

"Try something fresh," suggested the Bounder. "What about a party for Cannes? Or a trip to the South Seas? Your entertainment's getting rather stale!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you burbling asses!" howled Bunter. "Aren't I telling you it's true—absolutely genuine? I am getting up a party for Wembley. It's going to be

a tremendous affair. Expense won't be a consideration—not the slightest. My friends will have the time of their lives. I'm busy now drawing up my selection of the fellows. A fleet of splendid automobiles will call at the school—"

"One of the famous Bunter Court fleets?" inquired Squiff.

"You—you cackling asses!"

"I've got a splendid suggestion, Bunter," said Skinner. "Why not add lustre and novelty to the outing by arranging for one of your fleet of family steam-yachts to steam up the Sark and take the family washing—I mean, the party—on board at the boathouse? It can then steam out into the channel and up the Thames. A sea voyage will add novelty to the affair. Then after a brief stay for refreshments at one of your family pubs—I mean, town houses—the party could board the splendid fleet of cars, and, escorted by the family troop of household cavalry, proceed by road to Wembley. How's that?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A roar of laughter filled the Common-room, and Billy Bunter's eyes fairly glittered with wrath. He was inwardly fuming.

It really was exasperating. Billy Bunter was an inveterate boaster and swanker. He loved bragging and boasting and swanking for their own sakes. Oft and oft had the Remove heard all about his aristocratic connections, his family home in Scotland, his family chalet in the South of France, the family town residence, and the family country residence. They had heard of the splendid steam yacht, the splendid motor-launch on the Thames, the splendid fleet of cars owned by Bunter senior. They had heard, but they had not believed—they never dreamed of believing Bunter.

But now he really had something to boast about. The Wembley party was an accomplished fact—at least, he had very good reason to believe so. Bunter was a person of substance—of note. He had the power in his hands of shining as a generous benefactor—of bringing a few hours of joy and gladness to a select number of fellow Removites.

Alas! nobody believed Bunter—nobody dreamed of believing his claims and statements. There was no glory, no joy—only laughter.

It was too sickening for words. Billy Bunter almost wept with chagrin and exasperation.

"You—you cackling dummies!" he spluttered. "You wait, though—just you wait! You'll jolly soon see if I'm spoofing or not! You'll be sorry—"

"You're still keeping it up, then?" inquired Bob Cherry blandly.

"Of course!" hooted Bunter. "Aren't I telling you—"

"Then I propose, gentlemen," said Bob, "that we persuade Bunter to keep it down. I'm sure we're all fed-up with Bunter's Wembley party! I propose we soundly bump the fat ass and sling him out on his neck—just to teach him not to tell such frightful whoppers!"

"Ha, ha! Yes, rather!"

A rush was made for Billy Bunter. "Here, I say, you fellows!" howled Bunter. "Keep off!"

But they did not keep off. The Removites were fed-up with Bunter's gas. Harry Wharton & Co. took a prime part in the proceedings which followed. They felt they had not yet had their revenge on Billy Bunter; so they took it now.

The Owl of the Remove was bumped and rolled and bumped and rolled again. He looked a wreck when the juniors had finished. Then he was slung out of the Common-room like a sack.

"That's that!" panted Bob Cherry. "I bet that's the last we shall hear of Bunter's Wembley party!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But Bob Cherry was wrong there.

That evening the Remove went up to bed in a state of hilarity on the fat junior's account. For despite that "lesson" in the Common-room, Billy Bunter was still "keeping it up."

On the whole, the Famous Five, at least, were rather puzzled over the matter. After what had happened, it was rather queer that Bunter should still be "keeping it up." They couldn't understand it. Billy Bunter, that evening, had asked dozens of fellows to join his party, and every fellow had declined his kind invitation—without thanks. And not in one single instance had Bunter attempted to ask for a loan on the strength of his generous invite.

It certainly was surprising.

Even in the dormitory Bunter "kept it up." From his bed came a continuous mumble in which the word "Wembley" was heard many a time and oft—until a boot hurled with unerring aim by Bolsover cut short the fat junior's song. After that Bunter's voice was heard no more.

But a surprise was in store for the Remove.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

A Bombshell!

BILLY BUNTER eyed the Remove rather gloatingly as he rose at rising-bell the next morning. But he did not mention the word Wembley.

As a matter of fact, the fat junior had been thinking things over, and had come to the conclusion that it was simply hopeless to attempt to convince his scoffing Form-fellows without good proof that his Wembley claim was genuine and substantially founded.

That proof was coming very soon, however. His triumph would be the greater after the jeers and scoffing of the doubting Thomases—when it did come. He gloated in the thought of the approaching sensation and vindication of his statements. He met the smiles of the Famous Five with a lofty, condescending blink. His triumph was coming!

It came soon enough.

Most of the Removites had forgotten the affair by this time, so that when the bombshell did fall they were quite unprepared for it.

It came during second lesson that morning. Trotter entered the Form-room and handed Mr. Quelch a note.

The Form-master read the note, and then he looked severely at Billy Bunter. "Bunter!"

"Yes, sir!" said Bunter genially.

He rose to his feet. The hour had come. He knew what it meant.

"Bunter," said Mr. Quelch, "you are to proceed at once to the headmaster's study." The Remove master eyed the junior keenly. He was curious. "I trust, Bunter, that you have not been misbehaving—"

"It's all right, sir," said Bunter calmly. "I know what it is. The Head only wants to see me about my Wembley party."

"Wha-a-at?"

"My Wembley party, sir," explained Bunter, glorying in the knowledge that the staring eyes of the whole Remove were upon him. "I expect he wants to discuss details with me, and to make the final arrangements, sir."

"Mum-my hat!" breathed Skinner. "It—it's true, then."

The Remove fairly buzzed.

"Silence!" thundered Mr. Quelch. "Bunter, how dare you make such absurd statements?"

"But, sir—"

"You will proceed at once to the headmaster's study, Bunter!" thundered the astonished master. "I cannot detain you now, but when you return, Bunter, I shall require an explanation of your ridiculous conduct. You may go."

"Thank you, sir!" said Bunter calmly.

He left the Form-room.

As he expected, he found that Mr. Pascall was seated with the Head in his study. As Bunter entered the Colonial gentleman rose, his bronzed face smiling.

"Here is the brave fellow, Dr. Locke!" he exclaimed. "Well, my boy, I have come as I promised, you see."

He took Bunter's flabby fist and shook it warmly.

"Oh!" remarked Dr. Locke.

He seemed bewildered, and he eyed the fat junior fixedly. It almost seemed as though he had expected there was some mistake in the name; that he had expected the Colonial to announce that Bunter was not the boy he had expected to see.

"Bunter," exclaimed Dr. Locke, "I have heard from this gentleman—Mr. Pascall—a story that has amazed me. I understand that yesterday afternoon you performed a gallant action. You saved Mr. Pascall, at great personal risk, from serious injury and undoubted financial loss. Your action in rescuing Mr.

Pascall from the brutal hands of those footpads was most creditable, my boy."

"It was a mere nothing, sir," said Bunter. "I hope I'm not the fellow to make a fuss over what I did. I enjoyed knocking those fellows about, sir."

The Head coughed.

"Your modesty does you credit, Bunter," he said, a faint note of irony in his tone. "However, the fact remains that you have done Mr. Pascall a great personal service, and he feels that he is under a deep obligation to you, my boy. He is determined to do something towards showing his gratitude for the service you have rendered him."

"Oh, sir!"

"He has requested me to allow you to take some of your chums to the British Empire Exhibition at Wembley, on Saturday," said the Head, smiling. "As Mr. Pascall has agreed to be responsible for you while you are there, and as Saturday happens to be a holiday, I have consented to his request."

"Oh, sir!" gasped Bunter.

This time his fat voice trembled with joy.

"You may take five other boys with you," went on the Head, and again there was irony in his tone. "And I trust that you will choose responsible juniors. Bunter. Mr. Pascall, I understand, will be paying all expenses at Wembley, and he is leaving a sum of money with me to be handed to you on Saturday for personal pocket-money for yourself and your chums. A suitable conveyance will



Harry Wharton hurled Fisher T. Fish to one side and the American junior yelled as the bottles of "pop" crashed to the floor. Next moment the captain of the Remove was through the doorway, propelling the yelling Bunter along the passage. "Grooough! Leggo, you beast!" roared Bunter. "I say—yoww!"

(See Chapter 7.)

be here on Saturday at eleven to convey you to Wembley. I think that is all," added Dr. Locke, turning to Mr. Pascall.

"I think so," said the Colonial. "For the present, at all events. I hope to see you on Saturday, then, my boy."

He shook hands again with Bunter. The Head hesitated a moment, and then he also shook hands with Bunter.

"I need scarcely add, Bunter," he remarked kindly, "that I am proud of your conduct yesterday, as doubtless the whole school will be when they hear the story. You may go."

And, after thanking Mr. Pascall and the Head, Billy Bunter went. He was consumed with joy and gladness. He walked along the passage feeling as though he were walking on air. He felt just a trifle uneasy as he remembered the Head's words regarding the whole school hearing the story. He would much prefer that the whole school did not hear the story, or certain members of the school, at all events. What Wharton & Co. would think when they did hear he could only guess.

But he scarcely gave the matter a thought just then. Bunter rarely looked ahead. And the reflection that the Famous Five would never give him away was comforting. So Bunter did not worry. Far from it.

He reached the Form-room at last, and entered, his fat face beaming. Every eye in the room was fixed upon him as he walked serenely to his seat.

"Bunter!" snapped Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, sir."

"I trust," said Mr. Quelch, with biting sarcasm, "that you enjoyed your discussion with Dr. Locke, and that you have made all your arrangements for your proposed visit to Wembley to your entire satisfaction."

There was a giggle.

"Oh, yes, sir!" said Bunter cheerily. "I've fixed up everything with the Head. Everything's settled. I'm to select five fellows to join my party, and we're to motor up to Wembley, starting from here at eleven. Isn't it ripping, sir?"

"Bless my soul!" gasped Mr. Quelch.

He seemed thunderstruck.

"It's simply tophole, sir!" resumed Bunter brightly. "We're to be handed pocket-money before we start, and all our expenses at Wembley will be paid, of course. I say, sir, may I be excused from class now? I want to write home for my motoring things."

Mr. Quelch glared at the beaming Bunter, and his features went a trifle pink. He could hardly fail to see that Bunter was speaking the truth now. Even a fellow of Bunter's fatuous daring would never make statements like that to his Form master if they were not true. He reflected, too late, that he had been just a little previous with his sarcasm.

He decided abruptly to close the discussion.

"No, Bunter, you may not leave the Form-room!" he thundered. "Resume your seat at once! Any boy I discover not attending to the lesson will be severely caned!"

There was no more whispering after that. Nobody wanted to be severely caned. In astounded silence the Form settled down to the lesson again.

But from every part of the room glances were cast in Bunter's direction. But they were genial glances now. Skinner caught Bunter's eye, and he gave the fat junior a smiling nod. Every time Bunter happened to glance at either Stott or Snoop he met smiles—friendly smiles. Fisher T. Fish, who was

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sitting next to Bunter, watched his chance, and slipped a chunk of toffee into Bunter's fat palm, an amazing thing for a notoriously mean fellow like Fishy to do.

It looked as if William George Bunter was going to be remarkably popular—until after Saturday, at least.

For the rest of the lesson Billy Bunter fairly basked in an atmosphere of genial, smiling glances and nods. Whichever way he turned he met friendly eyes and good-natured looks.

It was quite a pleasant change for Bunter.

The lesson ended at last, and immediately he got outside he was fairly swept away on the tide of his newly-found popularity.

The Famous Five watched him depart along the passage in the midst of an effusive crowd with grins on their faces.

"Alas and alack!" groaned Bob Cherry, with a sigh. "Why, oh, why did we not give Bunter the hand of brotherly love yesterday? Why, oh, why did we turn with scorn from the hen that lays the golden eggs, and drive it from under our wing for the vultures to pick up?"

Bob's remarkable metaphor was a trifle hazy, but his chums understood, and they chuckled.

"So his blessed Wembley party is genuine, after all," breathed Harry Wharton. "Who'd have thought it? I—I can scarcely believe it even now. It beats me utterly."

"It can't be his pater who's finding the cash," said Nugent. "What's it mean?"

"The esteemed and disgusting Bunter must have pinchfully burgled a bank!" was Inky's contribution.

"But who's got him leave from the Head?" demanded Harry, frowning. "I don't see—"

He broke off. Mr. Quelch had just emerged from the Form-room, and as he did so the Head himself came along the passage.

"Ah, Mr. Quelch!" remarked the Head, stopping. "I wanted to speak to you concerning Bunter of your Form. The boy has distinguished himself in rather a remarkable manner. You may recollect that I sent for him this morning during lessons?"

"Quite so, sir," said Mr. Quelch grimly.

"I received a visit this morning from a Mr. Pascall, an old and valued friend of mine, who is staying at his brother's house between Courtfield and Latchley. He is from Australia, but is visiting this country for the British Empire Exhibition," went on the Head. "He has told me an amazing story. It appears that while strolling in the woods on his brother's estate, he was attacked by foot-pads, and only rescued in the nick of time by the unquestionable bravery of Bunter."

"You—you astound me!" ejaculated Mr. Quelch. "Bunter—"

"I was astounded myself," smiled the Head. "Bunter has never struck me as being a heroic boy—quite the reverse. The facts appear to be clear enough, however."

"Bless my soul!" gasped Mr. Quelch.

"I sent for Bunter," proceeded Dr. Locke, "to compliment him, and to tell him of a rather unusual request which Mr. Pascall has made on his behalf. Naturally, Mr. Pascall is grateful to

Bunter, and he wishes to show his gratitude by taking Bunter and a few selected chums to Wembley on Saturday."

"Oh!" murmured Mr. Quelch. "I have given my consent to this," continued the Head. "I could scarcely refuse, in the circumstances, as—"

The rest of the Head's remarks were lost to the Famous Five, for the two masters strolled out of earshot.

Harry Wharton & Co. blinked at each other. They were dumbfounded. They understood now.

"So—so that's it!" gritted Johnny Bull.

"So that's why Bunter returned in that car last night!" hissed Frank Nugent. "Oh, the—the fat, swindling rotter!"

"He's all that!" muttered Harry Wharton, clenching his fists. "Well, the scheming toad!"

The juniors were furious.

They saw it all now. They concluded, of course, that Bunter had seen all that had taken place—that he had known they had not claimed to have rescued Mr. Pascall. Obviously, he had known it, and had visited the Gables and reaped the glory—the glory he had never earned.

And now he was to reap more glory—and something more substantial than glory. The thought made the juniors grit their teeth.

"What are we going to do about it?" grunted Johnny Bull. "We're not jolly well going to let this go on, Harry?"

"I don't see what we can do, though," muttered Harry. "He's got it by false pretences, certainly! But—but we can't show him up! Bunter would be sacked for deceiving the Head like this, I should think. We don't want to get the fat cad sacked, much as he deserves it! And we don't want the glory ourselves, do we?"

"But, hang it all, it's too thick!" snorted Frank Nugent. "If anyone goes to Wembley, it ought to be us!"

"That's so!" admitted Harry ruefully. "My hat! Wouldn't I just like to go! But—but—"

He paused and his eyes gleamed. "By Jove! And we will go, you fellows!" he snapped the next moment. "You're right, Franky! If anyone goes, it should be us. And it's going to be us. We won't stop Bunter going, but we're going with him. And if he doesn't agree, we'll jolly well make him sit up!"

"That's the spirit!" "Come on!" snapped Harry. "We'll tackle that fat villain at once!"

And he led the way with a rush to the study of William George Bunter.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

"Dear Old Bunter!"

"WHAT, you fellows on the job, too?"

That was Peter Todd's ejaculation when Harry Wharton & Co. charged into Study No. 7, inquiring for Billy Bunter.

"Eh? What d'you mean, Toddy?" snapped Harry; a glance round had shown him that Bunter was not in the study. "We want that podgy poacher, Bunter!"

"I know you do!" chuckled Toddy. "Everybody seems to be after Bunter. I'm blessed if I thought you chaps would be on this game, though—even to get included in his blessed party!"

Harry Wharton coloured a trifle. Certainly they were after Bunter for that very reason—to get themselves included in his "Wembley Party." But they

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were, unlike Skinner & Co., not "sponging" on Bunter in order to do that, nevertheless.

"You—you burbling dummy, Toddy!" snorted Harry. "Are we likely to do that, you ass? Where the thump is the frog?"

"Better try Skinner's study!" grinned Toddy.

The juniors did not stop to explain matters to Peter Todd. They dashed away, eager to get hold of Billy Bunter.

Sure enough, they found the great man in Skinner's study, surrounded by admiring and effusive "pals."

Skinner was there, as was Snoop and Stott and Bolsover. And Billy Bunter was there, lofty, dignified, and condescending. Apparently, his new-found popularity rested weightily on Bunter's head.

And evidently he was making the most of it while it lasted. He was seated at the table, and before him was a big bag of tarts, a huge plum-cake, and a tin of biscuits.

How Bunter was going to eat any dinner after that little lot was a mystery, for Skinner & Co. did not appear to want any. They hovered round Billy Bunter, attending almost feverishly to his wants.

"Try these biscuits, Bunter, old man!"

"Thanks, I will, old chap."

"Have another of the tarts, Billy, old fellow!"

"This cake's top-hole, Bunter, old chap—have another slice!"

"Thanks—in a sec, old chap! I say, you fellows, this is awfully good of you! Yes, cut it up in slices, Snoop, to save time! I say, you fellows, I'll remember you when I make my final selection for my Wembley party."

It was upon this cordial and homely gathering that the Famous Five descended like wolves on the fold. Harry hooked a hand in Bunter's collar and fairly lifted him from his seat, and there arose a yell of protest from Skinner & Co.

"Here, what's this game?" shouted Skinner. "Leave Bunter alone!"

"Yes, dash it all, let old Bunter alone!" yelled Stott. "What the thump do—"

"You sponging cads can go and masticate coke!" snapped Harry. "We want Bunter, and he's coming! Out you come, you fat swindler!"

And Harry swung Bunter towards the door. Just then Fisher T. Fish entered the study. The cute American junior had his arms full of bottles of lemonade—apparently for "old Bunter's" consumption.

"Hyer! What's this?" ejaculated Fishy. "Jest you galoots let go of old Bunter. I kinder reckon and calculate that if you—"

"Ow! You chaps—mum-mum-mum—rescue!" spluttered Bunter, almost choking in a frantic effort to swallow a mouthful of cake. "Yarrough! Leggo, you beast! Yow! I say—grough! Rescue, you chaps!"

Skinner & Co. hesitated—the Famous Five were rather a big handful for them to tackle—even with Bolsover to back them up. And while they hesitated Harry Wharton acted.

"Quick, you chaps!" he muttered. "I'll see to Bunter! You fellows look after these rotters!"

He hurled Fisher T. Fish to one side, and the American junior yelled as the bottles of "pop" smashed to the floor. And Harry was through the doorway and propelling the yelling Bunter along the passage the next moment.

Behind him he heard a sudden uproar, and he guessed that Skinner & Co.'s

burning desire to be members of Bunter's party had overcome their distaste of a scrap with the redoubtable Famous Five.

But Harry knew his chums would give a good account of themselves, and he did not stop. Reaching Study No. 1, he flung the gasping and alarmed Owl into the armchair and waited.

He had not to wait long. Presently there came a rush of feet in the passage, and Johnny Bull, Frank Nugent, and Hurree Singh, with Bob Cherry limping behind, came dashing in.

They slammed the door to after them, and Frank Nugent turned the key in the lock. All looked the worse for wear, and Johnny Bull mopped a streaming nose.

"I—I say, you fellows—" gasped Bunter.

He had guessed at once what the kidnapping meant, and he shivered. Obviously, the Famous Five had heard the facts!

A sudden hammering came to the door, but Harry turned to Bunter, unheeding. He was determined to make the matter clear to Bunter before that fatuous junior had the chance to hand up his list of lucky ones to Mr. Quelch.

"Now, you spoofing rotter!" he said grimly. "We know all about it, my pippin! So you claimed to have rescued

that chap yesterday, did you? You—you bounder!"

"I—I say, you fellows!" gasped Bunter. "I—I say, there's the dinner-bell! Lemme go, you beasts!"

"Not yet, old top! Now, what about it, Bunter? You've got this trip to Wembley on false pretences! You know jolly well that we were the fellows who rescued Mr. Pascall yesterday. We're not—"

"I—I say, you fellows," gasped Bunter; "you're mistaken, you know! This—this isn't the same chap! It—it's another chap I rescued—another Mr. Pascall!"

"What?"

"Fact! I—I hope you fellows don't dream of doubting my word," said Bunter, with dignity; "if so, then I decline to discuss—"

"You frightful fibber!" snorted Harry. "That yarn won't wash with us, you silly idiot! It beats me how you had the astounding nerve to do it. Why, don't you see what you've done, Bunter? You've not only spoofed Mr. Pascall, but you've deceived the Head and Quelch! You'll be sacked if—"

"Oh dear! I say, you fellows," mumbled Bunter, in great alarm. "It's all right, you know. I—I was going to

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include you fellows in my party. You—you won't split—"

"You jolly well deserve it!" exclaimed Harry hotly. "But we don't propose to do that, Bunter. We don't want you flogged or sacked. But we want to make one thing plain, my pippin. We won't put a stop to your going, but we jolly well mean to see to it that we are the fellows to go with you! Got that?"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter, in great relief.

"You understand?" said Harry evenly. "If anyone goes we're the chaps best entitled to go—and, what's more, we mean to go, Bunter! I suppose you've got to hand up a list to Quelch before Saturday? When you do, that list has got to have the names of us five, my fat pippin. If it doesn't, you'd better, look out for squalls. Bunter? Understand?"

Billy Bunter did understand. He drew a deep breath of relief. Though he had given the matter little reflection, he had known that the Famous Five would never have "sneaked"—if it could be called sneaking. And so long as he went to Wembley he scarcely cared twopence who else went.

"That—that's all serene, Wharton," he said eagerly. "I—I meant all along to include you chaps, in fact. I'll tell Quelch this afternoon, you fellows—honest injun!"

"That's good enough, then!"

And opening the door, Harry Wharton & Co. gave Bunter his liberty, and followed him out in the passage.

Skinner was hovering about outside—apparently waiting for Bunter; but the Famous Five did not heed Skinner now. They knew—or, at least, felt certain—that Bunter would never dare to go back on his word.

They tramped on to the dining-hall with smiling faces, and even Mr. Quelch's scathing remarks at their unpunctuality did not disturb their serenity. They had heard great things of Wembley—of the wonderful exhibits, and of the delights of the huge Amusements Park there, and they could have danced with joy at the prospect before them.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

In a Cleft Stick!

"I SAY, you fellows, that was a ripping tea, you know! I must say you do your guests well, Skinner!"

Billy Bunter rose to his feet, breathing rather heavily, and beamed round the assembly. There was a smear of jam—in fact, more than one smear of jam—on Bunter's mouth, and his fat features were shiny and wore a satisfied grin.

There was quite a gathering in Skinner's study. Skinner himself was there, with Stott and Snoop, and so were Fisher T. Fish and Bolsover. They had "clubbed" together in order to stand Bunter that feed, and from the look of their honoured guest, they had certainly "done him" well.

After afternoon classes they had invited the man of the hour to tea with them, and Billy Bunter had willingly agreed. He knew perfectly well why the crafty Skinner & Co. were treating him thus.

But Bunter did not mind. That he had promised the Famous Five that they should be the lucky fellows to form his party—and that he had already kept his promise to them and handed their names in to Mr. Quelch, did not worry Bunter in the slightest—yet.

Bunter never concerned himself about

the future. It ought to have occurred to him that, after accepting their hospitality thus, there was every likelihood of his getting a record ragging from Skinner & Co. when they did get to know the facts.

"That was prime!"

Bunter rose to depart.

But Harold Skinner had a few remarks to make to Billy Bunter before allowing the fat schemer to depart.

"Hold on, Bunter, old man!" he said. "I've got a few words to say before you go. Sit down again, dear old fellow!"

Skinner's chums rather stared at Skinner. They wondered what Skinner had to say, and they wondered still more at the affectionate tone he adopted.

Bunter also wondered. He sat down a trifle uneasily.

Skinner stood up—apparently to make a speech.

"I am sure, gentlemen," he said, with heavy sarcasm, "that we one and all have enjoyed Bunter's charming society this afternoon. And," went on the humorous Skinner, smiling round the table, "I am perfectly certain that we all would be delighted to accompany dear old Bunter upon his splendid expedition on Saturday."

"Hear, hear!"

There was no question about that. Skinner's chums agreed heartily—though they wondered what on earth Skinner was about to say. They felt that their leader was mentioning the matter rather too early; they had not yet caught their bird, by any means!

Snoop gave Skinner a warning wink; the cad of the Remove smiled.

"Unfortunately," Skinner proceeded blandly, "there seems to be no hope of that. I believe that Bunter has already handed in the list to Mr. Quelch. And much as Bunter loves us, he has left us out in the cold; he has left our illustrious names off the list."

"Wha-at?"

"Well, I swow!"

It was a bombshell.

"I—I say, you fellows—"

"Is that true, Skinner?" hissed Snoop. "Has Bunter—"

"It is," said Skinner easily. "I happened to go into Quelch's study just after Bunter had been in, and I spotted it. The lucky fellows were Wharton, Cherry, Bull, Nugent, and Singh."

There was a howl of fury. Bunter shivered as he met the expressions on the faces of Skinner's pals. He began to see the danger of accepting favours from fellows like Skinner & Co. without giving anything in return.

"Skinner, you fool!" snarled Snoop. "You must have known when you asked this fat fool to tea—"

"Certainly!" said Skinner.

"Then you allowed us—"

"Exactly!"

"You fool! And I've spent nearly four bob on the fat cad!"

"And I've spent over five bob—"

"Me jolly near six—"

"What about me? Oh, Jerusalem crickets!" wailed Fishy T. Fish. "Nearly three bob—three shillings for nix! Well, I swow!"

Bolsover said nothing; he gritted his teeth. He was also a "victim."

"I—I say, you fellows," stammered Bunter. "It's—it's all a mistake, you know. That—that list Skinner saw was only a—a trial balance"—Bunter had seen the phrase somewhere. It was the first that occurred to him—"that's all. I've not made my final selection yet."

"Smash the fat cad!" hissed Snoop. "He's spoof—"

"Burst the fat barrel!"

"Pulverise him!" howled Stott.

He jumped up and led the rush at Bunter. Skinner shouted, but they did not heed him. Bunter went down with a terrified howl, and then his dear "pals"—now apparently pals no longer—swarmed over him in a pummelling mass.

"Let the fat ass alone, you idiots!" shouted Skinner, rushing to the struggling mass, and striving to pull Bolsover off his victim. "Why the thump couldn't you let me finish? We're not done yet, you idiots! I've got a wheeze—"

"What?"

"What's that, Skinner?"

They released the yelling Billy Bunter, and looked at Harold Skinner hopefully. Skinner ran quickly to the door, and, after glancing up and down the passage outside, he came in again, and locked the door. Then he turned to Bunter, who was gasping and groaning, his fat features red with rage.

"Sit down again, Bunter!" he invited. "We've not done with you yet!"

Just as Bunter had long ago lost his air of condescending dignity, so had Skinner lost his smiling blandness now. His eyes were glittering as they rested on the fat, crimson face of Bunter.

"You fat cad!" he went on savagely. "You've sold us a pup—or you think you have! You've been scoffing our grub, and fooling us! It's time we got down to brass tacks now, Bunter!"

"Beasts!" groaned Bunter, glaring at his old friends. "I'll jolly well see you don't join my party now! Beasts!"

"That's your mistake, Bunter!" said Skinner, with a nasty sneer. "I think you'll change your mind in a minute. Why did Wharton and those cads yank you along to their study, Bunter?"

Bunter gave a start, and looked quickly at Skinner. The others also stared at Skinner.

"What's the game, Skinner?" demanded Bolsover impatiently. "Do you know?"

"Yes, I know!" said Skinner coolly. "You fellows cleared off when the dinner-bell went; but I stayed. I listened at the keyhole, Bunter. Tried your little game!"

Skinner said it quite shamelessly. He knew that all present—with the possible exception of Bolsover—would have done the same had they wanted to.

"You—you heard?" stammered Bunter.

"Everything!" grinned Skinner, gloating over Bunter's obvious dismay. "I didn't quite understand it then, though. I understood when Quelch told us that yarn this afternoon—about dear old Bunter's gallantry, how he saved that merchant from the footpads. Bunter, the hero. He, he, he!"

Billy Bunter groaned.

Wharton & Co. might not "split," might not divulge his guilty secret. But he knew that Skinner would not have the slightest compunction in doing so—would delight in doing so. He remembered now that Skinner had been in the passage when he left Study No. 1.

"Oh,—oh, really, Skinner!" he gasped. "You—you're quite mistaken, you know. It—it was another chap named Pascall that Wharton and those beasts rescued—quite another person altogether!"

"So—so that's it!" breathed Bolsover. "So that's why they yanked Bunter away, and that's why they've got him to shove them in. My hat!"

"Exactly!" smiled Skinner. "It was Wharton and his dashed pals who did it. What Bunter's got to do with it I'm blessed if I know; but it's pretty clear he's collared the glory, and the—"

"But why doesn't Wharton—"
 "You know what modest little fellows they are?" said Skinner, with a sneer. "They won't claim the glory, and they won't split on this fat fool. But they mean to go to Wembley, for all that. See?"

"Oh!"
 "As it happens, though," went on Skinner, grinning at Bunter, "we're not so particular about splitting. Oh dear me, no! I'm blessed if I know how the fat spoofer had the dashed nerve to do it! He's spoofed that Colonial chap, and he's spoofed the Head. It means the sack for Bunter—"

"Ow! Oh dear!"
 "Unless Bunter decides to take us to Wembley," finished Skinner coolly. "We really must insist upon that, you fellows!"

"Phew!"
 "Good wheeze, Skinner!"
 There was a chuckle from Skinner's pals. They saw Skinner's game now, and they heartily approved of it. Fisher T. Fish grew radiant.

"Well, I swow!" he chuckled.
 Billy Bunter blinked helplessly at Skinner. But he did not hesitate long. He was in a cleft stick. A glance at Skinner's cunning features showed him he was in deadly earnest. It was a case of deciding upon taking Skinner & Co., and getting ragged by the Famous Five, or taking the Famous Five and getting ragged by Skinner & Co.—and the prospect of the sack in addition.

It was not really a difficult matter to decide—for Billy Bunter.

"I—I say, you fellows," he mumbled hastily. "It—it's all serene. I'll cancel that first list. I meant to do that all along, in fact. That's settled, you know. I'll tell Quelch—"

"That won't do, though," said Skinner keenly. "Quelch will smell a rat, possibly. He'll ask you awkward questions, I'm afraid, Bunt. He'll want to know why you've dropped such goody-goody saints like Wharton & Co. for wicked fellows like us. That's not all. Wharton might muck-up the game before Saturday."

"That's jolly likely," nodded Bolsover. "Wharton isn't the chap to give in without a fight. But—"

"I've got a better wheeze," grinned Skinner. "That Colonial chap can't have seen Wharton and the others. They can have the honour of being on the list, but they won't go. I'll see to that. When the car turns up on Saturday at eleven, we'll be the chaps to board it, my pippins!"

"Oh, really, Skinner—" began Bunter, in alarm. "But—"

"You needn't worry, Bunter," grinned Skinner. "All you'll have to do will be to sit tight until Saturday, and to stick tight to that pocket-money when the Head hands it over. We'll see to the rest. So that's that! Now get out, you fat ass!"

"Oh, really, Skinner—"

"Get out!" snapped Skinner, rising from the table. "It'll be better for you not to know the details, my fat pippin. Just keep your fat trap shut, and leave the rest to us. Now get out!"

And, somewhat reluctantly, Bunter got out. He was looking not quite so dismal now—in fact, he was almost grinning. Skinner's ultimatum had frightened him badly, but on reflection he had come to the conclusion that he was not risking much, after all. Certainly the Famous Five would be terrifically "waxy" if they were done out of their Wembley visit. But it would not be his fault, and he felt he could easily blame Skinner & Co. He could



The Famous Five dashed round the dimly-lit corner of the mine, and as they did so Harry Wharton crashed full into the figure of a man standing at the turn. There was a loud yell and a startled oath in the gloom. Thud! Wharton and his victim crashed down to the mud together, and over them sprawled Harry's chums. "Yarooop!" "Ow-wow!" "Grooough!" "Yaroooh!" rose a dismal chorus. (See Chapter 11.)

swear he had known nothing about the plot.

"Blow Wharton!" he mused warmly. "After all he never asked me to tea, and that beast Skinner did. Those beasts weren't a bit grateful for including them in my party. I'm blessed if I don't—"

Bunter reflected a moment, and then he went along to Study No. 1 and looked in. The Famous Five were just beginning tea, and after looking in, Bunter rolled in.

"You fellows having tea?" he asked genially. "Oh, good! I'll join you, I think."

"Well, my hat!" snorted Wharton. "Here, clear, you fat—"

He broke off with a laugh.

"Oh, well, we'll let the porpoise stay," he said with good-humoured sarcasm. "After all, we're going to be his guests on Saturday, and we mustn't be ungrateful, eh, you chaps?"

"Ha, ha! No!"

And Bunter pulled up his chair for a second tea, and stayed. Billy Bunter certainly had a "nerve."

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Gone Before!

"WEMBLEY" was a much-used word in the Remove at Greyfriars the next day—chiefly by Billy Bunter. High and low his fat voice was heard extolling the

delights of the exhibition, and the splendid treat in store for the lucky members of the party.

But towards evening his triumphant "song" began to slack off a little. By this time most of the Remove knew that the list was "out," and having lost interest in Billy Bunter and Wembley, they "booted" Bunter every time they heard him mention the name. It was really surprising how quickly Bunter's popularity began to decline when once the names of the lucky ones were known.

It was very soon noted, with much chuckling, that Skinner & Co. had suddenly lost interest in Bunter and Wembley also—or appeared to have done. And Harry Wharton & Co. especially were rather surprised at the tameness with which those "canny" juniors had accepted the news. They had expected Bunter to be the victim of a terrific ragging at their hands, instead of which nothing of the kind had taken place. On the contrary, during that day, Skinner & Co. had been quite decent to Bunter.

It was rather perplexing. But the Famous Five did not give much reflection to the matter; they were too much occupied with thoughts of the morrow to worry about Skinner & Co. They were looking forward to Bunter's Wembley party, if anything, more keenly than Bunter was.

Saturday dawned at last, and it was

with bright and cheery faces that Harry Wharton & Co. turned out smartly at rising-bell. Even Bunter turned out smartly on this great morning. Curiously enough—to others—Skinner & Co. and Bolsover also turned out with smiling faces, in strange contrast to the rest of the Remove who were looking rather glum and envious.

Whilst dressing Bunter entertained the Remove by giving Harry Wharton & Co. their final instructions as to how to behave and such-like—though the unscrupulous Owl was perfectly certain that the Famous Five would not accompany him to Wembley.

But he could not resist the opportunity of swanking; and he did swank—heavily. But the Famous Five only grinned. They could afford to grin at Bunter—or they felt they could.

After breakfast Mr. Quelch called to the Famous Five and Bunter, and very kindly made suggestions as to the best things to see at Wembley—to which the juniors listened with due respect.

A little later Mr. Quelch was seen to hand to Billy Bunter a number of Treasury notes—obviously the expected pocket-money.

Bunter pocketed the lot, and blinked at the Famous Five rather uneasily as they walked up to him.

"May as well hand us our little lot now, Billy?" remarked Harry Wharton.

"Oh, really, you fellows!" said Bunter warmly. "I hope you fellows can trust me—"

"I hope so," said Harry with a laugh. "Only—"

"Only you may forget it isn't all yours, Billy!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

"Quite likely!" added Frank Nugent.

"The likefulness is terrific!" grinned Hurree Singh.

Bunter sniffed and waved a fat hand.

"That's quite enough, you fellows!" he said with a great dignity. "I want you fully to understand once and for all that I am in charge of this Wembley party. You will take your instruction from me, and will kindly oblige by leaving all business matters and arrangements to me. I shall choose my own time and place for the distribution of this pocket-money."

And with that Billy Bunter rolled away loftily. It was the last the Famous Five saw of Bunter that morning. He simply vanished. As the hour for departure approached, Harry Wharton & Co. inquired right and left, and they hunted high and low. But without result. Bunter had disappeared.

It was queer—very queer!

"We ought never to have allowed the fat ass to keep that cash!" snorted Harry Wharton. "I expect the chump is gorging somewhere. Anyway, it's nearly eleven now. Let's get down to the gates."

The chums got their caps and rain-coats and hurried down to the gates. They had a lingering hope that Bunter might be waiting there. But Bunter wasn't. The gateway was deserted. Practically all Greyfriars was out of doors—on picnics and excursions bent, or on the playing-fields. A whole holiday was too precious to spend any part of it watching other excursions start out—even Billy Bunter's Wembley party.

The juniors waited. But Billy Bunter did not turn up—neither did the big car which was to take them to Wembley.

"Five past eleven!" muttered Harry Wharton, glancing at his watch. "I—I say, chaps, I don't like the look of this. That fat idiot's up to something! It—it's rummy, the car being so late."

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"Perhaps there's been a breakdown on the road?" grunted Johnny Bull. "But—but Bunter—"

"No good looking for him again," said Harry, frowning. "Let's wait."

They waited, and were still waiting five minutes later when Peter Todd came riding up on his bicycle from Friardale. He had a parcel under his arm, and had evidently been shopping.

He almost fell off his machine at sight of the juniors.

"What—wha— Googracious!" he gasped. "How did you fellows get here? Mum-my hat!"

"Eh? What d'you mean, Toddy?"

"Mean, you asses! Why, it isn't five minutes since I saw you going through Friardale, is it? At least, I supposed it was you—with Bunter in a whacking big car."

"Wha-a-at?"

"I expected you'd be well on your way to Wembley by this," said Toddy, eyeing the juniors blankly. "How did you do it?"

"Great Scott!"

"Perhaps you've dropped out, though, and let somebody else—"

"Toddy!" gasped Harry Wharton in alarm. "Is that a fact—did you see Bunter in it? Was it Bunter?"

"Absolutely certain it was Bunter!" said Toddy. "He grinned and waved to me. But—but—"

"You—you must be potty, Toddy!" stuttered Bob Cherry. "Why, we're waiting for the car now! We're waiting for Bunter, too! You've—"

"Then it jolly well looks to me as if you fellows have been done," said Peter Todd, shaking his head. "It was Bunter, and— My hat! I thought it funny at the time! I didn't recognise the five other chaps simply because they ducked their heads when they passed me—just as if they didn't want to be spotted. I took it for granted they were you chaps, though. Phew!"

And Toddy whistled as he blinked at the staring Famous Five. They were staggered. Up to now they had not even suspected trickery. Why should they? But they suspected it now—more than suspected.

"The—the fat, swindling spoofer!" hissed Harry, his face red. "Dished and done, by Jove! The fat rotter's taken somebody else. Most likely Skinner and his lot. He's absolutely done us brown!"

The others looked at him aghast.

"He—he wouldn't dare—" began Frank Nugent feebly.

"Of course the fat ass would if it suited him at the moment!" snapped Harry. "We might have thought of it. The little cad's banking on the knowledge that we wouldn't sneak. It looks as if he never intended us to go."

"But the car? How—"

"The rotters have met it on the road, of course. Most likely it was the same chauffeur who brought Bunter home the other night. In any case, Bunter had documents to prove he was in charge of the party. It was worked easily enough," groaned Harry.

He was certain of that now. He remembered the significant treatment of Billy Bunter by Skinner & Co. the previous day. He remembered their smiling faces that morning, and the surprising fact that Skinner had never once passed any sneering, envious remarks at their going.

Peter Todd chuckled. He could not help it, despite his obvious sympathy for the Famous Five. The remembrance of Bunter's swanking over the juniors, his final instructions to them that morning, struck him as being funny considering the fact that he must have

known they were not going. It looked like that to him, anyway.

"Oh, great pip!" groaned Johnny Bull. "We'll be the laughing-stock of Greyfriars when this gets out. Oh, my hat! No Wembley for us after all!"

"Isn't there?" said Harry, his eyes gleaming suddenly. "Yes, there is, my lads! That fat beast's done us, but we'll go for all that. There's a train leaves Friardale at eleven-forty; it gets into Courtfield two minutes before the London train goes out."

"But the cash—" gasped Bob.

"I've less than a quid—" gasped Bob.

"We're going!" snapped Harry swiftly. "We've got permission to go, and we're going. I've got a couple of quid, and between us we'll manage to pay our fares, and we'll have enough left to see us inside the exhibition and to get something to eat and drink. You fellows have a bit of cash each, I suppose?"

Luckily all Harry's chums had come prepared to spend money extra and above what they had expected to get, and Harry nodded grimly as they assured him on that point.

"Right! Then we'll go on our own," he said. "We sha'n't have much to spend, but there's plenty to see there without having to spend, I believe. Anyway, out with the bikes, quick! We mustn't miss that train. And if we do have the luck to meet that fat cad we'll—we'll burst him!"

And with that Harry Wharton & Co. dashed away for the cycle-shed, and a few minutes later they were racing hard for Friardale Station.

They got there in good time for the local train, and they caught the connection at Courtfield Junction. But none of the juniors were looking any too happy now. They were certainly en route for Wembley at last. But it was hardly what they had expected—hardly how they should have been going to Wembley. And as the Famous Five sank back into the seats of the third-class carriage they gave vent to remarks concerning William George Bunter that would—perhaps—have made that fat schemer's hair curl had he heard them.

— — —

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Spotted!

"WEMBLEY!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here we are at last!" called Bob Cherry eagerly.

At Charing Cross the juniors had made a brief halt for lemonade and sandwiches—having decided not to "blue" cash on a more elaborate meal—before going on to Wembley, and now they had arrived at their destination at last.

The juniors had recovered some of their cheery spirits by this time, and they lost no time in gaining admittance to the huge grounds of the most stupendous enterprise of its kind ever planned, eager to make the most of their brief visit.

Having passed through the turnstiles, they purchased programmes and began to study them.

"My hat! We'll want a week or two to see this little lot!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"We can't see everything, of course," said Harry. "We'll have to choose the most interesting—to us. Quelch told us to be sure and visit the Palace of Industry, so we'd better."

"Ha, ha! Yes!"

So the juniors made a start by visiting the Palace of Industry. They had

scarcely expected to find anything of interest to them here, despite Mr. Quelch's recommendation; yet they did, in the sports and games section.

"Now for the Palace of Engineering," said Harry. "We must see that, you chaps."

The juniors crossed Kingsway and entered the Palace of Engineering, and as they expected, they found the exhibits of wonderful interest, especially in the wireless section. And Johnny Bull, who had a mechanical turn, had to be dragged out of the huge building when Harry gave the word to go.

"Over there, my esteemed chums," remarked Hurree Singh, "is the pavilion of my own country. Shall we strollfully go there?"

"Oh, I don't mind a little jaunt across to India," said Bob Cherry. "Afterwards I suggest we take a run over to Canada and Australia. Then I don't think a little tramp through East Africa, South Africa, Burma, Malta and Ceylon would harm us. We could finish up with the West Indies, Newfoundland, Hong Kong and those places after tea, what? Mustn't tire ourselves, though."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bob's way of putting it made his chums laugh. The juniors went across to the Indian Pavilion, that looked like an Eastern temple with its lofty minarets and imposing dome. Here the juniors spent an interesting ten minutes, and then they "did" the Canadian Pavilion, and went on to the Australian Pavilion.

It was in the Australian Pavilion that they got their first glimpse of Billy Bunter and his party.

By this the juniors had almost forgotten Bunter amid the interesting sights and sounds about them. True, they had expected to see something of Bunter before the day was out, and they had looked forward keenly to an interview with him. But now they saw him they scarcely knew what to do. They had overlooked the fact that Mr. Pascall would be with him.

As they expected Skinner, Stott, Snoop, Bolsover, and Fish were the five who made up Bunter's party. Harry Wharton spotted them first, and he gritted his teeth and pulled his chums behind an exhibit stand.

"Let them go," he muttered. "We can't kick up a row here, and, in any case, we couldn't before Mr. Pascall, you fellows."

"But—but, hang it all, we ought to show these impostors up!" growled Johnny Bull. "If that Australian chap knew—"

"He doesn't know, and Bunter would only back those cads up, even if we did prove who we were," said Harry. "After all, we're here, and can enjoy—Hullo!"

The little party, led by the Colonial gentleman, had stopped by the model of an Australian sheep farm, and as Skinner & Co. watched the model working, Mr. Pascall explained details to the juniors.

"Skinner looks bored," grinned Bob Cherry. "I expect he wants to get—Great Scott! Did you see that?"

The juniors did see it. They could scarcely fail to see, as their eyes were fixed on the group a little distance away.

What they saw was startling.

Quite a number of people were watching the clever model, and among these was a thin-faced man, wearing a blue raincoat. He stood just behind Mr. Pascall, and before the juniors' eyes he picked the Colonial's pocket clean as a whistle.

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Another "Royal Enfield" Bicycle offered next week!

His arm slid under the Australian's coat, and when it was withdrawn it held a pocket-wallet, which was transferred at lightning speed to the thief's own pocket.

The next moment the fellow was strolling on, puffing a cigarette unconcernedly.

Nobody else had seen the incident but the Famous Five. Their keen eyes had witnessed it, however, and for a brief instant they stared after the man, hardly believing their own eyes.

Then Harry Wharton gasped, and roused himself.

"Quick!" he panted. "After him, you chaps!"

It did not occur to the juniors, excited as they were, to raise an instant hue and cry after the thief. Nor did they stop to acquaint Mr. Pascall with his loss. The juniors' one thought then was to prevent the escape of the pickpocket.

With his chums at his heels, Harry started in pursuit, pushing a way through the crush unceremoniously.

But by this time the fellow in the blue raincoat had increased his pace, and was sliding skilfully through the crush towards the nearest exit.

Agile and smart as the juniors were, they were not so skilled in the art of moving speedily through a crowd as the pickpocket obviously was.

An unexpected "jam" of sightseers gathered before an exhibit held the juniors up for a brief moment, and when they burst through the man in the blue raincoat had vanished in the crush ahead.

"Make for the exit!" snapped Harry. "The rotter will do us yet."

A moment later the juniors reached the exit, and, standing at the top of the steps, they glanced eagerly over the animated scene before them.

"There he goes!" said Frank Nugent excitedly. "Round by the Malaya pavilion, there."

"Looks like the chap, anyway," muttered Harry, following the direction Frank indicated. "He's—Hullo, he's gone inside! Come on!"

The juniors made a dash for the Malaya section, heedless of the expostulations and curiosity of the crowd through which they charged.

They entered the Malaya Pavilion, and glanced swiftly about them. The place was fairly full, and a crowd was gathered round the large model of Singapore Harbour.

Harry Wharton & Co. made for this, knowing that a crowd was a pickpocket's happy hunting-ground.

But the man in the blue raincoat was conspicuous by his absence. He was neither in the crowd before the exhibit,

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nor did the juniors get a glimpse of him in the pavilion.

With growing exasperation, the juniors searched through the building without avail.

"We're done!" said Harry. "He must have walked straight through the place. Blow the luck! We ought to have kicked up a row when we saw the chap do it, you fellows. He's got clean away. We'd better go back and report it."

The juniors retraced their steps speedily to the Australian Pavilion, and made for the model sheep farm, where they had left Mr. Pascall's party.

As they feared, the Australian and the juniors with him had gone, and after searching for them for some minutes the juniors gave it up. It was like looking for a needle in a haystack.

"All we can do is to report the matter to a bobby!" grunted Harry. "It's pretty clear he hasn't discovered his loss yet."

And, approaching the nearest constable, Harry told what he had seen, giving a description of Mr. Pascall and of the pickpocket. Then they left the pavilion, feeling they had done all they could do in the matter.

"We'll keep our peepers open for that chap, though," said Harry. "I'm afraid we rather mucked up that job, though I'm blessed if I know what else we could do. If we had shouted the beggar would have got away in the confusion just the same."

And Harry's chums agreed with him there.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Again!

"BUNTER!"

Johnny Bull made that exclamation about half an hour later as the Famous Five entered the Amusement Park section of the exhibition.

After a walk along the banks of the Great Lake, the juniors had paid a brief visit to the beautiful Burma Pavilion, with its exquisite carving and tinkling bells, and then they had taken a lightning tour of the West African mud village, of South Africa, East Africa, and the rest of the places of interest in that locality, and then they had made a bee-line for the Amusement Park.

It was then Johnny Bull caught a glimpse of the fat form of Billy Bunter.

Billy Bunter was standing in front of "Jack and Jill," one of the big side shows, and apparently Skinner and his chums were persuading Bunter to have his "sixpence on the mat." The Greyfriars juniors were alone. There was no sign of Mr. Pascall.

"Oh, good!" said Harry Wharton grimly. "Now's our chance to have a little explanation from the Bunter bird. Come on!"

"Yes, rather!"

The juniors pressed towards the spot, determined to have their longed-for chat with Billy Bunter.

But before they could reach the spot, Billy Bunter and Skinner & Co. had all passed up the steps of the side show. When Harry Wharton & Co. came up they saw the six being raised on the little trolleys to the top of the gradient.

Bob Cherry chuckled as he watched the fat form of Billy Bunter going up.

"If something doesn't give way before he reaches the top," he grinned, "then he's bound to get jammed coming down. We must watch this, you chaps."

And Bob was a true prophet. The juniors watched with grinning interest.

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and sure enough Billy Bunter came to grief.

He reached the top safely enough, and next moment they saw his fat figure, partnered by the rather skinny form of Skinner, come hurtling down the steep slide on the mat.

They were nearly half-way down when Bunter gave a yell.

"Ow! Oh crumbs! Stop-pit, someone! Ow! I've dropped my glasses."

"Steady, you ass!" howled Skinner. "You—"

Bump, bump!

They were a badly balanced pair at best, and in a frantic effort to look round to see what had happened to his glasses, Bunter wriggled up, bringing the speeding mat almost broadside on across the narrow alley-way. The next moment both were off the mat, and they finished the course in a sprawling heap.

"You—you burbling dummy!" howled Skinner furiously. "What the thump—"

"Ow!" Oh dear!" groaned Bunter. Like Skinner, he had received many bumps, and he was hurt. But he was more concerned about his glasses than his hurts at the moment. "Ow! My glasses! If they get broken somebody will have to pay for them. Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Do it again, Fatty!"

There was a yell of laughter from the spectators—a yell that ended in a warning shout as Bunter started to amble back up the steep incline, apparently to search for his precious glasses.

"Look out, Fatty!"

"Bunter, you ass! Come back!"

But Bunter looked up too late. He saw the mat with Stott and Snoop on board come racing down the slide, and, with a howl of alarm, he turned to bolt back.

He might as well have tried to race the wind. The speeding mat took his legs clean from under him, and he sat down on top of Stott and Snoop.

"Yoccoop! Yarrrough! Oh crumbs!"

Biff! Bump, bump, bump!

That mat slid on, and Stott, Snoop, and Bunter followed it amid sundry bumps and howls.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A howl of laughter went up from the spectators as the luckless three scrambled to their feet, and began to slide their way out of the danger-zone. Even Bunter forgot his glasses in his frantic desire to get out of danger.

An ironical cheer greeted them as they dived out among the grinning spectators.

"You—you burbling maniac!" groaned Stott, glaring furiously at Billy Bunter. "You—"

"Ow! Yow!" groaned Bunter, rubbing himself and blinking short-sightedly around him. "I say, you fellows, what about my specs? I can't—"

"You silly ass!" snorted Skinner. "Didn't you shove 'em in your pocket before we started down?"

"Oh!"

Bunter remembered then. He fished in his pocket and produced his huge spectacles amid another roar of laughter. Bunter jammed them on his fat little nose, and blinked indignantly around him.

"Oh, really," he snorted, wrathfully. "Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at. You—Oh dear! Mum-my hat!"

Bunter suddenly caught sight of Harry Wharton & Co., and his face was a study. Skinner also looked round, and his face went a trifle white as he recognised the juniors.

"Yes, it's little us!" said Harry

Wharton grimly. "Well, Bunter, what about it?"

"I—I say, you fellows!" stammered Bunter. "Fa-fancy you being here! So—so glad to see you!"

"That's rather lucky," said Harry Wharton. "Because now we've found you, Bunter, my pippin, we mean to stick to you—see?"

"Oh dear!"

"I suppose you never thought we might tumble to the game and come on by train?" snapped Harry. "Where's Mr. Pascall?"

"Oh dear! I—I don't know!" mumbled Bunter, blinking in alarm at the Famous Five. "He—he's lost his wallet with his cash in, and he's gone to the police about it. He's meeting us at five o'clock at the Australian Pavilion."

"We'll come along with you, then," said Harry coolly. "Skinner and his pals can do what they like; but I'd advise them to get back home. They've had a good run for their money. But it's ended now. Come on, Bunter!"

He hooked his arm in Bunter's, and was about to lead the fat junior away when Skinner interposed, his face red and desperate. Bolsover and Fisher T. Fish had joined the group now, and, like Skinner & Co., they looked staggered at sight of the chums.

"Look—look here, Wharton!" snarled Skinner. "You let Bunter alone, and clear! I suppose Bunter can choose whom he likes—"

"He did that," said Harry. "He chose us, and we're the fellows the Head gave permission to go—not you cads! We're not going to be done now."

"If you're going to sneak—" began Bolsover, with a sneer.

"We're not going to sneak," said Harry. "But if you chaps want to fight it out before Mr. Pascall, and names are mentioned, then that's your lookout. We're going to stick to Bunter, and we're going to see he explains matters to Mr. Pascall. Come on, Bunter!"

"Oh, really, you fellows—" gasped Bunter.

"Take his other arm, Bob!"

"Right-ho!"

Bob Cherry took the other podgy arm of Billy Bunter, and together they ran him away, with their chums bringing up the rear.

Only Bolsover appeared to think of following, but after a step, even he thought better of it. They had been masquerading as Wharton and his chums, and he knew that the Famous Five could very easily prove their identity.

The game was up for Skinner & Co.—or, at least, they believed it was then. They only felt intensely thankful that their own names were not known to the Australian.

Only Bunter felt he had little to be thankful for, and he wondered dismally as he accompanied the Famous Five how on earth he was going to explain matters to Mr. Pascall.

If he could only give the Famous Five the slip?

As the fat youth glanced desperately about him his eyes fell upon the shaft of the Model Coal-Mine a short distance away, and he stopped suddenly.

"I—I say, you fellows," he gasped. "Let's go down the coal-mine. It—it's ripping, I believe. I—I'll stand treat."

The juniors chuckled. They fancied they could guess why Bunter wanted to take them down the coal-mine. It would doubtless be dark there.

Well, they had no objection to seeing the coal-mine at Bunter's expense, but

they winked at each other, and mentally resolved to see that Billy Bunter did not give them the slip.

"You—you'll stand treat at once-and-threepence a time?" ejaculated Bob. "Well, that's real generous of you, Billy. Come on, you fellows!"

"I feel I owe you fellows something," explained Bunter eagerly. "Come on!"

The expenditure of seven-and-six for such a purpose hurt Bunter badly; but he felt it was well worth it to get rid of Harry Wharton & Co.

He led the way towards the turnstile, and soon they were inside, following on the heels of the lofty Billy Bunter.

From the first it was only too obvious to the juniors that Bunter had visited the place already, for he hurried them through the workshops, and scarcely allowed them to stop until the cage was reached at the top of the pit-shaft.

The juniors took their turn, and presently they were lowered in the two-decked cage to the bottom of the shaft.

Here a guide took charge of the little crowd, and proceeded to conduct them through the underground workings.

Though deeply interested in all about them, the Famous Five kept a close watch on Billy Bunter. In the dim light from the guide's lamp they tramped on, keeping on the edge of the crowd following the guide, while Harry kept a firm grip of the fat youth.

What Bunter's game was they could only guess. But when it did come the juniors were utterly unprepared for it.

Bunter stopped suddenly and stooped over his shoelace.

"I'll catch you up, you fellows!" he said calmly.

"You won't need to!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "We're staying with you, old fat pippin. I rather fancy——"

"Help! Oh, help!"

From the gloom behind the juniors the cry came suddenly, and the juniors almost jumped out of their skins. They had imagined they were the last of the stragglers following the guide towards the exit.

Apparently they weren't!

"What the thump——" ejaculated Bob in alarm. "It—it sounds like a woman's voice——"

"I thought so, too!" muttered Harry. "It's someone left behind—probably fallen and hurt herself. Come on!"

Without hesitation the juniors followed Harry as he dashed back through the gloom. It was quite possible that a visitor had fallen in the dark workings they had left, and visions of somebody lying hurt—possibly with a broken limb, lent speed to the juniors' feet, dark as it was.

Nobody else appeared to have heard the cries. The Famous Five rushed on to the rescue alone—leaving Bunter still tying his shoelace.

They dashed round a dimly lit corner of the working, and as they did so Harry crashed full into a figure standing at the turn—a man's figure.

There was a startled oath in the gloom, and both crashed down to the mud together, and over them sprawled Harry's chums, with startled gasps.

"Oh, my hat!"

Mumbling apologies, Harry Wharton scrambled to his feet, and blinked quickly along the passage, the appealing cries they had heard still uppermost in his mind.

Then he gave a start—a start of amazement, echoed next instant by his chums. There was no injured person to be seen in the dim working. Save for themselves, and the stranger they had bowled over, the place was deserted.

It was only then that the juniors



"Oh, great Scott!" groaned Skinner, catching sight of Mr. Queleh. "What putrid luck!" There was no time for the juniors to bolt—no time for anything but to get rid of the incriminating cigarettes, and make the best of it. The Remove Form-master beckoned them, grimly. Five cigarettes vanished mysteriously and the six juniors almost tottered over to the three gentlemen. (See Chapter 12.)

became aware of the significant fact that Billy Bunter had not followed them—and in a blinding flash they understood.

"Bunter's ventriloquism!" howled Bob Cherry. "We've been had!"

"Oh, great pip. He's done us!"

There was no doubt about that; but the juniors had little chance to discuss the matter then, for at that moment the stranger scrambled to his feet, and glared at the juniors, his eyes glinting with rage. And as they turned and looked at him clearly the juniors got the shock of their lives.

The man wore a blue raincoat, and his features were thin and crafty. They recognised the man in a flash. It was the pickpocket who had picked Mr. Pascall's pocket in the Australia Pavilion!

In silence the startled juniors blinked at the man.

They could understand why he was lurking there in the gloom. He had evidently taken his pickings out of the last party of sightseers, and now he was lying low for the next lot to come along. It was an ideal place for his nimble fingers to work in safety.

"You—you careless young hounds!" hissed the fellow. "What——"

"Collar him!" gasped Harry.

The man's words seemed to rouse the juniors from a trance, and at Harry's command they flung themselves upon the startled pickpocket.

Even as they crashed to the muddy floor of the working, Harry Wharton realised the risk they ran. It flashed across his mind that pickpockets usually worked with accomplices, and that the man would probably have parted with the wallet they were seeking long before this.

But the next moment Harry, to his

deep relief, soon discovered that this was not the case.

By this time the fellow seemed to have guessed their intention, for he struggled and fought furiously to free himself. But the juniors hung on grimly, and while the other four held him down, Harry made a dive for the fellow's breast-pocket.

His hand came into view again holding a leather wallet. He crammed it into his pocket. A glance was enough to convince him that it was Mr. Pascall's.

"That's good enough!" he snapped. "Run off for a bobby, now, Inky. We'll soon settle this merchant's hash!"

But Harry was mistaken there. He had underestimated the slipperiness of their quarry.

Even as Inky released his grip the fellow kicked out viciously, and Bob rolled away with a stifled howl. Another savage lunge sent Frank Nugent reeling back, and the next moment the man was on his feet.

Harry jumped to grasp him, as did Hurree Singh, but, agile as they were, he beat them. A swing of his fist sent Harry staggering backwards, and dodging Inky's outstretched hand, the man in the blue raincoat raced away into the gloom.

Harry's chums were about to follow, when Harry called them back.

"No good going after him!" he gasped. "I bet he knows this place like a book. Anyway, we've got that wallet, and that's all we wanted. Now let's get out of this. Our next job is to find Mr. Pascall."

The juniors made for the exit without loss of time. They saw the guide approaching with another party, but they

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saw nothing of the man in the blue rain-coat, neither did they see anything of Billy Bunter.

"We ought to be kicked for letting the fat ass take us in like that," grinned Bob Cherry. "I clean forgot him when I heard that cry, though. I never dreamed it was his blessed ventriloquism."

"He did us fairly," agreed Harry grimly. "But we'll soon see the fat ass. He said the Colonial was meeting them at the Australian pavilion, and we'll make straight for there. Come on! It's nearly five now."

The juniors hastened their steps, not lingering in the Exhibition Hall of the Model Colliery. And once outside they made a bee-line for Australia.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Nice for Skinner & Co.!

"H E E, hee, hee!"

That unmusical cachinnation proceeded from the mouth of Billy Bunter, as the fat junior emerged into the open air from the Exhibition Hall of the model colliery.

The success of his trick on the Famous Five seemed to amuse Billy Bunter hugely, and he was feeling very bucked and proud of his achievement.

"Hee, hee, hee!" he chortled. "They thought they were jolly clever. But I did 'em one! The beasts forgot what a splendid ventriloquist I am. Now for those other chaps!"

And Billy Bunter rolled away at top speed in search of Skinner & Co.

To his great relief he found them easily enough. They were enjoying a trip on "The Whip," and Billy Bunter waited until they came off. Harold Skinner stared at the fat junior in astonishment.

"You've given 'em the slip, Bunter?" he ejaculated. "Oh, good!"

"Trust me for that, old chap," grinned Bunter.

And he told Skinner & Co. how he had given the Famous Five the slip, and Skinner & Co. roared at the story.

"Then it's all serene?" grinned Skinner. "We can come with you, Bunter—what?"

"Right as rain!" grinned Billy Bunter. "It ain't likely we'll stumble into the beasts again, you fellows. Come on! It's near enough to five now, and I'm jolly near famished."

And Bunter led the way towards the Australian Pavilion, where Mr. Pascall had arranged to meet the juniors before taking them for tea. The fat junior had completely forgotten the fact that he had told Harry Wharton where they were meeting Mr. Pascall, and the time of meeting.

But he was fated soon to remember it. In fact, there was more than one surprise in store for Skinner & Co. that afternoon.

"I say, you fellows!" said Bunter, as they approached the gleaming white building, "chuck those cigs away, you silly asses! No good upsetting the old chap. He's told you once about it."

"Blow the old buffer!" grinned Skinner. "We're out to enjoy ourselves, my pippin, and we're going to."

"Yes, rather!"

And Skinner & Co. went on smoking. The next moment they had good reason to wish from the bottom of their hearts that they had taken Billy Bunter's advice.

As they pushed their way through the crowds towards the steps of the Australian Pavilion they came quite suddenly upon Mr. Pascall.

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He was standing at the foot of the steps, chatting with two other gentlemen, and as the juniors' eyes fell upon the two a sudden and complete end came to their enjoyment for that eventful day.

For the two gentlemen were none other than Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, and Mr. Prout, the master of the Fifth at Greyfriars.

The juniors stared dumbfounded. They seemed to be rooted to the ground with horror. The sight of the two masters standing there seemed like a miracle to the impostors.

But it was no miracle. Indeed, the explanation was simple enough. Being at a loose end that day, Mr. Quelch had suggested, on the spur of the moment, that they should make a lightning visit to Wembley, and Mr. Prout had willingly agreed to the proposal.

They had come on a later train than the Famous Five, and it was while emerging from the Australian building that the two masters had blundered into Mr. Pascall. Mr. Quelch, who had already met the Colonial, had thereupon introduced Mr. Prout, and the three had been chatting together some minutes when the hapless Skinner & Co. turned up.

"Oh, great Scott!" groaned Skinner, finding his voice suddenly. "What putrid luck!"

There was no time to bolt—no time for anything, save to get rid of the cigarettes and make the best of it. They had already been seen. Mr. Pascall waved genially; Mr. Quelch beckoned them—anything but genially.

Five cigarettes vanished mysteriously, and the six juniors almost tottered to the three gentlemen.

"Ah, here are the boys, Mr. Quelch!" said Mr. Pascall. There was rather a grim note in the Colonial's voice. He had not failed to see the remarkably sudden disappearance of the cigarettes.

But his grimness was as nothing to the grimness in Mr. Quelch's voice.

"You—you say that these are the boys, Mr. Pascall?" he inquired, his glance like steel as it rested on Skinner & Co.'s quaking faces.

"Er—yes, certainly, Mr. Quelch!" exclaimed Mr. Pascall, slightly surprised at the question. "I arranged for them to meet me here at five."

"Then, sir," said the Remove master, "I fear you have been grossly deceived."



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These are certainly not the boys who were given permission to accompany Bunter to Wembley."

"Bless my soul!"

"On the contrary," said Mr. Quelch, "they are the last boys in the school who would have been allowed to come without an escort. There has obviously been trickery at work here. The boys who should have— Good gracious! Why, they are here now!"

And Mr. Quelch stared in astonishment at the Famous Five, who had chosen that interesting moment in which to appear. But if the Remove master was astonished at sight of them, they were much more astonished at sight of Mr. Quelch and Mr. Prout.

"Oh, my only hat!" gasped Harry Wharton. "Now the band will play!"

Mr. Quelch beckoned to the Famous Five, and they advanced, looking rather scared. Bunter & Co. gave them black looks as they did so.

"Wharton," demanded the Remove master, "what does this amazing affair mean? Did Skinner and these boys take your places with your permission?"

"Nunno, sir!" gasped Harry. "We—we missed the car, and—and came on by train, sir."

"You are quite on your own, then, Wharton?"

"Y-y-yes, sir!" stammered Harry.

"It appears to me, Quelch," remarked Mr. Prout, "that Bunter is the person best fitted to explain this affair."

"Ow!" groaned Bunter.

Apparently Mr. Quelch came to that conclusion also, for he turned his gimlet-eye upon the quaking Billy Bunter.

"Well, Bunter?" he demanded. "We are waiting!"

The fat junior fairly shook with fear. The unexpected appearance of the two masters had quite "unhorsed" Bunter. He scarcely knew whether he was on his head or his heels.

"Ow! Oh dear!" he gasped. "I—I know nothing at all about it, sir—nothing at all! It—it's not my fault! It was all Skinner's fault. That's it! It—it was Skinner, sir. He made me do it. He suggested we should meet the car, you know. It was Skinner! Ow!"

"So Skinner suggested it, Bunter?"

"That's it, sir!" gasped Bunter. "He—he made me let them come, sir!"

"Is that the truth, Skinner?" snapped Mr. Quelch. "Did you force Bunter to allow you to take the places of Wharton and his chums?"

Skinner gave Bunter a deadly look. But he saw it would all have to come out now—there was nothing else for it. He saw there was trouble ahead for them, and he meant to see to it that Bunter suffered also.

"It—it's true, sir!" he muttered, licking his lips. "But it was only a lark. These fellows will tell you it was only a lark. We knew that Bunter had been spoofing everybody about having saved Mr. Pascall from those footpads—"

"What?"

"We happened to know, sir," said Skinner, "that Wharton and his friends were the chaps who saved Mr. Pascall, and not Bunter. Bunter did nothing, except collar the glory, sir!"

"Bless my soul!"

Skinner's statement came as a bomb-shell to the three gentlemen. Mr. Pascall looked sharply at Bunter, a peculiar expression on his face. Mr. Prout and Mr. Quelch turned amazed faces to Harry Wharton & Co.

"Wharton," gasped Mr. Quelch, "if there is any truth in the statement Skinner has made, you will oblige me by giving a full explanation without delay."

"Ye-e-es, sir!" stammered Harry.

(Continued on page 28.)

Although Matthew Melton has dragged the family name into disrepute, there is a splendid chance open to his brother to redeem it. Will big George Melton put things right with that powerful punch "locked up" in his right fist, or will he fall a victim to Britain's Heavy-weight Champion?



Suspended for Life!

A SMALL cordon of police formed round Matthew Melton, and the crowd, having partially satisfied their desire for punishment, allowed the police to escort him to the dressing-room.

Weary, worn, and half-dazed, Matthew listened to the hot outburst from Montague Roberts. He knew the director of the club was sounding his death-warrant so far as being a professional footballer was concerned.

"Disgraceful!" roared Mr. Roberts. "Never happened in the history of the Rovers before, young fellow. Striking a referee! Refusing to obey his commands to stop fighting! Good heavens, man, do you know what you've done?"

Matthew shook his head wearily. "You've dragged the good name of the Rovers in the dust!" bellowed Montague Roberts. "You're certain to be reported to the Football Association. You're equally certain to be suspended for life!"

Matthew uttered a hollow groan. That was the worst blow of the lot. Useless for him to plead provocation, useless for him to explain that the Wanderers' half-back had deliberately gone out of his way to foul him on every possible occasion. For the referee would declare that nothing of the kind had happened, and would be perfectly justified in so doing. Few among that crowd had witnessed the half-back's shady tactics, they had been executed so skilfully and deceitfully.

And few indeed had seen the vicious kick the half-back had aimed at him when he was scrambling to his feet. Matthew realised dully that his ambitions had been shattered. He was a victim of circumstance. As a footballer his name would reek in the nostrils of those who followed the grand winter game—would be bandied about from mouth to mouth in scorn and derision.

As in a dream Matthew heard his director speaking again.

"Now I know why you left St. Bartholomew's!" he hissed. "I received an anonymous letter two days after you had played your first match, in which the writer said that you were one of the principal culprits in a rebellion against your

HOW THE STORY OPENED.

GEORGE MELTON—a powerful, well-built fellow, approaching twenty years of age. Boxer of great promise.

MATTHEW MELTON—a clever footballer, two years his junior.

DICKY and MARCUS MELTON—known as the twins. Fourteen years of age.

JUSTIN MAHONE—the Meltons' guardian—who refuses to assist his wards. Something of a mystery man.

SIR HUMPHREY DALLAS—known as the Sporting Baronet. Saved from a terrible fate by George Melton, Sir Humphrey shows his gratitude by starting George on a professional boxing career, at the same time allowing his brothers the free use of a cottage belonging to him in Cobham.

SANDY ROBSON—a veteran pugilist, who trains the Sporting Baronet's pupils.

FERRERS LOCKE—the world-famous detective.

In course of time George is matched against an opponent and, until his natural antipathy to dealing the knock-out obsesses him, more than holds his own. At the moment when the fight is his for the taking, George is caught off his guard and knocked out.

The following day he is invited to a reception at Sir Humphrey's mansion in Mayfair. During the festivities a thief gets to work. By a strange tangle of circumstances, George is drawn into the affair, and he is accused as the thief. Ferrers Locke comes to his aid, however, and although the sleuth refuses to name the real thief, his word is accepted that George is innocent. Learning the Meltons' story, Locke introduces Matthew to a director of a First League football team. Matthew is engaged on the spot. In his first match as a professional he distinguishes himself. In the second game, however, Matthew continually runs foul of the opposing half-back, who brings into practice every shady trick of which he is capable. The fouling goes on for some considerable time unknown to the referee. Then, his hot temper getting the better of him, Matthew hits out at the half-back. A fight ensues on the footer-ground, and the referee, in an endeavour to part the combatants, runs into two of Matthew's wild blows. The unruly element in the crowd then take a hand. Matthew is dragged from the field and pitched out in the roadway. Sprawling there, gasping for breath, Matthew is conscious of the ring of angry faces round him—of the threatening fists raised on every side.

(Now read on.)

headmaster. That was why you were expelled. Is that the truth?"

Matthew nodded dully. At that moment he hadn't a word to say in his defence.

"Then you're fired from the Rovers!" bellowed Montague Roberts. "Not that the Football Association would have passed over your offence in any case. But I'll redeem the good name of the club by taking the first step to rid it of such a person as yourself. You're fired!"

And with that Montague Roberts stamped out of the dressing-room.

"Well, old scout," said George, as Matthew came into the sitting-room that evening, "what luck? How did the match— Why, what the thump's the matter with your face?"

George peered closely at Matthew's bruised face, noting the cut lips, the grazed cheek, the tendency of the left eye to swell.

"Paper! Paper! Football results! Sensational Sheffield match! Referee assaulted! Paper!"

The Meltons looked at one another blankly as the paper boy's raucous shouts greeted their ears. Then Marcus slipped quietly out of the cottage to return a few moments later, a copy of the "Evening News" in his chubby hand, a white, horrified expression in his chubby face.

"Good heavens, Matthew," he gasped hoarsely, "what on earth have you been doing?"

George snatched the paper out of his young brother's hand and ran his eye over the bold headlines. Then he uttered an ejaculation of dismay.

"Good gad, Matthew, is—is this true?"

"Part of it," was Matthew's whispered reply. "It's written finis to my career as a footballer, anyway."

They plied him with questions, they extracted the true happenings of that eventful afternoon from their footballing brother. And, as was perfectly natural in the circumstances, all their sympathy went out to Matthew.

"Heavens!" said George, smiting the little table with his massive fist. "What confounded luck dogs our footsteps! I

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believe you, old boy," he added, as something like a tear sprang unchecked to Matthew's eye. "You're not the kind of fellow to run riot in a match unless the provocation was severe."

"Never mind, Matthew," said the twins, coming to the rescue. "If the worst comes to the worst you'll be able to act the Form master again."

And thus the Meltons bore their ill stroke of fortune like stoics. They took their "punishment" well, even when, some few days later, Matthew Melton was called upon by the Football Association to present himself at their offices to submit his defence of the charge laid against him by the referee.

It was useless for Matthew to apologise to the referee, who appeared now little the worse for the two hard blows he had received in the execution of his duty; it was useless for him to proclaim to that grim-visaged body of judges that the Wanderers' half-back had played a dead-set at him from the commencement of the whistle. He was found guilty.

Once again the name of Matthew Melton appeared in the sporting papers in large type, once again he provided the topic of conversation at the sporting clubs. But the headlines, in thick black type, ran as follows:

**"FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION
SUSPEND MATTHEW MELTON!
BARRED FROM THE GAME FOR
LIFE!"**

They sounded the death-knell to all Matthew's hopes, for he was ambitious to a degree. He had tried to lift the family name out of something like an unknown quantity. He had done so, but its effect had gone contrary to his intentions. Instead of a name to be proud of, Melton, when prefixed by Matthew, was a name that would drag in the dust!

The Invalid!

DESPITE the fact that the Meltons had experienced a nasty set-back in the matter of Matthew's wretched affair with the Football Association, George entered into his training with right goodwill and an untroubled mind.

Sandy Robson, his trainer, could not find sufficient words in his vocabulary to praise the headway he was making. Reporters admitted to George's training quarters and watching him at work said, without dissension, that if he did not enter the ring overtrained he would give Johnny Cavendish, the champion of the British Isles, the fight of his life.

These same reporters, too, threw out hints that Johnny Cavendish was not taking his training seriously enough. Indeed, that was the one fault in the champion's make-up that provided a continual source of worry to his backers. Well past thirty years of age, the heavy-weight champion had reached a stage when most fighters retire on their laurels. But the deplorable lack of promising British boxers was so marked that Cavendish was determined to "sit tight" on his title, taking life far more easily than a man of his profession should do.

That Cavendish's next fight was "easy money" was a vulgarism sufficiently true in substance to make him a hot favourite amongst that fraternity known as the "layers" at the odds of five to one on. The most complacent and self-satisfied man in the enemy camp was Johnny Cavendish himself. Win or lose—and he had not the slightest doubt

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that the former would be his lot—he stood to take the lion's share of the purse and gate money. It was only on those terms that his manager had consented to enter a contract with Sir Humphrey Dallas, who nominated George Melton—practically an unknown quantity—as his principal.

Yet such was the restless curiosity of the followers of the Ring to discover a boxer who had any pretensions to championship form that the forthcoming bout at Belcher's looked like creating a fever of excitement in the sporting world.

As the day of the great fight drew near, the price that had originally been laid against George Melton in the betting market shortened considerably. No longer was he the rank outsider of the pair, there now being only half a point between him and his opponent.

"They are laying even money against you, George," smiled Sir Humphrey Dallas, as he watched his protegee conclude his training for the day, "and Cavendish stands at five to four on. Can't understand this sudden shortening of your price in the betting-ring, although if you shape in the ring as you're shaping now it will be justified."

George laughed, a light, easy laugh, full of confidence.

"This money side of the game doesn't interest me a bit," he admitted. "I've got all I can do to keep pace with old Sandy without bothering my head about betting. Can't understand why people bet on a fight. Why, anything might happen!"

Sandy Robson shook his grizzled head. "It's this money side of the game that has brought boxing down to a low level, in my opinion," he muttered. "I don't hold with it!"

"Never mind, Sandy!" smiled Sir Humphrey. "You do your bit and put George into the ring a trained man, and I'll take over your worry about the financial side of the game."

Only a week remained now for the big fight to be staged. But before the first of the seven days had passed another bombshell was dropped among the public in the shape of odds being laid against Johnny Cavendish. Five to one was a big price to be had against a champion heavy-weight who had an unknown quantity to tackle. The general public put it down to the fact that Johnny Cavendish's age was being taken into consideration, likewise his negligent methods of training. But they were puzzled.

The shrewd followers of boxing, however, had the good sense to leave the betting market severely alone. There was something decidedly fishy about the manner in which the prices of the two principals had fluctuated. Others less shrewd jumped to put their money on the new favourite—the unknown quantity as he came to be styled.

And in the midst of this wild speculation young Dicky Melton was suddenly taken ill with pneumonia. The fight became a matter of secondary importance to George when he arrived home at the cottage in Cobham and learned the bad tidings. He took it like a man who has been dealt a knock-down blow. The laughter went out of his eyes; his vivaciousness and his zeal for work looked like becoming things of the past.

"Buck up, old scout!" said Matthew, taking his elder brother on one side as they waited for the doctor's verdict. "Things might not be so bad as they seem. Besides, you have a duty to Sir Humphrey, remember. You must enter the ring on Saturday next with a clear head and free from worry."

His obligation to the sporting baronet roused George from his depression.

"You're right, Matthew, old boy!" he admitted. "I must forget the existence of poor young Dicky on Saturday night. But let me have my head now. Heaven, if anything should happen to Dicky—"

His words trailed off and a lump rose in his throat.

"Don't be so confoundedly pessimistic!" muttered Matthew, who, strangely enough, was thinking the same thing. "Buck up! Here's the doctor!"

A grave-faced medico tiptoed out of the room in which young Dicky was lying and made his way over to the brothers.

"Well?" queried George, unable to restrain his impatience.

"Your brother is seriously ill," said the medico kindly. "But I think he'll pull through. His constitution is in his favour."

That was all he said; but the tone behind the words provided great comfort to George's troubled mind. For the next few days he continued his training with that zeal which had won him such respect and praise among those admirers who were permitted to see him "in action." And day by day the doctor reported Dicky's good progress towards recovery.

"I know it sounds a heartless thing to say," said Sir Humphrey Dallas, the day before the fight; "but when you enter the ring to-morrow, George, you must blot out all memory of young Dicky—of everyone except your opponent."

"I understand," said George. "I'll do my best, sir. I feel as confident of success as any man could, and I'm wonderfully fit."

"Good man!" was the sporting baronet's hearty reply. "You'll do!"

The newspapers that night dwelt on the fact that George Melton's younger brother, who had been smitten with pneumonia, was now mending rapidly, and that his recovery meant more as to the outcome of the fight between George and Johnny Cavendish than most people imagined. George's affection for his younger brother was made the romantic centre piece of the "write ups," and it drew him many friends from the public.

The morning of the fight dawned a typical October day; dark, heavy clouds overshadowed London and its neighbouring suburbs. Towards midday a fog descended on the great metropolis like a huge blanket. And George, preparatory to his departure from the cottage in Cobham, gazed at the heavy sky with a sense of foreboding in his heart.

Something—some instinct—warned him that danger in some shape or form impended. Three times had he visited young Dicky that morning, anxious to learn for himself whether the lad was well and comfortable.

"You old fuss-pot!" grinned Dicky from his bed. "I wish you'd buzz off! It's bad enough having Matthew's blooming chivvy in front of me all day without yours, old scout!"

George did not take the remark literally. He knew that Dicky wished him to make himself easy in his mind. Young as he was, Dicky was shrewd enough to observe that his big brother was worrying about him, and that a worried man, with a twenty three-minute rounds contest in front of him, stood little chance of going the full distance. Dicky raised himself on the pillow.

"Buzz off, George!" he grinned. "And if you don't come back with victory to-night, I'll lick you myself!"

"Right, you little imp!" chuckled George, now feeling assured that Dicky was the old Dicky. "I'm off! You'll

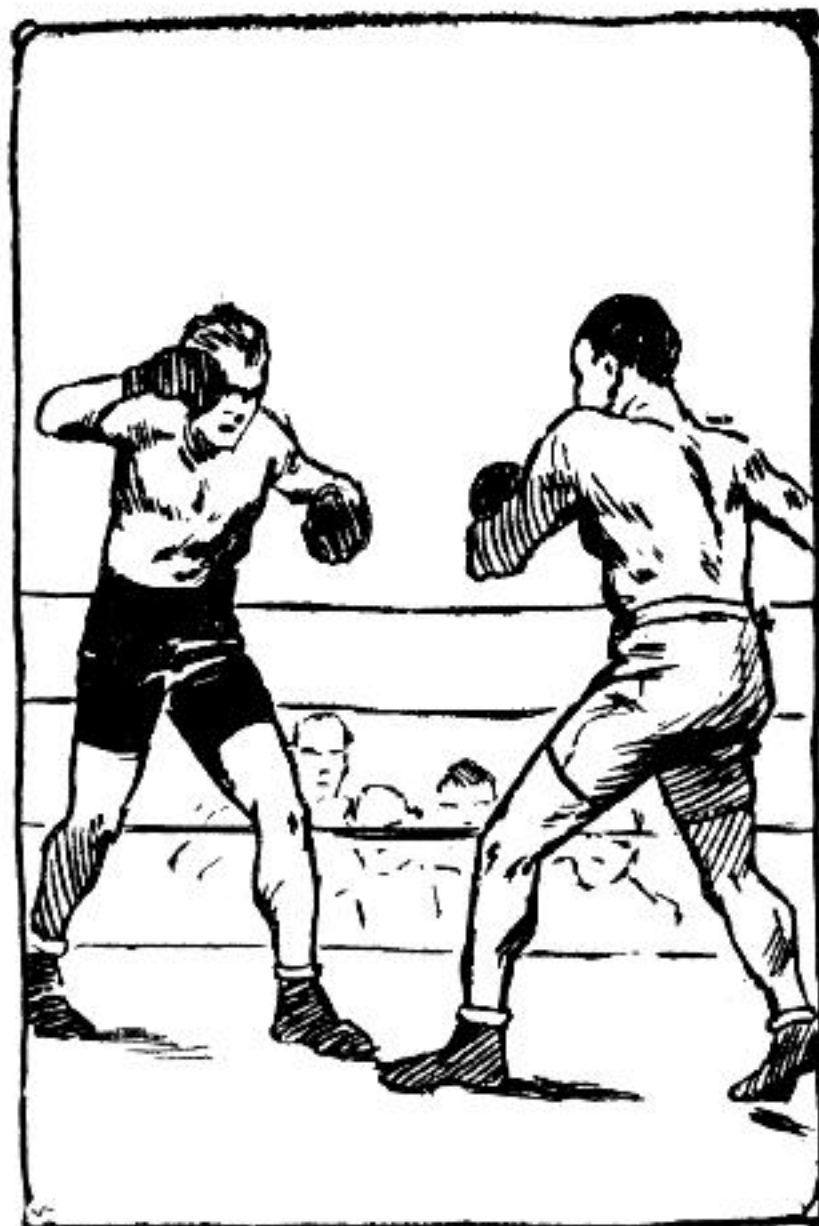
take care of him, Matthew?" he added, turning to Dicky's nurse.

"Sure thing," replied Matthew. "And Marcus has promised to sing in the woods if he must sing. Can't have him bawling about the sick-room!"

"Why, you cheeky rotter—" began Marcus.

Marcus prided himself on his singing, and he had every right to, for Nature had endowed him with a silvery, melodious voice. To refer to that gift

PLAYING 'POSSUM—



George almost staggered from his corner, to all intents and purposes a beaten man.—

as bawling was almost like sacrilege to Marcus.

"He's only pulling your leg!" chipped in George, patting Marcus on the shoulder. "The next fight I take on I'm going to let you sing to me just before I enter the ring."

"Oh, that will be ripping!"

George laughed, conscious that in those few words he had given Marcus something to look forward to. Little did this big brother imagine that his remark would come true—little could he see the circumstances in which he was to ask, nay, beseech to hear the silvery notes falling from young Marcus' lips. But that is of the future.

They saw him off, these Meltons, Matthew and Marcus waving him into the car that awaited him; while young Dicky, propped up on the pillows, gazed through the window and silently prayed that George would fight in winning vein.

And so with the brothers' "God speeds" echoing pleasantly in his ears, George Melton made himself comfortable beside Sir Humphrey Dallas and Sandy Robson for the quick run up to town.

The Anonymous Message!

"HERE he comes!"

The cry was taken up on all sides as Sir Humphrey's Daimler car bearing George Melton came to a halt outside the stadium known as Belcher's. Caps and hands filled the air like a miniature forest, fervent wishes of good luck and a chorus of cheers accompanied George Melton as, between two ranks of officials

who had met the car, he passed into the gigantic building.

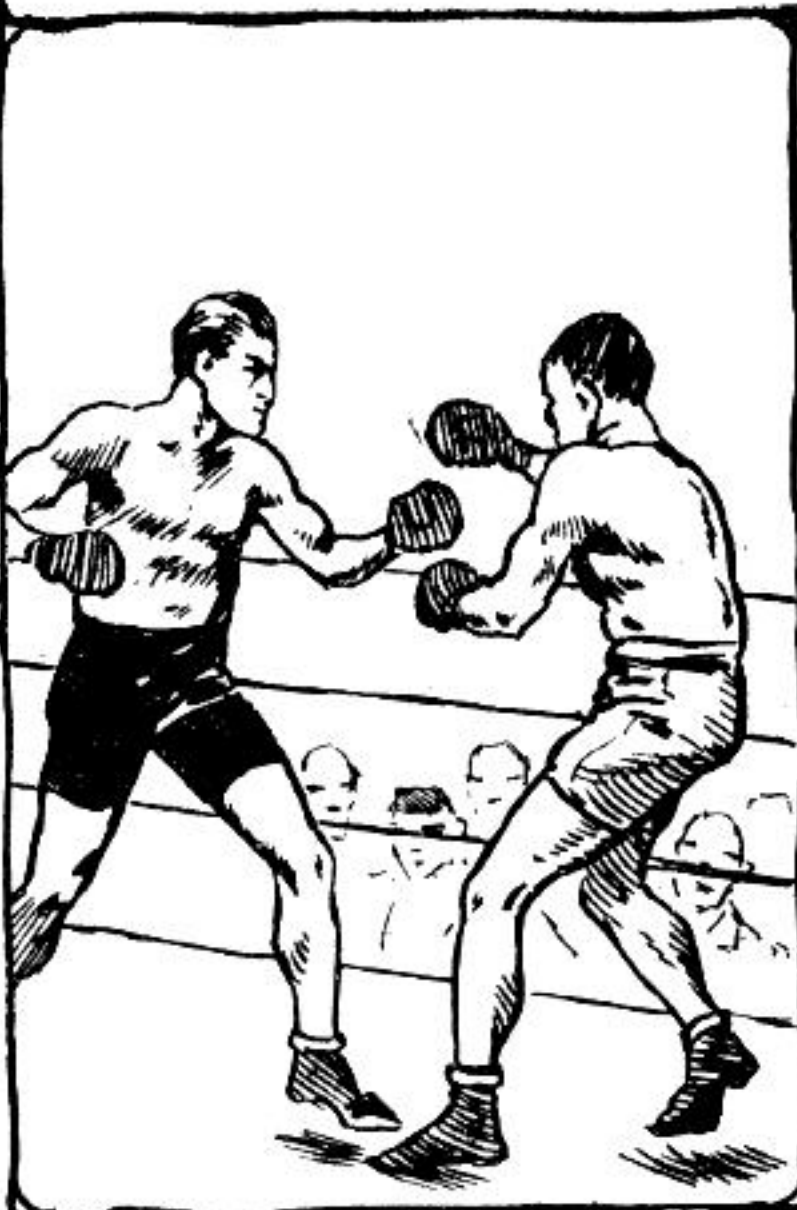
His cheery smile of acknowledgment, his obvious fitness fitted in well with the good-humour of the crowd, and everyone talked of him as the winner of the forthcoming fight.

"You mustn't let them down, old boy," muttered Sandy, as he saw his charge safely installed in the dressing-room. "A public like you've already attached to yourself is an achievement that many another boxer would give his soul to possess. They want you to win, they think you're going to win—"

"And I am going to win," said George firmly. "Thanks to you, Sandy, I've mastered that one weakness of mine. You won't find me afraid to deal the knock-out to-night!"

"Bravo!" exclaimed Sandy, his eyes shining. "I'm going to turn out a champion yet. But there, let's forget all 'shop' and you take things nice and quiet. There's another hour to go before your fight comes on. Take a nap on this couch."

THE AWAKENING—



—Suddenly, from half drooped lids, George saw his opportunity. Gone in a flash was his mantle of weariness.—

The request was tantamount to a command, for Sandy helped his charge to the couch and made him comfortable among the pillows, covering him with his dressing-gown. Next, to George's amazement, he brought into view a banjo, which he handled with an ease that bespoke long acquaintance with this South American instrument.

"What's the game?" grinned George.

"You're going to take a nap," said Sandy firmly; "and I'm going to help you. Just you lie back with your eyes closed and your mind a blank. Leave the rest to me."

Wonderingly George did as he was bid. Scarcely had he closed his eyes when a dreamy melody floated out from the banjo in Sandy's hands, filling the dressing-room with a restful influence that settled on George like a warm blanket. His breathing became deep and regular as those soft notes strummed out from the banjo, his mind pictured a realm of serene calm and quiet, a realm in which there was no strife, no worries, and no Johnny Cavendish.

Inside ten minutes George Melton was deep in slumber. The notes from the banjo died down until they ceased altogether. And then Sandy tiptoed quietly over to his charge.

"Good," he muttered, gazing down into the strong, handsome face. "Barring accidents he'll win hands down."

It was not usually given to Sandy to boast, but in George he reckoned he had made a fighting man who would one day be a world's champion. Seating himself by the couch, his eyes fixed on the sleeping form of George Melton like a mother watching her child, old Sandy did not hear the door of the dressing-room open.

He became aware of another presence in the room when a slight draught blew upon his face. He turned sharply and saw Sir Humphrey Dallas entering the room on tiptoe.

"Shush!" cautioned Sandy, rising to his feet. "I've just got him to sleep, sir. Wonderful what a nap does for a man just before his engagement."

Sir Humphrey Dallas smiled approvingly at his trainer.

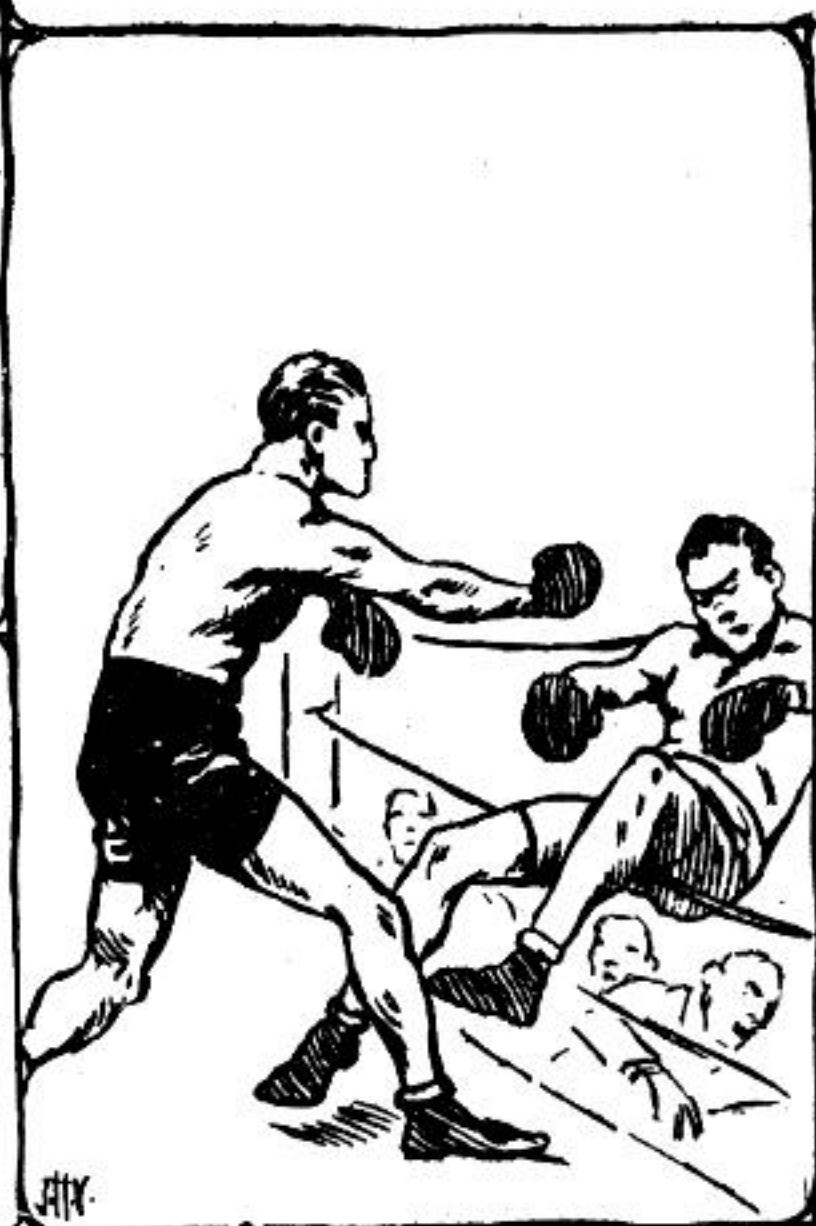
"You're a wonderful fellow, Sandy," he whispered. "But—but what do you make of this?"

He handed Sandy Robson a letter. It ran:

"If you wish to recover your losses, Sir Humphrey, put your money on Johnny Cavendish. This is not a fancy—the writer is in 'the know.' Beware, your principal is double-crossing you in the sixth round.

"A FRIEND AND A WELL-INFORMED PERSON."

THE RESULT!



—Smack! Smack—smack! Three blows, executed at lightning-like speed, took Cavendish at an unprepared moment. The third came like a kick from a mule and lifted the champion clean through the ropes. (See page 25.)

There was a scornful look on Sandy's face as he handed back the letter to his chief.

"Don't take any notice of it," he whispered. "That's an old trick of the trade. Didn't I say that money is spoiling the game? These kind of things didn't happen in my young days."

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"Of course, I don't put any store by it," whispered Sir Humphrey. "Still, it's disconcerting. You—you don't think that George would play us false, do you?"

"Heaven forgive you for thinking such a thing!" said Sandy hotly. "He's the straightest man I've met. Tear that confounded anonymous letter into pieces, sir," he added with a growl of disapproval; "and forget it!"

The sporting baronet did as he was bid, tossing the fragments into the fire.

"That's better," he remarked, as he watched the flames curling round that piece of written slander. "I feel much easier in my mind now."

And with a half-ashamed look in his face Sir Humphrey tiptoed out of the dressing-room, leaving old Sandy staring after him, rank disapproval written in every line of his rugged features.

But scarcely had five minutes elapsed when there came another soft knock at the door of the dressing-room. This time Sandy came face to face with a messenger boy in the service of the club.

"Telegram for you, Mr. Robson," said the lad, extending a buff envelope.

Wonderingly the trainer took the missive and perused it, a puzzled, angry frown bringing his thick brows together as he did so. It ran:

"Ware of foul play against George.—
"FERRERS LOCKE."

"This 'ere's a go!" muttered Sandy, scratching his head in perplexity. "Ferrers Locke, of all people, too. He usually knows what he's talking about. I'll—"

And then, becoming aware that the messenger-boy was listening to his remarks, he curtly dismissed him. Three times he read that telegram, growing more angry on each occasion.

"If there's anyone trying to double-cross us," he muttered, "it behoves me to keep my ears and eyes open. Have to be a good trick to pass me without being spotted."

And with that reflection Sandy placed the telegram in his pocket and took up his seat beside George. For the next half-hour he was deep in thought. Two messages had been received—one anonymous. One stating that foul play was expected from George in the sixth round, the other warning him, Sandy, of foul play against George.

"Something on the tapis," grunted the old trainer. "Thank Heaven I've not let George out of my sight! They haven't got at him up to now, at any rate, and I'll take deuced good care that they don't before he enters the ring."

Outside, the call-boy was shouting, warning the principals in the bout that was to take place before the big fight to hold themselves in readiness. Sandy shook George gently by the shoulder.

"Wake up, old boy," he said softly. George came out of his slumbers with a happy smile on his face.

"Jove, Sandy," he remarked, stretching himself. "but that banjo sleeping-draught is the goods! I feel wonderfully fit and wonderfully confident."

"Good!" grunted Sandy. "We'll just have a final look over you."

He commenced to massage George's limbs with a thoroughness that many a professional masseuse would have envied. At length he declared himself satisfied.

"You're the fittest man I've turned out since I took up the game," he remarked. "Not a sign of flabbiness anywhere, not a blemish on you. And you're not muscle-bound or overtrained. George," he added, taking him by the

shoulder, "you're going to win, aren't you?"

Melton was surprised at the question, surprised at the earnestness in Sandy's voice.

"No man will do more than I do to-night," he returned confidently. "I feel that success is within my grasp. But I shall not take any chances on that account. I'm fighting from the sound of the gong to the end of each round."

Chatting on every matter other than the forthcoming fight, Sandy and George now awaited their "call." And they had not long to wait.

The last preliminary bout had concluded, and at a sign from Sandy, George roped his dressing-gown about him and followed at the heels of his trainer.

"Hurrah!"

A gigantic shout that rose in thousands of throats went up as the "unknown quantity" made his appearance. A line of officials encompassed him as he strode towards the ring. Faces craned forward to get a near glimpse of him, and the sight of it all, the noise of it all, made George tremble for a moment. But only for a moment. Once he had got over the first shock of that reception George was the true fighting man, possessing iron nerves and an equanimity of spirit.

He arrived at the ringside, to find that Johnny Cavendish was already installed in his corner, a group of seconds and friends conversing with him. At sight of his opponent a peculiar grin overspread the heavy features of the champion—a grin that was answered by a grim frown from George.

The preliminary formalities were gone through with all haste. It was only when the bandages came to be tied on that a lengthy pause took place. From his corner Johnny Cavendish stared out across that nineteen and a half foot ring at his opponent, who was ready and waiting for the fray.

It took quite twenty minutes for the champion to declare that his bandages were fixed to his liking, what time Sandy urged George not to be unnerved at the deadly and long-drawn-out pause. Had it not been for Sandy's encouragements George would have been tempted to fly out of the ring, so troubled were his feelings, his confidence, as he waited.

At last, however, Johnny Cavendish signalled to the referee that he was ready. The seconds in their respective corners whipped the dressing-gowns from their men at the sound of the gong and ducked beneath the ropes.

The fight had started.

From the first it was obvious by the smirk of conceit on the champion's face that he reckoned his opponent a distinctly inferior person to himself. That was so much bluff. Had not Sandy put George wise to these idiosyncrasies of Johnny Cavendish, George, doubtless, would have rushed in wildly, determined to shift that irritating smile. As it was, he smiled in return as he sized up his man, noting his length of reach, his agility on his feet, and the shaping of his right hand, which was said to contain a punch like a kick from a wild horse. At the end of the first round—a very tame affair—George broke the monotony and the impatience of the spectators by feinting with his left. It was quickly followed by a half-arm jolt that barely travelled a foot, but which caused Johnny Cavendish to grunt with pain and surprise as it thudded against his ribs. That was practically the only blow struck in the opening round, and when the gong sounded the spectators applauded vociferously the "unknown" who had dealt it.

Back in his corner George was speaking to Sandy Robson.

"Don't worry, old boy," he remarked in a low voice. "I've got him sized up to a nicety. There's going to be some fireworks in this round, take it from me."

Sandy smiled indulgently as he fanned his charge's face with a towel. This was the fighting spirit—the confident spirit—that he longed to see in any man he trained.

Gong!

Round two started off in much the same manner as its predecessor, but after thirty seconds of careful sparring George delighted that vast audience with a sudden whirlwind attack that compelled the champion to retreat. Its very unexpectedness caused Cavendish to leave himself open.

Thud!

A straight left flashed out, the noise of its contact being heard all over Belcher's, catching Cavendish flush on the jaw. He tried to rally, and finally dropped into a clinch.

"Break away!"

The referee stepped forward and parted them, and then commanded them to "box on."

Smack! Thud-thud!

Into his man went George with all the ferocity of a tiger. A left feint saw Johnny Cavendish all at sea, and before he could recover two smashing blows caught him under the heart and on the jaw respectively. Another one followed—practically an upper-cut. And to the delight of the spectators Johnny Cavendish, the Heavy-weight Champion of Britain, dropped to the floor like a sack of flour.

The sound of the gong saved him from defeat, and his seconds worked at him feverishly to pull him round. In George's corner all was smiles. Sir Humphrey could scarcely contain his excitement.

"Bravo, George!" he exclaimed, as his protegee drank in great gulps of "fanned" air. "You've got him beat!"

But there Sir Humphrey was wrong. That severe shaking up had taken all the conceit out of Johnny Cavendish, leaving him the true fighting man—the man who had won his title in the long ago on his merits. Cavendish realised that he was up against a formidable proposition. The fight had to end within ten rounds, for no one knew better than Johnny himself that he could never last the scheduled twenty.

It was surprising how fresh Cavendish was when he came up for the third round. His seconds had worked wonders with him. This time the champion became the aggressor. He brought into play all the tricks at his command. He feinted, ducked, and danced like a marionette out of harm's way from the sound of the gong, and undoubtedly took the honours of that round.

But George was still confident. His lips were bleeding where two savage right-handers had landed, but otherwise he showed no marks of the fray. Three blows he struck himself in that round—only three. But one of them sent down Cavendish for a count of six.

The champion levelled matters just before the gong, however, by putting George down for a count of seven, result of a full left-hand swing that jerked George's jawbone into the top of his head, it seemed.

"Come on, unknown!"

"Give it to him, Johnny!"

Between rounds the spectators let themselves go. One point on which all were satisfied was that they were getting

their money's worth. They had paid to see a fight, and they were seeing one.

"No more rounds like that, George," whispered Sandy as he attended to his charge. "Don't give him so much rope. He's been at the game all his life, and he's canny deceiving!"

"So can I be," whispered George. "Watch me in this round, Sandy."

To the dismay of that vast public, George almost staggered from his corner at the sound of the gong. Cavendish's eyes opened wide in amazement and then triumph, for he saw in the stumbling figure of a man before him a half-dazed wreck. He knew that he had put all the force at his command into the blow that had laid George down for a count of seven, but he had reckoned on the latter's seconds getting him into fighting trim for the following round.

Apparently they hadn't.

George brushed his face with his glove as he fell into fighting attitude, as though to wipe off the weariness that seemed to hold him. Almost mechanically he evaded the swinging blows of his opponent, who pumped them in at the rate of one a second. Sandy in his corner was looking worried. Well he knew that George was playing 'possum, but to indulge those fancy tricks with a man like Johnny Cavendish was a risky thing to do. Still, Sandy hoped for the best.

Many blows George appeared to take, but in reality they were parried by his gloves. During that fourth round it appeared as if he were a punch-ball being knocked hither and thither at the champion's will.

A straight left seemed to crumple him up—in reality it had been taken on his glove—and George began to totter at the knees. In rushed Johnny Cavendish, determined to finish the fight there and then. George side-stepped mechanically from that rushing battering-ram, ducked, and then fell into a clinch. He threw all his weight against Cavendish, and his breath came hot and fast. To his opponent George Melton appeared a beaten man. Johnny Cavendish "read the signs" and determined to act upon them. The referee parted them and ordered them to box on.

Working his "victim" into a corner of the ring, Johnny Cavendish prepared to deal the knock-out blow. George's eyes were listless in their expression, his head was lolling on his shoulders in a stupid fashion, his legs seemed unable to support him.

Advancing with little caution, for caution seemed unnecessary, Johnny Cavendish swung back his right arm to deal the winning blow. He left his body and his chin entirely open.

From half-drooped lids George saw his opportunity. Gone in a flash was the mantle of weariness, the listless expression, the almost mechanical movement of those brawny limbs. George had returned to life.

Smack! Smack-smack!

One, two, three. All of them registered a shout of applause from that vast audience, despite the ruling of the club that there should be no talking while bouts were in progress.

A straight left caught Johnny Cavendish full between the eyes, jerking his head back. A second later a battering right smashed against his stomach, just an inch or so below the heart. A gasp of pain escaped the champion's lips, a gasp that was drowned as the third blow connected.

That blow—a right upper-cut that came like a kick from a mule—was as near a knock-out as any blow could be. Many another man would have suc-

cumbed to it. As it was, Johnny Cavendish was lifted clean through the ropes, to fall a crumbling heap on the pressmen's table.

Gong!

A Plucky "Come Back"!

A GASP of disappointment went up as the gong sounded. Many of the spectators reckoned that the fight was finished, as indeed it would have been but for the gong. Keen was George's disappointment, for he had deemed himself the victor of that memorable fight a trifle premature.

"Hard luck, my boy!" said Sir Humphrey, patting his protege on the shoulder. "Only the gong saved him. Better make a quick job of it in the next round."

"Hard cheese, sonny!" grunted Sandy, plying the towel. "Never knew you could play 'possum like that. Reckon it opened Johnny's eyes—"

"And closed 'em, too!" grinned one of Sandy's colleagues.

"Seconds out of the ring. Time!"

The fifth round was under way.

George had received instructions from Sandy to wade in from the outset and finish the fight, before Johnny Cavendish had time to recover. But that was easier said than done. The champion fell into a clinch at every occasion, despite the referee's cautioning, and reserved his strength.

Suddenly from the back rows of Belcher's came an indignant hum of voices, that grew into an uproar before ten seconds had passed. One group of spectators were standing on their feet now, shouting towards the ring.

"Stop the fight!"

"Melton's going to sell us in the sixth round!"

"Foul play!"

Sandy looked up anxiously to the scene of the trouble, and bethought himself of the two warnings he had already received. By this time the majority of the spectators were focusing their attention on the rowdy group of agitators at the back, leaving the principals of the fight to continue their battle unobserved.

George heard the commotion going on around him, heard the reference to himself. His face burned angrily. Why should these people say that he was going to sell them? His troubled look

brought a grin to the face of his opponent, a grin that was swiftly wiped out, however, as George lashed out at that ugly face with all the force of his muscular arm.

"Stop the fight!"

The cry echoed out from all sides now, and hundreds of people were standing on their feet. The officials and attendants did their best to quell the disturbance, but a particular group of people occupying the cheaper seats refused to submit to order.

The scandal directed at him made George fight like a tiger. His blood was up, but he was not so blind as to leave himself open. His anger was of the cool, deadly sort.

Smack! Smack! Smack!

Three blows landed on Johnny Cavendish in as many seconds. He tried to cover up, but at best he was only a punching-ball. With all the ferocity of a tiger, George went into his man. Between encouraging George and eyeing the unruly crowd at the back of the hall, old Sandy was dancing with excitement.

Thud!

A powerful straight left caught Johnny Cavendish full between the eyes. Down he went in a crumpled heap. But at the same moment a bottle whizzed through the air, missed George's head by a couple of inches, bounced off a taut rope of the ring, and shattered into pieces on the stone gangway.

"Shame!"

The sportsmen present were growing indignant. Evening-clad men stood up in their seats and called upon the roughs at the back to "play the game." Still the uproar went on. It was obvious to any clear-minded person now that the disturbance was a well-organised affair.

"—Four, five, six!"

The referee was counting, watch in hand, as Johnny Cavendish made an effort to rise. The champion was hard hit, but he was wily enough to make the most of the rest, and took a count of eight. Then, as George advanced, grim and determined, his right arm moving like a piston-rod, ready to deal the knock-out, Cavendish fell into a clinch. Till the end of that round the champion did nothing else but clinch, throwing his entire weight on George's sturdy shoulders the while he pumped in deep gulps of air.

Just as the gong was about to strike,

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George thought he saw his opportunity. The champion's guard was open. In flashed a wild swing—no other name could be given it. Had it landed Johnny Cavendish would have been carried to his corner. But it missed him by a matter of an inch.

"Try again, Twister!"

A jeering cry went up as the force he had put into the blow nearly swung George off his feet. Biting his lip angrily, he sparred up again, lynx-eyed, and ready to seize the first opening that his opponent presented. But Cavendish was taking no more chances. He kept out of the way of those whirling fists in such a manner as to involve the jeers of the rowdy element at the back of the hall.

"Call this a fight!"

"We want our money back!"

"Who's going to throw in his mitt in the sixth round?"

"Stop the fight!"

So great was the clamour that the gong could hardly be heard now. George walked back to his corner to receive the cheers and encouragements from his followers. Sandy, working feverishly with the towel, was all smiles.

"You've got him!" he kept on exclaiming. "You'll finish him this round! Don't take any notice of those hooligans," he added, noting George's glance travel to the rear of the hall. "Don't be—"

His words trailed off as one of his colleagues plucked him by the arm. "What's that?" inquired Sandy. "A telegram—for George?" he added in a whisper. "Put the confounded thing out of the way. He can have all the telegrams he likes after the fight, and—"

"Hold on!" broke in George, who had caught something of the whispered conversation. "A telegram for me?"

"Ye-es," said Sandy sourly. "Leave it till after the fight—won't be long now," he added.

But a strange feeling obsessed George to glance at that telegram.

"Expect it's from my brothers, wishing me the best of luck," he smiled. "Open it, Sandy, and read it out."

Reluctantly Sandy Robson opened the telegram and commenced to read. But after voicing aloud the first word he stopped abruptly, a troubled look crossing his rugged features. He glanced sharply at George, and made as if to screw the telegram into a ball, but George was too quick for him. Despite the fact that his hand was gloved, he made a sudden reach at the slip of paper and fixed his eyes on it.

Then he gasped, the colour drained from his face, leaving a strained, anxious look that had no place in a boxing ring at Belcher's. The paper fluttered from his hand, and he fell back limply on his stool. The message ran:

"Dicky serious relapse. Condition very critical. Asking for you."

"MATTHEW."

"Good heavens!" gasped George, looking about him wildly. "I—I must go, Sandy! Supposing anything should happen? I must go!"

"Don't be a durn fool, man!" cried Sandy angrily. "You can't leave the ring now! You must wait for the end of the bout. You— There goes the gong!"

He literally pushed his man out of the corner and turned to Sir Humphrey, who had just learned the news, with a deploring gesture.

"That's done it!" he growled. "Confound that durned telegram. He'll go to pieces, sure as eggs. His heart's not here. Look!" added Sandy miserably. "Good heavens, sir, he's half-dazed!"

It was only too true. George was reeling about the ring like a drunken man. From the commencement of the round he had allowed himself to walk into a couple of left and right swings, that numbed his brain and made his misery on Dicky's account the more acute. His heart, as Sandy had said, was not in Belcher's. It was in the tiny cottage at Cobham where young Dicky was lying dangerously ill, perhaps dying, asking for the big brother that did not come.

Johnny Cavendish was fighting like a man possessed now. Blow after blow he rained in on his almost helpless opponent, but still George managed to keep his feet, fighting back feebly and mechanically.

"He's playin' 'possum again!"

But there was no subtlety of manoeuvres now. George was rocking on his legs naturally now. Who would not under that battering-ram of blows? And then he seemed to hear Sandy's voice raised in hope. From dimmed eyes George saw that Sandy was waving to him excitedly; he saw, too, another evening-clad gentleman whose features were strangely familiar. Both figures

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seemed at a long distance away, but in the glance he gave them George recognised the evening-clad gentleman as Ferrers Locke.

Ah, he was being driven back into his own corner now. Johnny Cavendish, acting on the signs of his seconds, was determined to finish the fight there and then. Little he cared whether the crowd thought it was a put-up job.

Thud!

A vicious right-arm swing that could not have travelled more than a foot, caught George full on the point. The pain of it was excruciating, but enough of his senses still remained obedient to the governing will. He must fight on. Weakly he lashed out at that dancing figure before him, but the blow would hardly have hurt a baby. Then—

Smack!

A gloved fist pumped into his stomach, depriving him of his wind, causing him to groan with the pain of it. He tottered unsteadily on his feet, conscious now that Sandy and his companion were yelling to him a message of some sort, for the same wording was repeated time and time again. His gloved fists clawed the air weakly and pitifully.

The knock-down blow travelled a moment later—a left uppercut to the jaw. It fairly lifted George off his feet, sending him crashing against and through the ropes like a sack of flour.

Sandy was pushing his sprawling figure back into the ring. Sandy was yelling in his ear. Sandy was pinching him, trying to awaken his consciousness.

"The telegram's a fake!" he kept on repeating. "Good heavens, man, pull

through this round and we'll save you! The telegram's a fake—a fake!"

At last Sandy's message pierced George's dimmed brain. It awakened him as from a trance. A fake! George staggered to his feet, his eyes clearing, his brain cooling down with every fleeting second, that dominant will of his taking the upper hand. He must stave off defeat at any cost. He prayed that his strength would return quick enough to carry him through the remainder of that round. His Dicky was safe, after all! The cads!

Smack!

Cavendish rudely broke in on his swift reflections. The referee had allowed him to advance, now that George was properly on his feet.

The blow lashed all George's fighting mechanism into action again. Around him he could hear jeers and cries of sympathy. Some were for him, others were positive that the sixth round was a put-up job. He would show them.

Smack!

He jumped in to the attack with a gruelling straight left that shook Cavendish from head to foot. George was fighting toe to toe, taking his opponent's blows wherever they landed, and dealing out punishment with something of his old fire. It was amazing to the spectators that a man who had previously crawled on the ropes, obviously a beaten man, could be able to work up such a spirited aggressive. Far from adding to his sympathetic supporters, that re-awakening, as it were, seemed to supply the deadly proof that the round was an absolute fake.

Regardless of the comment reigning about him, George fought on. Every ounce of his strength was being called into requisition. Streaks of crimson were running down his face, his lips were cut and bruised, his eyes mere slits. But genuine or otherwise, no one at Belcher's will ever forget that memorable ninety seconds of savagery—no other term is applicable. Gone was the civilised being, in its stead reigned the animal, fighting for his life.

But there was only one possible outcome to that fight, and the majority knew it in advance. The power was falling from George's punches, while his opponent still seemed fairly fresh. Sandy groaned in spirit as he gazed upon this gallant last-minute stand of the man who had been beaten by a telegram, and dug his nails into his flesh till the blood came. He saw George's battered face left unguarded for a moment, saw Cavendish's right arm swing back—and then he closed his eyes.

When he opened them again it was to see George's battered figure stretched out upon the canvas, an unconscious heap. Above him stood the referee, his monotonous voice grinding out the seconds that meant the difference between victory and defeat. Dimly George heard the count, and tried to rise. He crawled on one knee—

"Nine—" droned the referee.

Thud!

Unable to sustain that last effort, George crashed to the boards, a beaten wreck.

And in the hour of his defeat rose a chorus of angry hissing and groans.

"He's not knocked out!"

"It's a put up job! Lynch the twisters!"

The crowd was now thoroughly out of hand. Some of the more rowdy spirits were pressing towards the ring. It did



"You lying hooligan!" roared Sandy Robson, disengaging one hand. "Take that—perhaps it'll teach you better manners!" "That" was a particularly healthy straight left. It caught the voluble gentleman full between the eyes. By the time he had been helped to his feet Sandy and Ferrers Locke, bearing George's inanimate figure between them, were safe on the other side of the dressing-room door. (See this page.)

not take Sandy long to see the storm that was brewing. With a sob in his heart he raised George's inanimate form from the canvas flooring, and, helped by Ferrers Locke, began to force a passage through the massed spectators to the dressing-room.

Those who did not stir out of his way were soon dealt with. Sandy was angry—savage, in fact. Thus it was one well-assured fellow, who waved a threatening fist under George's bruised face and hurled a string of vulgar abuse at him, repented of his folly a second or so afterwards.

"You lying hooligan!" roared Sandy, disengaging one hand. "Take that! Perhaps it'll teach you better manners."

"That" was a particularly healthy straight left. It caught the voluble gentleman full between the eyes, and sent him hurtling back into the ranks of his followers. By the time he had been helped to his feet Sandy and Ferrers Locke, with Sir Humphrey Dallas bringing up the rear, were safely on the other side of the dressing-room door.

In gloomy silence the three of them set to work to revive George. It was quite half an hour before he thoroughly understood what was said to him. And when he opened his lips to speak something like a sob escaped him.

"Don't take on like that," said Sir Humphrey Dallas huskily. "Poor old boy! They caught us napping. If Ferrers Locke had only arrived a couple of minutes earlier."

"Ah," breathed the great detective, "would that I had! I got wind of this ramp a couple of hours ago. I was at Fether at the time, and I thought the best thing to do was to inquire at George's cottage, in Cobham. There I

learned that Dicky was progressing better than ever. Without waiting to explain to your brothers, George," he added, with a rueful smile, "I jumped into my car and raced Londonwards. There was no other means of letting you know that everything was O.K.—that the telegram was a fake, a deliberate attempt to put you off your guard. Couldn't phone. From Cobham it would be a trunk call, with a wait of half an hour or more. And then, who would know what on earth I was talking about when I got through to Belcher's? They would have thought I was mad."

"But a telegram—" broke in Sir Humphrey. "You could have—"

For answer Ferrers Locke looked meaningly at Sandy Robson. The old trainer slowly pulled his hand out of his pocket, and when he opened his fist the crumpled telegram was visible.

"They've beaten us!" he growled. "I had my eyes well skinned for foul play, too," he added bitterly. "Never thought they'd play a low-down and yet infernally simple trick like that, though."

George limped to his feet, his eyes flashing.

"Sir Humphrey," he exclaimed hotly, "is this the boxing you champion? Is this the way your professional fights for his living? Good heavens!"—he banged his aching fist on the table—"I'll have no more of it!"

The sporting baronet eyed George steadily, and then he shook his head.

"Poor old George!" he said softly. "You mustn't take it to heart. Scurvy tricks like that happen, thank heavens, only once in a lifetime! I can see now why Johnny Cavendish's price went out in the betting market. But if they'd

known the type of fighter you were they could have saved themselves all the trouble if it was only a long gamble they wanted. Why, you were winning all ends up—"

"It would not have made the slightest difference," broke in Ferrers Locke quietly. "There's more in this than meets the eye, Sir Humphrey. It's not only a money 'corner,' as you seem to think. There's something far deeper than that."

"And I know who's at the bottom of it," said George, with a shrewd glance at the famous detective. "That old scoundrel of a guardian of mine."

"Sssh!" cautioned the sleuth, with a smile. "Such things must not be uttered aloud. Maybe you're right," he added noncommittally, "maybe you're wrong. The future will tell us."

"And you're really finished with boxing?" asked Sir Humphrey appealingly.

There was silence in the room for over two minutes. The baronet was thinking of the champion he was losing, likewise was Sandy. But George was thinking of those agonising moments when he had read that his brother Dicky was lying seriously ill, needing him. At last he spoke.

"Yes," he said firmly, "I'm through with pugilism—for good! It will always be tainted for me. I shall never forget that telegram or the agony it caused me both in mind and body till the end of my life. Boxing has seen the last of George Melton, the 'twister,'" he added, with a bitter smile. "Tis here, Sir Humphrey, that you and I must part!"

(Don't miss the continuation of this magnificent story in next week's MAGNET chums. Order your copy now.)

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(Continued from page 20.)

And he gave it—there was no help for it. Bunter had already given Skinner away, and Skinner had had his revenge by giving Bunter away. All that remained for Harry to do was to make matters clear to all—which Harry proceeded to do. A few searching questions soon disclosed all details of Skinner & Co.'s plot. Mr. Quelch was satisfied at last—as was Mr. Pascall, who was looking dumbfounded.

"Then—then this fellow Bunter—"
"Is an impostor, sir!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch, his face grim. "I regret to say that he has practised a disgraceful deception upon you, Mr. Pascall. You may rest assured, however, that his punishment will be severe!"

"Ow!" groaned Bunter.

"These other boys have also deceived you, sir," went on Mr. Quelch, his eyes resting on Skinner's companions. "And they also will be suitably punished. And now, if you will permit me, Mr. Pascall,

I will take them back to Greyfriars without delay, where the matter can be gone into thoroughly."

"By gad!" gasped the Colonial. "The—these young rascals! And these other boys," he queried, smiling at Harry Wharton & Co., "I presume they may stay—"

"Most certainly, sir!" said Mr. Quelch. "They have leave until nine-thirty this evening, and if you still desire to—"

"I most emphatically do!" exclaimed the Colonial. "I shall be proud to have them, Mr. Quelch."

"I—I say, sir," stammered Billy Bunter. "what about me? I've got leave, too. I suppose I can stay—"

"No, you cannot stay, Bunter!" snapped Mr. Quelch. "You will accompany Skinner and the others at once."

And Bunter did so. Escorted by Mr. Prout and Mr. Quelch, the luckless party tramped dismally away towards the exit. They looked so utterly miserable that Harry Wharton & Co. could not help feeling sorry for them. It was certainly a sad ending to Skinner & Co.'s Wembley visit.

It was not until Skinner & Co. and their escort had gone that Harry remembered the wallet; and as he handed it over and explained the Australian's face was a picture. He had never expected

to see it again; and, to his relief, the contents—a considerable sum in notes—was untouched. For the second time in one week the Famous Five had saved him from a serious loss, and the good-natured Mr. Pascall proceeded to show his gratitude in the only way he could just then. And that way was by giving the juniors a rattling fine time that evening.

After seeing the police, the Colonial gave the juniors a sumptuous tea, and then a move was made for the Amusements Park, where the excited juniors sampled practically every sideshow of note.

Then came the long run home in the cool of the evening to Greyfriars. Harry Wharton & Co.'s trip to Wembley was one they were likely to remember with delight for a long time.

And Billy Bunter and Skinner & Co. had reason to remember their trip also—though not with delight—for a long time. In addition to a flogging at the hands of the Head, they had to face the chipping of their schoolfellows, and the shady schemers had good reason to regret their inclusion in Billy Bunter's Wembley Party!

THE END.

(There is another ripping story of Harry Wharton & Co. next week, entitled "Sir Hilton's Nephew!" Be sure and read it, boys.)

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