

SUPERB ART PLATE OF H.M.S. SPENCER (FLOTILLA LEADER) INSIDE!

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The **Magnet** 2^d Library of Complete School Stories.

EVERY
MONDAY

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plate
inside



HARRY WHARTON LETS THE "CAT" OUT OF THE CUPBOARD!

(An unexpected development in this week's magnificent 25,000 word school story of Harry Wharton & Co.)

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OUR FIGHTING FLEET!



THIS WEEK
H.M.S. SPENCER.

By JACKSTAFF (THE WELL-KNOWN NAVAL WRITER).

WHOEVER aims to lead must be a little bit better than those under him. Knowing this, the Admiralty, when they formed destroyers into flotillas, or little independent squadrons, provided as flotilla leaders vessels that were larger and faster than the craft that would be attached to them. Of these leaders H.M.S. Spencer, which is commanded by Captain Eric Robinson, V.C., is a typical example. As the leaders are only a larger kind of destroyer the differences that mark them off from the general run of the destroyer classes are not readily apparent to the untrained eye. Moreover, the flotilla leaders themselves do not conform strictly to one pattern, though the variations are not so important that they matter greatly. A description of one gives an adequate idea of the whole lot.


For the sake of homogeneity, warships are usually built in "classes" or batches containing several of precisely the same design. By this method uniformity is obtained so that a number of ships all of the same speed and fighting capacity can be brought together in a squadron where they will "all work as one." This gives certain tactical advantages over a squadron

composed of "odds and ends." In building torpedo craft this system of "classes" or "groups" has always been followed. For example, the Spencer is one of a group of five. All of them displace 1,750 tons, are 329 feet long, and have 40,000 horse-power engines, which give them a speed of 40 miles an hour. That places them amongst the speediest warships ever built. For vessels of their type speed is a thing of the greatest consequence, as their hulls are so slight that they cannot stand up to a hammering from enemy guns as the armoured ship is intended to do. In all other respects they are as efficient as the naval architects' skill can make them. The five 4.7 inch guns which they carry in steel case-

mates on the fore-castle and astern are director controlled, just as are the big guns of the Queen Elizabeth, and they have smaller weapons for beating off aircraft. On their decks are six tubes for firing 21-inch torpedoes.

The Spencer is now serving in the Mediterranean as leader of a flotilla. These "leaders" are commanded by a captain—"Captain (D)" is his official title—who has under him a flotilla of eight destroyers, towards whom he stands in practically the same relation as the admiral commanding them does to a squadron of big ships.

Destroyer flotillas are an integral part of a fleet's organisation, and accompany it to sea when it goes as a whole. Generally they go ahead of the big ships to which they act as scouts and watchdogs, but not infrequently a flotilla is detached on an independent cruise of its own. One of our destroyer flotillas usually goes "up the Baltic" once or twice a year to see how the new nations there are getting along. Having a leader, or flagship, and a perfect sea-going organisation, a destroyer flotilla constitutes a quick-moving, well-ordered little force that can be sent anywhere at a moment's notice. Putting down slave traders in the Red Sea is one job that was recently assigned to them.



Next Week:
H.M. PATROL BOAT "P" 52.

NEXT MONDAY'S PROGRAMME!

WORTH FRAMING!

A LOYAL chum from Stockport writes an enthusiastic letter in appreciation of the first of the MAGNET Free Plates. "It's a beauty," he says, "and I shall certainly frame it and put it on the wall of my den!" Splendid! My Stockport friend will be more enthusiastic than ever when he has collected the complete set of Art Plates, and the walls of his den will arouse the admiration and envy of all his pals. These wonderful MAGNET Art Plates are going to make a lasting impression upon my thousands of loyal chums. They're the best—nothing cheap or shoddy about them. MAGNET readers are accustomed to the best, and they have it. Just think of it, boys! Twelve Gorgeous Photogravure Plates, each one a more perfect specimen of what the modern photographer can do than its predecessor, each one a real picture in itself, each one bearing full testimony to the pride and esteem in which Your Editor regards his loyal chums and the desire suitably to show his appreciation of their efforts.

SPREAD THE NEWS!

Here's your chance, boys, to do the old MAGNET a "bit of good." Tell your friends about these superb Free Gifts; give them an idea of the quality of the MAGNET stories—in short, persuade a non-reader pal to give you your favourite paper a trial. In this way you will be doing your Editor a service, to say nothing of your pal. Jove, when he's read his first MAGNET he'll go just crazy for No. 2.

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H.M. PATROL-BOAT.

Next week's Free Plate shows the "P" 52—a patrol-boat. This type of vessel did some sterling work during the Great War, effectually putting a stop to the submarine warfare that was such a menace to our food-carrying ships. It's a splendid action photo, and one that will figure very prominently in the complete set of Free Gifts when you put them side by side. You can't afford to miss it, boys, so take the precaution of ordering your MAGNET early.

"BILLY BUNTER'S CAMPAIGN!"

Billy Bunter has not yet despaired of reinstating himself as a respectable member of the Remove at Greyfriars; he's a real sticker! Unable to find refuge within the gates of Greyfriars until such time as Dr. Locke will "come to his senses" and rescind the sentence of expulsion, the fat junior decides to take up quarters outside the school, but near enough to make things unpleasant for everybody in authority. He eventually pitches his camp, as it were, right outside the gates of the school, and steadfastly refuses to budge. What is more, he is on the "right side of the law" in so refusing. Here's a quandary indeed! Dr. Locke is at his wits' end. Lucky for him Coker of the Fifth has no wits to point out the way he should go. Coker always believes in doing what he thinks right. Bunter is forcibly ejected by the burly Fifth Former, despite the fact that in so doing Coker is travening the laws of this country. This high-handed measure, however, contrary to keeping Bunter miles away from Greyfriars, eventually brings him back. In the end everyone is satisfied, but, between you and me, the honours rest easy with William George Bunter. Look out for

"BILLY BUNTER'S CAMPAIGN!"

and be prepared to read the finest story Mr. Frank Richards has given us this year.

"HELD TO RANSOM!"

This is the title of the next brilliant story in our powerful footer series. "The Trials of Storrydene Villa" make excellent reading, growing more exciting as the weeks roll by. In this coming treat we see Sir Aubrey Ailen in his true colours—a money-grabbing upstart with scant ideas of honour and principle. Sir Aubrey moves, lives, and has his being in pounds, shillings, and pence. But there is a nasty time in store for him—money can't accomplish everything. Detective-Inspector Dorland takes a hand in the plot, and things begin to hum. Dorland has cut his eye-teeth pretty early. Don't miss this amazing story, chums, or you will be missing something extra good.

SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT!

Harry Wharton & Co. of the "Herald" again come up to scratch with a humorous Supplement—they can turn their fluent pens to any subject. Next week's "Herald" will be well received, I have not the slightest doubt. Mind you read it!

THE "HOLIDAY ANNUAL"!

I expect most of my chums have followed my advice and ordered their "Annual" in good time. If any of you haven't done so, take my tip and visit your newsagent at once. The "Annual" is selling twice as fast as it did last year—everyone wants a copy. If orders are left till Christmas some of you are going to be disappointed. People want the best of things at Christmas more than at any other time of the year. That being so, the "Holiday Annual" is sure to be well in evidence. But it is the far-seeing people who will score—those who have made certain of their copy well in advance, and thus avoided the rush and the inevitable "Sold out, sir!"

NERVE! Few fellows would have the cheek to turn up at the school from which they had been "sacked." Pride and a sense of propriety would forbid such a course. But Billy Bunter is not troubled by any such scruples. He turns up at Greyfriars all right. What's more, he refuses to be "sacked"!



A Magnificent New Long Complete Story of Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars. By popular FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Bunked!

"BUNKED?"
"Bunter?"
"My hat! Bunter's bunked!"
It was the one topic at Greyfriars.

Billy Bunter of the Remove Form was under sentence to go!

The Greyfriars fellows alluded to it variously as "bunked," or "sacked," or "fired"—they had quite a variety of verbs to choose from. The Head, of course, would have described it as "expelled." Dr. Locke, certainly, was not likely to allude to any fellow as being "bunked from the school."

But it came to the same thing.

Bunked, or sacked, or fired, or expelled, William George Bunter was to quit Greyfriars! He was not to stand upon the order of his going; he was to go at once.

"Bunkings," otherwise expulsions, were rare at Greyfriars. Rarely, indeed, did the Head come down so heavy.

But such things had occurred. Now there was another occurrence of the same sort—and it had happened to Bunter.

In the Lower Fourth, or Remove, to which W. G. Bunter belonged, there was naturally great excitement. But in the other Forms the interest was also keen. Harry Wharton & Co. of the Remove, were quite concerned about it. Temple, Dabney & Co, of the Fourth, discussed it. Hobson of the Shell said that it was hard cheese. Fags of the Third and Second discussed the matter quite breathlessly—especially in the Second, where W. G. Bunter had a minor. In the Second Form, general regret was expressed that it was not Bunter minor instead of Bunter major who was to be "bunked" from Greyfriars.

Even the seniors talked of the affair—Coker of the Fifth deigned to take notice of the existence of the Remove for once, to the extent of remarking to Potter and Greene that it was a jolly good thing, and that it was rather a pity that the Head was not bunking the rest of the Remove along with Bunter. To

which Potter and Greene agreed cordially.

Even in the high-and-mighty Sixth, the bunking of Bunter emerged as a topic. Wingate said that he was sorry to hear it, while Walker seemed sorry to hear that Bunter was to be sacked without being flogged first.

But it was in the Remove, of course, that the excitement was keenest. All the Removites felt a little concerned for Bunter. That he had asked for the sack was certain—indeed, Bob Cherry observed that he had fairly begged and prayed for it. Still, it was hard cheese—very hard! Bunter, as the Remove fellows agreed, was more a chump, and an ass, and a duffer, and a burler, than anything else. There were worse fellows than Bunter in the Remove, in no danger of being "bunked" from Greyfriars. If the Head wanted to make an example, as Lord Mauleverer remarked, why couldn't he have made an example of Skinner, for instance? A question which evoked some laughter from the Removites—excepting Skinner, who scowled.

"I suppose the Head couldn't do anything else," Bob Cherry remarked, as a crowd of Remove fellows discussed the matter in the Remove passage. "Bunter really beseeched him to do it."

"He really did," agreed Harry Wharton. "He couldn't have expected anything else. But I'm sorry, somehow."

"Bunter's no end of a toad," said Johnny Bull thoughtfully. "He's the last word in toads. Still, I'm sorry he's got it in the neck like this."

"The sorrowfulness is terrific," said Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh. "We shall miss the excellent and execrable Bunter."

"It's rotten!" said Peter Todd. "Of course, my study will be ever so much nicer without Bunter in it. Any study would be. But I'm really sorry he's got the chopper."

"It isn't as if he's done anything really bad, you know," observed Vernon-Smith. "He's only cheeked the Head, really."

"Only!" grinned Squiff.

"Well, of course, that seems jolly

serious to the Head," agreed the Bounder. "But it's not really a crime."

"Bunter piled it on rather too thick," said Harry Wharton, shaking his head. "He couldn't really expect anything else. But even now he's got the chopper he doesn't seem to mind."

"Hasn't sense enough!" said Skinner.

"He doesn't realise that it's serious," said Peter Todd. "But it's jolly serious, all the same. I know what I should feel like, if I were bunked from Greyfriars."

"Chap who's born an ass, can't help being an ass!" remarked Squiff. "I wish we could do something for Bunter."

Wharton had a thoughtful look.

It was quite certain that Billy Bunter did not realise the seriousness of being sacked from the school. But it was equally certain that he would have to realise it later on, when he went home and faced his father. Mr. Bunter was not likely to take such an occurrence with the equanimity displayed, at present, by his hopeful son William George.

If Bunter had to go, the more cheerfully he went, the better, perhaps; but Wharton wondered whether anything could yet be done to save the Owl of the Remove from his fate.

Saving Bunter from the sack would be an act of self-denial, there was no doubt about that. But the captain of the Remove felt that it was up to him to do anything that he could. Little as the Owl of the Remove realised it, the matter was very serious for him.

"Nothing we can do, I suppose," said Frank Nugent, with a glance at the captain of the Remove.

"The Head isn't likely to listen to us," said Johnny Bull. "Even if we tell him we want Bunter to stay! And we can't very well tell him that it would be a rather hefty crammer."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The cramfulness would be terrific," agreed Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh. "But it is up to us to help the esteemed and fatheaded Bunter, if it is not too late."

"Any old thing," said Bob Cherry. "What are you thinking of, Harry?"

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can see you've got some idea in your head."

Harry Wharton nodded.

"Well, we might make an appeal," he said. "If the whole Form rallied round poor old Bunter and tried to beg him off, the Head might listen to us. He might let Bunter off with a flogging."

"Fatty wouldn't like that."

"Whether he liked it or not, it would be getting off cheap. We might try it, at least," said Harry.

"Let's!" said Bob Cherry.

"A flogging won't hurt Bunter—in fact, it may do him good."

"Very likely! After all, he needs it."

"He does—he do!"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here he is!"

Billy Bunter blinked out of the doorway of Study No. 7 at the crowd of fellows who were discussing his fate in the passage.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Bunter is Satisfied!

BILLY BUNTER was not looking dismayed.

He was not looking perturbed.

Nobody, looking at Bunter, would have supposed that he was under sentence of the "sack."

He was fat and cheery, and, indeed, looked more merry and bright than usual. Really, he looked as if he regarded the "sack" as a pleasant episode in his fat career.

"I say, you fellows, you can cut that out!" he said, blinking at the juniors through his big spectacles.

"Eh?"

"What?"

"Like your check, I think, Wharton."

"Wha-a-at?"

Gratitude was not a distinguishing trait in Bunter's agreeable character.

"Check!" he repeated. "If you think I'm going to take a flogging from the Head, you're jolly well mistaken!"

"You silly owl!" roared Wharton. "It's better than the sack, isn't it?"

"Certainly not."

"Oh, you ass!"

"I refused to be flogged," said Bunter. "I was up for a flogging, and I wouldn't have it. That's why I cleared off, and stayed up in the attics till you fellows came nosing round and found me. Now the Head's decided to bunk me instead. Well, I don't mind that."

"You don't mind?"

"Why should I mind?" argued Bunter. "A flogging's a jolly serious thing. But I don't mind going home."

"Your pater will mind," grinned Bob Cherry.

Bunter did not heed that observation. Evidently he was not worrying about his father's view of the matter.

"The fact is, I'm rather glad," he said.

"Oh, my hat!"

"I shall ask my father to send me to Harrow," said Bunter. "It's a better show than this—"

"You silly ass!"

"Cheese it!"

"Or Eton," said Bunter. "I've no doubt that I should make my mark at Eton. I can tell you, I'm rather fed up with Greyfriars."

"Greyfriars is fairly well fed-up with you!" remarked Nugent.

"I shall have a few weeks at home, without any lessons at all," went on Bunter. "That's all to the good."

"Oh!"

"While you fellows are grinding in the Form-room with old Quelchy, I shall be having a good time!" grinned Bunter. "I'm not surprised that you're jealous."

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"Jealous!" murmured Bob. "Oh, dear!"

"As for begging me off, and trying to get the Head to give me a flogging in stead, you can cut it out. Mind your own business."

"Bunter—"

"You cheeky owl—"

"Of course, I can understand that you don't want me to go," went on Bunter. "That's natural enough. I don't know how you'll get on without me in the study, Toddy."

"Fan me, somebody!" murmured Peter Todd.

"It will be a big loss to the Form, and I know it," said Bunter; "but I can't say I pity you much. You'll have to do without me."

"Oh, crumbs!"

"In fact, it serves you right to lose me," said Bunter severely.

"Serves us right!" said Bob Cherry dazedly. "It serves us right to lose him. Lose Bunter! Oh, my only Aunt Matilda!"

"You've never really treated me decently," said the fat junior. "Lots of you fellows have refused to cash a postal-order for me. You're ungrateful. Mean, in fact. I hope I shall get into a better set of fellows in my next school. Any change must be for the better, I think, considering what a crew you chaps are! Don't you think so?"

The juniors stared at Bunter.

They did not answer. The Owl of the Remove seemed to have taken their breath away.

Bunter wagged a fat forefinger at them.

"So you just mind your own bizney, and don't butt in," he said. "I'm satisfied, and that's all that matters. If you feel so bad about losing me, serve you jolly well right. See?"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Mind you don't butt in, that's all," said Bunter.

And having thus put his Form-fellows into their places, as it were, the Owl of the Remove rolled back into Study No. 7.

"Well!" Bob Cherry drew a deep breath. "Well! Bunter does take the jolly old biscuit, and no mistake!"

"The fat idiot!" growled Johnny Bull.

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Well, it's his own bizney," he said. "Let him rip!"

Billy Bunter had effectually checked any movement on the part of the Lower Fourth to help him in his emergency. It would have been rather difficult, as well as thankless, to "butt in" and help Bunter, against his own desire. And evidently the fat junior greatly preferred the "sack" to a Head's flogging.

That preference was not likely to last, when the seriousness of the situation came home, at long last, to his obtuse mind. But for the present William George Bunter was quite satisfied.

When Peter Todd went into Study No. 7 for prep, later in the evening, he found Bunter reclining in the armchair, with a fat grin on his face—apparently a grin of anticipation. The Owl of the Remove gave Peter a sympathetic nod as he sorted out his books.

"Prep, old man?" he asked.

"Yes, fatty."

"Poor old chap!" said Bunter. "Go it! No prep for me! No classes tomorrow! No classes for a week! Don't you wish you were in my place, Peter?"

"Not quite," said Toddy. "It may be a great distinction to be kicked out of school. But I'm not keen on it."

"Oh, really, Toddy—"

"Bunter, old man, have a little sense,"

said Peter kindly. "If you go to the Head in the morning, and tell him you're sorry, and beg him to let you off lightly, he might do it. He's a good old sort."

Bunter sniffed.

"Catch me!" he said. "Sorry for you, Peter, old man, but you're losing me now, and it really serves you right. I never really had enough to eat in this study. You've often refused me a little loan. I'm sorry, Peter, in a way; but you really deserve this."

"Oh dear!" said Peter.

Toddy devoted his attention to prep; he felt that Billy Bunter really was a little too much for him.

After prep, however, he gave Bunter his attention again.

"Have you packed your box?" he asked.

"Not yet."

"Shall I help you?"

"You may as well," said Bunter. "Make yourself useful, you know. You can't be ornamental, old chap, with a face like that, can you? He, he, he!"

Peter Todd's hand strayed to a ruler. But he remembered that it was Bunter's last night at Greyfriars, and he refrained.

"Well, let's get on with it," he said.

"I've sorted out some things," said Bunter. "You can carry them up to the dorm for me—my box is in the dorm, you know."

"Right-ho!"

"Here you are!" said Bunter.

"That's Russell's 'Holiday Annual,'" said Peter abruptly.

"Oh, really, Toddy—"

"That's Dutton's Atlas—"

"Look here—"

"And that's my fountain-pen!" roared Peter Todd.

"If you're going to grouse instead of help, Peter—"

"That's Wharton's silk muffler—"

"I'm fed up with this, Toddy! Leave the things alone, and I'll do without your help," said Bunter, with dignity.

"You'll do without other fellows' property, too, you fat toad," growled Peter. "I'll sort them out for you."

"Let my things alone!" howled Bunter.

"Fathead!"

Peter Todd proceeded to sort. The stack of goods Bunter had collected was considerably reduced, by the time Peter had finished. Bunter's own undoubted belongings were quite easy to carry upstairs, under one arm. The Owl of the Remove blinked irritably at his study-mate; but Peter had his way. And when they reached the Remove dormitory Peter took the liberty of looking through Bunter's box.

He was not surprised to find some of Lord Mauleverer's beautiful neckties there, as well as some of Smithy's silk socks, and a collection of other unconsidered trifles that belonged to anybody but William George Bunter.

With a ruthless hand Peter Todd cleared them out.

"Is this what you call helping a fellow?" asked Billy Bunter, in a tone more of sorrow than of anger.

"Yes—I'm helping you to keep out of chokey!" explained Peter.

"Oh, really, you know—"

"Give me the key."

"What do you want the key for?"

"Give me the key!" roared Peter.

Bunter handed over the key, and Peter locked the box.

"I'll give you the key back in the morning," he said. "When it's too late for you to shove in my boots, or Bob Cherry's trousers, or Wharton's top-hat."

"Beast!"

Really, Billy Bunter seemed to have an impression that he was fully and justly entitled to take with him on his homeward way any trifling thing that struck his fancy. It was, perhaps, fortunate for him that Peter had helped him to pack—certainly it was fortunate for some other Remove fellows.

When the Lower Fourth came up to bed many curious glances were cast at Billy Bunter.

He was going in the morning; his father had already been warned to expect him home. Obtuse as Bunter was, the juniors expected him to show some sign, at last, of realising that he was in a serious position.

But there was no sign of it.

Bunter was fat and cheery and self-satisfied, and evidently under the impression that he was in for a good thing. Greyfriars was not worthy of him; and he was going to shake the dust of Greyfriars from his feet with scorn. That was all there was about it. That night—his last at Greyfriars—Bunter slept quite soundly; and for the last time his deep and resonant snore echoed and re-echoed through the Remove dormitory.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Going!

DR. LOCKE wore a worried frown. It was a misty, weepy autumn morning; the weather was not enlivening. But it was not the weather that caused the worried frown to corrugate the brow of the Head of Greyfriars.

That morning the sentence of expulsion was to take effect, and Bunter of the Remove was to go.

Bunter's offences had been manifold. He deserved, he had fairly asked for, the sack. But the Head was worried.

It had fallen to his lot to expel Greyfriars fellows before. But in such cases there had been some serious fault—something called for drastic measures. And on deep reflection, the Head could not help

feeling that Bunter's offence was more that of obtuseness than anything else.

If any other fellow had done what Bunter had done the Head would have expelled him without ruth. But, then, no other fellow, blessed with his seven senses, was likely to do what Bunter had done. If Bunter had so acted, it was because he was a howling duffer—though the Head, of course, did not think of him as a howling duffer.

It seemed hard that a schoolboy should be turned out of his school while any extenuating circumstances could be found. Having had a night to think about it, the Head was in a more merciful mood in the morning, and he wondered whether he could not, after all, let Bunter off that final drastic sentence and allow him to escape with a flogging.

The Head touched his bell at last, and sent Trotter for Mr. Quelch.

Mr. Quelch's face was rather grim when he came into the study.

Of late there had been much stress of feeling at Greyfriars, owing to the reckless proceedings of Bunter of the Remove. During the days that Bunter had remained in hiding, causing the keenest anxiety to his Form master and headmaster, Mr. Quelch's temper had been extremely tart, not to say savage, and the Head's usual equanimity had been greatly disturbed. So the two masters had met upon somewhat chilly and acid terms, and neither had yet quite recovered.

"You wished to see me, sir?" said the Remove master formally.

"Yes, Mr. Quelch. I have been considering the case of Bunter," said the Head, taking no note of Mr. Quelch's icy manner. The Head had recovered somewhat his good temper, and he was willing to give Mr. Quelch a chance to "come round."

"He leaves this morning, I understand," said Mr. Quelch.

"Quite so."

"You wish me to arrange to see him to the station?"

The Head coughed.

"It cannot be pleasant for you, Mr. Quelch, for a boy in your Form to be expelled from the school."

"It is not pleasant, sir."

"I have been wondering whether Bunter could be dealt with a little more leniently, Mr. Quelch."

"Indeed, sir."

"His transgressions were very serious and—"

"Very serious indeed."

"He deliberately hid himself away to escape a punishment to which he had been sentenced, causing us much needless anxiety. It was a flagrant defiance of all authority."

"It was, indeed."

"Such conduct could not possibly be passed over, Mr. Quelch."

"I agree, sir."

"Nevertheless"—the Head coughed again—"it appears to me, Mr. Quelch, that Bunter's conduct was dictated more by stupidity than by any deliberate intention to flout authority."

"Very probably, sir."

"If you, as his Form master, take the same view, I think that perhaps Bunter might be given another chance, and allowed to remain at Greyfriars."

Mr. Quelch nodded.

"I think you are right, sir. Bunter is a very trying pupil, and certainly gives me more trouble than any other boy in the Remove. But I should be sorry to see him expelled from the school."

"Very good," said the Head. "Then perhaps, Mr. Quelch, you will see Bunter and tell him that, if he will come to me and apologise for his conduct, I will rescind his sentence, and a flogging will close the matter."

"Certainly, sir!"

"Doubtless it will be a great relief to his mind."

"Doubtless, sir. I will tell the boy at once."

Mr. Quelch left the headmaster's study. Billy Bunter's box was in the hall, ready to be taken out to the station cab. That cab had been telephoned for, and Bunter was awaiting its arrival. He was catching an early train, and was to leave



"I say, you fellows, don't you wish you were going instead of staying here with old Quelchy?" said Bunter. "Shush!" murmured Bob Cherry. "Quelehy!" "Blow Quelchy!" said Bunter, blinking round at the Remove master. "Bunter!" said Mr. Quelch sternly, "How dare you!" (See Chapter 3.)

before the fellows went in to class. He was sitting on his box now, with a group of Removites round him, talking away quite cheerily, with a grin on his fat face.

"I say, you fellows, don't you wish you were going, instead of staying on here with old Quelch!" he said, as the Remove master came along.

"Shush!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"Cave!"

Bunter blinked round.

He saw Mr. Quelch approaching, but his terror of Mr. Quelch was a thing of the past now. He was leaving Greyfriars, and he was, therefore, no longer under the authority of the Remove master. So Bunter was prepared to be very free and easy with Mr. Quelch.

"Bunter—"

"Hallo!"

"Wha-a-at?" ejaculated Mr. Quelch.

"Hallo!" repeated Bunter familiarly.

The Remove fellows looked on in silence. Mr. Quelch's face was a study for some moments.

"Bunter! Is that the way to address your Form master?"

"You're not my Form master."

"What?"

"I'm bunked, sir," said Bunter cheerfully. "I'm just going to see the last of this rotten old show—"

"This—this what?"

"This rotten old show," said Bunter coolly. "And I'm jolly glad of it. I'm fed-up with it, I can tell you."

Mr. Quelch breathed hard and deep.

"Bunter, I have just seen the Head concerning you. Dr. Locke is prepared to rescind your sentence—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Go to the Head, Bunter, and offer him an apology for your mutinous conduct, and Dr. Locke will administer a flogging, and you will be allowed to remain at Greyfriars."

"No jolly fear!" said Bunter promptly.

"What?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

"Allowed to stay at Greyfriars!" said Bunter contemptuously. "I jolly well don't want to stay."

"Bunter! For your own sake, I advise you—"

"Keep your advice, sir, till I ask for it."

"What? What?"

"Bunter, you crass ass—" breathed Harry Wharton.

"Shut up, Wharton."

"Bunter!" whispered Peter Todd.

"Shut up, Toddy!"

Billy Bunter fixed his big spectacles on the Remove master, and grinned. He was feeling quite secure in "cheeking" Mr. Quelch. That was a pleasure he would have allowed himself many times before, had he dared. Now he dared!

"As for staying at Greyfriars, I wouldn't be found dead in Greyfriars if I could help it," said Bunter. "I've never been treated decently here. The fellows are a very scratch lot. And—if you don't mind my speaking plainly, sir—so are the masters."

"Bunter!" gasped Mr. Quelch.

"Not up to my style, really," said Bunter. "Scarcely my class, in fact."

"Bless my soul!"

"So you can put that in your pipe and smoke it, sir, and you can tell old Locke to do the same," said Bunter victoriously.

"Who—what?"

"Old Locke," said Bunter coolly.

"Are you alluding to Dr. Locke?" stuttered Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, sir—I mean, yes, Quelch," said Bunter.

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"Boy!"

"Keep your wool on!" said Bunter

"Kik-kik-keep my wool on!" repeated the Remove master dazedly.

"Yes. I'm not a Greyfriars chap now. I'm done with Greyfriars, and with you, Quelch, and with old Locke, too," said Bunter independently. "I'm fed up with the lot of you. I don't want any cheek, from you or the Head."

"The boy is mad!" murmured Mr. Quelch.

"I'm speaking to you now as one man to another," said Bunter. "You be civil, and I'll be civil. These chaps can toe the line, and say yes, sir, and no, sir, and please, sir, and oh, sir! Not me! Not little me! I'm out of it now, and if you talk to me, Quelch, you talk to a fellow who doesn't care a dashed rap for you, or your scowling, either!"

"Bunter—" murmured Bob Cherry.

"Shut up, Cherry! I'm done with Greyfriars, Quelch, and you can tell old Locke so, from me."

"You certainly have done with Greyfriars, you impertinent young rascal," thundered the Remove master. "I have a great mind to administer a severe caning before you go."

"Here comes the cab, sir!" called out Vernon-Smith.

"Bunter! There is the station cab! Go at once."

"Jolly glad to!" sneered Bunter. "Good-bye, you fellows! Don't suppose I shall ever see you again—"

"Oh, we'll see you some time, Bunter," said Peter Todd.

Bunter shook his head.

"You jolly well won't, Toddy," he said. "At my new school I shall have to be rather particular, and I can't have you butting in. Sorry, but there it is."

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Peter.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Removites.

"Doesn't he take the jolly old cake!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Bunter, old man, are you trying to make us all weep briny tears when you're gone?"

Mr. Quelch looked out of the doorway.

"Get into the cab at once, Bunter!"

The Owl of the Remove blinked round at him. It was quite a happy feeling to Bunter, to be no longer under authority, and to be able to talk to so terrifying a personage as Mr. Quelch as "one man to another."

"What's that?" he asked coolly.

"Take your cab at once, Bunter."

"That's all right, Quelch," said Bunter cheerily. "Don't you butt in, you know."

"Bunter!" gasped the Remove master.

The Remove fellows expected to see their Form-master stride out of the house, and take Bunter by the scruff of his fat neck. But no doubt Mr. Quelch felt that such a proceeding would be undignified. He gave Bunter an expressive look—a very expressive look—and stepped back into the House.

Billy Bunter grinned round at the juniors.

"That's the stuff to give him," he remarked. "Who cares for old Quelch, what?"

"You silly owl—"

"Shut up, Wharton! I don't want any more of your cheek! I've had enough of it, and a little over!"

Harry Wharton burst into a laugh.

"I won't kick you before you go, Bunter," he said. "But be a good chap, and don't keep on asking for it."

"Rats!"

Billy Bunter stepped into the cab at last. He sat down, and grinned the grin of conscious superiority at the

juniors. Evidently Bunter regarded his departure as something in the nature of a triumph.

"Well, good-bye, you bounders!" he called out. "Pretty rotten for you to be hanging on here, isn't it? Still, it serves you right. Tell old Quelch, from me, that he can go and eat coke."

"Yes, we're likely to tell him that!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

"And tell the Head—"

"Oh, cheese it, Bunter!"

"Good-bye, fatty!"

"And jolly good riddance!" growled Peter Todd.

"Yah!"

That was Bunter's final farewell. The cab rolled away with the Owl of the Remove in a state of complete and fat satisfaction. William George Bunter was gone, and, as Skinner remarked, he left plenty of dry eyes behind him when he went.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Gone!

BILLY BUNTER was gone!

The once-familiar fat figure had vanished, and that day there was a vacant place in the Remove room.

That day Lord Mauleverer's construe was the worst in the Remove—having, hitherto, been the worst but one! The departure of Billy Bunter made the difference.

That day Mr. Quelch found his labours, as a Form master, considerably lightened.

That day it was possible for the Remove fellows to leave their study cupboards unlocked with tuck therein.

That day, for the first time on record, there was no mention of a postal-order which Billy Bunter was expecting. That day, indeed, as Hurree Jamset Ram Singh observed, was really a day worthy to be marked with a white stone!

The departure of Bunter was, it had to be admitted, a general improvement all round.

Skinner remarked that it even improved the landscape.

And yet the fellows somehow missed Bunter a little. He was a familiar object to their eyes; his ways were not popular, but they were used to him, and the Remove did not seem quite the same without him. It was likely to be some days, at least, before the fellows got used to having no Bunter in the Form.

But the fiat had gone forth, and Bunter had gone forth likewise. He was home again, and some of the fellows were curious to know what kind of a reception he had met with at the Bunter home.

That Mr. Bunter had received him with enthusiasm, they did not suppose for a moment. However fond a parent, Mr. Bunter couldn't possibly want Bunter at home, that stood to reason, in the opinion of the Remove. People might stand Bunter, but how could anybody want him?

Indeed, it was probable that his arrival home had been an eye-opener for William George Bunter. It was very probable, indeed, that after his interview with his father, he had wished himself safe back at Greyfriars.

But the die was cast for William George. He had burned his boats behind him. His last words to Mr. Quelch, duly reported to the Head, had settled the matter for him.

Bunter had asked for it, and he had got it, and there was an end of



"Open the gate, Gosling!" ordered Mr. Quelch. "Yessir!" Gosling swung the gate open and the Form master marched Bunter out. At last the vice-like grip of Mr. Quelch was released from the Owl's fat shoulder. "Bunter! You had better go home at once!" said Mr. Quelch sternly. "If you are found within the precincts of the school again you will be dealt with severely!" "Oh, really, sir——" (See Chapter 6.)

Bunter, so far as Greyfriars was concerned.

Undoubtedly, Bunter supposed that his departure would be an irreparable loss to the Remove. Upon what grounds he based this supposition, nobody could even begin to guess. But there was no doubt that he supposed so. As a matter of fact, in two or three days, the Remove went on the usual even tenor of their way as if such a person as William George Bunter never had existed or belonged to the Form.

Skinner declared that Peter Todd was looking younger since Bunter had gone. Certainly it was a relief to Peter to find at tea-time food supplies in the study cupboard, and he found his rather limited finances considerably eased by not having to stand Bunter's whack in the study tea. And all the fellows agreed that they had heard quite enough about the postal-order that Bunter was always expecting, and about his titled relations, and did not want to hear any more about either.

So Bunter was gone, leaving dry eyes behind him.

In a few days the bunking of Bunter hardly emerged as a topic in the Remove studies, and in the other Forms Bunter was forgotten as completely as if he had never existed.

There was one fellow at Greyfriars who might have been supposed to nourish some tender regret. That one was Bunter minor, of the Second Form. But it was not observed that Sammy Bunter displayed any special signs of grief.

True, he came along the Remove passage the day after his major went inquiring whether Bunter had left anything behind him in the study or the Remove dormitory. Sammy apparently regarded himself as heir-at-law if anything had been left behind.

But nothing had been left; and with that discovery Sammy's interest in his major seemed to come to a sudden end.

Some of the fellows wondered whether Bunter's plump sister, Bessie Bunter of Cliff House, would feel concerned about it. The Bunters were not noted for family affection. But on

Saturday afternoon, when Harry Wharton & Co. were going down to football practice, they observed a plump figure rolling in at the school gates, and recognised Miss Bunter of the Fourth Form at Cliff House School.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! It's Bessie!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "I—I wonder whether she's feeling worried about Billy's being bunked."

"She doesn't look worried!" grinned Johnny Bull.

Miss Bunter spotted the Famous Five, and came over to them. They raised their caps very politely. If Bessie Bunter was feeling cut up about her brother's fate, the chums of the Remove were prepared to be very sympathetic.

"So Billy's gone!" was Miss Bunter's first remark.

"Yes, Miss Bunter. Hard cheese wasn't it?" said Bob Cherry. "We—we all miss old Bunter, in—in a way."

"The missfulness is terrific, my esteemed Bessie," said the nabob of Bhanipur.

"Did he leave any message for me?"

"Hem! I—I think he must have forgotten, in the—the hurry, you know," said Bob Cherry.

Miss Bunter breathed hard. "The fat bounder!" she said.

"Eh?"

"The awful rotter!"

"Oh!"

"He owes me two-and-six!" explained Bessie Bunter.

"D-d-does he?"

"Yes. Just like him to sneak off without squaring!" said Bessie Bunter indignantly. "If it's left over till the holidays, he will never square. You know Billy!"

"Hem!"

"He didn't leave it with one of you fellows to hand to me?" asked Miss Bunter, blinking inquiringly at the Famous Five.

"Nunno!"

"Just like him! Now I've walked all over here for nothing!" said Bessie Bunter. "I thought he might have left it with one of you. You're quite sure he didn't?"

"Oh, quite!"

"What an awful rotter!" said Bessie. "Think he may have left it with Sammy for me?"

"Better ask Sammy."

"I'll jolly well box his ears when I see him again!" said Bessie Bunter discontentedly.

Harry Wharton & Co. raised their caps again, and walked on to Little Side, smiling. Evidently Miss Bunter was not suffering from any very keen pangs of grief on Billy's account.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Blows In!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"

"What the thump——"

"Bunter!"

Harry Wharton & Co. stared. Nearly a week had elapsed since the departure of William George Bunter from the classic shades of Greyfriars.

Much water passed under the bridges in a week!

Already Billy Bunter was only a memory in the Remove—not a very happy memory, and growing dimmer daily.

And now——

Here he was; not a memory, but in the flesh! The Famous Five could scarcely believe their eyes when the latter fell on Bunter.

Here was William George Bunter, rolling up the path in the quadrangle, looking as if he were on the point of bursting through his Etons—just the same Bunter as of old.

"Bunter!"

"What!"

"I say, you fellows——"

"What on earth are you doing here?" exclaimed Harry Wharton, in amazement.

"Oh, really Wharton——"

"You've come back to see us?" asked Frank Nugent. "Bunter, old man, an expelled chap isn't allowed to come back on visits."

"I shouldn't be likely to make a long journey to see you, Nugent."

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"Oh!"

"I've come back!"

"Come back?" repeated the Famous Five, almost dazedly.

Bunter nodded.

"Yes. I'm fed-up at home."

"Oh, my hat!"

"I've had a rotten time!" said Bunter lugubriously.

"Didn't you expect that?" grinned Johnny Bull.

"The pater was a regular Tartar!" said Billy Bunter dismally. "He said I'd disgraced the family, getting sacked from school!"

"So you had."

"Oh, really, Bull——"

"He didn't rejoice to see you?" chuckled Bob Cherry.

"Nunno! He seemed simply wild and waxy," said Bunter. "He's refused to send me to Eton or Harrow. He jawed me no end for wasting the fees. It seems that he paid the term's fees in advance for me here. Of course, the Head will return the balance. I told him so. But he said that he wouldn't have me at home for twice the money!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! I call it unfeeling," said Bunter. "What do you think? He says that, as I've failed to make good at Greyfriars, he isn't going to send me to school any more!"

"Well, that's what you want, isn't it—no more lessons?"

"Yes. But he says I shall have to work."

"Work! You?"

"Yes!" groaned Bunter. "Me! Awful, isn't it? He says he's going to find a place for me in his office—and put me under a man who'll see that I earn my screw!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Greyfriars is better than that!" groaned Bunter.

"Much better. I should think!" grinned Johnny Bull. "What a pity you didn't think of that a little earlier!"

"Well, I thought I was going to have a good time," said Bunter. "It—it's turned out quite differently."

The Famous Five chuckled.

"It's all very well to cackle," said Billy Bunter indignantly. "It's not a laughing matter for me, I can tell you! The pater hasn't tipped me a single brown since I've been home. I've been stony all the time. I haven't even had enough to eat! The cook complained about a pie she said was missing, and the pater gave me six with his walking-stick."

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the juniors.

"I say, you fellows——"

"Well, but what are you doing here, Bunter?" asked the captain of the Remove.

"I've come back, as I told you. I—I say, do you think the Head will say anything?"

"Oh crumbs! I fancy so!"

"Think Quelchy will say anything?" asked Bunter, blinking anxiously at the Famous Five.

The chums of the Remove simply stared. Really, it was hard to take Bunter seriously at any time. But for a fellow who had been expelled from the school to suppose that he could come back because he found things uncomfortable at home, was really the limit!

"Oh dear!" said Bob. "Does your father know you've come back here, Bunter?"

"No. I—I told him I was going away for a time, and he said I could go as soon as I liked, and the longer I stayed away the better!" mumbled Bunter.

"Of course, he'll be jolly glad to hear that it's all right here."

"But it isn't all right, old bean. Are you going to march into the Head's study and tell him you've come back, after he's bunked you?" exclaimed Johnny Bull.

"I—I'm going into Form with you fellows this afternoon——"

"Phew!"

"Quelchy will find me in my old place, you know, just—just as if I'd never gone," said Bunter hopefully. "D-d-d-do you think he'll say anything nasty?"

"Great Scott! I imagine so!"

"The nastiness will probably be terrific, my ridiculous Bunter!" grinned Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"I—I'm chancing it!" said Bunter. "If—if he finds me in my place, as—as usual, he—he mayn't say anything. You fellows keep round me and walk in with me, and—and I sha'n't be seen till I'm in the Form-room. See?"

"Oh dear!"

"Hallo!" Vernon-Smith came up. "Is that Bunter, or his giddy old ghost?"

"It's me, Smithy, old chap! I suppose you've missed me?"

"Why the thump should you suppose that, Bunter?"

"Oh, really, Smithy——"

"But what on earth is the fat bounder doing here?" exclaimed Vernon-Smith, in astonishment.

"He's come back!" gasped Bob Cherry. "He's going to wedge into class this afternoon, and he hopes that Quelchy won't say anything."

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Bounder.

"I—I say, you fellows, keep round me, you know! Back me up——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! There's the jolly old bell!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Bunter, old man, that's the way to the gates!"

"Oh, really, Cherry! I'm coming into class!"

"But you're not a Greyfriars fellow now, you know," urged Frank Nugent. "Have a little sense, Bunter."

"Oh, really, Nugent——"

"Cut off, old bean!" grinned the Bounder. "Go while the going's good."

Billy Bunter blinked mournfully at the grinning juniors. He did not make any movement to go. Apparently he had resolved to try his luck in the Remove Form-room, hoping for the best.

Harry Wharton & Co. walked away towards the School House, and the Owl of the Remove rolled along with them. They came into the Form-room passage together, and there was a howl from the Remove fellows there, at the sight of Billy Bunter.

"Bunter——"

"What the thump——"

"I've come back!" said Bunter.

"Come back!" yelled Skinner. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, my hat!" howled Peter Todd.

"He's come back! Ha, ha, ha! You fat, frabjous duffer, roll out before Quelchy sees you!"

"Oh, really, Toddy——"

"Begad! This does really take the cake, you know!" remarked Lord Mauleverer. "Don't you understand that you're bunked, Bunter?"

"Oh, really, Mauly——"

"Here comes Quelchy!" murmured Redwing, as the lean form of the Remove master appeared at the end of the passage.

The Removites scudded into their Form-room and took their places. With them went Billy Bunter.

He dropped into his old place in the Remove; and a gust of laughter swept

through the Form-room. Whether it was obtuseness, or "neck," or both, the Removites did not know; but certainly Billy Bunter was playing a part no expelled fellow had ever played before.

The laughter died away as Mr. Quelch's firm tread sounded outside the doorway.

There was silence as the Remove master entered.

What he would say—and do—when he found Billy Bunter in his Form once more was a keenly interesting problem to the Removites.

In breathless silence they waited, watching Mr. Quelch—waiting with tense excitement for his eyes to fall upon Billy Bunter.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Outside!

MR. QUELCH raised his eyebrows in astonishment.

He raised them so much that, for a moment, they really seemed in danger of disappearing over the top of his head.

His eyes fixed on the fat face of William George Bunter, sitting among the Remove fellows as if he had never left Greyfriars at all.

To say that Mr. Quelch was astonished is to put it mildly. He was astounded—in fact, dumbfounded.

He gazed at Billy Bunter, and for nearly a minute a pin might have been heard to drop in the Remove Form-room. The Removites were more breathless than ever. They knew that this was the calm before the storm.

"Bunter!" articulated Mr. Quelch at last. "Is—is—is that actually Bunter?"

"Yes, sir."

"Bunter, bless my soul!"

"G-g-good-afternoon, sir!" ventured the Owl of the Remove.

"What?"

"I—I hope I see you well, sir," said Bunter. "I—I hope you haven't had much rheumatism, sir, in this beastly rainy weather."

"Bunter!"

"Nice afternoon, isn't it, sir?"

"Bunter, what are you doing here?"

"I—I've come back, sir."

"You have come back to Greyfriars!" said Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, sir," said Bunter brightly. "I'm willing to apologise to the Head, sir, and to you, and to—to anybody you like, sir. I—I don't mind a bit."

Some of the Removites grinned. But they did not dare to laugh. The expression that was gathering on Mr. Quelch's countenance did not encourage laughter.

"You have returned to this school, Bunter, after being expelled!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch blankly.

"Yes, sir. I—I missed you very much, sir——"

"Eh?"

"It's such a pleasure to see you again, sir."

Mr. Quelch's jaw shut like a vice.

"You—you see, sir, you—you were always so—so nice, and—and I always admired you so much, sir——"

"That will do, Bunter."

"Yes, sir. I—I haven't got my books, sir. I—I suppose I can borrow some of Toddy's——"

"You will not need any books here, Bunter. This is, I suppose, another example of your astounding impudence? But if you really fancy that you will be allowed to return to Greyfriars as if nothing had happened, you are deceiving yourself! Leave this Form-room!"

"Eh?"

"And this House!"

"I—I say, sir—"

"I am surprised that your father has allowed you to act in this—this unprecedented and unheard-of manner! A remonstrance will be addressed to Mr. Bunter without delay. In the meantime—go!"

"Go where, sir? To my study?" asked Bunter.

"You have no study here, Bunter, as you know very well. Leave this room, this House, these premises altogether!"

"I—I've come back to stay, sir—"

"Wharton!"

"Yes, sir?" said Harry.

"Kindly take Bunter to the gates, and see him off the school premises. Tell Gosling that he is not to be re-admitted under any circumstances whatever."

"Oh, really, sir—"

"Silence, Bunter!"

Harry Wharton rose to his feet. It was not a congenial task that had been assigned to him; but he had no choice but to obey his Form-master. He tapped Bunter on the arm.

"Come on, Bunt, old chap!" he said gently.

Bunter blinked at him, and did not move.

"Go with Wharton at once, Bunter!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

"But—but I don't want to miss lessons, sir," said Bunter. "I—I'm so jolly keen on—on work, as you remember, sir."

"Go!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

Bunter quaked; but he sat tight. The Remove-room at Greyfriars was his haven of refuge; the alternative was home. And that seemed a terrible alternative to the Owl of the Remove. Considering Bunter's magnificent descriptions of Bunter Court, it was surprising that he did not want to stay at that imposing residence. But he didn't—it was quite plain that he didn't.

"If you do not immediately accompany Wharton, Bunter, I shall remove you from this room myself!" boomed Mr. Quelch.

"Oh, sir!"

"Are you going?"

"You—you see, sir—"

"Enough!"

Mr. Quelch strode across to Bunter. He grasped him by the collar, and hooked him out of class, landing him in the middle of the Form-room like a fat fish.

Bunter spluttered.

"Oh! Ow! Groogh! I—I say, sir— Leggo— I say— Oh, dear! Oh, my hat!"

"Come!" said Mr. Quelch, in a grinding voice.

With an iron grasp on his fat shoulder Billy Bunter was marched out of the Form-room. The heavy tread of Mr. Quelch, and the faltering footsteps of the Owl of the Remove, died away down the passage.

There was a rush of the Remove fellows to the windows. Those windows were crowded with faces, to watch the further adventures of William George Bunter.

He emerged from the House with Mr. Quelch—still with the Form master's vice-like grip on his shoulder. Right down to the gates Mr. Quelch marched the hapless Owl of the Remove.

"Gosling!"

The porter came out of his lodge. He stared at Bunter.

"Gosling, this—this boy has returned to the school, unpermitted. You should not have allowed him to enter, Gosling."

"Which I never seed him a-doing of

it, sir," said Gosling. "Wot I says, sir, is this 'ere—"

"Kindly see that he does not enter again, Gosling."

"Werry good, sir!"

"Open the gate, Gosling."

"Yessir."

The gate swung open. Mr. Quelch marched Bunter out, and then at last the vice unclosed from the Owl's fat shoulder.

"Bunter, you had better go home at once!" said Mr. Quelch severely. "If you are found within the precincts of Greyfriars again you will be dealt with severely."

"Oh, really, sir—"

"You are, in fact, trespassing here," said Mr. Quelch. "If you were not so stupid you would realise the absurdity and bad taste of your conduct. Now go home at once. Do you hear?"

"Oh, yes, sir!"

Mr. Quelch walked back, and the gate closed after him. Without another glance at Bunter, he walked towards the House.

Gosling grinned sourly through the bars of the gate at Bunter.

"Pretty goings hon, I don't think, young Bunter," said Gosling. "A-shoving in when a man's back is turned! Ho!"

"I—I say, Gosling, old man—"

"Wot I says is this 'ere, young Bunter—you clear hoff!"

"Let me in, Gosling!" urged Bunter.

"Old Quelch has gone into the House now—he won't see you. Let me in, there's a good chap!"

"I don't think!" said Gosling

derisively. "You go 'ome, Master Bunter. Wot I advises you to do is this 'ere—you go 'ome."

"Gosling, old chap—"

"Huh!"

Gosling grunted and walked back to his lodge.

"Gosling!" called out Bunter appealingly. The porter did not turn his head.

"Gosling, old fellow!"

William Gosling went into his lodge.

"Gosling you rotter!"

No answer.

"Gosling, you cheeky cad!" howled Bunter. "Do you hear me, you cheeky old donkey?"

No answer came from Gosling's lodge.

Billy Bunter blinked up and down the road dismally. It was a long walk back to the station, and Bunter did not like long walks. Besides, he did not want to go. He looked this way and that way, like Moses of old, and then he turned to the gates again.

When Gosling looked out of his lodge half an hour later, a fat figure was still lingering at the gates. Billy Bunter had not gone.

There he was—haunting the gates of Greyfriars like a podgy Peri at the gate of Paradise. Bunter was a sticker—and now, undoubtedly, he was sticking!

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

A Talk on the Telephone!

HARRY WHARTON & Co. were very circumspect in the Remove room that afternoon.

Mr. Quelch was in a tart humour.

The amazing return of Bunter had surprised and deeply irritated the Remove master; really, it seemed to Mr. Quelch that he never would have done with the worry of Bunter.



"You silly owl, Bunter! Where are you?" There was a fat chuckle and the sound of someone crawling out from under a bed. "Under my bed, by gad!" drawled Lord Mauleverer. "Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Removites. "Bunter's turned up again like a giddy bad penny!" chuckled Skinner. "I wonder what Quelch will do with him this time?" (See Chapter 10.)

When a fellow was expelled from the school, the school had a right to suppose that it had seen the last of the fellow in question. But Bunter seemed like the gentleman in the story, who was dead but would not lie down. He was expelled, but he was not, apparently, done with. Like a spectre he had returned to haunt the scene of his former existence. It was extraordinary—unprecedented—exasperating. Mr. Quelch found quite a large number of expressive adjectives descriptive of such conduct. He almost regretted that he had not caned Bunter before walking him out of gates.

He determined to speak very plainly to Bunter's father on the subject. Mr. Bunter ought to have seen that this did not happen.

When classes ended, Mr. Quelch proceeded to the Head's study to acquaint Dr. Locke with the singular occurrence of the afternoon.

He found the Head in a good humour. The Head had been doing Greek with the Sixth, digging deep into the mysteries of Sophocles; and the Head always found pleasure in that. How much pleasure the Sixth found in it was another matter.

"A most extraordinary occurrence, sir—" said Mr. Quelch.

"Indeed, Mr. Quelch?"

"Bunter, sir—"

"Bunter?" repeated the Head absently. He was still thinking of Sophocles, and his mind was three thousand years away.

"Bunter of the Remove, sir—"

"Oh, Bunter!" said the Head, coming back with an effort from the dim ages of the past. "Certainly! The boy I was compelled to expel from the school a week ago. Quite so! What is it, Mr. Quelch?"

"He had the unparalleled impudence, sir, to present himself in the Form-room to-day."

"Wha-a-at?"

Dr. Locke jammed his pince-nez on his nose and blinked in amazement at Mr. Quelch. He totally forgot even Sophocles.

"Bunter—here! Mr. Quelch—what—what—"

"It is amazing, sir, that the boy should act in so—so unprecedented a manner, and that his father should allow him to do so."

"I am astounded, Mr. Quelch. Such impudence—"

"Such insolence, sir—"

"Such amazing effrontery—"

"Such reckless disregard of all propriety—"

"He is gone now, I presume?" exclaimed the Head.

"I turned him out at once, sir."

"Very good! Very good indeed, Mr. Quelch."

"Probably he will not venture to repeat such an act of insolence, sir. But no doubt you will agree that his father should be communicated with."

"Certainly, Mr. Quelch. His father is very seriously to blame. Perhaps you will make the necessary communication."

"Certainly, sir, with your leave."

"Pray do so, Mr. Quelch."

"Then I will telephone, sir."

"Very good."

Mr. Quelch returned to his own study and proceeded to ring up Mr. William Samuel Bunter at once. The Head had been glad to be relieved of the task of remonstrating with Mr. Bunter; he shrank from saying anything disagreeable to anybody. But Mr. Quelch had no such objections. He intended to put it very plainly to William Samuel Bunter.

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He compressed his lips when the reply came through from his trunk call. The reply was that Mr. Bunter was not yet home from the City.

"Very good!" said Mr. Quelch, in a tone of voice which seemed to imply that he really considered it very bad, and he rang off.

But he was not disposed to wait. He proceeded to ask for another trunk call, this time to Mr. Bunter's number in the City. Mr. Bunter was apparently at his office; but he had no right to be attending to his own affairs at his office while his son was causing trouble at the school from which he had been expelled. Mr. Quelch was prepared to interrupt a busy stockbroker in the midst of his dealings with bulls and bears, with contangoes and backwardations, without ruth.

When Mr. Quelch received a reply to his second trunk call, it came in a hoarse voice that was obviously not Mr. Bunter's. From a caretaker, Mr. Quelch learned that Mr. Bunter had left for home.

The Remove master murmured something under his breath. He was an economical gentleman, and he often found cause for complaint in his telephone bills. Now there were two trunk calls to go down—for nothing. It really was very trying to the temper.

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But Mr. Quelch was fairly on the war-path now. Once more he rang up Mr. Bunter at home.

This time, fortunately, he found that that gentleman had come in; and William Samuel Bunter's fat voice came through over the wires.

"Mr. Bunter—"

"Mr. Bunter speaking. What is it?"

"Mr. Quelch speaking, from Greyfriars—"

"Mr. Squelch—"

"Quelch!"

"Did you say Squelch?"

"I did not say Squelch!" hooted the Remove master. "I said Quelch! My name is Quelch. I am your son's former Form master at Greyfriars."

"Oh, very good! What is it, Mr. Squelch—I mean Quelch?"

"Your son was here this afternoon and—"

"Eh?"

"Your son—"

"Naturally. I suppose nothing has occurred to cause the Head to send my second son away from Greyfriars!" There was an inflection of sarcasm in Mr. Bunter's voice.

"I am not alluding to Samuel Bunter of the Second Form, sir. I am alluding to William George Bunter, formerly of the Remove."

"Eh?"

"Your son, William, who was expelled from the school, has had the audacity to return here!" hooted Mr. Quelch.

"Indeed!"

"Yes, indeed, sir."

"I understood that he was going to visit friends," said Mr. Bunter. "No doubt he was referring to friends at Greyfriars. Really, Mr. Quelch, this is disagreeable to me. No doubt the boys miss him, but a visit like this should not have been arranged, in the circumstances. Surely you see this."

Mr. Quelch breathed hard.

"You son came here uninvited, sir!" he gasped. "I have rung you up, sir, to point out to you that it must not occur again."

"It is for you to see that it does not occur again, sir!" snapped Mr. Bunter. "My son was dismissed from Greyfriars for reasons that appear to me totally inadequate. I have been put to great inconvenience. The affair has been a trouble to me. When I placed my son with Dr. Locke I did not expect him to be returned on my hands like this."

"Your son's conduct—"

"His conduct, sir, whatever it was, was doubtless the outcome of his training, which was in your care."

"Wha-a-at?"

"And now," resumed Mr. Bunter indignantly, "after handing my son over to me suddenly, almost without warning, you allow him to revisit the school, you encourage him to return—"

"Encourage him!" gasped Mr. Quelch.

"If it is your wish that he should return to Greyfriars as a pupil, I will consider the matter," said Mr. Bunter.

"Bless my soul! I—I—"

"I am, I think, prepared to consent to this. At all events, I will consider the matter, and give you a favourable answer if possible."

Mr. Quelch almost dropped the receiver.

"In the circumstances, I have no objection to my son staying on at the school for a few days, till the matter is finally settled."

"Sir!"

"It would have been better to communicate with me first. I must say, Mr. Quelch, that there seems to me something surreptitious about your encouraging William to come back to the school without my knowledge. Still, if you are anxious to have him back, I can make allowances."

"I—I—I—" Mr. Quelch's voice failed him.

"We will leave it at that," said Mr. Bunter. "I will see about it, and let you know whether I can consent to my son's resuming his former place at Greyfriars. Tell the Head that I will give him a favourable answer if possible. Good-bye."

"Sir—Mr. Bunter—listen to me—"

Only a buzz on the wires answered Mr. Quelch. William Samuel Bunter had rung off.

The Remove master stood and stared at the telephone. Already he had three trunk calls to pay for; and Mr. Quelch was very careful with his money. But he felt that he could not let the matter rest where it was, with Mr. Bunter under so singular a misapprehension.

So a fourth trunk-call was required. It was some time before Mr. Quelch got through. A young lady at the exchange, deeply interested in the problem of choosing between bobbed and shingled hair, mistook the number, and Mr. Quelch found himself in conversation, after a time, with a gentleman living at Brighton, who seemed quite cross when he found that he was not the gentleman required. But the exasperated Remove master got through at last—to receive

information that Mr. Bunter was gone out for the evening.

Mr. Quelch put up the receiver with feelings almost too deep for words.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Tea in Study No. 1!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. came up to the Remove passage to tea, after punting a footer about till dusk. Wharton had a parcel under his arm. The Famous Five were "teasing" together in Study No. 1. Nugent turned on the light, and the five juniors tramped cheerily into the study. Naturally, they expected to find the room empty. But it was not empty.

There was a shout from five voices at once as the light came on.

"Bunter!"

"I—I say, you fellows—"

"Bunter! My hat!"

There he was!

The Owl of the Remove was seated in the study armchair, evidently waiting for the captain of the Remove to come in. He blinked at the astonished juniors.

"Surprised you—what?" he inquired.

"Well, yes, rather!" ejaculated Harry Wharton. "What the thump are you doing here, Bunter?"

"I'm hungry."

"Eh?"

"I suppose you fellows are going to stand me some tea."

"You can't stay here, you ass!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"How on earth did you get here?" exclaimed Nugent. "Mr. Quelch thinks you're gone."

Bunter grinned.

"Of course, I wasn't going," he said.

"My people are not expecting me home. I've come back, you know."

"You awful ass—"

"I tried to get that beast Gosling to let me in again," said Bunter. "He wouldn't! Unfeeling beast, you know. I've tipped him lots of times—at least, I was going to tip him. But it was all right—I got in through the Cloisters. I came here to wait for you, Harry, old chap. I knew you'd be glad to see me."

"What on earth put that idea into your head?"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Well, now you're here the sooner you hook it the better," said Johnny Bull. "Can't you understand that you don't belong to Greyfriars now?"

"Oh, really, Bull—"

"Bunter, old man, you'd really better go," said Harry Wharton. "I'm sorry, old chap, but you really asked to be bunked, you know; and now you're bunked, anyhow. Quelch will be fearfully wild if he finds you here again."

"Yes, cut, old man," said Bob.

"How can I cut when I'm hungry?"

"Bunter—"

"Frightfully hungry," said the Owl of the Remove impressively. "I had lunch at a railway-station, and I've had nothing since, excepting a few tarts and a doughnut or two and a cake. I suppose you fellows don't want to see me expire before your eyes."

The Famous Five exchanged glances.

Billy Bunter was "up against it," there was no doubt about that. They felt a natural inclination to help a fellow who was down on his luck. But really it was a difficult matter to help Bunter. The fat junior did not seem to realise that he no longer belonged to Greyfriars, and that he was now a stranger there. They could guess what Mr. Quelch's feelings would be like if he discovered the expelled junior on the premises again. Entertaining Bunter in the study was likely to be a dangerous business.

"Well," said Harry Wharton at last, "we shall get into a thumping row if Quelch finds Bunter here. But—"

"Oh, feed him!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"The feedfulness is the proper caper, in the esteemed circumstances," remarked Hurree Singh, "and then the worthy and ridiculous Bunter had better depart hookfully."

"Jolly decent of you fellows to stand by me like this," said Bunter. "Of course, you ought to, after all I've done for you."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Look here, Bunter—"

"I say, you fellows, I'm famished. It's rather unfeeling of you to waste time talking when I'm famishing."

Harry Wharton & Co. spread the table for tea. It was only too certain that they were booked for trouble if Mr. Quelch discovered their proceedings. But they felt that they could not turn

good!" said Bunter, when he had disposed of enough for four, "I'll have some more of that ham. And a few more eggs."

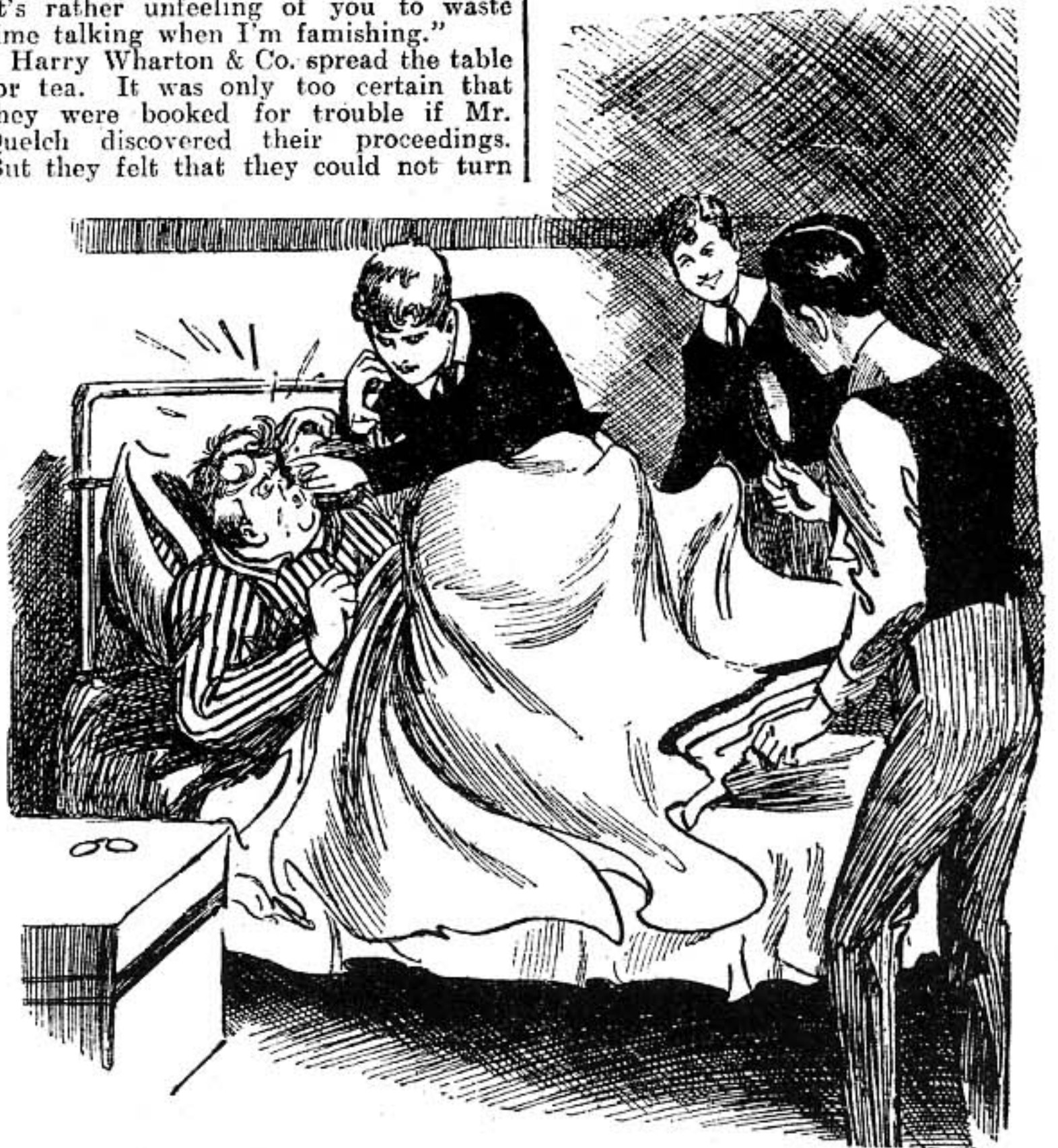
"Won't you try the cake, Bunter?"

"I'm coming to that."

Bunter came to the cake presently, and disposed of the whole of it. By that time he had taken the keen edge off his appetite.

But he still went on, so long as a crumb remained on the table. Bunter did not believe in leaving anything unfinished.

The news that the Famous Five had an unexpected guest in Study No. 1 had



"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" shouted Bob Cherry, leaning over Bunter. "Wake up, old fat man! Rising bell!" "Groooooogh!" Bunter opened his eyes and blinked peevishly at Bob. "Don't make that row, Bob Cherry, when a chap's trying to sleep. I—whooooop!" The fat junior yelled in alarm as Cherry squeezed the sponge over his fat features. "Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors. (See Chapter 11.)

the hungry Owl empty away. They decided to take the risk.

Billy Bunter was soon going strong. Supplies for a tea for five had been brought to the study. Frank Nugent hurried back to the school shop. Supplies for ten at least were required, if Bunter was to "tea" with the Famous Five.

Bunter's fat face beamed over the festive board.

He seemed quite to have forgotten his peculiar position, in his keen interest in the foodstuffs.

His troubles, evidently, had not affected his appetite. It was doubtful whether any imaginable troubles could have done that. If the universe had come to a sudden end, Bunter's last act probably would have been to bolt a last hurried meal while the final crash was going on.

"I say, you fellows, this is really

spread along the Remove passage. Fellows came along to stare into the study at Bunter, really scarcely believing their eyes when they saw him there. There was chuckling and chortling all through the Remove.

Bunter grinned and nodded to the fellows as they looked in. He seemed to fancy that he was holding a kind of reception.

He was finished tea at last; and then the Famous Five considered that it was time for Bunter to go. In fact, the sooner he went the better, before wrath descended upon the devoted heads of his kind entertainers. But Bunter had no idea of going.

He leaned back luxuriously in the armchair, unfastening the lowest button of his waistcoat. Even Bunter's stowage capacity had been rather severely taxed.

The chums of the Remove looked at him.

"Well, Bunter—" said Wharton. "Jolly good feed," said Bunter. "If you fellows don't mind, I'll take a little nap."

"But—" "You might put something on the fire, Wharton."

"Yes; but—" "And I dare say you want to get along to your own study, Cherry. You're rather noisy, with your big feet—"

"Eh?" "Well, don't make a row, anyhow." Bunter closed his eyes comfortably.

"My hat!" said Bob Cherry, with a deep breath, gazing at Billy Bunter. "I—I suppose a fellow had better not kick him, in the giddy circumstances. But he does beg to be kicked, doesn't he?"

Skinner grinned into the study. "You fellows want to see Quelch?" he asked.

"Good lord, no!" ejaculated Wharton. "He seems to want to see you—he's coming, anyhow."

"Oh, crumbs!" Skinner walked off, chuckling. The Famous Five stood in dismay. Apparently Mr. Quelch had become aware that something of an unusual nature was proceeding in the Remove passage, and was coming to investigate. Billy Bunter's eyes reopened behind his glasses.

"I say, you fellows, is that— Oh, my hat!"

Mr. Quelch stood in the doorway of the study.

"What— Bless my soul! Bunter!" And the Form-master gazed spell-bound at the Owl of the Remove.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Exit Bunter!

"WHAT are you doing here, Bunter?"

"I—I've been having tea, sir!" gasped Bunter.

"How dare you come here?" "I—I told you I'd come back, sir."

"Upon my word! This passes all patience!" exclaimed the Remove master. "Wharton, you have admitted Bunter to the House—knowing that he is expelled and not allowed to come here at all—"

"We found him here, sir," gasped Wharton.

"Then you should have informed me immediately of his presence. That was your duty, as head boy of the Remove."

"W-a-w-as it, sir?" "It certainly was, Wharton. Instead of that, it appears that you have been entertaining him—welcoming him to the school which he had disgraced, and from which he was expelled with ignominy."

"Oh! We—" "Each of you will take five hundred lines," hooted Mr. Quelch. "As to-morrow is a half-holiday, you will remain in the Form-room and write out your lines, until they are finished and handed in to me."

"Oh dear!" "If there is any repetition of this conduct, Wharton, there will be a severer punishment to follow. Bunter is deliberately flouting the Head's authority in coming here, and you appear to be encouraging him to do so. You should know better."

"I—I—" "Enough! Bunter, follow me at once."

"I—I say, sir, I—I'd much rather stop here—"

"You will go home at once, Bunter."

"I don't want to go home, sir."

"That is quite beside the point, Bunter. Are you really obtuse enough to suppose that you can return to Greyfriars after being expelled?"

"Yes, sir!" "Bless my soul! Really, Bunter, I scarcely know how to deal with you," ejaculated Mr. Quelch.

"I—I'd prefer to let bygones be bygones, please, sir," said Bunter. "I'm willing to overlook the whole thing, sir."

"I shall not waste further words on you, Bunter. I shall remove you from the school; and if you come here again I shall punish you severely. Although you are no longer a Greyfriars boy, I shall cane you if I find you within the precincts of the school again."

"Oh lor'!" "Follow me!" thundered the Remove master.

Billy Bunter quaked, and followed the Remove master from the study. A crowd of Removites watched him go downstairs in the wake of the angry master. Mr. Quelch strode out into the dusky quadrangle, with Bunter at his heels. The Owl of the Remove blinked to and fro, apparently considering the possibility of dodging away in the shadows. Mr. Quelch seemed to read his thoughts, for he came closer, and dropped his hand on Bunter's shoulder. There was no dodging for Bunter.

"Come!" snapped Mr. Quelch. The gates were closed and locked for the night. Mr. Quelch led Bunter to the master's private gate, which he opened with his own key. Billy Bunter blinked dismally into the shadowy road outside.

"Now go, Bunter!" "I—I say, sir—" stammered Bunter. "Go!"

"I—I can't stay out all night, sir. I—I haven't my railway fare home," gasped Bunter. "If—if anything happens to me, sir, you'll be responsible."

Mr. Quelch breathed hard. "What is the amount of your railway fare home, Bunter?"

"Seven-and-six, sir."

"Third-class?" snapped the Remove master.

"Five-and-six, sir."

"I will give you five-shillings-and-sixpence, Bunter. I do not desire that you should suffer for your folly to the extent of remaining unsheltered for the night. But take warning, Bunter, and do not come anywhere near Greyfriars again."

"I—I want to come back, sir!" "Nonsense!"

"I shouldn't like to have any Form-master but you, sir."

"What?" "You see, sir, I—I like you so much—"

"Take this money, Bunter, and go." Bunter took the money, but he did not go. His fat feet really seemed glued to the soil of Greyfriars.

Mr. Quelch stood with his hand on the gate impatiently. "Will you go, Bunter, or must I push you out of this gateway forcibly?" he inquired.

"Oh lor'!" Bunter rolled out dismally. "Now, be sensible, and go home at once," said Mr. Quelch, preparing to close the gate.

"Hold on a minute, sir! I—I can't get home on five-and-six—"

"That is your railway fare, Bunter!"

"I—I shall want a taxi from the station at the other end, sir!"

"You may have a taxi from the station, Bunter, or from anywhere else, if you have the pecuniary resources to remunerate the driver," said Mr. Quelch. "Otherwise, doubtless you will walk."

Slam!

The gate closed, and Mr. Quelch turned the key in the lock. From over the wall floated an ejaculation:

"Beast!"

Mr. Quelch compressed his lips and walked back to the House, extremely angry, but relieved to think that he had done with Bunter at last.

In the road Billy Bunter stood for some minutes, with five shillings and sixpence in his fat hand. He rolled away at last towards Friardale.

When he reached Friardale he did not, however, head for the railway-station. He dropped in at Uncle Clegg's little tuckshop in the High Street.

After his tea in Study No. 1, it might have been supposed that even Billy Bunter was "full inside" for a time. But perhaps his walk had made him hungry. Or perhaps Mr. Quelch's five-and-six was burning a hole in his pocket. At all events, he gave his orders in Mr. Clegg's shop, and was soon consuming tuck at a great rate. And the amount of tuck he consumed was of the precise value of five shillings and sixpence.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

A Lodging for the Night!

"NICE for us!" granted Bob Cherry.

"The niceness is terrific!"

Really, it was not nice. Five hundred lines each had been rewarded the Famous Five for their hospitality to Bunter; and they did not like the prospect at all. A half-holiday spent in grinding out lines in the Form-room was not in the least attractive.

"Bother him!" growled Johnny Bull. "Blessed if Bunter isn't as much trouble after he's gone as when he was here!"

"More!" said Bob.

"Thank goodness he's cleared now, at any rate. I suppose we've seen the last of the silly owl!"

"Have we?" said Harry Wharton dubiously. "I'm not so sure of that. The fat ass simply can't understand that he's not in the picture now."

"He won't, you mean," granted Johnny Bull. "It's just his thundering neck. I wonder Quelch doesn't wallop him."

"You think he'll come back again, Harry?" asked Frank Nugent, with a whistle.

"Well, I sha'n't be surprised to see him, anyhow."

"Blessed if I should be surprised at anything from Bunter," said Bob Cherry.

The episode had its serious side for the Famous Five, as it had led to five hundred lines for a half-holiday. But the rest of the Remove cackled over it loud and long. Bunter's amazing proceedings were the only topic in the Remove that evening, and fellows in other Forms discussed them also with loud laughter.

Bunter, evidently, was determined to come back to Greyfriars if he could. Too late he had repented him of his folly, and had realised his mistake. Either he could not, or would not, see that it was too late. He seemed to hope to gain his point by sheer persistence. After what had occurred, most of the

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Remove fellows fully expected to see him again on the morrow. Skinner remarked that he would hang on till he was licked. And, to judge by Mr. Quelch's looks a licking was pretty certain, if Bunter showed up at Greyfriars again.

Bunter's idea, apparently, was to regard himself as still being a Greyfriars chap; and his expulsion by the Head as a trifle that could be disregarded—a trifle light as air. It was not likely that the headmaster would share that peculiar view.

The Remove fellows were still discussing Bunter in the Rag, when Wingate of the Sixth looked in, his appearance announcing that it was bedtime.

The Remove fellows went up to their dormitory. Bob Cherry glanced up and down the room when the light was turned on.

"Looking for Bunter?" grinned Peter Todd.

Bob laughed.

"Well, I'm blessed if I should be surprised to see him here," he said.

"The surprisefulness would not be great," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Bunter was not to be seen, however. The Remove turned in, and Wingate put out the light and retired.

A minute after the captain of Greyfriars was gone a still, small voice was heard in the Remove dormitory.

"I say, you fellows!"

"Great Scott!" yelled Bob Cherry.

"He's here!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"That beast is gone, isn't he?" went on the still, small voice.

"You silly owl, Bunter! Where are you?"

There was a fat chuckle, and the sound of someone crawling out from under a bed.

"Under my bed, by gad!" ejaculated Lord Mauleverer.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, this beats it!" said Vernon-Smith.

"He's turned up like a giddy bad penny again," chuckled Skinner. "I wonder what Quelch will do with him this time? He can't very well turn him out to graze at this time of night."

"I say, you fellows, I'm ready to turn in. Have those rotters taken my bed out of the dorm?"

"You silly owl, did you think your bed would be left here in case you changed your mind and came back?" demanded Tom Brown.

"Oh, really, Brown—"

"You can't stop here, Bunter," exclaimed Harry Wharton, sitting up in bed, in almost a state of consternation.

"You can't, really!"

"I'm jolly well going to!"

"How did you get in again?" asked Squiff.

"I got in the back door and dodged up here," said Bunter. "What was a fellow to do? I couldn't go home. Quelch lent me my third-class railway fare; but I'm not travelling third. All very well for Quelch—a twopenny-ha'penny schoolmaster. Not quite good enough for me."

"Oh crumbs!"

"Besides, I had a snack at Uncle Clegg's, and the five-and-six went," said Bunter. "I'm stony. Of course, I know my old friends here will stand me a small loan, in the circumstances."

"Who are your old friends here?" asked Skinner, with interest. "This is the first I've heard of them!"

"Oh, really, Skinner—"

"But you can't stay here, Bunter," said the captain of the Remove. "You know five of us got five hundred lines each for standing you tea—"

"He, he, he!"

"Why, the fat villain is cackling!" exclaimed Bob Cherry indignantly. "He thinks it's funny!"

"He, he, he!"

"Roll out of this dorm, Bunter, before I come to you with a bolster!" shouted Bob.

"I'm waiting to turn in, old chap. Of course, I'm sleeping here. Which of you fellows is going to whack out a bed with me?"

"The whichfulness is terrific."

"I suppose you don't want me to sleep on the floor?" said Bunter. "I know you're selfish. But there's a limit!"

"I can see myself sharing a bed with you—I don't think!" chuckled Skinner. "In a two-foot-six bed, there's two-foot-three for Bunter, and three inches for the other chap. Who's keen?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The keenfulness is not terrific!"

"I say, you fellows, I'm tired, you know. Look here, if you like to give me half a dozen blankets, I can sleep on the floor."

"You fat duffer, you can't sleep here at all!" exclaimed Harry Wharton impatiently. "You'd better go down at once and speak to Mr. Quelch, and ask him to put you up somewhere for the night."

"Most likely he would lick me."

"Serve you jolly well right if he does."

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Can't you understand that you don't belong to Greyfriars now?" howled Bob Cherry.

"That's unfeeling, Cherry."

"But can't you understand it, fat-head?"

"I don't care to discuss the matter with an unfeeling chap! Look here, two of you fellows could whack out one bed and let me have the other. See? I'm really sleepy."

"Rats!"

"Rot!"

"Buzz off!"

"The departfulness is the proper caper, my esteemed Bunter."

"I guess it's up to you to vamoose the ranch," remarked Fisher T. Fish. "Light out, Bunter!"

"Oh, really, Fishy—"

"Well, I'm blessed if I know what's going to be done with the silly owl!" said Bob Cherry at last. "I say, some

of you, anybody mind my sharing a bed if I give mine to Bunter?"

"You jolly well won't share mine," said Snoop.

"That's understood," said Bob. "I mean any fellow who washes himself, of course!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why, you cheeky beast—" began Snoop.

"Shut up, Snoop! Turn in here, Bob," said Harry Wharton. "We can manage it somehow."

"Right-ho! Bunter, you fat villain, you can have my bed!" said Bob Cherry, turning out. "I shall get a licking for it to-morrow, but I suppose it can't be helped."

"Well, a licking won't hurt you," said Bunter. "Don't make a fuss about a trifle like that."

"What?"

"Be a man!" said Bunter. "Like me, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Bounder. "Are you still giving him your bed, Cherry, you ass!"

Bob Cherry breathed hard.

"Yes," he said. "Take it, Bunter! If you weren't sure of a licking and a boot in the morning I'd give you my bolster, hard. But turn in, and shut up!"

"Above all, shut up!" said Nugent.

"Yah!"

Billy Bunter turned in. Lord Mauleverer called to him.

"If you want some pyjamas, Bunter, I can lend you some."

"That's all right, Mauly; I've taken some from your box already."

"Oh, gad! Have you?"

"Yes, old chap! I knew you wouldn't mind."

"Oh, gad!" said Mauly.

"What on earth's going to happen in the morning, when they find that fat frog here?" said Hazeldene.

"Goodness knows!"

"I say, you fellows, dry up, will you? I want to go to sleep. Fellow can't sleep with you chattering like a lot of magpies."

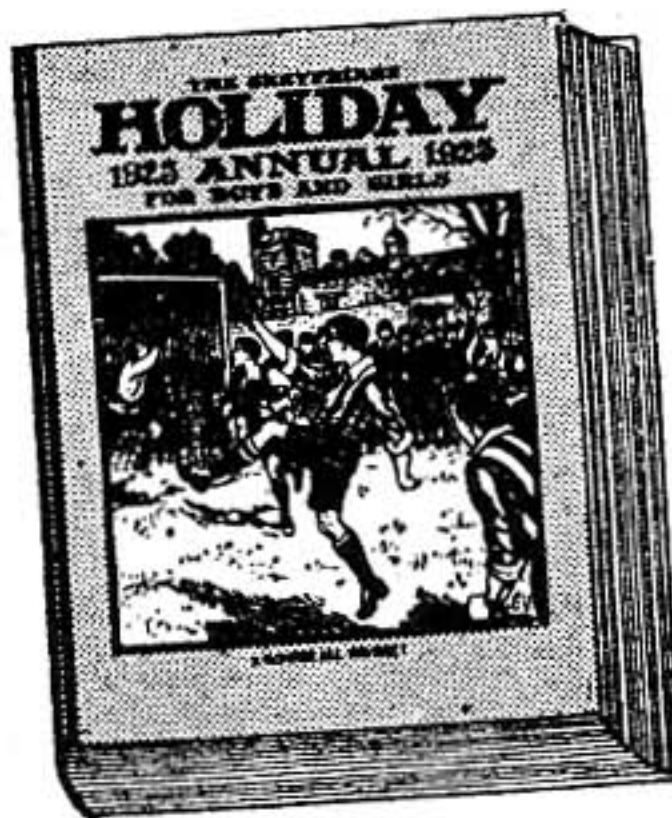
"Isn't he nice," said Peter Todd. "So grateful, and all that. Such tact and delicacy."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I really wish you fellows would dry up," said Bunter peevishly. "You

(Continued on page 16.)

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EDITED BY HARRY WHARTON

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Bill Sikes at Greyfriars!

Some Thrilling Scenes in the
School's History.

Described by George Wingate

A PUBLIC school is a happy hunting-ground for the plunderer, if he can only surmount the obstacles which stand in the way of his gaining access to the building.

The Head's safe usually contains much that is of value. In the library are many rare editions of books, which are worth their weight in gold. There are also a good many gold and silver trophies which are well worth the trouble of locating—from the burglar's point of view.

Greyfriars School has often been the scene of an attempted burglary, and occasionally a successful one. The first burglary of which there is any authentic record occurred in 1792—the days of the highwaymen. A party of plunderers forced their way into the school building, and made off with a big haul of valuables. The burglary must have been cleverly planned, for nobody saw the burglars arrive, nobody was disturbed during their visit, and nobody saw them leave. It was not until the morning that the school awoke to the fact that it had been plundered. The stolen property was assessed at over five hundred pounds.

Only a few months later another burglary was attempted. But on this occasion the intruders walked into a hornets' nest. A special night porter had been engaged, and he kept watch from a room in the school tower. From this vantage-point he saw a number of shadowy figures crossing the Close at midnight. Instantly he rushed down and challenged the intruders, levelling a blunderbuss at the gang. Then he raised the alarm by means of a stentorian shout. The fellows came dashing down from their dormitories, clad in the nightgowns which were worn at that period, and the burglars were speedily captured. In those "unhappy far-off days" burglary was regarded as a very serious crime, and the members of the gang were sentenced to transportation for a long period. This salutary punishment had a good effect, for Greyfriars was free from the unwelcome attentions of the burglar for many years.

In 1833, however, there was quite an epidemic of burglaries, the school being visited and plundered three times in the same year. On two occasions the burglars were caught red-handed, and on the other occasion they made what the Americans call "a cute getaway."

An attempted burglary in the year 1854 was not without its humorous side. The school porter had been specially instructed to keep watch and ward for burglars; and one dark December night he peeped from his bed-room window and saw a number of men clambering over the school wall. The porter, whose name was Craven, was also craven by nature. Although armed with a

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pistol—which had been provided in case of emergency—his courage failed him completely. He made numerous efforts to load the weapon, but his hands trembled so violently that by the time he accomplished the performance the burglars had broken into the building, and were beginning to get busy in the Head's study. Then the terrified porter, fearing that his lodge would be broken into, and that he would suffer personal violence, fired wildly from his window into the night. The pistol-shots were punctuated by wild shouts of "Elp! Burglars! Save me!" The slumbering school was soon awakened; but, unfortunately, the burglars were forewarned by the din that the porter was making, and, leaving their plunder behind, they hurriedly fled from the school premises, and escaped by scaling a high wall at the back of the building.

The biggest burglary in the school's history occurred in 1890. The burglars had the assistance of a treacherous member of the school domestic staff—a manservant named Morley. He admitted them to the school at dead of night, and handed them a bunch of keys which enabled them to enter many departments of the school where valuables were kept. The looters got away with a rich haul, even the strong-room having been successfully rifled. But Morley, who had been promised a big share of the spoils, never received it. In his fury he gave the burglars away to the authorities, and the gang, when arrested, promptly rounded on Morley, and told of the part he had played in the affair. Morley strenuously denied his complicity in the burglary, but he was convicted and sent to penal servitude with the others. Since that time no manservant has been engaged at Greyfriars unless he has been able to produce the highest credentials.

A determined and successful effort to break into the school was made during the Summer Vacation of 1905. But the burglars went empty away—or very nearly. All the school valuables had been locked in a room in the tower, and the marauders did not think of looking there. However, they obtained a few "unconsidered trifles" from the masters' studies, and made off in a motor-car.

The last big burglary at Greyfriars was very ingeniously planned. The Old Boys sent a football eleven to the school, and among them was a fellow who masqueraded as Dick Chester, a famous goalkeeper of the past. Whilst a concert was in progress in the evening, the impostor, with the aid of accomplices who had been lurking outside the school, plundered the place from end to end. Then came the startling revelation that the real Dick Chester had been killed in the war, and that the man who now assumed his name was an impostor. He was promptly arrested, and all the stolen property was recovered.

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

"FAIR PLAY" (Chichester).—"I think that Billy Bunter ought to have a trial in the Remove Eleven."—Believe me, if Bunter had a "trial," he would be "condemned" by all competent "judges"!

"Curious" (Lewisham).—"Is Mr. Quelch's typewriter a portable one?"—No; it is a cumbersome, old-fashioned machine. Quelch's manuscript, however, is portable. The other day he left it lying on his desk, and a sudden gust of wind "carried it away"!

R. J. B. (Manchester).—"I think a Special Babies Number of the 'Herald' would be jolly interesting."—We've already had a Special Number dealing with the "Babes" of the First and Second, if that's what you mean.

"Speed Limit" (Blackburn).—"Coker of the Fifth seems to be a perfect terror on his motor-bike. How many fatal accidents does he have per day?"—Well, he couldn't have more than one, could he?

Mabel J. (Llandudno).—"Billy Bunter claims to be a splendid all-round sportsman."—The only thing "all-round" about Bunter is his circumference!

"Heraldite" (Hastings).—"Have you got a museum at Greyfriars?"—Yes, rather! It contains all sorts of interesting curiosities. There are lots of old coins which would make a collector's mouth water; there are relics of ancient wars; and there are also some stuffed birds. Billy Bunter envies them. He wishes he could be "stuffed"!

F. J. B. (Taunton).—"Why doesn't Skinner of the Remove turn over a new leaf, like Vernon-Smith did?"—Because he hasn't Smithy's strength of character. It was possible for the "Boulder," as we used to call him, to rise on stepping-stones of his dead self to higher things; but Skinner doesn't want to rise. He seems quite content to remain a rotter.

EDITORIAL!

NOT being by profession a burglar, I have no special qualifications for publishing a special number dealing with the disciples of the immortal William Sikes.

But although I know nothing about burglary from within, I have seen a good deal of it from without. Greyfriars has been burgled on several occasions since I have been here, and I have sometimes had the pleasure of assisting the authorities to capture the merry burglar.

Of course, the modern burglar is seldom of the "Bill Sikes" type. He is well-dressed, polished, and polite. But he is not the less a scoundrel because he wears fine clothes and has suave manners. There is little, if anything, to be said in favour of the burglar. Often he has brains enough to follow an honourable profession, but he doesn't choose to. He will tell you that humanity is divided into two classes, the looters and the looted, and that he prefers to be a looter. And when he is caught—as he is fairly certain to be in the long run—he often whines for mercy and leniency, and forgets the wrong he has done to his unfortunate victims.

I don't think that anybody, after reading this issue, will have the slightest desire to become a burglar!

HARRY WHARTON.
[Supplement i.]



At Grips with a Berglar!

A Thrilling Story of St. Sam's

BOOM! Boom!
The grandfather clock in the school tower struck two. But it was a couple of hours fast, so, in reality, it was midnite—the witching hour, when churchyards yawn and graves give up their dead.

Jack Jolly stirred restlessly in his bed in the Fourth Form dormitory and awoke. It was a wild night. The wind wissled and shrieked around the old turrets and towers of St. Sam's. The rain beat against the windows with a series of sickening thuds, and ever and anonymously came the muffled roar of the lightning and the fitful flashes of thunder.

"What a night!" muttered Jack Jolly, with a shudder. "I'd better get out of bed and shut the windows."

As he did so he happened to glance down into the quadrangle. It was pitch dark; but prezzantly a sheet of lightning lit up the seen, and Jack Jolly distinctly saw a dark, sinnister-looking figger stealing across the quad.

Was it a fantom figger or a human form? No, it could not be a fantom, bekawse Jack Jolly could hear the crunching of feet on the gravel.

Instantly the thought flashed into Jack's mind:

"A berglar!"

It was an ideel night to commit a berglary at St. Sam's. The Head and the masters had long since retired for the night, and the plaice was rapped in slumber.

Peering into the gloom, Jack Jolly listened with all his eyes. And prezzantly he heard the sound of a window being raised down below. The berglar was breaking into the box-room!

Jack Jolly hastily roused his two chums, Merry and Bright. He threw a jug of cold water over Merry, and he woke Bright by bashing him on the head with the empty jug.

"Quick, you fellows!" panted Jack Jolly. "Slip into your toggs, and come downstares with me! I've just seen a berglar break into the bilding!"

"Sure it wasn't Blade of the Sixth returning from one of his pub-haunting eggspeditions?" asked Merry.

"Quite sure! It's a berglar, right enuff! And it's up to us to capture him before he rifles the Head's safe! Buck up!"

The three chums jumped into their toggs, and rushed out of the dormitory and lept down the stares six at a time.

Jack Jolly led the way with an electric-torch, and Merry and Bright were hard at his heels.

Round the winding corridors they went until they reached the door of the Head's study.

Jack Jolly lifted a warning fourfinger. Then he stooped down, and applied his ear to the keyhole. He could hear loud eggsplosions within, as if somebody was blowing open the Head's safe with dynamite.

Bang! Boom! Bong!

"Can you hear anything, Jack?" wispered Merry.

"I fancy I heard a slight noise," answered Jack Jolly.

Suddenly a tall form in a dressing-gown loomed up in the corridore. It was Mr. Lickham, the master of the Fourth.

"What are you boys doing here?" he demanded.

"We're on the track of a berglar, sir," said Jack Jolly.

"A berglar? What nonsense! Go back to your beds at once!"

"But there's a berglar in the Head's study, sir!" protested Merry. "Lissen! Didn't you hear a noise like Vesooivius in eruption?"

"No, Merry; I did not!" roared Mr. Lickham.

ham, who was looking very pail and agitated. "Return to your dormitory at once!"

"No jolly fear!" muttered Bright. "We're going to investigate this affair first!"

So saying, he threw open the door of the Head's study, and the three juniors rushed in.

A thrilling seen met their gaze. The room was fludded with electric light, and a desprit-looking ruffan was neeling in front of the Head's safe, the door of which had been blown to bits with dynamite.

The berglar spun round with a savvidge implication. Instantly he wipped out a brace of blunderbusses, and fired upon the intruders.

One of the bullets went clean through the panel of the Head's bookcase, and berried itself in the cover of a book, entitled "How to Shoot Straight." The other bullets passed harmlessly through Jack Jolly's curly hare.

"Collar the broot!" cried Jack. "Sweep him off his legs, and make him lay down his arms!"

Our heroes hurled themselves at the berglar, and a feeerce hand-to-hand struggle ensued.

The berglar fought with all the ferossity and tennassity of a wild animal. But he was overpowered at last. Just as Jack Jolly sat on his face, the Head came in in his pijjammers. He had been awakened by the sound of the eggsplosions.

"What the merry dickens——" gasped the Head, in amazement.

"We've bagged a berglar, sir!" said Jack Jolly.

"My hat—I mean, my mortar-board! The rotter must have had designs on that shilling postle-order I keep in my safe! It was very plucky of you, my boys, to tackle a ruffan who was armed to the teeth! Hallo, Lickham! What do you want?" added the Head, as the master of the Fourth came in.

"I—I just looked in to see if I could be of any assistance, sir!" stammered Mr. Lickham.

"Yes, you can. You can take charge of that sinnister skoundrel while I go and tellyfone for the perlice. The tellyfone in this study is out of order, and I shall have to go and use the one in my dining-room. You boys can buzz off to bed. Mr. Lickham will look after the jolly old berglar!"

Jack Jolly & Co. retired, and the berglar

was left with Mr. Lickham, while the Head went to call up the perlice.

The Head was only absent a cuppie of minnits. But when he returned to his study there was no sign of the berglar. Mr. Lickham was alone in the apartment.

"Dash it all, Lickham!" said the Head angrily. "What have you done with the berglar?"

Mr. Lickham hung his head.

"I—I let him go!" he muttered.

"Grate pip! What did you do that for?"

"I may as well confess," said Mr. Lickham in a low voice. "The berglar was my brother—an ex-convict. It was arranged that he should rifle your safe to-night, and that we should go halves with the loot. I tried hard to prevent those juniors from getting to grips with the berglar, but I failed. However, as soon as you left me alone with him, I permitted him to hop through the window. Don't send the perlice after him, sir, I implore you! Remember, he is my own flesh and blud!"

The Head frowned.

"I hardly know what to say to you, Lickham," he said. "This is a most paneful revelation to me. Strickly speaking, you are an accessory after the fact—or, rather, after the loot. I beleve you're as big a berglar as your brother!"

"I admit it, sir!" muttered Mr. Lickham mizzerably.

"Well, I suppose I ought to ask you to hand in your resignation. The guvverners would have a fit if they knew that one of the Form masters here was an apostle of the late William Sikes. But I will let you off this time. When next you plan a berglary see that it takes plaice at one of the big houses outside the school! Don't come and bergie my safe! Dash it all, man, that's like biting the hand that feeds you!"

"Thank you, sir!" said Lickham huskily.

"I shall not forget this kindness. In future I will confine my berglarious activities to the houses of the rich gentry in the district."

"That's the idea!" said the Head, with a smile. "Chin-chin, my dear Lickham!"

"Good-night, sir!"

The Head and the form master went their respective ways, and nothing more was heard of the attempted berglary at St. Sam's.

THE END.

IF YOU MET A BURGLAR!

What would you do if you met a burglar face to face?

PERCY BOLSOVER:

All depends on the size and stature of the said burglar. If he was a puny, undersized weakling I should give him such a pasting that he would have to be sent to the special Home for Bedridden Burglars. But if the fellow was a Samson—a towering giant—I should turn tail and run for my life!

ALONZO TODD:

If I encountered a burglar face to face I should reason gently with him. "My dear good man," I should say, wagging my forefinger to emphasise my remarks, "I implore you to desist from your nefarious enterprise! Turn aside, I beg of you, from the broad road which leads to the—er—treadmill. It is not too late, even now, to mend your ways. If you will wait here a moment I will run to my study and fetch you a little book called 'From Burglar to Bishop; or, The Reformation of Percy Pincher.' When you have read it you will be full of remorse for your chequered past, and will turn over a new leaf." I have no doubt the burglar would be very impressed.

I am hoping to meet a good many burglars, so that I can add them to my scroll of converts.

LORD MAULEVERER:

If I met a burglar, begad, I should just give him a polite "How d'ye do?" and pass on. I shouldn't dream of scrappin' with him. Scrappin' is the most exhaustin' form of exercise I know. Besides, I shouldn't like my classical beauty to be marred by a couple of black eyes or a bulbous nasal organ!

FISHER T. FISH:

Say, bo, if I met one of those burglar guys, I guess I'd deal him a sockdolager! Reckon he'd think an earthquake had hit him. It would be all up with the galoot if he stopped one of my straight lefts. Guess he'd feel too mighty sore to do any more burgling!

HAROLD SKINNER:

I believe in keeping on the right side of burglars. They're dangerous customers if you oppose them. If I were to meet one, staggering along with a sack of loot over his shoulder, I should simply say: "Halves, partner!" And if he refused to share out, I should just wish him good-night, and clear. That's the most tactful way of dealing with a member of the Bill Sikes' tribe.

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(Continued from page 13.)

cheese it, Toddy! You're like a sheep's head, you know—jolly nearly all jaw!"

"I—I won't slaughter him!" gasped Peter. "After all, Quelch will do that in the morning. I only hope he'll lay it on hard."

"Yah!"

Billy Bunter's deep snore was soon heard in the Remove dormitory—a familiar and unmusical sound which the Removites had never expected to hear there again. And Bunter slept soundly—in spite of the uncertainty of the morrow.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

No Brekker!

CLANG! Clang! The rising-bell rang out over Greyfriars in the misty morning. In the Remove dormitory the juniors turned out, and many grinning glances were turned towards Bob Cherry's bed, in which Billy Bunter was still snoring.

Harry Wharton and Bob had passed a rather uncomfortable night; junior beds were not built for two. But Bunter had been comfortable enough; which doubtless was the important matter.

He seemed in no hurry to leave his bed. He was still snoring when the Remove had all turned out.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" shouted Bob Cherry, leaning over him. "Wake up, Bunter! Rising-bell!"

"Grooogh!"

"Turn out, slacker!"

Bunter opened his eyes and blinked up peevishly at Bob.

"Don't make that row, Cherry, when a fellow's trying to get a snooze. I'm not getting up yet. After all, I don't belong to Greyfriars, so there's no reason why I should turn out yet."

"Lots of reasons," said Bob cheerily. "One reason is that I'm going to yank the bedclothes off you—like that—"

"Yaroooh!"

"Another reason is that I'm going to squeeze this giddy sponge over you—like that—"

"Whoooooop!"

Billy Bunter turned out.

He groped for his spectacles, and jammed them on his fat little nose, and gave Bob a wrathful glare.

"You beast! I've a jolly good mind to lick you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Buck up, Bunter," said Harry Wharton. "The best thing you can do is to sneak out quietly as soon as the doors are opened—"

"I'm not going!"

"Do you think you can stay here, fat-head?"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

Billy Bunter's morning toilet did not take him long; it never did. But when the Remove fellows went down Bunter stayed in the dormitory. He was in no hurry to show up downstairs. In spite of his amazing cheek, the Owl of the Remove was feeling very uneasy as to his reception there.

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"I say, Wharton," he said as the captain of the Remove was going, "hold on a minute! Think the Head would notice me at prayers?"

"Bound to, ass!"

"Think I'd better keep out of sight till brekker?"

"You'd better keep out of sight altogether, if you know what's good for you."

"I can't miss brekker, of course; that's important. But perhaps I'd better come in rather late, after Quelch has had a bite or two," said Bunter anxiously. "He's always crabby before brekker, you know—most elderly people are, and then they like to take it out of somebody. I'll give him a chance to get over his early-morning tantrums before I show up, I think. What do you think, old chap?"

"I think you'd better scoot as soon as you get a chance of scooting without being seen."

"Oh, go and eat coke!" growled Bunter.

When the Greyfriars fellows assembled at the breakfast tables Bunter was not on view. Mr. Quelch was looking rather cross as he sat at the head of the Remove table. Perhaps his experiences with Bunter the previous day had made him cross; or perhaps it was, as Bunter said, a case of early-morning tantrums, not unusual in an elderly gentleman. Certainly the Remove master looked a little more placid when he had disposed of bacon and kidneys and a cup of tea.

Then there was a stir in hall. A fat figure rolled in and sidled up to the Remove table.

Mr. Quelch stared at it, bereft of speech. It was the first intimation he had had that William George Bunter was once more at Greyfriars.

There was a murmur throughout Hall. Fellows looked round from all the tables. Even the great men of the Sixth, at the top table, glanced round at Bunter. The ghost of Banquo at the festive board scarcely caused more commotion than the amazing apparition of Billy Bunter in Hall at Greyfriars.

"I say, you fellows, make room for a chap!" murmured Bunter.

Mr. Quelch found his voice.

"Bunter!"

"G-g-good-morning, sir!" stammered Bunter.

"You—you—you are here again, Bunter!" articulated the Remove master.

"Yes, sir! Sorry I'm late, sir!"

"Late!" repeated Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, sir—late for brekker, sir. I'm not often late for meals, sir."

"That's true!" murmured Skinner. And there was a chuckle along the Remove table.

Mr. Quelch rose to his feet. There were thunderclouds on his brow. Skinner remarked, afterwards, that he wouldn't have been surprised if the Old Scout had had a fit on the spot. Fortunately, Mr. Quelch did not have a fit.

"Bunter, have you passed the night in this school?"

"Oh, yes, sir!"

"And where?" demanded Mr. Quelch.

"In—in my dormitory, sir."

"You have no dormitory here, Bunter, as you do not belong to Greyfriars."

"Oh, really, sir—"

"Wharton, did Bunter stay in the Remove dormitory last night?"

"Yes, sir," said Harry.

"You allowed him to do so?"

"Hem!"

"You are head boy of the Remove, Wharton! You allowed this boy, who does not belong to Greyfriars, to stay

in the Remove dormitory, well knowing that his presence was unknown to me."

"Yee-e-es, sir."

"You should have informed me at once, Wharton, that a—a person who did not belong to Greyfriars was trespassing in the school."

"Oh!" murmured Harry.

"That was your duty, Wharton, as head boy of the Form."

"Wa-a-as it, sir?"

"It was!" snapped Mr. Quelch.

Harry Wharton was silent. It was all very well for Mr. Quelch to tell him that that was his duty; but nobody in the Remove agreed with the Form master on that point—least of all Wharton. But argument with a Form master was not feasible, so Harry said nothing more.

"You have an imposition of five hundred lines already, Wharton. It is now doubled."

"Oh, yes, sir!"

Billy Bunter had squeezed himself into a seat, perhaps hoping that Mr. Quelch's wrath would be wholly turned upon the captain of the Remove, and that he would escape notice. If Billy Bunter hoped that, however, he was doomed to disappointment.

Mr. Quelch's gimlet-eye, which had been almost boring into Wharton's flushed face, now turned on Bunter and bored into him instead.

"Bunter!"

"Yes, sir," murmured the fat junior.

"Leave this table at once!"

"I—I haven't had brekker, sir."

"You will not breakfast here, Bunter. Leave this table, and leave this hall. At once, sir!" thundered Mr. Quelch, as Bunter showed a great reluctance in moving.

The fat junior rose unwillingly to his feet.

"I—I say, sir, I'm awfully hungry."

"That is your own concern, Bunter."

"I—I'm famished, sir."

"I desire no information whatever, Bunter, on that subject. Leave this hall at once, before you are ejected."

"But, sir—" stammered Bunter.

"You will go down to the gates, and request Gosling to let you out," said Mr. Quelch. "If I find you within the precincts of Greyfriars when I quit this table, I shall deal with you as a trespasser. Go!"

"Oh dear!"

Billy Bunter gave his former Form master a pathetic blink. But pathos was wasted on Mr. Quelch. He glared along the table at the Owl of the Remove. Bunter blinked up and down the table at the Remove fellows—he found that most of them were grinning. Bunter had, apparently, expected to carry off matters by sheer "cheek," but Mr. Quelch was not the kind of gentleman to be "cheeked." Reluctantly the Owl of the Remove detached himself from the table and drifted slowly out of hall.

He disappeared from sight, and Mr. Quelch with a red spot glowing in either cheek, sat down again. Breakfast at the Remove table finished in a rather electric atmosphere.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Still Bunter!

DOESN'T he take the jolly old bun?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Where is he now?"

"Gone, I suppose."

"Poor old Bunter!"

The Remove fellows chuckled as they came out after breakfast. The adventures of the expelled junior were becoming a standing joke in the Form by this time. Bunter's cool cheek, in supposing

that he could come back to Greyfriars after being officially "bunked" by the Head made the fellows chortle. It really was the limit.

Bunter was not to be seen in the quadrangle, and the general supposition was that he was gone at last. But Peter Todd walked down to Gosling's lodge and asked a few questions, and came back grinning.

"Gosling hasn't seen him," he said.

"Then he's not let him out?" said Bob Cherry.

"No. Bunter's still about somewhere."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good gad!" exclaimed Lord Mauleverer. "Will he have the neck to turn up for class?"

"Phew!"

"I think he's got neck enough for anything," chuckled Skinner. "Quelch's face will be worth watching if he finds Bunter in the Form-room."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

For once, the Remove keenly anticipated first lesson. They were quite eager to get into the Form-room that morning.

There was some little disappointment, however, when the Lower Fourth came in. Bunter was not to be seen in the Remove room. Mr. Quelch came in, and his gimlet-eye gleamed over his class. The juniors guessed that he, too, would not have been surprised to see Bunter there.

"Has anyone here seen Bunter since breakfast?" asked Mr. Quelch, scanning the Remove.

No answer. Evidently no one had.

"I trust," said Mr. Quelch, "that he has now left Greyfriars. Anyone aiding or encouraging him to trespass in the school will be dealt with very severely. Please bear that in mind, all of you."

The Remove received that admonition in respectful silence.

Most of the Removites fancied that Bunter was still within the walls of Greyfriars. He was not likely to start on his journey home without his breakfast. Neither was he likely to give up his extraordinary scheme of replanting himself, as it were, at Greyfriars, until a licking awakened him to realities.

The blackboard was required in the lesson, and Mr. Quelch glanced round for his chalk.

"Wharton!"

"Yes, sir."

"Kindly fetch me a chalk from the cupboard."

"Yes, sir."

Wharton crossed to the tall wall-cupboard at the end of the Form-room, in which easel and chinks and rolled maps and other paraphernalia were kept. He opened the big door, to take a chalk from the box on the shelf, and the next moment he uttered a startled ejaculation.

"Oh!"

In the shadowy interior of the big cupboard was a rotund form. A pair of large spectacles glimmered there, with Billy Bunter's little round eyes twinkling behind them. The fat junior's face was sticky—evidence that he had found some sort of a breakfast somewhere. He blinked imploringly at the captain of the Remove.

"I—I say, old chap, d-d-don't give me away!" he gasped, under his breath.

Wharton nodded silently. He could not give the fat junior away, though keeping his presence dark meant more trouble as soon as Mr. Quelch discovered it. Wharton had accumulated a thousand lines already—a heavy afternoon's work for his half-holiday. He wondered whether he would soon have

Virgil to write out from beginning to end.

Mr. Quelch's eyes gleamed round.

"Wharton! I am waiting for the chalk!"

"Oh! Yes, sir!" said Harry hurriedly.

He took the chalk and returned to the blackboard with it. He left the cupboard door an inch open. Bunter's foot was against it, and he could not shut it without risk of attracting attention.

"Thank you, Wharton."

Mr. Quelch took the chalk. His eye dwelt for an instant on Wharton's face, which was a little flushed. Wharton had been considerably startled by the sudden discovery of William George Bunter in the Form-room cupboard. It was an unfortunate circumstance that nothing ever escaped Mr. Quelch's gimlet eye.

"Wharton!" he snapped, as the captain of the Remove was going back to his desk.

"Yes, sir?"

"You have left the cupboard door open."

"Oh!"

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"Close it at once, Wharton! I dislike slovenly and careless habits in my Form. Doors are made to shut, not to be left open!"

"Oh! Yes, sir," murmured Harry.

He returned to the cupboard and pushed at the door. But Bunter's foot was still in the way.

"Let me shut the door, you fat idiot!" breathed Harry, in the faintest of whispers.

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Quick!"

"I say, I shall be suffocated in here, with the door shut!"

"Quick, you silly ass!" breathed Harry.

"Look here—"

"Wharton!" Mr. Quelch's voice was very deep. "What are you doing there? Why do you not return to your place?"

"Just coming, sir!" gasped Wharton.

All eyes in the Remove, as well as Mr. Quelch's, were on Wharton now. All the fellows thought his proceedings rather singular.

"Well, come!" snapped Mr. Quelch.

Wharton pushed the tall, heavy door hard. It had to be shut, whether Bunter was suffocated or not; that, really, was a minor point. There was a

squeak in the cupboard as the door closed. Bunter's fat leg was shoved out of the way by the push.

"Bless my soul! What is that?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

"Wha-a-at, sir?"

"Is there an animal in that cupboard, Wharton?"

"N-n-no, sir!"

"I distinctly heard a sound—something like a rat squeaking," said Mr. Quelch. "Possibly Mrs. Keble's cat may be there."

"I—I didn't see anything of a cat, sir."

"Look again, Wharton. You cannot be too careful in such matters. It would be heartless to risk shutting up an animal in a cupboard."

"Oh, yes! Very well, sir!" gasped Wharton.

He opened the door again a few inches. To open it wide was to reveal William George Bunter, Mr. Quelch's eyes now being fixed on the spot. Keeping it a few inches ajar, Wharton peered into the cupboard.

"The cat isn't here, sir."

"You certainly cannot see into an unlighted cupboard, Wharton, without opening the door. Open it wide at once!" snapped Mr. Quelch. "Really, Wharton, you are acting very foolishly this morning. I fail to understand you!"

"Oh dear!"

Wharton pulled open the door a few more inches—as wide as he could open it without revealing Bunter. From the dusky interior Bunter's imploring blink was fastened on him.

"The—the—the cat isn't here, sir!" gasped Wharton.

Mr. Quelch uttered an impatient exclamation, and strode across the Form-room to the cupboard. He jerked the door from Wharton's hand and hurled it wide open.

"Now, what—what—Bunter!"

"Ow! I'm not here!" gasped Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!" came in a roar from the Remove. They understood now the singular proceedings of Wharton.

"Bunter!" repeated Mr. Quelch.

"Bunter! This passes all patience! Wharton, you knew that Bunter was here!"

"I—I—I—" stuttered Wharton.

"You knew that he was here, and you were deliberately concealing his presence from me!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"I—I—"

"Fetch me my cane from my desk, Wharton!"

Wharton fetched the cane.

Swish! Swish!

"I am sorry to have to deal with you like this, Wharton!" Swish! "I regret it very much." Swish! "You will realise that it is entirely your own fault." Swish! "Now go back to your place!"

The captain of the Remove went back to his place, squeezing his hands in anguish.

Then Mr. Quelch's piercing eye fixed on Bunter. The fat junior was squirming with terror in the cupboard.

"Come forth, Bunter!"

"Oh dear!"

"Do you hear me, Bunter?"

"No, sir—"

"What?"

"I—I mean yes, sir!" gasped Bunter.

"Stand forth at once!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"Ow!"

Billy Bunter rolled reluctantly out of his refuge. He eyed the Form master, and especially the Form master's cane, very uneasily. Billy Bunter wanted very

much to come back to Mr. Quelch's Form. But he had a deeply rooted objection to Mr. Quelch's cane.

For a moment or two the Remove fully expected Mr. Quelch to lay that cane emphatically round Bunter. But the angry gentleman restrained himself.

"Were I still your Form master, Bunter, I should chastise you with the utmost severity!" he boomed.

"Oh dear!"

"You have returned here, Bunter, in spite of my express commands. You have been expelled from this school, yet you are here. Very good! You will be detained now until your father can come and take you away personally. I shall lock you in the punishment-room, and communicate with him at once by telephone. You have yourself to thank for this, Bunter. Come!"

"I—I say, sir—"

"Silence!"

Mr. Quelch grabbed the fat junior by the shoulder, and marched him out of the Remove-room. There was a gasp from the Remove.

"Bunter again! My hat!"

"This is the finish!" remarked Vernon-Smith. "Good-bye to Bunter!"

"I wonder?" grinned Bob Cherry. "Bunter's a sticker!"

"The stickfulness is terrific!"

"Better mind your p's and q's this morning," murmured Squiff. "Quelch is in a royal wax. I'm going to be jolly good when he comes back!"

But Mr. Quelch, as it happened, did not come back. Gwynne of the Sixth came in soon afterwards to take the Remove in hand, and they wondered what was detaining their Form master.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Personally Conducted!

BILLY BUNTER rolled into the punishment-room, under the severe eye of Mr. Quelch. The Remove master placed the key in the outside of the lock—a proceeding which Bunter watched dismally.

"I—I say, sir—" stammered Bunter. "You need say nothing, Bunter. You will remain locked in this room until your father takes you away."

"I—I don't want my pater to be bothered to come here, sir," mumbled Bunter. "He—he's busy in the City, you know, sir."

"That is not for you to decide, Bunter."

"The fact is, sir, I—I'm ready to come back to Greyfriars," said Bunter. "I should much prefer, sir, to let bygones be bygones—"

Slam!

The closing of the door, hard, interrupted Bunter's observations. The key clicked in the lock.

"Beast!" gasped Bunter.

Mr. Quelch heard that complimentary ejaculation as he walked away with the key in his pocket. It did not soothe his ruffled temper.

He proceeded to his study at once and rang up Mr. Bunter's City number on the telephone. It was quite probable that, as Bunter stated, his father was busy in the City that morning. That, however, was no concern of Mr. Quelch's. Mr. Bunter's first duty was to take his obnoxious son away from Greyfriars, in Mr. Quelch's opinion, howsoever busy he

might be among the bulls and bears and stags of the Stock Exchange.

He was fortunate in getting through to Mr. Bunter's office after only a short delay. A voice—not Mr. Bunter's—inquired his business.

"Kindly ask Mr. Bunter to come to the telephone at once," said Mr. Quelch sharply. "Mr. Quelch speaking, concerning his son."

"Sun Life?" inquired the voice.

"Eh?"

"Sun Life—very well."

"I repeat—"

But Mr. Bunter's clerk was gone.

Mr. Quelch breathed hard. He had a faint recollection that Sun Life was the title of an insurance company. It seemed that Mr. Bunter's clerk supposed that he was ringing up the stockbroker on the subject of insurance shares.

A fat voice came through a few moments later.

"Are you there?"

"I am here—"

"Very good. Mr. Simons speaking, I presume," Mr. Bunter rattled on cheerily. "Sun Life thirty-five and a quarter—"

"Eh?"

"Thirty-five and a quarter to thirty-six and a quarter—"

"Bless my soul! I—"

"In my opinion, a rise of a point is extremely probable, Mr. Simons," went on the stockbroker. "If you have decided upon this investment, I should recommend an immediate purchase."

"Mr. Bunter—"

"I will take down your instructions

GOING—GOING—GONE!



That would seem to be the ultimate fate of Billy Bunter of Greyfriars as suggested by the accompanying picture. The sluggish waters of a Friardale pond are gradually submerging Bunter and his haven of refuge. No, it's not suicide! Bunter has no intention of burying himself and his troubles so tragically; he means to "un-expel" himself and get back to Greyfriars. Gee! he'll have to look slippy, won't he? That reminds me—there's going to be a record rush for next week's

MAGNET LIBRARY.

You chaps who don't make a point of ordering your copy regularly will have to look slippy, too! If you miss next Monday's ripping Greyfriars story

"BILLY BUNTER'S CAMPAIGN!"

to say nothing of the splendid Free Art Plates, you'll feel like kicking yourselves.

GIVE YOUR ORDER NOW.



Later in the afternoon an express train rolled out for Courtfield, with a fat junior hidden under the seat of a first-class carriage. Bunter had solved the first part of his problem; but what was going to happen when he arrived at Courtfield and was collared as a "bilk" was a question to which he did not know the answer. (See Chapter 14.)

now, to be confirmed, of course, in writing—"

"I did not ring you up to talk about stocks and shares, Mr. Bunter," hooted the Remove master.

"What?"

"I desire to speak about your son—"

"Do you mean Sun Life?"

"I do not mean Sun Life!" howled Mr. Quelch.

"Let us have this quite clear, Mr. Simons—"

"I am not Mr. Simons!" shrieked the Form master.

"What? What? I understood—really, sir, let us have this clear. I was expecting a call from Mr. Simons, with regard to the purchase of Sun Life shares. Are you not Mr. Simons?"

"Certainly not!"

"Kindly tell me who you are then!" said Mr. Bunter with some asperity. "Are you a regular customer of the firm?"

"I am Mr. Quelch of Greyfriars—"

"Dear me! I have done no business for you, Mr. Quelch, but, of course, should be very pleased to do so at any time—no introduction is necessary in your case. You are interested in insurance shares?"

"No, sir, I am not interested in insurance shares!" shrieked the Remove master. "I take not the faintest interest in insurance shares, or in any other shares of any description whatsoever."

"Then why have you rung me up, Mr. Quelch, and asked my clerk about Sun Life?"

"I have done nothing of the kind. I was referring to your son—your son William—"

"I really wish, Mr. Quelch, that you would make yourself clear when you telephone to a busy office. I cannot now discuss school matters—"

"Your son is here again."

"Eh?"

"Bunter has had the effrontery to return to this school again, and I have locked him in a room. He is waiting now for you to come here and take him away."

"Is that a jest, Mr. Quelch?"

"A—a—a jest?" stuttered Mr. Quelch. "Certainly not! I am not in a jesting mood, sir."

"You surely do not suppose that it is possible for me to leave the City and come down to Greyfriars at a moment's notice?"

"It certainly is not possible for your son to remain here."

"Then send him away."

"I have done so twice, and each time he has returned. He will not stay away!" hooted Mr. Quelch. "He must be taken away at once."

"This is absurd, Mr. Quelch!"

"What?"

"I certainly cannot come to the school to-day. Neither have I any desire to make such a long journey at any time for such a frivolous reason. I supposed that William had gone to stay with his Uncle George. Tell him, from me, to go there at once."

"That is not sufficient, Mr. Bunter. I insist upon your taking this boy away or sending someone with authority to remove him!"

No reply.

"Sir! Do you hear me?"

Silence.

"Are you there, Mr. Bunter?" The

Remove master fairly hooted into the transmitter. "Are you there?"

Apparently Mr. Bunter was not there. Either he had rung off, feeling that he had wasted enough time on a gentleman who was not interested in stocks and shares of any description whatsoever, or else he had been cut off. A sweet, feminine voice came through.

"Are you finished?"

"No, I am not—I—"

"Do you wish for another three minutes?"

"I—I—I—"

Mr. Quelch hung up the receiver—or, rather, he jammed it on the hooks. The telephone rocked.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "Upon my word! This is—is sheer insolence! I—I—I—"

Mr. Quelch whisked away to the Sixth Form room, where the Head was busy with the Sixth and Sophocles. After a few words with the Head, Gwynne of the Sixth was sent to the Remove room to take charge of the Lower Fourth, and Mr. Quelch took his coat and hat. He hurried to the punishment-room and unlocked the door.

Billy Bunter blinked at him as he looked in.

"Bunter! Your father refuses to come here and take you away—"

"Oh, good!" ejaculated Bunter.

"What?"

"I—I mean—"

"I shall, therefore, take you away myself," said Mr. Quelch, in a grinding voice. "Where is your hat, Bunter?"

"I left it in my dorm, sir."

"Do you mean the Remove dormitory, Bunter?"

"Yes, sir."

"Fetch it at once—stay, I will come with you."

"I—I say, sir——"

"Silence."

Mr. Quelch marched Bunter to the Remove dormitory, where the fat junior had left his hat. Then he marched him out of the House, and out of gates. Bunter cast a longing blink backwards, and a very doubtful blink at Mr. Quelch. Then he went quietly. Bunter was not as a rule very sagacious, but he had sagacity enough to perceive that Mr. Quelch, in his present mood, was not to be trifled with. So he started for the railway-station by the Remove master's side, his fat little legs going like clock-work to keep pace with the long strides of Mr. Quelch.

Not a word was exchanged during that walk to Courtfield Junction. Mr. Quelch strode along in grim silence, with a set face. Billy Bunter rolled on by his side, puffing and panting. Long before Courtfield was reached the fat junior was winded. But he dared not halt. Whenever he slacked down a gleaming, gimlet eye was turned upon him, and Bunter bucked up again as if he had been electrified.

Courtfield was reached at last.

In the old High Street Bunter blinked this way and that way, with a lingering hope of dodging Mr. Quelch. But he did not venture to try it on. The Remove master, in his present mood, was simply terrifying. They entered the station.

Mr. Quelch inquired for trains and bought a ticket. He took a platform-ticket for himself, and marched Bunter on to the platform.

"Take your ticket, Bunter."

"I—I say, sir——"

"Well?" snapped Mr. Quelch.

"That's a third-class ticket, sir. I'm accustomed to travelling first."

"I should be sorry, Bunter, to have to box your ears in public. Take your ticket."

"Oh! Yes, sir! Thank you, sir!"

"I shall see you into your train," said Mr. Quelch. "You change at Sevenoaks."

"Oh! Yes, sir!"

Mr. Quelch waited, with suppressed fuming, for the train to come in. It came in at last. Mr. Quelch opened a carriage door. He was leaving nothing to chance. Bunter had his railway ticket, and he had no money; it was impossible for him to take a ticket back to Courtfield, even if he had the temerity to think of doing so. He could go home—he could go to his Uncle George—or he could even go to Jericho, so far as Mr. Quelch was concerned. All Mr. Quelch desired was to see the last of him.

"Step in, Bunter."

"I—I—I say, sir——"

An iron grip on his fat shoulder helped Bunter into the third-class carriage. He plumped gasping into a corner seat.

Bang!

Mr. Quelch closed the carriage door.

Bunter blinked at him through the window. He was prepared to jump out again, if Mr. Quelch cleared off. But Mr. Quelch had no intention of clearing off till the train was gone. Bunter dismally realised that he was booked for a journey as far as Sevenoaks at least.

"I—I say, sir, are you having a lunch-basket put in for me?" he gasped.

"Certainly not, Bunter."

The guard was slamming the doors.

"Stand clear there!"

Mr. Quelch stepped back.

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The express rolled out of the station. It rolled away with William George Bunter, and he vanished from the sight of the Greyfriars master. And Mr. Quelch, much relieved, left the station and walked back to the school. Bunter was gone at last.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Gone!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. came out of the Remove room as Mr. Quelch arrived at Greyfriars on his return from the station.

They saw their Form-master come in. He looked rather tired from his long walk; but his brow was a little clearer.

"Let's ask him what he's done with Bunter!" suggested Skinner. Skinner had already scuttled up to the punishment-room, and ascertained that the Owl of the Remove was no longer there.

"You ask him, Skinner!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"No jolly fear!" said Skinner promptly.

The Remove fellows were very keen to know what had happened. But no

RESULT OF MAGNET "CHARACTERS" COMPETITION (Herbert Mauleverer).

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

T. ROWE,

16, Gloucester Road,

Brighton,

Sussex,

for the following line:

IEWS LIFE "HORIZONTALLY."

member of the Form was keen on questioning Mr. Quelch on the subject. He passed them and went into the House.

That Bunter was no longer at Greyfriars was clear. The Remove fellows looked for him, but did not find him—though really they would not have been surprised, at any time, to see the Owl of the Remove start up into view.

"We're done with Bunter at last," Hazeldene remarked after dinner.

"The donefulness is terrific."

"I wonder!" murmured Bob.

It was a half-holiday that afternoon, being Wednesday; but not for five members of the Remove. Harry Wharton & Co. had to pay for their hospitality to the "bunked" junior; and instead of going down to games practice, the Famous Five had to turn into the deserted Form-room, and sit down to lines.

Mr. Quelch kindly came in to see them started. Now that the worry of Bunter was off his mind—for good, as he supposed—the Remove master was a good deal less tartaric. He was, perhaps,

touched a little by the sight of five down-cast faces in the dusky old Form-room.

He coughed.

"I am sorry that you are detained this half-holiday!" he said.

"Thank you, sir!" murmured Wharton hopefully. Of old the Remove fellows knew that Mr. Quelch's bark was worse than his bite.

"The sorrowfulness of our esteemed selves, sir, is also terrific," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Mr. Quelch coughed again.

"You have acted very thoughtlessly," he said. "I am willing, however, to make some allowances for the concern you doubtless felt for that foolish boy who has been expelled from the school. As I have taken measures with regard to Bunter, and he will trouble us no more, I think I may take a more lenient view of your—your unreflecting conduct."

The Famous Five waited hopefully.

"You will write one hundred lines each," said Mr. Quelch. "Bring the lines to my study when written."

"Thank you, sir."

Mr. Quelch quitted the Form-room, and left the Famous Five to it. They smiled at one another.

"We shall get some football after all," said Bob Cherry. "Chuck Virgil over here."

And five pens were soon travelling over the paper at a great rate. Five cheery faces presented themselves soon afterwards at Mr. Quelch's study door; and five impositions, very nicely written, were handed in to the Remove master.

Then, in a cheery mood, Harry Wharton & Co. joined the rest of the Removites on the football field.

Exactly what had happened to William George Bunter the Remove fellows did not know, though they discussed the matter a good deal. But they had no doubt that he was gone—for good.

Doubtless they would have been surprised had they been able, with the eye of Asmodeus, to follow the movements of the Owl of the Remove.

Billy Bunter had arrived at Sevenoaks—having had no choice in that matter. There he had to deal with a knotty problem—how to get back to Courtfield on the next express, without possessing any money to pay for a ticket.

Bunter had not the slightest intention of going home—or of going to his Uncle George. Bunter was going back to Greyfriars—somehow or anyhow; he had been "bunked," but he simply declined to recognise the fact. It really seemed to be Bunter's view that expelling a fellow was simply a sort of practical joke on the part of the Head.

Later in the afternoon, an express train rolled out for Courtfield, with a fat figure hidden under the seat of a first-class carriage. Bunter had solved the first part of his problem—and what was going to happen when he arrived at Courtfield, and was colliared as a "bilk," was a question to which he did not know the answer!

But on one point, at least, there was no doubt—Greyfriars was not done with the Owl of the Remove. More—much more—was to be heard at the old school of the "bunking" of Bunter.

THE END.

(Now you can look forward to "Billy Bunter's Campaign"—next week's grand extra-long story of Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars. A winner all the way!)

THE "BOYS"! Somewhere in the slum quarters of Storrydene as choice a gang of scoundrels as one could meet in a day's march are to be found. Having found them, you will be surprised to discover that their leader is Nugent Beasley Ailen—he of the bespatted feet and the pluck of a rabbit.



The Re-Play!

A MID-WEEK match seldom draws such a big crowd as a Saturday afternoon fixture, yet the re-play between Storrydene Villa and Ironville United attracted "fans" from all parts of the country. A dozen motor-coaches plied between the town and the outlying villages, whilst three special trains arrived from the North and decanted a small army of Ironville folk beneath the lofty glass dome of Central Station.

The unexpected influx amounted to an invasion, and Fore Street echoed with the shouts of the enemy.

"Up, Ironville!"

"Up, up, up, the Reds!"

"We're the boys who make no noise!"

"Yah, yah! Yah, yah, YAH!"

Everything suggested that there would be a record "gate" up at Bedwell Park, and the Villa directors, standing about on the balcony of the clubhouse, rubbed their hands—metaphorically, at any rate—as they listened to the sweet music of the clicking turnstiles.

"H'm! Ah! Most satisfactory, I think," declared Sir Aubrey Ailen, the chairman of the club, jamming his monocle into position. "My only regret is that my son is not playing, Tippitt!"

Tippitt, the funereal-faced undertaker, fawned upon the portly baronet as he made reply.

"Yes, Sir Aubrey," he said, in his thin voice. "We shall all miss Mr. Nugent!"

"You bet we will," put in Jonas Trimble, another director. "We shall miss him in the same way that we'd miss a pet corn. We are jolly glad to be rid of him!"

Red-faced and glowering, Sir Aubrey Ailen swung round upon Trimble.

"To listen to a conversation that does not concern you is scarcely the act of a gentleman," declared the pompous baronet, swelling visibly. "You are inclined to forget the deference due to my rank!"

"You're rank, right enough!" growled Trimble, turning away.

"I beg your pardon, sir!" thundered Sir Aubrey.

"I said 'Your rank's right enough!'" explained the other director, glancing over his shoulder; and a chuckle broke from the other people on the balcony.

Saturday's game had been abandoned owing to fog, a thick brown curtain having descended with dramatic suddenness and blotted out the whole scene; and the home side was leading by two goals to one when Mr. Morecroft, the referee, had come to his decision, declaring the match off.

It was not only the importance of the re-play that had attracted forty thousand people to the mid-week match; it was, in many cases, just morbid curiosity that was the magnet, a desire to gaze upon a young man who had escaped death by a hair's-breadth on the previous Saturday.

For Peter Voyce, the young man in question, had been shot at by a mysterious gunman, the bullet grazing his temple and stunning him.

There were all the elements of drama about the extraordinary affair, and the Sunday papers had made the most of the sensation.

Briefly, the facts are these.

The game had been in progress for about fifteen minutes or so when a brownish pall had descended, enveloping everything; and a moment later a single shot rang out. The sound of the shot was still reverberating upon the damp air when the fog lifted for a moment, and the players were horrified when they saw the still form of Peter Voyce lying upon the turf, a trickle of blood flowing from his temple, his face ghastly, as though in death.

Then the fog, still playing its part in the drama, descended once more, and the ground was still bathed in a brownish gloom as the injured player was carried across the grass to the dressing-room.

A brief examination by Dr. Mace showed that Peter's temple was merely grazed; yet the fact remained that he had had a miraculous escape from death.

The local police had taken the matter

in hand, and on Tuesday they told the Press that either a fool or a madman had fired point-blank into the fog, thinking nothing of the possible consequences.

All the players had been interrogated, of course, but nothing of a suspicious nature had come to light.

Sir Aubrey, indeed, had scoffed at the mere idea of questioning the footballers, and there was certainly something to be said for his point of view.

After all, it were scarcely credible that anybody, knowing he was going to take part in a vigorous game, would carry a loaded revolver about with him.

The theory was not feasible; it did not hold water.

So declared Sir Aubrey.

But Peter Voyce could have thrown much light upon the mystery had he wished to do so; and so could Hebble, Sceptre, Thirlboy, and Hoppy Hawkins. Guessing that Nugent Ailen was the assassin, they had kidnapped him and threatened to bury him alive; and so frightened had he been that he had confessed. Their purpose accomplished, they had hinted that he should clear right out of Storrydene, and on Tuesday morning the baronet announced that his son had sailed for America.

Whether Sir Aubrey had been told all the facts of the case was something known only to himself; but his attitude towards Peter and the other players had not changed. He remained his pompous, overbearing, dictatorial self, but he showed no sign of marked animosity.

Standing upon the balcony, with his podgy hands thrust deep into his pockets, and a fat cigar between his lips, he gazed with contemplative eyes upon the ever-changing panorama; and he gave a start as the reedy voice of Mr. Tippitt fell upon his prominent ears.

Scowling, he turned his head.

"Eh? What?" he demanded fiercely; and the lantern-jawed undertaker squirmed at having roused the wealthy baronet's displeasure.

"I—I was speaking of Mr. Nugent, Sir Aubrey," said Tippitt. "A nice lad!"

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A thorough gentleman! But he was misunderstood!"

The "thorough gentleman" had been kicked out of his 'Varsity over a very unsavoury betting scandal, but this did not weigh with Tippitt.

"Well, what about him?" snapped Sir Aubrey.

"I asked you the name of the boat he sailed by, Sir Aubrey," said Tippitt.

The baronet grunted.

"It's like your confounded check!" he growled. "I think it was the Baronia, one of the latest greyhounds!"

The undertaker, who had lived every moment of his drab life in Storrydene, tried to visualise the broad bosom of the Atlantic. A three days' trip to London would have been an experience for him, but to have gone to America— No, the whole thing was beyond him.

He searched about in his mind, seeking the appropriate remark.

"Then he is a long way from the white walls of Old England, Sir Aubrey," he said brightly.

The baronet muttered something, his smouldering eyes upon the undertaker's hatchet features.

"Of course he is, you idiot!" he snapped, thoroughly irritated by the banal remark. "He's hundreds of miles away by now!"

But the baronet was wrong, for Nugent was not more than a few hundred yards away.

He was, in fact, wedged in the crowd behind the north goal.

Hard Fought!

IT wanted ten minutes to the advertised time for the kick-off when Sir Aubrey Ailen gave the order to close the gates, and there did not appear to be a square inch of unoccupied space when Hefty Hebble, on the stroke of half-past four, led his men across the broad cinder-track and took the field.

The first glimpse of the famous black jerseys was the signal for an outburst of thunderous cheering, and rattles, bugles, and bells united in making an ear-splitting din that must have been heard all over the town.

"Villa, Villa, Villa!"

"Good old Peter!"

"How's the head, lad?"

Peter Voyce looked a perfect specimen of virile young manhood as he trotted along beside Thirlboy, the centre-half, and he did not appear to be any worse for his experience of Saturday.

Hoppy Hawkins, a bizarre figure, with his green Homburg hat and wooden leg, also came in for a personal ovation, and his keen, birdlike face was alight with good humour as he took his place between the sticks. He had been with the Villa for less than a fortnight, yet he was a great favourite with the Storrydene supporters. And well he might be, for he was undoubtedly one of the finest custodians in the country.

Ironville United came out on the heels of the home side, and their supporters lacked nothing in the matter of leathern-lunged enthusiasm.

"Up, the Reds!"

"Iron! Iron!"

"We're the boys who make no noise!"

"Yah, yah! Yah, yah, YAH!"

Berrington and Hebble exchanged hearty grips when they met for the toss, and Mr. Morecroft, the referee, was smiling as he gazed up at the cloudless sky.

"No fog this time," he predicted, his mind going back to Saturday's game.

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"Hebble, I see that you've got to play without your star turn!"

"You mean Ailen?" grunted the brawny back. "We may be able to manage without him. I'm not a vindictive sort of chap, but I hope he falls overboard!"

The choice of ends fell to the Villa, and Hebble decided to take advantage of the slight breeze, and within a matter of seconds the teams lined up as follows:

Storrydene Villa (black jerseys, white knickers): Goal, Hoppy Hawkins; backs, Grace, Hebble (captain); half-backs, Denning, Thirlboy, Craye; forwards, Sceptre, Coyne, Voyce, Noyle, Battle.

Ironville United (red jerseys, white knickers): Goal, Berrington (captain); backs, Harrop, Lloyd; half-backs, Coward, Cross, Brand; forwards, Cohn, Page, Smith, Cole, Corner.

Taking a quick glance at his watch, the referee blew a sharp blast, and set the game in motion, and the first thrill of the match came within a matter of seconds.

Passing to Cole, Smith darted past Peter, and snapped up a lightning return, and so unexpected was the manoeuvre that Thirlboy, for once in his life, was taken at a complete disadvantage. Making straight for the home goal, the Ironville centre-forward showed that he had a remarkable turn of speed, and the manner in which he shot away to the left, pushing the ball past Grace, brought a frantic yell from the United's supporters.

"In with it, Dicky!"

"Take a shot!"

Smith, by this time, had reached a very awkward angle, his chance of scoring being about fifty to one against, so he steadied himself, paused for a brief second, and placed a perfect centre, the ball dropping within a couple of feet of the goalmouth.

"Heads!" roared the "fans" from Ironville; but they reckoned without Hoppy Hawkins. Stooping slightly, the custodian braced his muscles, and then shot straight into the air, and such was the power behind the skinny fist that the ball did not come to earth until it had travelled fully half-way down the



NUGENT BEASLEY AILEN.

field. It was a prodigious feat, and the packed ground thundered with whole-hearted applause.

Trapping the leather, Sceptre swung round and tore away down the line, and everything went smoothly with him until he came up against the burly Harrop, who seemed to have left his usual sunny smile at home. Harrop, tight-lipped and stern, looked like a man who meant to accomplish something or perish in the attempt, and his one idea at the moment was to rob the flying winger of the ball. That, he knew, was going to be no easy matter, for he could not forget what had happened on Saturday.

Bracing himself, the brawny fellow ambled out to meet Sceptre, and he decided that the present was an occasion on which he would have to employ his poundage. So, making a sudden dart, he used his weight, and all would have been well had he come up against something more stable than chilly November air. As it was, he went floundering across the turf, and he could not pull up until he crashed against the palings with a force which threatened to wreck the grand-stand.

Shaken and breathless, with a callous roar of laughter dinning in his ears, he turned slowly, and gazed towards the Ironville goal, and he was just in time to see Berrington hurl himself bodily at a shot that was a winner all the way. Eluding the outstretched fingers by a bare inch, the ball thudded against an upright and darted into the net, and Harrop, a rueful smile upon his heavy face, gave himself a severe mental kicking.

"Goal!"

The long-drawn-out roar threatened to split the heavens, for that goal was as spectacular as it was unexpected.

Taking his kick from a wellnigh impossible angle, the winger had placed the ball with perfect judgment, and the newspaper scribes afterwards declared that it was the most brilliant goal that had been scored at Bedwell Park that season.

An almost uncanny calm settled upon the crowd as the players lined up for the second time, and Dicky Smith was smiling grimly as he looked from one partner to the other. Lowering his voice, he made a remark to Cole, and that young gentleman nodded with perfect understanding.

And Smith was still looking at Cole when the whistle shrilled, but it was Page who received the pass. Having slipped past Coyne, the inside man sent Cohn away with a perfectly placed ground pass, and the winger, taking the ball on the run, sent the too-unfortunate Denning reeling with a hefty charge. He then bore down upon Grace.

And the back made no mistake on this occasion. Dicky Smith had taught him a lesson.

Bending low, he placed his big hands upon his knees, and grinned amiably, and he waited until the winger was almost abreast of him before he moved. Then, still smiling, he darted at his man, and the effect of his terrific kick was twofold.

The ball, in the first place, went winging clean across the field to Harry Noyle; and Cohn, in the second place, had his legs cut from under him, and turned a complete somersault, landing on his back.

The crowd had no eyes for Coyne, however; Peter Voyce held the centre of the stage.

Taking a pass from Noyle, the centre-forward swerved past Smith, and set his



“Well done, son!” shouted the “fans,” hitting the Villa’s centre-forward with their bladders. “Peter’s the boy for us!” Thud, thud! went the bladders, descending upon the amazed youth’s head and shoulders. The disguised “enthusiasts” faded away quickly as the police bore down upon them, and when the crowd caught sight of Peter they gasped in horror and amaze. Battered and bleeding, the youngster was lying ominously still—victim of a well-organised attack. (See page 24.)

brown eyes upon the Ironville goal, and such was the excitement that both players and spectators seemed to lose their heads. Even the stolid Harrop was affected, and no sooner did he bring Peter down in the penalty area than the referee stopped the game and pointed to the whitewash blob.

He had given a penalty against the visitors, and it was Erasmus Hawkins who hopped down the field to take the kick!

The Penalty!

THE lean-faced little goalkeeper was still wearing his green Homburg hat as he hopped over the springy turf, his whimsical smile being very much in evidence as the laughing crowd overwhelmed him with wild shouts of encouragement.

“Good old ‘Oppy!” roared the excited “fans,” and rattles and bells joined in the riot of sound.

“Hefty” Hebble usually took the penalty kicks, and all the players, including Hoppy Hawkins, had been very surprised when he had jerked a thumb and assigned the important task to somebody else.

A small section of the home crowd declared that Hefty was throwing a certain goal away for a whim, and to these captious critics Hebble turned a smiling, confident face.

“Just wait a moment, my lads,” he growled.

Hoppy’s birdlike face was in repose as, with the players spread out on either side of him, he prepared himself for the kick, and the din died down to a breathless hush as the referee placed the whistle to his lips.

Every eye was upon the quaint figure beneath the Homburg hat, the whole universe seemed to stand still, the tension was almost painful. Then—

Pheep!

Flapping his arms like wings, Hoppy Hawkins took three short steps, balanced himself upon his wooden peg, and swung his right leg.

Boomp!

Short and sharp came the sound of contact after that effortless movement, and there was scarcely a person in the crowd who was able to follow the flight of the ball. Where Hoppy stored that amazing force of propulsion was a mystery, for there seemed to be very little power behind the kick.

“Goal!”

Berrington certainly hurled himself bodily across the goalmouth, yet he might just as well have jumped for the moon for all the success that rewarded his wild effort. And it was not only the unsuspected power of the shot that beat him. He rushed away from the ball instead of towards it!

That in itself was something that he was never able to explain away. It was incredible, uncanny, something that had never before happened in the whole of his playing career, and Jack Berrington was a very puzzled young man as he scrambled to his feet and fished the twirling leather out of the net.

“Where did that one go to, ‘Erbert?” yelled the Storrydene supporters, and the vast ground rocked with the thunder of voices.

Still smiling whimsically, Hoppy Hawkins removed his Homburg, bowed to right and left, and set off towards his goal, and he and his burly skipper exchanged a ponderous wink in passing.

The home side was now two goals to the good, and Smith and his partners looked very grim as they lined up for the resumption of play. They were not without hope, however, for the newspaper men had lauded them as one of the finest goal-getting combinations in the country; yet Sceptre’s brilliant effort and Hoppy’s miraculous penalty kick had done nothing to strengthen their morale. After all, the mighty Berrington had been beaten twice in a matter of minutes, and that in itself was something unheard of, a disaster of some magnitude.

Passing the ball to Page, Smith set his line in motion once again, and so determined were the forwards that they swept down the field and managed to reach the Villa’s second line of defence, and here disaster awaited them—disaster in the person of Hefty Hebble.

Still wearing his famous smile, the burly fellow intercepted a pass that was meant for Corner, and stood firm and rocklike as the winger charged him. Then, Corner having bounced off him, Hebble sent the leather forward to Peter Voyce, who was gazing reflectively at the azure sky.

So preoccupied did Peter look that Cross, the Ironville centre-half, had ceased to take much interest in his charge, but no sooner did the pass come his way than Peter’s lethargy dropped from him like a cloak. Trapping the ball, he swung round and went away down the field, and the roar of voices broke out anew.

“Up, Voyce!”

“Go through on your own, lad!”

To go through on his own was Peter’s intention, of course, for he had left his

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inside men well in the rear, but Harrop and Lloyd made it quite clear that there was going to be a certain amount of opposition before the Villa notched their third goal. Hard-eyed, tight-lipped, and determined, the big fellows exchanged understanding glances, and closed in upon the flying forward, and had their massive shoulders sandwiched Peter Voyce it is tolerably certain that they would have flattened him into a species of cigarette paper. But it was not to be, for Peter moved just a fraction of a second faster than seemed humanly possible, and the two backs, coming together with bone-shattering force, reeled dazedly away from each other, the physical shock being tremendous.

Peter Voyce did not wait to commiserate, but went off towards the Ironville goal, and the crowd, worked up to a pitch of extraordinary enthusiasm, lost every vestige of self-control.

"Shoot!"
 "In with it, lad!"
 "Oh, beauty, sir!"
 "Goal!"

A low shot, driven from the edge of the penalty area, had flicked the tips of Berrington's outstretched fingers, and found the net.

Never had Peter known such a scene of pandemonium as greeted that goal, for no sooner did the ball cross the line than a knot of wild-eyed, hoarse-voiced fans swarmed round from the back of the net and bore down upon him in a yelling body. Smothered in black-and-white favours, they had big black-and-white check caps that were pulled well down over their eyes, and their beauty was further enhanced by false noses and detachable beards. Waving pigskin bladders, they yelled shrilly, and performed a grotesque war-dance round the hero of the hour, and the air trembled with the roar of laughter that broke from all sides of the packed ground.

Flushed and bewildered, Peter remained quite still, and smiled at the hysterical fans, yet he felt anything but comfortable as they closed in upon him and bore him to the ground in sheer exuberance of high spirits.

Being popular was all very well in its way, thought Peter, but this was going a bit too far. Closing his fists, he struggled and fought to get to his feet, but he was overcome as his admirers fell on

top of him and thumped him until he was breathless.

"Well done, son!" shouted the fans, hitting him playfully with their bladders.

"Peter's the boy for us!"

Thud, thud! went the bladders, descending upon the dazed youngster's head and shoulders.

Peter was lost to the sight of the crowd, for something very like a Rucker scrum was taking place in front of the Ironville goal, and a warning yell broke from the fans as a dozen laughing constables came pounding across the turf.

"Look out!"

"Cops!"

To state that the fans faded away is to describe the manner in which they vaulted the railings and disappeared into the crowd. But it was not their lightning disappearance that brought an involuntary shout from thousands of throats.

The startled eyes of the crowd were upon Peter Voyce.

Battered and bleeding, the youngster was lying ominously still upon the grass, the victim of a callous and well-organised attack.

Snarling cries for vengeance filled the air, and a free fight started behind the Ironville goal. But the hooligans had disappeared by the time the ambulance men arrived on the scene, and Peter Voyce, still unconscious, had been carried slowly from the field of play.

And Nugent Ailen, wedged in the crush behind the goal, was smiling evilly.

His scheme had worked like a charm.

The Meeting!

THE vast ground was still in a state of indescribable turmoil as Nugent Ailen thrust his way through the human maelstrom on the sloping embankment and fought his way towards the exits.

"The dirty hounds!" he shouted, adding his hoarse voice to the riot of noise. "After 'em, boys! Which way did they go? Lynch the skunks!"

Nobody took the least notice of Nugent, however, for his well-simulated indignation was merely a ripple upon the torrent of emotion that was sweeping all round the ground, carrying everything

before it; and certain it is that nobody recognised the fleshy, unshaven individual in the shabby brown suit, the big check cap, and the red muffler, for Sir Aubrey's offspring looked a mechanic to the life, a football "fan" who had rushed straight from his bench in order to see the replay between the Villa and Ironville United.

Still shouting hoarsely, with his eyes blazing fire and his fists clenched, he forced his way through the crush and succeeded in reaching an exit, and he breathed a little more freely as he left Bedwell Park in the rear and set off along the deserted Fore Street.

A cautious young man in most things, he did not mean to run the risk of being recognised when the crowd surged through the town after the game; also, he had a most important appointment to keep.

The Ditches, with its mean streets, littered gutters, and spiritless blocks of tenement houses, is not the most savoury quarter of Storrydene, so the appearance of the greasy mechanic in the brown suit aroused neither interest nor comment.

Slouching along Little Smith Street, Nugent Ailen made straight for the Marquis of Grandy, and it must be confessed at once that the nobleman did not do justice to his exalted rank. Shabby and disreputable, the "Marquis" was in the last stages of decrepitude, and his hangdog expression suggested that he had fallen upon lean days.

Pushing open the swing-door with his shoulder, Nugent passed into the bar and nodded to the man behind the counter.

"Anyone arrived yet, Scan?" he asked, jerking a thumb towards the rusty red curtains at the end of the room.

"Scan" Merritt—he who was warned off over the Light o' Night scandal in the Twelve Thousand Guineas—nodded his cropped head—a round, bullet head, with round, beady eyes and a little round nose like a cherry. Scan was something of a mystery to the denizens of the Ditches, even though it is not considered etiquette to take a close interest in the affairs of your neighbour. But anybody could see that Scan was doing well, even though trade was bad. He ran a car and went to race meetings, and his customers wondered how he did it. The point was not discussed openly, however; that sort of thing was not done in the Ditches. Besides, Scan was very useful with his hands.

Scan glanced round furtively before he made a verbal reply to Nugent's question.

"Foxy's here, and Jackson and Gumper; and the others are comin' along," said the ex-jockey. "I 'ear that the old doings up at the ground went off all Sir Garnet!"

Nugent Ailen grinned. "You bet they did!" he returned, slouching across the sanded bar. "My idea about the weighted bladders was a brain-wave! You should have seen young Voyce after the boys had finished with him!"

"Bashed him, did they?" grinned Scan. "Did they 'out' 'im?"

"He certainly went for a quiet ride on a stretcher!" smiled Nugent callously; and the grin died out of the ex-jockey's face.

"I—I suppose it's all right?" asked Scan uneasily. "You know what I mean. The boys didn't 'it 'im too 'ard?"

Nugent Ailen shrugged his bottle-neck shoulders.

"And what if they did?" he demanded. "Hasn't he been asking for it? You're

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Covered by the automatics, Hebble and his men were each tied to a separate tree. Nugent Ailen's eyes glittered as he watched the operation through the narrow slits of his mask. "Adieu, gentlemen," he said, making a mocking and elaborate bow. "I hope to have you released in a matter of hours!" (See page 27.)

up to your neck in it, anyway, so I don't advise you to squeal!"

Having glared at the scared-looking Sean, Nugent passed through the curtained doorway into the tawdry parlour, but he had no eyes for the gilt looking-glass, the gaudy china ornaments, and the cheap furniture. Crossing the linoleum, he entered a small recess and opened a door, and he showed not the slightest hesitation as he descended the flight of narrow steps that led down into the inky blackness.

The steps led to the cellars of the house, and the stuffy atmosphere was heavy with the reek of stale spirits and beer. Moving cautiously, Nugent passed along the narrow passage and came to a baize-covered door, and here he paused, listening intently.

No sound came to his straining ears, however, so he raised his hand and rapped upon the baize.

Tap! Tap-tap-tap! A pause. Then, Tap-tap! Tap!

The door was opened at once, and Nugent, with a nod and a grunt, passed into the strange apartment. A long table ran the whole length of the place, and upturned barrels, eight in number, served as chairs. A dozen candles, jammed into bottle-necks, spluttered protestingly and threw a flickering light upon the scene; and the shadows that were cast were mocking and eerie. The air was foul with liquor fumes and the smoke of cheap tobacco, and the stained deal table was littered with bottles and glasses, dice and cards.

The cellar looked like the thieves' kitchen of one's imagination, and the three young gentlemen who greeted Nugent with a grin completed the picture.

The man named Gumper was a gnome-like individual with repulsive features and a stumpy body; he was an ugly, simian figure in the yellow flickering of the candles.

"Foxy" Durrell could have been

called nothing else, for his every glance and movement was vulpine. Jackson was a burly lout with a loose mouth and a receding forehead, and he gave one the impression of being a mental bankrupt. He was cunning, however, with a certain amount of brute courage; so he served his purpose with the notorious Storrydene "Boys."

The "Boys" were known and feared all over the North, no race-meeting being free of their sinister presence; and it was common knowledge that they made a comfortable living by blackmail and bullying. Also, they were open to tackle any shady job that had money in it. They were pests of the worst kind, brutal and unscrupulous, and it went ill with anyone who came up against them.

How Nugent Ailen became acquainted with them during his short sojourn in Storrydene is something known only to himself and Sean Merritt, but the fact remains that he had been installed as their leader.

The "Boys," of course, were quick to recognise a young man with wealth and a genius for organisation; and they also saw in him a fat pigeon to be plucked should he ever break with them.

They would bleed him dry, and then "split" on him.

"Isn't it time the others were here?" asked Ailen, seating himself at the head of the table and reaching for a bottle.

"They're comin' along, guv!" grunted Gumper, showing his stained teeth in a leer. "I wonder if young Voyce has got over 'is 'eadache! Weighted bladders! You're a one, you are, guv!"

The flattery put Nugent Ailen into a better frame of mind, and he was wearing his usual patronising smile as he greeted the other "Boys" on their arrival.

"Any news?" he asked eagerly.

Blimper, a flashy man of the book-maker type, shook his massive head.

"Not a word," he answered, his voice thin and wheezy, as he perched his coarse body on a barrel. "Some say that he's gone to hospital, but perhaps it's only a rumour!"

"Well, that's one out of the way," smiled Nugent. "It's a thousand to one against Voyce playing on Saturday!"

Each member of the gang had seated himself upon a barrel, and the unshaven faces that grinned in the yellow candle-light were ghoulish and repellent. Glasses were charged, and the rumble of gruff voices died away; and all eyes were upon Nugent Ailen as he rapped on the top of the table.

"About Saturday's business," he began, thoroughly at home in his role of leader. "I want no bungling and no questioning, for this is going to be the biggest thing that the 'Boys' have ever brought off. What's more, it's going to make the whole country sit up; and I'm the only man in the world who could have thought of it!"

"Ear, 'ear!" growled the hooligans.

"Ain't 'e a one?" grinned Gumper. "Brains—that's what it is! Wish I'd had an Anniversary education!"

"Shut up!" growled Blimper, thrusting an elbow into Gumper's ribs.

"Shut up yourself!" snarled the gnome-like little ruffian; and, without the slightest warning, he snatched at his glass and flung its contents into Blimper's coarse features. "Any more lip," he warned, "and you'll git the glass an' all!"

Seldom did the cunning leer leave Gumper's flat features, but once he lost his temper he was a thing to be feared; he became an animal, savage and ferocious. There was not one of the "boys" who was not afraid of him on occasions; and Blimper, burly fellow that he was, was a coward at heart. The Blimpers of this world always are.

Taking a spotted handkerchief from his pocket, the big man mopped his

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streaming features, and glared at the squat figure by his side; but he made no attempt to avenge the insult.

"Now, then, you two!" shouted Nugent Ailen. "Cut that stuff right out! This is a business meeting!"

"'Ear, 'ear!" growled one of the other "boys," his smouldering eyes upon the moist Blimper. "Put a sock in it, you two!"

"What's the lay, guv?" asked Foxy Durrell, who was rolling a shag cigarette with thin, talonlike fingers.

"I will tell you," said Nugent. "As you know, the Villa are playing Benstone, at Benstone, on Saturday, and they will do the journey—a matter of five miles—by charabanc. Now, the charabanc belongs to Hedges, and Hedges, I happen to know, is up to his eyes in debt to Blimper. Is that so, Blimp?"

The big man nodded his bullet head. "That's so," he growled. "Owes me fifty of the best, 'e does!"

"That's splendid!" smiled Nugent, whose heavy features were slightly flushed. "For it means that we've got him where we want him! What's more he will run no risk. You will go to Hedges and tell him that Foxy is to drive the coach on Saturday, and if he starts to squeal you can mention a little matter of fifty pounds. But I don't think Shady Hedges will squeal, especially when he knows that he's on a terner.

"I have made it my business to find out all about Saturday's arrangements, so I know that the Villa eleven will go to Benstone early in the morning—about nine o'clock. I think they're going to take part in a knock-out billiard match with the other team; anyway, it's something like that.

"The road between here and Benstone isn't very busy in the ordinary way, so there'll be very little traffic about at nine o'clock on Saturday morning. In the afternoon it will be different, of course, for the whole of Storrydene will be on the move.

"Now for the plan. Foxy, disguised as a driver, will be at the wheel of the charabanc, whilst Jackson will act as conductor, and all will be merry and bright until Tumbly Hill is reached, when Foxy will swing off the main road—"

"But that's not the way to Benstone!" put in Foxy Durrell quickly.

"Of course it isn't, you idiot!" flashed Nugent angrily. "Keep your mouth shut! Turning down Tumbly Hill, you will pretend that you've lost control of the charabanc, whilst Jackson will yell to the players to keep their heads. Reaching the foot of the slope, you will swing round by Fir Coppice and come to a halt; and the rest of us will be waiting for you."

"And what happens then?" asked Foxy Durrell, his little eyes goggling with interest.

"I'll tell you," smiled Nugent, who looked very pleased with himself.

He said no more until he had unlocked the door of the cellar and satisfied himself that the passage was empty; and a gloating grin distorted his heavy features as he walked across the stone floor and perched himself upon his barrel.

Speaking in a low voice, he then outlined his scheme for kidnapping the Storrydene Villa eleven; and his words brought wild shouts from the "boys."

"Ain't 'e a one?" gurgled Gumper admiringly. "Brains—that's what it is! Brains!"

The Hold-Up!

THE United players were as happy as a crowd of schoolboys as the trim little charabanc moved smoothly along the road that winds between Storrydene and Benstone; and the only fly in the ointment was the absence of Peter Voyce, the new centre-forward.

Seen by the doctor on the previous evening, the brown-eyed youngster had declared most emphatically that he was fit enough to play; but the gruff-voiced practitioner had other views upon the matter.

"I wouldn't let you turn out if it meant playing a man short," he declared, finality in his tone. "No 'buts,' young man! You don't play!" Peter, therefore, was left behind, but he was going to follow on with Spudge Dixon, the trainer.

The charabanc was nearing Tumbly Hill when the driver increased his speed slightly; and then the players, who were shouting lustily about night-time in Italy, suddenly forgot their song and addressed a few terse remarks to the driver, who had turned off the main road.

"Not that way, you ass!"

"Straight on!"

"What are you doing, idiot?"

Gripping the wheel with skinny, talonlike fingers, Foxy Durrell shot a scared glance over his shoulder and shouted wildly; and the players were quick to understand what had happened.

"The thing's out of control!" cried Hefty Hebble, springing to his feet.

"Make a jump for it!" yelled Craye, gripping the side of the car.

"Stay where you are!" advised Jackson, the conductor. "It's a straight road. Keep your heads, gents!"

"I'm thinking about my neck!" grinned Hoppy Hawkins, a whimsical little smile twisting his birdlike features.

The charabanc was tearing down the steep incline like a mad thing, rocking from side to side and raising a dense cloud of dust, and it was not until Fir Coppice came in sight that the driver managed to gain control. The hedges ceased to flash by; the rush of biting air became less painful.

"It's all right, you chaps!" shouted Hebble. "We're slowing down!"

Swinging round the corner, the car came to a standstill, and a little nervous laugh broke from three or four of the fellows. After all, there are more pleasing things than being aboard a runaway charabanc. It had been a nasty experience, and the players were truly thankful for having escaped without broken limbs—or worse.

"Well done, old son!" cried Hefty Hebble, leaping over the side of the car and grinning up at the foxy-faced driver.

The other fellows followed their skipper's lead and alighted, and they were standing in an animated bunch when a gruff voice came to their ears:

"Hands up! And look lively!"

Swinging round, the players found themselves covered by six masked figures that were standing on the edge of the thickly-wooded coppice, and such was their surprise that they gazed stupidly, their eyes wide open and their jaws sagging; they could not believe the evidence of their eyes.

Yet there was something very real and compelling about the six gleaming automats that covered them, each bore looking as big as a soup plate.

"Hands up!" snapped the leader once more; and his lean trigger-finger twitched a silent warning.

Wondering whether the whole thing was an elaborate joke, Hefty Hebble raised his arms above his head; and the players, as usual, followed his example.

"I don't wish to inconvenience you more than is absolutely necessary, gentlemen," said the leader of the hold-up men, "but I must warn you that we shall not hesitate to shoot if you show the slightest sign of—er—interfering with our plans. To put up a fight would be very heroic—worthy, indeed, of such magnificent specimens of manhood—but I trust that none of you will be so rash as to rob the Villa of your services—for all time! You see, it is our habit to shoot to kill, gentlemen! Merely to wound a man is to waste a bullet! I hope I make myself clear!"

"You're clear enough, Mister Gunman!" growled Hefty Hebble, looking threatening and ugly. "But what's the meaning of this fool business? Robbery?"

The leader chuckled.

"That is a harsh term, sir," he declared, "but I suppose it amounts to the same thing."

"What's the game?" demanded the burly back.

"Your curiosity, in the circumstances, is perhaps natural," smiled the man with the gun; "but I fear there is no time in which to give you full details of this coup! You will know everything in good time. Meanwhile, gentlemen, I shall be obliged if you will step into the wood and make for the clearing which you will find in its heart. Again I warn you that there is a bullet for any fool-hardy individual who tries to raise the alarm or escape."

Ranging themselves according to plan, the masked figures escorted their captives into the middle of the coppice; and once inside the clearing, which looked almost eerie in the bleak, white light of a November morning, Foxy and Jackson produced many lengths of rope and set to work without a word from their leader.

Everything was going smoothly—according to plan—and Nugent Beasley Ailen was congratulating himself upon his genius for organisation.

Covered by the automatics, Hebble and his men were tied to separate trees. And the eyes of Nugent Ailen were gleaming as he watched the operation through the narrow slits in his mask.

Their task at an end, Jackson and Foxy stood back and admired their handiwork; and Nugent, removing his slouch hat, swept the helpless footballers an elaborate bow.

"Adieu, gentlemen," he said mockingly. "I hope to have you released in a matter of hours! My one regret is that your centre-forward, Peter Voyce, is not with you!"

"You scoundrel!" said Hebble fiercely.

"Gag them," commanded Nugent. "They'll talk themselves to death otherwise!"

The order was carried out swiftly.

"Once more, adieu," smiled Nugent.

Still smiling, he turned and thrust his way through the bushes, his men following upon his heels; and a minute or so later the muffled throb of a motor-engine filtered through the coppice.

The "hold-up" men were making a get-away in the players' charabanc. This was the unkindest cut of all!

The Mystery!

THE massive ormolu clock was striking eleven when the telephone bell whirred, and Sir Aubrey Ailen snatched the receiver off its perch. The chairman of Storrydene Villa was not a sweet-tempered man at any time, but on this particular morning he appeared to be at war with the world.

Scowling and muttering, he clapped the receiver to his ear and barked into the mouthpiece.

"Well?"

"Is that Ailen?"

"No, it isn't!"

"Then—"

"This is Sir Aubrey Ailen! You're not talking to a pork butcher, you know. I'm a baronet! Who are you?"

"This is Benstone United—"

"Then you're Peglar?"

"No, I'm not! I'm Mister Ralph Peglar to you! So now we know how we stand!"

Red-faced and apoplectic, the baronet snorted into the mouthpiece.

"What do you want, anyway?"

"Where's your team?" asked Peglar. "They said they'd be here just after nine, and now it's past eleven!"

Again Sir Aubrey snorted.

"You're talking through your hat!" he barked. "They left here over two hours ago—by charabanc!"

"I don't care if they left in snowshoes," said Peglar. "They haven't arrived at this end!"

"Rot!" snapped the baronet. "What can have happened to them en route?"

"Perhaps the car skidded and slipped down a drain," suggested the Benstone manager.

"The occasion does not call for im-

(Continued on next page.)

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THE STARLIGHT BOYS!*(Continued from previous page.)*

pertinence, Peglar," declared Sir Aubrey pompously. "I shall have something to say about this business, so I shall be obliged if you will phone me as soon as the players arrive!"

"Right-ho, old son!" said Peglar; and the baronet's little eyes blazed.

"Look here, my man!" he shouted. "Do you hear? Hi! Are you there?"

Peglar, as a fact, was not there, so Sir Aubrey replaced the receiver with a savage force that threatened to wreck the instrument.

Ten minutes ticked away, and then the phone bell whirred once more.

"Well?" snapped the baronet. "Is that you, Peglar?"

"No, it's me, Sir Aubrey!"

"And who the blazes are you?"

"I'm Hedges!"

"I don't care a hang if you're ditches!" snapped the baronet amiably.

"What do you want? You're the second maniac who's phoned me this morning!"

"I've had a message through to say that my charabanc—the one you hired this morning—has been found in a side turning out near Brampton, and—"

"What! Brampton! That's miles the other side of Benstone. There's a mistake—"

"I don't think so, Sir Aubrey," de-

clared Hedges. "The car was empty, and there was no sign of the players nor the driver! It's a proper mystery, this is!"

Sir Aubrey Ailen was a very angry man.

"All right, I'll look into it!" he said. "Phone me if you hear any more news!"

As Hedges had declared, the disappearance of eleven stalwart footballers was a profound mystery. Mounted on bicycles, groundsmen and clerks scoured the countryside round Brampton, but not a trace of Hefty Hebble and his men could they find. The Storrydene side had vanished, as though into thin air, and they were still missing at two o'clock—half an hour before the advertised time for the kick off.

Striding up and down Ralph Peglar's office, Sir Aubrey Ailen raised a pudgy hand and stormed, threatening to put the whole eleven upon the transfer list.

"I'll fire the whole team!" he roared. "I'll bundle 'em out neck and crop! It's unheard of—scandalous! The F.A. shall hear about it!"

The minutes were ticking away, and it wanted a quarter of an hour to half-past two when the door of the office opened and a scared-looking groundsmen hesitated upon the threshold, a letter in his hand.

"Feller asked me to give you this, me lord!" said the man.

Striding forward, Sir Aubrey snatched the envelope and ripped it open; and his little eyes positively bulged from his head as he read the following message:

"Your men are safe—for the time being—but something unpleasant will happen to them unless you carry out our instructions to the letter.

"We are holding your eleven to ransom, and on your promise to pay one thousand pounds (£1,000) they will be released in time to play against Benstone this afternoon.

"But don't give that promise lightly, Sir Aubrey Ailen, for we do not take kindly to treachery. To play us false is to sign your own death warrant.

"Show yourself upon the balcony of the clubhouse, and if you are holding a white handkerchief in your hand we shall know that you promise to pay. Fail to put in an appearance, and Hebble and his men are doomed.

"Arrangements for the payment of one thousand pounds will be made during the next twenty-four hours.

"THE STARLIGHT BOYS."

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