

RESULT OF "CROSS WORDS" LIMERICK COMPETITION
INSIDE!

No. 891. Vol. XXVII.

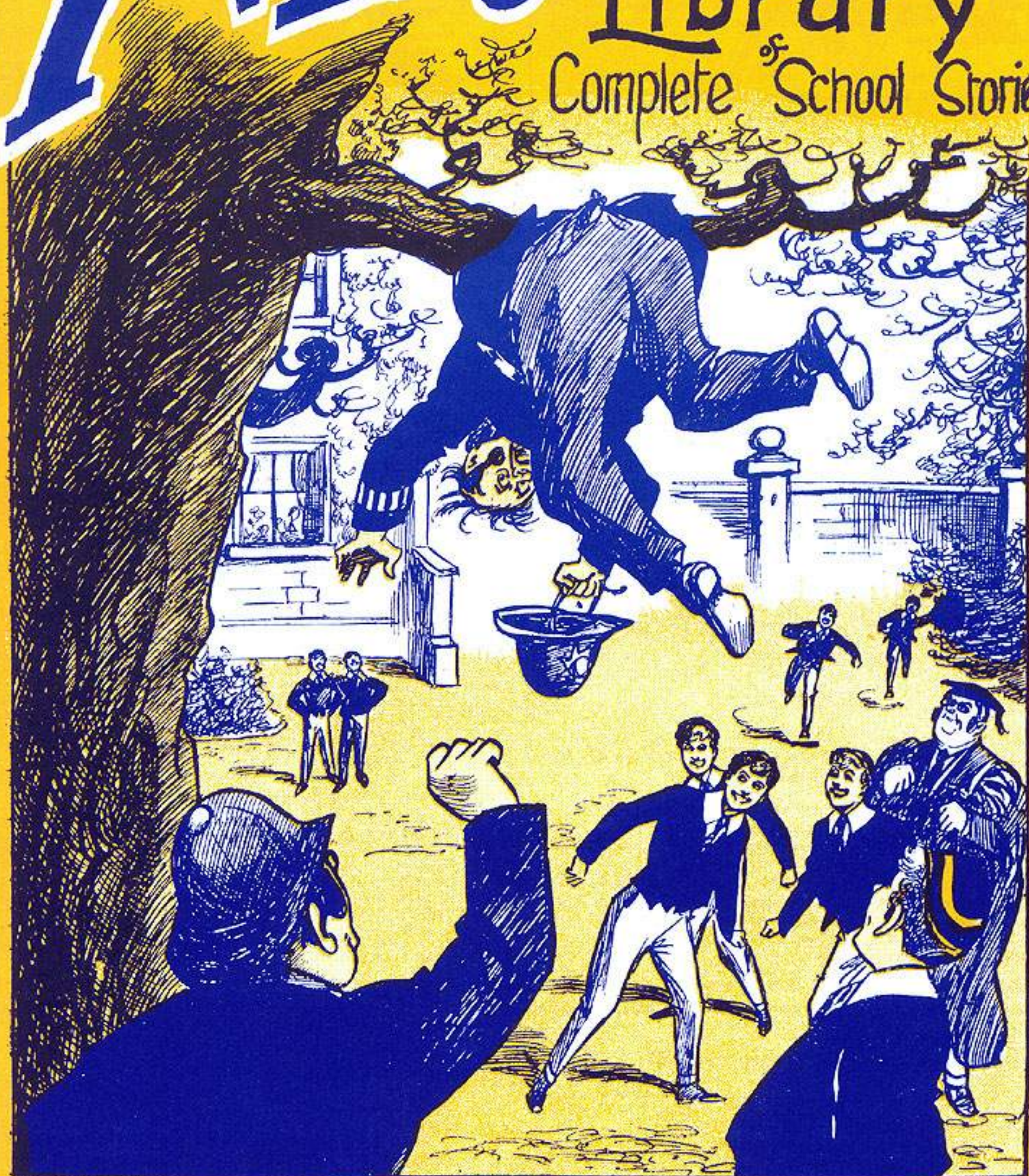
Week Ending March 7th, 1925.

The Magnet 2^d

EVERY MONDAY.

Library

Complete of School Stories



UP A TREE!

SKINNER, THE CONSTABLE, ARRESTS ATTENTION!

(A diverting incident from this week's magnificent story of Harry Wharton & Co.—inside.)



THIS is a competition in which every one of you can join. You are all familiar with the Cross Words that fly between schoolboys, and you are all familiar with the time-honoured Limerick.

For the benefit of those unacquainted with completing an unfinished Limerick I will give you a few hints that may be found helpful. Now, suppose you were required to complete the following verse

Said Brown to Bully Silvester
In tones that courted disaster
"Yah, go and eat coke
Hit some other bloke"

You must make your last line scan with the first two. That's the most important thing to remember in completing a Limerick.

For instance, such a line as:

"Then Brown ran—but Silvester was the faster."

is obviously far too long. A more suitable last line would be:

"Now Brown's requiring some plaster."

I don't say that this is a clever line, but it fulfils the requirements of a Limerick and scans correctly with the first two lines.

Another point is, don't try to be too clever. A simple but forceful line is what is wanted—a line that rhymes and scans with the first two.

Now that you have got the hang of the thing, fill in the coupon below.

To the sender of the "last line," which in the Editor's opinion is the best, will be awarded the handsome money prize of FIVE POUNDS. To the 12 next best, Consolation Prizes of SPLENDID POCKET-KNIVES will be awarded.

DIRECTIONS.

When you have thought out a really good last line fill in the coupon below, taking care to write your name and address clearly IN INK, and post it to:—

"Cross Words" Limerick Competition, No. 7.
c/o MAGNET, Gough House,
Gough Square, London, E.C. 4,

so as to reach that address not later than March 10th, 1925.

You may send in as many attempts as you like, but all efforts must be written on the proper Entrance Form.

It is a distinct condition of entry that the Editor's decision must be regarded as final.

NEXT MONDAY'S PROGRAMME!

"BUNTER, THE PROPHET!"

By Frank Richards.

WE have seen Billy Bunter of the Greyfriars Remove in many roles, but up to the present he has given the fortune-telling business a miss. In this coming story, however, the egregious Bunter really thinks a deal of his chances as a seer. Quite a wave of "magic" sweeps over Greyfriars, and several of the gullible folk are ready to believe that Billy Bunter possesses the rare gift of prophecy.

THE OUTWARD AND VISIBLE SIGN!

Now, Bunter believes in doing a thing properly, if there's anything to be gained from it. A fortune-teller must look the part. Thus we get a glimpse of Bunter's ample figure swathed in a gown plentifully decorated with black cats, etc. On his learned, prophetic head reposes a conical-shaped hat. So far so good. Bunter begins to realise that a fortune-teller must tell fortunes; it's funny how long he takes to think that out. And a fortune-teller, if he's going to do any good at the game, must sometimes hit upon the truth. There's the rub. Bunter really has about as much "second sight" as the kitchen cat, even although he does wear specs. But there is always the keyhole! Bunter has found it convenient on innumerable occasions to tie up his shoelace outside the door of a master's study. In such a position it is an easy matter for a fellow of the Owl's capabilities to stretch his ear on a line with the keyhole of the door, and thus learn "what the future holds."

LODER OF THE SIXTH

plays a big part in this coming story, and between the unpopular Sixth Form prefect and the fatuous Owl of the Remove the "oracle" is worked. Bunter actually does forecast the truth. What the outcome of all this is I'll leave you to discover for yourselves. But make no mistake about it, chums, you'll enjoy every line of "Bunter the Prophet!"

There will, of course, be another humorous Supplement from the nimble pens of Harry Wharton & Co. This time the Greyfriars journalists have concentrated upon singing.

They have a deal to say on this subject, for there are all kinds of singing and songsters. You'll be singing with glee by the time you have read their efforts, though, so look out for this special number.

"THE DEPUTY DETECTIVE!"

The curtain rings down on Jack Drake's first case in next week's instalment of this popular yarn. That our youthful detective does the work he has set out to do goes without saying. He has been so near success in the past that it is only right and proper he should win through after fighting against a whole series of misfortunes. But there's a big surprise at the end of the story, especially for the rascally Dr. Fourstanton, which rounds off the yarn, and leaves that mingled feeling of pleasure and regret with the reader that the author has written "Finis" to his work. But the next par contains a good piece of news that will console my chums who are keen on the adventures of Ferrers Locke and his plucky boy assistant.

"THE GOLDEN PYRAMID!"

I made mention in a previous Chat of this coming attraction. My chums can look forward to the opening chapters in two weeks' time. This new serial is going to score a bullseye, I feel perfectly confident. Ferrers Locke and Jack Drake have to handle as intricate a case as it has been their lot to come up against in the course of a thrilling and adventurous lifetime. That they tackle it with their usual vim and cleverness goes without saying. Ferrers Locke is a man in a thousand, whilst Drake—to apportion the praise evenly—is a boy in a thousand. Look out for the start of this super-story, boys.

THE EDITOR.

"CROSS WORDS" LIMERICK COMPETITION.

"I guess I'd knock spots off you, Fry,"
Said Fishy, his pluck running high.
"You're a swanking galoot
Who could do with a boot—"

Last Line.....

No. 7.

Name

Address

Closing date, March 10th.

THE AGE OF MIRACLES! Billy Bunter is in funds. A whole bunch of "expected" postal-orders turns up! Bunter and fifty shilling postal orders is an entirely different Bunter from the podgy impecunious youth of old. See what you think of—



A magnificent new long complete tale of Harry Wharton & Co., the Chums of Greyfriars, with Billy Bunter, the fattest and funniest schoolboy in the world in the limelight.

By **FRANK RICHARDS.**

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Bunter Butts In!

ROTTEN! Some fellows have all the blessed luck! Here's chaps like Mauly and Smithy fairly rolling in cash, and I'm always beastly hard-up—can't even get enough to eat! Rotten! It's not fair!"

Billy Bunter mumbled the remarks to himself in deep disgust. They expressed his views on the state of affairs in general, and on the sad state of his own financial resources in particular.

The fat member of the Remove Form at Greyfriars was standing outside "Uncle Clegg's" shop in Friardale High Street. His fat little nose was glued to the small window of the village tuck-shop, and his eyes were fixed longingly on the contents of the window.

To anyone who was in the slightest degree fastidious the contents of Uncle Clegg's window would not have been at all inviting. The jam-tarts were decidedly stale—likewise the cream-buns and rock-cakes and custard-tarts. They were also distinctly dusty—indeed, they were, so to speak, of the earth, earthy, and of the grub, grubby.

Yet to Billy Bunter at that moment they were food fit for the gods.

Billy Bunter was hungry—very hungry.

Unfortunately, he was also stony—at least, a mere three-halfpence separated him from that hapless state. And three-halfpence was the price of one stale rock-cake.

One scrap of pastry! And Billy Bunter felt equal to polishing off the whole window stock!

"Rotten!" repeated the fat youth, in deep disgust. "It'll have to be a measly rock-cake, I suppose; that'll fill up better than a tart or a blessed cream-bun, anyway. Here goes!"

With a pathetic sigh of resignation Billy Bunter entered the shop, to the accompaniment of the jangling of the doorbell.

Uncle Clegg was not visible in the little shop; but a girl was behind the counter, and Bunter rolled up to her.

Even as he fished in his pocket for his three-halfpence, however, he paused, his big spectacles turned on the inner door of the shop.

Beyond the door was a little room where teas were served; it was a room often patronised by Greyfriars fellows. Bunter could not see inside, but he could hear the hum of cheery voices—familiar voices.

"Oh, good!" murmured Bunter. "My hat! What luck!"

Ignoring the girl, Bunter pushed open the door and rolled inside. At two of the small tables five juniors were seated. They were Harry Wharton & Co., and they looked up at Bunter's entrance.

Bunter beamed round at them with a genial smile.

"Hallo, you fellows!" he remarked. "Fancy finding you chaps here! I say, this is ripping!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, with a groan. "Bunter!"

There was nothing cordial in Bob Cherry's greeting, nor was there anything cordial in the looks of anyone of the little tea-party.

"Get out, you fat clam!" said Johnny Bull grimly.

"Yes, play at trains, old fat pippin, and shunt!" added Frank Nugent.

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

"Roll away, Bunter!" said Harry Wharton. "We see enough of you at Greyfriars!"

"More than enough!" grunted Johnny Bull. "How the fat bounder manages to track us down beats me! Take your fat face away, Bunter! It worries me!"

Bunter rolled up to the tables.

"Oh, really, you fellows!" he said pathetically. "I've as much right in here as you. I just dropped in for some tea, you know. Not quite my style, this potty little show; but one can't expect much in a beastly little village, of course."

"Look here, Bunter—"

"Those cakes look jolly good, though," went on Bunter. "I say, I think I'll join you if you don't mind."

And, without waiting for approval, Billy Bunter dropped into a chair at

Harry Wharton's table. Then he stretched out a fat hand and helped himself to a cream-bun.

"Well, my hat!" gasped Harry Wharton.

Though they were used to Bunter's little ways, the Famous Five were staggered at this latest exhibition of his "nerve." They were still staring when Bunter finished the cake he had taken and started on another. The cakes were fresh—unlike those in the window—and Bunter evidently found them good.

"These cakes are prime, you fellows!" he remarked, with his mouth full. "I say, pile in, you chaps; don't let me stop you!"

The juniors had no intention of allowing Bunter to stop them. But they intended to stop Bunter.

"Well, you fat burglar!" gasped Harry Wharton. "Why, I'll—"

"Oh, really, Wharton, don't be mean, you know!" mumbled Bunter. "I say—"

"Sling the burgling rotter out!" roared Johnny Bull wrathfully. "Collar him—"

"Here, hold on!" gasped Bunter, jumping up, in alarm. "It's all right, you fellows! I'm going to pay my whack, you know—when my postal-order comes. I'm expecting one by to-night's post. I'll give it—"

As one man the Famous Five rose from the tables; and, without finishing, Bunter grabbed a chocolate eclair and leaped wildly for the door.

He was a trifle too late, however. Bob Cherry grabbed him by the collar and yanked him back. Grasping the fat hand which held the eclair, Bob jammed it upwards into Bunter's face.

"Yarrough! Grough!" howled Bunter. "Oh, you beast, Cherry! Ow! Oh crumbs!"

Wrenching the door open again, Bob planted a hefty boot behind Bunter's fat person, and he went through the doorway, howling. It was quite plain that Bunter's kind offer to stand his "whack" out of the coming postal-order did not interest Harry Wharton

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& Co. Perhaps they had heard of that expected postal-order before!

Out in the little shop Bunter stood blinking wrathfully at the closed door. Then he stooped and shouted, "Yah! Beasts!" through the keyhole. After which he turned away, rubbing the mess of confectionery from his fat features.

The juniors inside the room heard him move away, and they seated themselves again, chuckling, and went on with their refreshments.

"That fat poscher beats the band!" grinned Bob Cherry. "Blessed if I know where he gets his nerve from!"

"Postal-order—eh?" chuckled Frank Nugent. "That postal-order's been coming since Bunter came to Greyfriars. It'll be wearing a grey beard when it does come!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Famous Five soon finished. They had been to see the Courtfield Ramblers play football, and they had merely called in at Uncle Clegg's for a little "snack" before returning to Greyfriars for a more substantial tea.

Harry Wharton rang the bell on his table, and a moment later the girl entered. Harry asked her for the bill.

The girl counted the cakes on the dishes and made a swift mental calculation.

"Ten-and-six, please," she said.

"Eh—what?" ejaculated Harry. "But—but we've only had tea and one or two cakes, miss."

"Two cakes each," added Frank Nugent. "And Bunter had two—or, rather, three."

The juniors stared at the girl. She was looking a trifle uneasy.

"But—but the other young gentleman—the stout one wearing glasses!" she exclaimed. "He had a dozen cream-buns, a dozen custard-tarts, and a dozen jam-tarts, besides the chocolate and toffee. He took them with him, saying you would pay for them."

"Wha-a-at?"

Harry Wharton & Co. blinked aghast at the girl.

"He—he said we'd pay, miss?" gasped Cherry.

"Yes. Why, I do hope it is all right," murmured the girl rather fearfully.

"Well, my only hat!"

"The—the fat fraud!"

"The blessed burglar!"

The juniors could have danced with wrath. They understood now. Finding he could not wedge himself into the party for a free tea, Bunter had tried to get a free feed another way—and succeeded.

"Well, that fat beast is the limit!" snorted Johnny Bull. "You ought to have asked us before letting him have them, miss."

"I—I thought he was going to pay for them," stammered the girl. "I put the things in a bag, and he picked the bag up, saying the young gentlemen inside would pay. Then he walked out before I could say anything."

"Great Scott!"

"It's no good, you chaps," said Harry Wharton, with a rueful laugh. "We'll have to settle up, and we'll settle up with that fat rotter later! Who's got any cash?"

Harry took out all the cash he had—seven-and-six—and between them they made up the required amount, greatly to the girl's relief. After all, as the juniors could see, it was scarcely the girl's fault. She was Uncle Clegg's niece, who was looking after her uncle's shop during his illness, and she

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obviously did not know Billy Bunter. It could never have happened had Uncle Clegg been present. Uncle Clegg knew Bunter only too well, and he always demanded a sight of Bunter's money before taking any orders from him.

It couldn't be helped; the Famous Five could only pay up. So they controlled their wrath and paid up, and left the shop. But out in the street Harry Wharton almost exploded with concentrated rage.

"Come on, you fellows!" he said, through his teeth. "This is the limit, even for Bunter. The fat thief can't have got far. He'll be scoffing those dashed tarts and things as he goes along. We'll catch him up and give him the hiding of his life."

"My hat! Yes, rather!"

Headed by Harry Wharton, the angry juniors started off towards Greyfriars, on Bunter's track. It was not the first time, by any means, that Billy Bunter had transgressed, but they felt he had gone beyond the limit this time. And they intended to teach him a severe lesson when they caught him.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Treasure Trove!

"THERE he goes!"

"Tally-ho! Yoicks!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

"Don't shout!" warned Harry Wharton. "If the fat worm spots us he'll give us the slip."

It was Frank Nugent who spotted the fat form of Billy Bunter rolling on ahead of the juniors in the Friardale Lane. Apparently Billy Bunter had not considered the possibility of pursuit, for he was rolling along quite comfortably. And even at that distance the juniors could see that he was busy consuming the contents of the big paper bag he carried.

The sight increased the juniors' wrath, though Bob Cherry persisted in treating the matter humorously, as was his wont in most matters. It also caused them to increase their pace from a brisk trot to a run.

"Run on the grass," suggested Frank Nugent breathlessly. "He won't hear us coming then."

It was a good idea. They knew what a slippery customer the Owl of the Remove could be when cornered. Running softly on the grass bordering the lane, they rapidly overtook the ambling figure of Billy Bunter.

They approached to within a few yards, and then Bunter looked round suddenly. He had no chance to fly, however.

"Collar him!" roared Harry Wharton.

"Oh, crumbs!" gasped Bunter.

With a custard-tart half-eaten in his fat fist, Bunter stopped, with a gasp of dismay, as Harry Wharton & Co. came up with a rush and surrounded him.

"Now, you fat rotter!" roared Bob Cherry.

"I—I sus-say, you fellows—"

The grasp of Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry fell upon the fat junior, and he blinked round at the avengers in great alarm.

"I say, you fellows," he gasped, "it's all right, you know. I'll square up, honour bright! It—it was only a lark. I'll pay you back out of my next postal-order. It's for ten bob— Yarrrough! Ow! Leggo!"

Harry Wharton shook the fat junior until his spectacles fairly rattled on his fat little nose.

"You fat swindler!" he panted-wrathfully. "We'll teach you to play rotten tricks like that on us!"

"Ow! Leggo, will you?" roared Bunter. "Wharrer you shaking me for? I don't know what you're talking about. Yow! You'll have my glasses falling off! If they break—"

"We're talking about these!" snapped Wharton, wrenching the bag of food-stuffs from Bunter's grip. "You fat spoofer—"

"Yow! Don't I tell you it was only a lark?" yelled Bunter. "I tell you I'm going to stump up, don't I, out of my next postal-order? Gimme my tarts back!"

"Your tarts! I like that!"

"Of course they're mine!" hooted Bunter indignantly. "If you think they're from Uncle Clegg's you're mistaken! Not at all! I bought these in—in Courtfield!"

"You fat fibber!"

"It's a fact! I say, if you don't let me go I'll tell Quelchy—"

"Why, you fat rotter!" gasped Wharton. "You got these from Uncle Clegg's and left us to pay for them, you swindling little worm!"

"I didn't, I tell you! Besides, they're only a few measly tarts and cakes! Don't be so beastly mean, you fellows! It was only a lark. I'll stump up when my postal-order— Yarrrough!"

Bunter let out a wild howl as Harry and Bob sat him down with a bump on the hard roadway.

"Now give him the bumping of his life!" said Harry Wharton sulphurously. "A dozen bumps for playing this little trick, and another dozen for trotting out his postal-order fable."

"Oh, really, you fellows— Yarrrough!"

"Bump!"

Bunter descended to earth with a resounding bump. But just at that moment Fate intervened to save the fat junior from further punishment.

As they lifted Bunter's bulky form a second time, Harry Wharton gave a sudden yell:

"Look out!"

The yell of warning was followed instantly by the mad ringing of a cycle-bell, and the next moment a rough-looking youth swept round the corner amid a swish of cycle-tyres.

What followed happened too suddenly to be seen clearly.

Though the youth had clapped on his brakes instantly, he was travelling too swiftly to avoid a collision. And before the juniors could scramble for safety he was upon them.

Crash! Clatter, clatter! Crash!

"Oh, my hat!"

"Yarrrough!"

In a flash the group of juniors and the cyclist were mixed up in a sprawling, yelling heap in the centre of the lane.

The cyclist's front wheel had sent Bunter rolling over and over, and the cyclist himself described a somersault through the air and landed yards away on hands and knees.

From his yells he was obviously more than a little hurt, but for all that he was up on his feet again in a moment. And he was also exceedingly angry.

"You careless little 'ounds!" he howled. "Messing about in the middle of the lane like that there! What you playin' at—hey?"

Harry Wharton scrambled to his feet, gasping.

"Sorry!" he exclaimed breathlessly.

"It was partly our fault, I suppose—"

"Of course it was your fault!" hooted the youth, his features red with rage. "Look at me 'ands and me face!"

I might have broken me neck, too! Why, I'll bloomin' well knock your little heads off!"

So saying the red-faced youth aimed a blow at Harry's face. It was a hefty blow, and it was swift and unexpected. Harry took it on the temple, and went spinning across the lane.

"Here, you rotter, none of that!" shouted Bob Cherry.

He sprang forward—just in time to take the pugnacious youth's fist on his nose. Bob Cherry howled and reeled back, clasping his injured nasal organ frantically.

Only for a brief second, though! The next instant Bob's eyes flashed with the light of battle, and he sailed in with a rush. Bob was the best-tempered chap in the world; but that punch on the nose was too much for him.

"Leave the cad to me, Bob!" called Harry Wharton, scrambling up, his eyes gleaming.

"Not much, old top!" sang out Bob quite cheerily. "I fancy I can manage this merchant all serene."

There was little doubt about that, as was very soon evident. Bob had not won the title of the best fighting man in the Remove for nothing. After contenting himself with defence against the youth's bull-like rushes for a brief time, Bob took the offensive in fine style.

Backwards and forwards across the muddy lane the two tramped, fighting like wildcats. The youth was far bigger and stronger than Bob, and Bob's chums had thought more than once of interfering.

But they saw there was no need to do that now. Bob had already taken the measure of his opponent, and his science and skill easily overcame the clumsy and brutal rushes of the red-faced youth. He very soon had "bellows to mend," and the end came quicker than any of the juniors had anticipated.

Without warning, the youth suddenly ducked away, and made a jump for his bike. The juniors could have stopped him, but they were too astonished to try had they wanted to.

Grabbing the machine, he wrenched it upright and sprang into the saddle. It proved to be undamaged from the smash, for the next moment the burly youth was pedalling away furiously, shouting imprecations over his shoulder as he went.

Bob Cherry, with his fists at his sides, blinked after him in amazement.

"Well, my hat!" he panted. "Has the fathead had enough, then?"

"Looks like it!" grinned Harry. "My hat! What a bad-tempered brute! It serves him jolly well right to get a licking!"

"It was more our fault than his, though," grinned Frank Nugent. "Anyway, he asked for a licking; and he got it. Good man, Bob!"

Bob Cherry grinned ruefully as he stroked a rapidly swelling nose, likewise a rapidly swelling eye.

"Blow the chap!" he grumbled. "My hat! He's got a punch like the kick of a mule! Hallo! Where's the Bunter bird?"

There was no sign of Billy Bunter—or the bag of confectionery, either! Billy Bunter had evidently "made hay while the sun shone."

"Well, the fat toad's done us, after all!" snorted Harry Wharton. "I was going to collar the rest of those cakes and things after we'd bumped the rotter. Blow it!"

"The little rascal's made to cause



Though the youth on the bicycle clapped on his brakes instantly he was travelling at too great a speed to avoid a collision. Before the juniors could scramble to safely he was upon them. Crash! Clatter! "Oh, my hat!" "Yarooooogh!" The group of juniors and the cyclist were mixed up in a sprawling, yelling heap. (See Chapter 2.)

trouble!" grinned Johnny Bull. "Never mind; we'll get him at Greyfriars."

It was some consolation—though the juniors were not a little wrathful about the confectionery. It was exasperating to think that Bunter would have them after all. They might get him at Greyfriars—they most certainly would—but they knew they were not likely to see that bag of confectionery again.

After Bob had put his clothing to rights, and done what he could to hide the bruises on his heated features, the juniors started for Greyfriars again. They went with all speed, naturally supposing that Billy Bunter had gone on towards the school, and hoping they might have the luck to catch the fat junior up.

They vanished round a bend in the lane, and as they did so a fat figure squeezed through a hole in the hedge and blinked after them.

It was Billy Bunter, and his face wore a fat grin of satisfaction. In his hand was the big bag of pastry, and he was munching cheerfully as he watched the distant bend where Harry Wharton & Co. had vanished.

"Beasts!" he mumbled, with a chuckle. "Mean beasts! Thought they'd do me after all, did they? He, he, he! Lucky I bolted when I did! My hat! I believe the rotters would have had the cheek to take this grub from—"

Billy Bunter paused in his musings. His little round eyes had fallen upon something on the grassy side of the lane.

It looked like a bundle of papers, and Billy picked it up casually.

"Wonder what— Oh crumbs!" Bunter jumped as he saw what the bundle really was. It was a bundle of new postal-orders, fastened together with a rubber band.

Bunter fairly blinked at them. He stuffed the paper bag under his arm and examined them. They were postal-orders for the sum of one shilling each.

"Mum-my hat!" gasped Bunter. "Great pip! There must be fifty of them here. Phew! Wonder where the blessed things came from?"

With the bundle in his fat hand, Bunter pondered the problem. They were quite clean, and obviously quite new. And none of them bore the stamp of the office of issue—though Bunter was far too unobservant to notice that significant fact.

"My hat!" breathed Bunter, his eyes gleaming with excitement behind his spectacles. "I do believe that beastly, low-down rotter who ran into us just now has dropped 'em. Phew! If they'd been lying there long they'd be wet and muddy, I bet. What the dickens shall I do with them?"

Bunter stood pondering that question next.

"Fifty one-shilling postal-orders!" he murmured, his eyes beginning to sparkle. "That's fifty bob! My hat! Perhaps that chap didn't drop them; after all, they don't really belong to anybody now."

Bunter grinned a trifle; he seemed to find great satisfaction in that thought.

"Except me, that is!" he went on reflectively. "After all, the blessed things are lost. They're nobody's property really. And—and finding's keeping!"

Bunter slowly stuffed the packet of postal-orders in his pocket. Bunter rarely spent much time fighting temptation. He had a most accommodating conscience, being more of a fat fool than a rogue. He found all sorts of reasons why he was doing the right and proper thing in sticking to the postal-orders now he had found them. The more he turned over the matter in his fatuous mind the more entitled he thought himself to keep the postal-orders.

He rolled along towards Greyfriars, his mind busy evolving new excuses to account for the postal-orders. Even Bunter had a conscience—of sorts—and he needed excuses to satisfy it.

It did not take him long to find plenty. And by the time Greyfriars was in sight Billy Bunter had arrived at the view also that he was doing a public service in collaring the postal-orders for his own use.

"After all, that beast—if he did drop them; though I don't believe he did—may have stolen them, and he may come back to look for 'em. Well, it wouldn't be right for the awful rotter to find them. Besides," argued the fat junior virtuously, "some other dishonest chap might easily have found them and stuck to them."

As this was just precisely what Bunter was doing it was rather remarkable how he found this argument of use to support his intention.

Bunter was beaming with satisfaction as he rolled in under the old gateway of Greyfriars that afternoon. He stopped suddenly, however, as a rather unpleasant thought struck him. It occurred to him that it was more than possible that Harry Wharton & Co. would be on the look-out for him.

"Beasts!" grunted Bunter. "They'll want to lick me—just over a few measly cakes and tarts! I'd better keep out of the—My hat! I've got it! I'll pay up out of my postal-orders. That ought to satisfy 'em. He, he, he! The beasts wouldn't believe me when I told 'em a postal-order was coming for me. I'll show the rotters!"

With a fat chuckle, Bunter rolled on—not towards the School House but towards the tuckshop under the old elms.

Bunter had only just disposed of several shillings' worth of "tuck," but he was quite ready for more. And when he left Mrs. Mimble's shop a few minutes later Bunter's face was adorned with a fat grin of satisfaction—in addition to crumbs of pastry and smears of jam and custard.

In Mrs. Mimble's till reposed three of the shilling postal-orders. Billy Bunter was already making good—or, rather, bad—use of them.

Billy Bunter very often sailed very close to the wind; there was every prospect of the obtuse fat youth finding serious trouble before long. But Billy Bunter did not realise that—or if he did he ignored it.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Postal Orders Galore!

"I SAY, you fellows—"
"Well, my only hat!"
"Bunter!"
"Here's the rotter!"

Harry Wharton & Co. fairly blinked at Bunter, as that junior's spectacles
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glimped in through the doorway of Study No. 1.

The juniors had been back some time, and they were just finishing tea when Bunter looked in. Harry Wharton & Co. were not a little astonished to see him. They had naturally supposed that, after what had taken place that afternoon, Billy Bunter would give them a very wide berth indeed.

Yet, here he was as large as life—and equally as cool and collected.

"I say, you fellows!" he repeated, rolling inside the room and blinking at the juniors with lofty dignity. "You've no need to look at me like that, you know. I'm not after tea, if you think I am. Blow your measly tea!"

"Great pip!"

"You—you're not after tea?" repeated Bob Cherry blankly.

"Certainly not! Keep your tea!" said Bunter, with a pronounced sniff. "I've come to settle up a little bit of business between us."

"Oh, my hat!"

The juniors stared blankly at Billy Bunter. What the fat junior was driving at they could not imagine. On Bunter's entrance they had started to their feet with the intention of collaring him before he could bolt again. But they sat down again and stared at him now.

"What on earth are you gassing about, Bunter?" demanded Harry Wharton.

For answer Billy Bunter threw four pieces of paper on the table—paper printed in blue ink. They were postal-orders for one shilling each.

The juniors gasped aloud and stared at them as if mesmerised.

"There you are!" said Bunter, with a careless wave of his fat hand. "I believe I owe you fellows a trifling sum for some tarts and cakes this afternoon. That's to pay for 'em. I think I told you fellows I was expecting a postal-order this afternoon. Well, it's come."
"What?"

It was a shout.

"There you are!" snorted Bunter. "You fellows wouldn't believe me—you never will believe me. You jolly well think nobody else but your dashed selves can have remittances sent to them. Well, there you are! My remittance was for a quid. My uncle—Sir Rufus Bunter—sent it me. He sent it in shilling postal-orders, though. Goodness knows why, but—Why, what—what's the matter with you?"

Something, apparently, very serious was the matter with Harry Wharton & Co. One by one they had collapsed into their chairs—seemingly in a dead faint. Bob Cherry had even slid down on to the carpet, where he lay like a log.

Bunter stared at them, his mouth opening and closing in his agitation. He supposed his school-fellows had suddenly been taken seriously ill.

"Oh—oh crumbs!" gasped Bunter.

He blinked in great alarm at the silent forms, and then he rushed to the door, yelling:

"Help, help! I say, you fellows—quick! Wharton's ill—so's Cherry, and Nugent, and Singh, and Bull! I say, you fellows, come quickly!"

There were several fellows passing along the passage at the time—Vernon-Smith and Redwing, and Skinner, Stott, and Snoop. Several other fellows had their study doors open, and they came rushing out on hearing Bunter's wild yelling.

"What the thump—" began the Bounder, staring at Bunter. "What's bitten the fat ass?"

"Come on—quick!" yelled Bunter, in great excitement. "It's potmain poisoning, I expect!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, my hat!"

The Owl rushed back into Study No. 1, and the crowd of alarmed juniors followed him. They stared at sight of the still forms of Harry Wharton & Co. Vernon-Smith suddenly grinned, however, as he glimpsed a slight twitching of Bob Cherry's eyelid. It was suspiciously like a wink.

Skinner's sharp eyes saw it also, and he turned in well-feigned excitement to Bunter.

"Fetch Quelchy, Bunter!" he gasped, grasping Bunter and rushing him to the door. "Fetch him—quick, you ass!"

"Oh dear!"

Bunter hesitated a brief instant, and then he rolled away at top speed, fairly trembling with excitement. He rushed away so quickly, indeed, that he quite failed to hear a sudden yell from Harry Wharton—or the chorus of chuckles that went up as he left the room.

For even as he went, Harry Wharton leaped to his feet, and his action was followed instantly by the rest of his chums.

"You—you burbling ass, Skinner!" snorted Harry Wharton wrathfully. "Has the burbling chump gone?"

"Why?" asked Skinner innocently. "Aren't you chaps ill after all?"

"You know jolly well we were only pulling the fat idiot's leg!" was Harry's angry retort. "Now you've sent him for Quelchy, and there'll be trouble."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The rest of the juniors did not understand the joke, but they roared at the alarm on the faces of Harry Wharton & Co.

Harry Wharton ran to the door and looked out. There was no sign of Bunter, however. The little joke had come "off"—and it looked like coming off only too well!

"Well, you burbling rotter, Skinner!" hooted Harry Wharton. "Now we're going to get it from Quelchy! How can we dashed well explain? Here, you fellows, get out, quick!"

"But—"

"Clear!" snapped Harry Wharton. "You can come back after Quelchy's gone, and we'll explain. Go on, you dummies!"

The Bounder and the others grinned, and slipped out of the study. Skinner did not seem to want to go—he apparently wished to witness the discomfiture of the Famous Five. But Harry Wharton placed a boot behind him and fairly lifted the practical joker through the doorway.

Then Harry closed the door.

"Go on with tea, you fellows, for goodness' sake!" he gasped. "We'll have to bluff it out! Old Quelchy will rave at being made a party to a blessed joke."

"Yes, rather!"

The juniors seated themselves at the table in great haste. They had already finished tea, but they started again now for the sake of realism.

They had scarcely done so when the door was flung open, and Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, rushed in, with Billy Bunter at his heels.

The master stopped dead and stared at sight of the Famous Five calmly getting on with their tea. Billy Bunter himself almost collapsed at the peaceful sight.

Harry Wharton lowered his cup, and rose politely to his feet—as did the rest of his chums.

"Is anything the matter, sir?" he asked.

Mr. Quelch seemed at a loss for words for a moment. Then he turned a glittering eye upon the astounded Billy Bunter.

"Bunter!" he thundered. "You told me that these boys had been taken suddenly ill—were unconscious, in fact?"

"I—I—I— Oh dear!"

That was all Bunter could say at the moment. He was staggered at the sight of the Famous Five calmly getting their tea as if nothing had happened.

"You—you young rascal!" thundered the master angrily. "You—you have had the effrontery—the audacity to bring me here on a fool's errand! You have actually played a stupid practical joke upon your Form master, Bunter!"

"Nun—not at all!" gasped the hapless Bunter. "I—I say, sir, it wasn't my fault! They were lying ill, sir! Honour bright! Wharton—"

"Do you dare to persist in this foolery, boy!" gasped Mr. Quelch. "Very well, Bunter. You will follow me to my study."

"Oh, really, sir—"

"Excuse me, sir," exclaimed Harry Wharton hurriedly. "It wasn't Bunter's fault. It was—ahem!—our fault, really."

"Oh, indeed, Wharton!"

Mr. Quelch's tone was like ice.

"It—it was only a joke, sir," faltered Harry Wharton. "You—you see, we never expected Bunter to rush off and bring you. We were just pulling his leg; pretending we were ill for a—a lark, sir."

"Wharton—"

"We're awfully sorry, sir!" gasped Harry.

"Very sorry indeed, sir!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"Oh!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch angrily. "Then you were playing a joke upon Bunter? You had no intention of bringing your Form master into it, Wharton?"

"Oh, no, sir!"

"Not at all, sir!"

"Very well!" Mr. Quelch's tone was grim, though his mouth twitched a trifle. "I will accept your statement, Wharton. It was a very stupid and thoughtless joke to play. Did I believe you had any intention of causing me this trouble and unnecessary agitation I should cane you very severely indeed. As it is, you will each do me two hundred lines."

"That doesn't mean me, of course, sir?" grumbled Bunter. "I was the— the victim, you know; it wasn't my fault!"

"Yes, it certainly does include you, Bunter!" snapped the Remove master. "You deserve that and more for being so incredibly stupid as to believe these boys ill when they were not!"

"But—but, sir—"

Mr. Quelch did not wait to hear Bunter's protests. He was feeling some little loss of dignity, and he realised there was a crowd of grinning juniors hovering round the doorway.

He vanished along the passage; and Bunter turned upon Harry Wharton & Co. with a growl of wrath.

"You rotten beasts!" he hooted. "What d'you want to play a trick on a fellow like that for?"

"Yes, what's the idea of the joke?" grinned Vernon-Smith. "Blessed if I can see it!"

"Nor me!" grinned Skinner. "Trot out the merry old point, Wharton!"

"They're jolly well potty!" snorted Bunter, in great wrath. "Two hundred lines they've landed me with! You beasts! Yah! It ain't fair!"

"But it was your own fault, fatty! We'll do the lines for you, though; don't worry about them, Bunter. But you can't deny it was your own fault."

"Eh? How was it my fault?" howled Bunter.

"Giving us such a frightful shock!" said Harry blandly. "You ought to have had some consideration for our hearts and nerves and sinews, Bunter. We're only flesh and blood, you know. You sprung that shock on us without warning—"

"What shock?" roared Bunter, in great exasperation. "Wharrer you mean, you ass?"

Harry Wharton picked up the four postal-orders from the table and held them up before the assembly.

"You fellows!" he said in the tone of one about to make an amazing and an extremely important announcement. "Prepare for a stunning shock! You've all heard, of course, about Bunter's famous postal-order—the one that's been coming since before the flood?"

"Ha, ha! Yes!"

"Once or twice!"

"Just a little!"

"I think I have heard Bunter mention such a thing," said Skinner reflectively.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, you fellows—"

"Shut up, Bunter!" roared Harry Wharton. "Do try to be modest and retiring in the hour of your greatest triumph. Well, you fellows, if you're all ready for the shock, here it is. You see these four postal-orders?"

"Ha, ha! Yes, rather!"

"Well," said Harry slowly and distinctly, "these postal-orders came this afternoon—and they're for Billy Bunter of the Remove."

"What?"

"Great Scott!"

"Billy Bunter's postal-order's come at last," went on Harry. "In fact, there are four here—four—for a bob each! And, according to Bunter, he's got heaps more. His uncle, Sir Hookey Walker, the Rag-and-Bone King, has sent him twenty, I believe."

"Three cheers!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors cheered amid roars of ironical laughter.

"Oh, really, Wharton, you beast—"

"Now, you fellows will understand," went on Harry, ignoring Bunter's wrathful outburst, "why the shock of being handed those four postal-orders proved too much for us!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"In fact," proceeded Harry, shaking his head, "it was a double shock. Not only did Bunter break the news that his postal-order had come at last, but he actually came straight here to pay us back some money he swindled us out of."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter's eyes fairly glittered with wrath as he glared through his big spectacles at the laughing juniors.

"You cackling dummies!" he roared. "Wharrer you laughing at? Can't a fellow have a blessed remittance without all this silly fuss? Rotters! Beasts! Yah! Go and eat coke!"



"There you are," said Bunter, with a careless wave of his fat hand. "I believe I owe you fellows a trifling sum for some tarts and cakes I had this afternoon. These four postal-orders will pay for them." "Oh—oh, my hat!" gasped Bob Cherry faintly. The Co. collapsed in their chairs seemingly in a dead faint, and Bob Cherry dropped to the carpet and lay like a log. (See Chapter 3.)

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter's fury made the juniors roar more than ever.

"It isn't silly fuss, Bunter," said Harry Wharton blandly. "That's your mistake. The point's this, you fellows—Bunter's postal-order's come at last! He's borrowed money right and left for terms on the strength of it. He's borrowed cash galore from every fellow in the school practically. And now it's come at last—in fact, quite a number's come. So now Bunter's going to pay up—"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"He's turning over a new leaf and going to pay his debts. He's actually paid us four bob of what he owes us! That's a good start. Now, we'll have the rest if Bunter doesn't mind!"

The look on Bunter's face made the juniors yell. His wrath had suddenly given place to utter dismay.

"I—I say, you fellows!" he gasped. "It—it isn't true, you know! Certainly not! My postal-order hasn't come at all!"

"What?"

"It's all rot!" gasped Bunter desperately. "My postal-order hasn't come at all, I tell you! Wharton, you beast!"

Bunter panted and his eyes gleamed. Wharton had carelessly laid the four postal-orders on the table again. Quick as thought, before anyone realised his intention, the fat youth suddenly grasped them and leaped for the door.

But Bob Cherry was just a shade too quick for him. His grasp fell on Bunter's shoulder, and he had the wriggling Bunter back, and snatched the orders from him.

"No, you don't, my pippin!" he grinned. "We don't want to lose those. We're going to have 'em framed and hung up in this study! This is a great occasion, and we are going to make the most of it. We're going to issue a special edition of the 'Greyfriars Herald,' too. I vote—"

Cherry paused, as at that moment another junior squeezed into the crowded study. It was Fisher T. Fish, the American junior.

Fishy was looking greatly excited—his eyes were glistening greedily.

"Look hyer!" he exclaimed eagerly. "I reckon I'm on to this—some! Is it the goods that Bunter's postal-order has arrived?"

"Ha, ha! True enough, Fishy!"

"Postal-orders galore, in fact!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

"Waal, I swow!" ejaculated Fishy. "I guess that's the chippiest bit of noos I've heard for days. Jerusalem wickets! I reckon I've been left thinkin' the fat galoot never really expected one."

He turned quite genially to the quaking William George Bunter and held out a bony, grasping hand.

"Pay up—right now!" he said.

"Oh, but really, Fishy, it ain't true!" howled Bunter.

"You don't pull the wool over this hyer guy's peepers," said Fishy, winking. "Pay up, fatty! I guess you've owed me six bob since my first term. I reckon I never expected to see it. See hyer! I'm hyer for the spondulicks—jest a few!"

"I tell you I haven't any cash!" hooted Bunter.

"Aw, shucks!" growled Fishy. "Don't keep a guy waiting. Pay up!"

"I won't, you beast!"

"Eh—what's that?" snorted Fisher T. Fish.

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He shoved a bony fist under Bunter's nose. Apparently Fishy had heard that Bunter was paying out, and he was determined to get his six shillings before all the cash went.

"Pay up, you fat galoot," he roared, "or, by jemima, I'll make shavings of your fat carcass!"

"Yes, pay up, Bunter!" came a laughing chorus. "Pay up, you fat rotter!"

"He's no excuse now!" yelled Skinner. "His postal-order's come, and he's got to shell out. He's owed me two bob for two terms. Turn the fat rotter's pockets out!"

"Hear, hear!"

The juniors were far from being serious—at least, most of them were—but Bunter imagined they were, and he blinked round in great alarm. He wished from the bottom of his heart that he had not been quite so free with the postal-orders. He had brought the four to the Famous Five, partly to save himself from the expected licking, partly to swank with a triumphant "I told you so!" He had not dreamed that it would raise this commotion—that now the real postal-orders had "arrived" at last, the fellows who had lent him money on the strength of imaginary ones would expect him to "pay up."

He blinked round him like a hunted animal. The bundle of forty-odd postal-orders were in his trousers pocket, and he began to have grave fears for their safety.

"Look here, you fellows!" he gasped. "It's all right. I mean to pay up, of course. I hope you fellows don't think I'm so dishonourable as to neglect to pay my creditors."

"Oh, my hat!"

"If you do," said Bunter, "then I refuse to discuss the matter with you. I've already paid some of my creditors. I fully intend to pay the rest—"

"Oh, good!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Three cheers!"

"I reckon that's good enough—"

"Out of my next postal-order," finished Bunter calmly. "I'm expecting one in the morning. It's coming from a distant relation of mine—an admiral. It's for a quid, I expect—perhaps more. If you fellows can't wait, then you—you can go and eat coke!"

Fishy gave a yell, and his bony fingers gripped Bunter's jacket.

"I guess I'm not waiting—not much!" he yelled. "You fat jay! I guess I'm having my six bob now! Turn his pockets out!"

"Hear, hear!"

There was a movement towards Billy Bunter, and the fat junior gave a howl. Then he suddenly ducked, and rammed his head into Fisher T. Fish's waistcoat.

"Yarrough!"

Fishy howled fiendishly, and collapsed into the study fender with a terrific clatter. Billy Bunter made a wild jump for the door. His fat form went through the doorway, and vanished down the passage at a terrific rate.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors roared with laughter. Fishy roared with pain, and staggered to his feet, gasping.

"Waal, I swow! Ow-wow!" he gasped. "That fat jay! Why, I'll make shavings—I'll make mince-meat of his hide! Yow! I guess he's busted me! Where—"

Finding Bunter had vanished, the transatlantic junior went through the door after him with a rush. Quite a number of the laughing juniors followed—not in the hope of seeing Bunter pay-

ing up, but in the hope of seeing more fun. The rest dispersed, chuckling. They had not expected Bunter to pay up, and so they were not disappointed.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Suspicious!

"BUNTER," remarked Bob Cherry, "is a public benefactor. If he doesn't add to the joy of nations, he adds to the joy of Greyfriars. He's a tonic for the health, too. I don't think I should ever find a smile at Greyfriars if it wasn't for Bunter."

The door had just closed on the last of the visitors when Bob Cherry made that observation.

Harry Wharton grinned. "He's the absolute limit!" he exclaimed. "Fancy his coming and paying up like that! Four bob, too! Who says the age of miracles is past?"

"I expect the fat swizzler did it to save his fat hide," grinned Bob Cherry. "But—but it's rather a queer business, isn't it? I don't suppose the blessed postal-orders are really from an uncle at all. I expect his pater sent them."

"It's queer, as you say, though," said Harry thoughtfully. "He was only swanking, of course, about having a quid's worth sent him. But even if he only had four sent him, it's queer. Why should his pater send him four separate shilling orders?"

"The queerfulness is terrific, my chums," agreed Hurree Singh. "Are you quite sure they are the genuineful caper, though?"

"My hat!"

"Let's have a squint at them, Bob," demanded Harry suddenly.

Bob withdrew the four famous postal orders from his pocket, and the five juniors examined them.

"My hat!" gasped Harry Wharton, eyeing them keenly.

"Well?"

"See anything wrong, you chaps?" went on Wharton, in some alarm.

"Why—no!" said Bob Cherry. "They're not made out to Bunter; but that's nothing to go by."

"Of course not! But what about the stamp?" demanded Harry. "Every postal-order issued is supposed to bear the stamp of the post-office that issues it—a round stamp, showing the date also."

"Great pip!"

"There's none on any of these," said Harry grimly. "And that's not all. Every postal-order issued is supposed to bear the initials of the postal official who issues it. There's no initial on any of the four, either."

"Phew!"

"Well, my hat!" gasped Bob Cherry blankly. "What does it mean, then? That fat rascal can't have robbed a blessed post-office surely?"

"I hope not," said Harry, with a smile. "But it's fishy for all that. I wonder if he's got any more of the blessed things?"

"Better see the fat idiot," said Frank Nugent, in alarm. "The silly ass will land in quod yet."

"They're genuine enough—no doubt about that," said Harry. "And yet how on earth could the fat rotter have got hold of them if they've never been issued by a post-office?"

"Ask me another!" grinned Bob. "Who can fathom the thoughts and doings of Bunter?"

"It's serious, you ass! Come on—let's go and see Toddy about this."

"Yes, rather!"

Peter Todd was Billy Bunter's study-mate—much to Toddy's sorrow—and he usually knew quite a great deal concerning Bunter's affairs. In fact, realising the fat junior's obtuseness, Toddy deemed it his duty to keep a very close eye on Billy Bunter.

So the juniors went along to see Toddy. They found a crowd of grinning Removites congregated round a notice pinned to the door of Study No. 7.

"Hallo! What's this?" exclaimed Harry.

He pushed his way to the front with his chums at his heels. Then he blinked at the notice. It was in Peter Todd's handwriting; and it read as follows:

"GRAND EXHIBITION.

"NOTICE is hereby given that a grand exhibition will be held in Study No. 7 this evening after prep, when certain objects of unique and unparalleled interest will be shown for the very first time to the general public—objects which will, to Greyfriars, undoubtedly constitute one of the SEVEN WONDERS OF THE WORLD. The old saying that the age of miracles is past has been given the kybosh. An event long chronicled and foretold and prophesied by our own schoolfellow, and fellow Removite, William George Bunter, has come to pass. The long-expected event has materialised. Scoffers and unbelievers will now find it necessary to hide their diminished heads. By this afternoon's post there arrived at Greyfriars THREE POSTAL-ORDERS FOR BILLY BUNTER. These have now passed into the hands of the undersigned, and they will be exhibited as stated above, free, gratis, and for nix.

"PETER TODD.

"P.S.—In case any misguided creditors of William George Bunter should entertain hopes that the numerous debts of W. G. B. will now be paid as a natural consequence, they are hereby solemnly warned that such hopes are doomed to disappointment.

"P. T."

Harry Wharton & Co. blinked at that extraordinary notice. The rest of the juniors present roared at the expression on their faces.

"Mum-my hat!" stuttered Harry Wharton. "Then—then Toddy must have got some, too?"

"Looks like it! Phew!"

"Looks as if Toddy doesn't know we've got some of the postal-orders," went on Harry blankly. "My hat! This looks like serious business."

He turned the handle of the door and marched in with his chums at his heels. Toddy was busy writing at the table, and he waved his hand, without looking up.

"No good, you fellows!" he called out promptly. "The exhibition's after prep, and nobody's seeing the postal-orders until then. After the exhibition I'm going to hand them over to the school museum."

"Ha, ha! You silly ass—"

"Go away," said Toddy. "I'm busy. I'm just writing a special account of the arrival of the postal-orders for the 'Greyfriars Herald.' I shall expect double rates for the article, Wharton. I suppose you'll publish a special postal-order edition—"

"There's something wrong with your supposer, then, Toddy," grinned Harry Wharton. "We want fresh news for the 'Greyfriars Herald,' not stale news with whiskers on it."

"Eh, what?" said Toddy.

"Look at these," said Harry.



Billy Bunter took from the cash-box a ten-shilling note and counted out ten shillings' worth of silver. "That's that!" he chuckled. "Now I'll leave the beasts twenty of my shilling postal-orders. After all, one lot of money is as good as another. He, he, he!" (See Chapter 5.)

He threw the four postal-orders on the table. Peter picked them up and whistled.

"Phew! You—you don't mean to say these came for Bunter?" he ejaculated.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a roar from the fellows in the doorway.

"Yes; they came for Bunter, and he handed 'em to us—to save himself a licking," explained Harry. "Are they the same as yours, Toddy?"

Toddy looked at them blankly and nodded.

"Just the same. They were for a bob each. I gave the fat rascal three shillings in exchange. I wish I'd been sensible enough to pocket 'em without giving the fat burglar change. He owes me quids and quids, I suppose."

"That's not the point, Toddy," said Harry, becoming grave. "Have you examined—Hallo!"

They were interrupted just then by a commotion in the doorway. Through the crowd of grinning juniors came the fat form of Billy Bunter. He was panting and gasping.

"I say, Toddy old fellow," he gasped pathetically. "that beast Fishy's after me. Keep him off, will you? Ow! Here he is!"

Fisher T. Fish, also looking heated and breathless, pushed through the crowd and entered the study. He was looking grim and business-like.

He made a rush at Bunter, but Peter Todd headed him off.

"Hold your hurry, my American friend," said Peter coolly. "What's Bunter done?"

"I guess I'll soon put you wise to that!" snorted Fishy. "This hyer guy owes me six bob—six silver shillings! Got that? Well, he promised to pay up when his postal-order came. That's terms ago. I reckon yew've heard the noos, Toddy? His postal-order's come—spondulicks galore, I've heard. The swizzling jay's got the durocks now, and I guess I'm after my little old share. See?"

"I see," said Toddy. "Now I'm going to ask you another question, Fishy. Where were you brought up, my pippin?"

"Eh? Why, I reckon I was raised in little old Noo Yark—and I might mention that I've got my eye-teeth skinned, friend Toddy. If that jay, Bunter—Yarrough! Leggo! Why, I'll make potato-shavings—Leggo!"

But Toddy didn't "leggo."

"You can now go back to Noo Yark, Fishy," he said, tightening his grip on Fishy's neck, "and ask 'em there to teach you to knock before entering a gentleman's room. Got that? Well, then—out you go!"

With that the humorous Peter ran the astonished Fishy to the door, and planted a hefty kick behind him. Fishy howled fiendishly and shot forward on hands and knees in the passage.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The wrathful American junior scrambled to his feet and was about to charge at Toddy when he suddenly spotted the form of Mr. Quelch approaching along the passage.

"Ow!" groaned Fishy. "Oh, jemina!"

Changing his intentions, the American junior departed hurriedly, and the rest of the crowd did likewise.

Peter Todd re-entered the study and faced the grinning Bunter.

"Good man, Peter!" grinned Bunter approvingly.

Peter took Bunter by the ear, and led him to the table.

"You're just the chap we want to see, Billy," he said. "We want you to tell us where you pinched these postal-orders from?"

"Oh, really, Toddy—Ow! Leggo! Yow!"

"Half a minute, Toddy!" exclaimed Harry grimly. "I fancy there's something you haven't seen yet. Have you examined these dashed postal-orders? They've never been issued officially from any post-office."

"What?"

"Look at them. They've neither got the office date-stamp nor the postal official's initials."

"Oh, really, Wharton, you beast—"

"Dry up, Bunter! We'll talk to you presently. What do you make of the business, Toddy?"

"Great Scott!"

Peter Todd blinked in great alarm at the postal-orders. He took three other postal-orders from an inside pocket and compared them. All were the same—all were without stamp or initial.

"So—so the fat burglar must really have pinched 'em!" he gasped. "G-goo-gracious! I suppose he's either raided a post-office or burgled one! You fellows heard of a local burglary?"

"You silly ass, Peter!" howled Bunter wrathfully. "Of course I haven't pinched them! Didn't I tell you I had them sent me by an aunt? She's the wife of a bishop, and—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The fat fibber told us his uncle had sent him them," said Harry, grinning, despite his uneasiness. "I think it's pretty plain there something wrong with them."

"No doubt about that."

"I tell you it's all right!" almost shrieked Billy Bunter. "Don't I keep telling you my Uncle James sent 'em me—he's a Governor-general in the Navy. He sent me two quids' worth, and—"

"Thought it was one quid's worth?" said Frank Nugent.

"I mean to say a quid's worth," corrected Bunter. "I tell you it's genuine enough. Honour bright!"

"But your honour isn't bright, Bunter," said Harry gently. "It's thundering muddy! Think we swallow those silly yarns, you ass? Nobody would send you twenty separate postal-orders—"

"It's a fact, I tell you! I suppose he—he—I mean, she—meant me to use one every week, of course. Jolly good idea, I think. That's just what my uncle—I mean, my aunt's sent 'em like that for. She—she's concentric, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You cackling dummies—"

"He means eccentric, I suppose," grinned Harry. "But, look here, Bunter, for goodness' sake try to understand what you're doing, you thick-headed idiot! These postal-orders have been pinched or something—must have been! Where on earth did you get them?"

Bunter blinked loftily at Wharton.

"That's my business, Wharton," he said, with dignity.

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"But, you silly ass, you'll be getting into trouble! You'll be finding yourself in chokey, if you aren't careful, Bunter! Can't you see these dashed orders aren't—"

"Rot! Bosh!" snorted Bunter indignantly. "I'm blest if I can see how it concerns you, Wharton. I decline to discuss the matter further. Besides, I want to see Mrs. Mimble before the tuckshop closes. Yah!"

And with that far from elegant rejoinder Billy Bunter rolled out—apparently en route for Mrs. Mimble's tuckshop.

"Well, the burbling idiot!" grinned Bob Cherry. "Talk about fools walking where angels fear to tread! Shall I run after the ass, Harry?"

"Oh, let him rip!" sniffed Peter Todd carelessly. "I'm about fed-up with the silly chump! Let him rip! He's bound to end in quod sooner or later, so what's the use of worrying?"

With that, Peter seated himself at the table again. And as, for the moment, at all events, Harry Wharton & Co. were also "fed-up" with Bunter, they, too, decided not to worry. They went back to Study No. 1 to clear away the tea-things, and for the nonce Billy Bunter and his postal-orders were forgotten.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Cashing the P.O.'s.

THAT evening the majority of the fellows at Greyfriars had heard that Billy Bunter's long-delayed postal-order—or, rather, orders—had "arrived" at last. And they heard the astounding news amid much hilarity on the subject. Those fellows who had not been present in Study No. 1 or Study No. 7 flatly refused to credit it—until they had seen some of the orders with their own eyes.

Under the very suspicious circumstances Peter Todd had decided not to hold his great "exhibition," after all. He took down the notice from his door, and announced to all and sundry that it was "off"—why, he refused to explain.

And, in like manner, Harry Wharton also refused to show anyone the postal-orders they possessed. Like the keen-witted Peter, the Famous Five were really very much troubled over the strange affair, and they were very concerned on Bunter's behalf. They decided that the less fuss made about the business, the better—for Billy Bunter.

But Billy Bunter, apparently, had no qualms whatever regarding the postal-orders. He was seen by very few fellows that evening—until bed-time. Like Brer Rabbit, he "lay low." This was very necessary, from Bunter's point of view, for quite a number of fellows were looking for Bunter that night. Some of them—like Fisher T. Fish—really hoped to get their long-outstanding debts paid; and others—like Skinner & Co.—hunted for the fat junior for the sole purpose of japing him.

Yet, for all that, Billy Bunter managed to dispose of several of his orders. The guileless Alonzo Todd cashed two for him, as did Tom Dutton and Tom Brown. Lord Mauleverer, wakened from sleep, handed over five shillings, and promptly fell asleep again without noting the fact that Bunter had walked out without handing over the five postal-orders. Bunter then tackled Bolsover and Bulstrode; but here he was not so lucky. Both Bolsover and Bulstrode pocketed the shilling orders, but

they flatly refused to hand over any cash in return. They told Bunter they accepted the orders as a little "on account" of what he owed them; and when Bunter protested they kicked him.

In the Upper Fourth Bunter also had a bit of luck by disposing of four of his orders to fellows who had not troubled to examine them. At all events, even the doubting Thomases soon had clear proof that the yarn about Bunter's postal-orders having arrived was true enough.

But, though he had met with some success, Billy Bunter was none too cheery when he went to bed that night. He began to see that it was going to be harder than he had supposed to dispose of the rest of the fifty. He made no further attempts to get any of his Form-fellows to cash any. His experience with Bulstrode and Bolsover had made him wary. To get only kicks in exchange for the postal-orders was not good business.

The next morning the fat junior had further proof that it was going to be a little troublesome to get rid of them.

Opening-time found Bunter on the doorstep of the tuckshop; but when the fat youth started to give his orders Mrs. Mimble eyed him suspiciously.

"Very good, Master Bunter!" she said grimly. "But I'd like to see your money first!"

"Well, I like that!" grumbled Bunter indignantly. "Didn't I spend ten bob here yesterday, Mrs. Mimble? It looks to me as if you don't trust me, ma'am."

"I certainly don't, Master Bunter," said the old dame flatly. "I know you, Master Bunter!"

Bunter grunted and fished out from his pocket three postal-orders for one shilling each.

"There you are, Mrs. Mimble," he snorted. "Perhaps that will satisfy you?"

Mrs. Mimble eyed the postal-orders and sniffed in rather an unladylike manner.

"I'd rather have cash if you don't mind, Master Bunter," she said.

"But isn't that cash?" hooted Bunter. "You took ten from me yesterday, Mrs. Mimble."

"That's just it, Master Bunter. I'd rather not take any more until I knows where you got 'em from, Master Bunter. Ten postal-orders in one day is suspicious. I'm not a woman as takes any risks. You can pay cash or go without, Master Bunter."

"Master Bunter" blinked at her, his eyes glittering behind his spectacles with wrath and indignation.

"Oh, really, Mrs. Mimble!" he spluttered. "Do you actually mean to suggest that these postal-orders aren't on the square? I must say I'm surprised—disgusted! I don't know what the lower classes are coming to."

Mrs. Mimble tossed her head and sniffed.

"I'm honest, if I'm nothing else, Master Bunter," she retorted tartly. "And that's more than I can say of some people. Take that as you likes!"

"Oh, really, Mrs. Mimble—"

Bunter paused and groaned. Time was passing, and he was hungry. He decided not to argue the matter further. With a grunt he placed a handful of shillings on the counter.

"That's better, Master Bunter!" said Mrs. Mimble.

The old dame's face changed at once, and the next moment she was bustling about attending to the wants of Billy Bunter.

Those wants were many; and when Bunter left the tuckshop the bell for morning classes was ringing, and Bunter's pockets were lighter by a goodly number of silver shillings.

Billy Bunter was the object of a great deal of attention in the Form-room that morning. Grinning glances were directed at him from every part of the room. But Bunter scarcely noticed them. He was absorbed in deep thought. And what occupied his thoughts was the deep problem of how to dispose of the rest of his "Treasure Trove." Now Mrs. Mimble had failed him it looked like being a difficult problem to solve.

More than once his abstraction brought down the wrath of Mr. Quelch upon his head. When asked what were the chief exports of Belgium, Bunter answered "Postal-orders!"—an answer that brought a roar of laughter from the Remove and an imposition of one hundred lines from Mr. Quelch. By the time morning lessons were ended the one hundred lines had been increased to three hundred, while the fat junior had been caned three times in addition.

Bunter rolled out of the Form-room in a far from happy mood. Things were not going quite as he had expected. He was also beginning to feel just a trifle uneasy. Mrs. Mimble was already suspicious about the postal-orders. Other people might also get suspicious if he wasn't very wary.

Skinner, Stott, and Snoop met him in the passage, and Skinner stopped him.

"Still qualifying for a broad-arrow suit, Bunter?" asked Skinner casually.

"Eh? What d'you mean?" snapped Bunter peevishly.

"Still cashing postal-orders?" explained Skinner blandly. "That's what I meant, Bunter. You'd look jolly well in a broad-arrow suit, old chap! I'm afraid you wouldn't like the skilly for grub, though."

Stott and Snoop chuckled.

"You silly ass, Skinner!" mumbled Bunter. "What are you gassing about? More likely it's you that'll be wanting a blessed broad-arrow suit, you rotter!"

"Not at all," said Skinner sweetly. "I thought I'd give you a word of warning, Bunter. I've seen one of your postal-orders—Bolsover showed me one. It's got no date stamp on, nor initials. That shows it's never been issued in the ordinary way. It's been pinched from a post-office, I expect."

"Wha-at do you mean, Skinner?" stammered Bunter.

"What I say, old chap. It's pretty clear how you got them, Billy. You've either raided or burgled a post-office!"

"You—you silly ass——"

"You're the silly ass!" grinned Skinner. "I shouldn't be surprised to see a bobby here after you at any moment, Bunter!"

"Oh dear!"

Skinner & Co. strolled on, leaving Bunter transfixed.

"That's put the wind up the fat ass!" murmured Skinner. "It's true enough, of course. The burbling idiot is looking for trouble. We're going to help him find it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There's a bobby's uniform in the Remove Amateur Dramatic Society's property-box," said Skinner thoughtfully. "I think it will fit me all right; it fitted old Wibley at the last do we had, anyway. You fellows game to give Bunter a fright?"

"If you'll do the bobbying, yes!" chuckled Stott. And Snoop nodded agreement.

"Right!" grinned Skinner. "Come on, then!"

And Skinner hurried on with his chums towards the spare class-room, where the Remove property-box was kept.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

No Change!

BILLY BUNTER rolled on towards Study No. 7 when Skinner & Co. had left him, and his face was a picture of alarm and dismay. Undoubtedly Skinner's words had "put the wind up" him.

If he had been uneasy before, he was ten times more so now. Mrs. Mimble had suspected something wrong—as had Peter Todd and Harry Wharton & Co. And now Skinner & Co. suspected; and apparently they had good grounds for their suspicion.

To his relief, Bunter found Peter Todd and Tom Dutton out; and, after carefully closing the door, Bunter took out his depleted bundle of postal-orders and blinked closely at them.

He soon saw what Skinner had evidently noticed—and what he himself had failed to notice. It was pretty clear also that Mrs. Mimble had failed to notice it, either; she was almost as short-sighted as the Owl himself. As Bunter blinked at the blank spaces where the stamp and initials should have been he paled and trembled.

"Oh dear!" he murmured dismally.

"Every one of the blessed things the same, too! I shall have to get rid of them quickly now. How the dickens am I going to do it, though?"

That was the question. Bunter realised that to keep them much longer might be running grave risks. Of course, he himself had done nothing wrong! Not at all! They couldn't blame him. Everybody knew that findings were keepings. If they didn't, then they ought to know, and it wasn't his fault.

That was how Bunter looked at the matter. He quite failed to see that he had already run more risks than was good for his health, so to speak.

"I'll try Mauly again, I think," he murmured. "He forked out quickly enough last night. No good trying Peter or those beasts in Study No. 1. They're so jolly suspicious, the rotters!"

Bunter rolled out again, after cramming the bundle into his trouser pocket, and went along to Lord Mauleverer's study. The schoolboy earl was reclining gracefully on his expensive Chesterfield, and he groaned on sighting Bunter.

"I say, Mauly, old fellow——" began Bunter affectionately.

Mauly waved a delicate hand.

"Please go away, dear boy," he murmured. "I really couldn't stand you now, Bunter."

"Oh, really, you know, Mauly——"

"Go away!" groaned his lordship wearily. "Jimmy, old top, will you do me a favour?"



"Stop 'im!" bellowed P.-c. Tozer wrathfully. "Stop thief!" roared Uncle Clegg. Fisher T. Fish streaked down the village street like the wind, with the shopkeeper, his assistant, and the constable in chase. "Oh, jumping Jerusalem crackers!" panted Fishy. (See Chapter 7.)

Sir Jimmy Vivian, who was sitting on the table, grinned and nodded.

"Name it!" he said.

"Kick old Bunter out!" said Mauly.

"What-ho!" grinned Sir Jimmy cheerfully. "Like a shot!"

"Oh, really, you—Yarrrough!"

Bunter leaped for the door, and Sir Jimmy's boot missed him by inches only.

"Yah! Beasts!" roared Bunter over his shoulder.

He realised it was no good trying Mauly after all. He rolled along to the study occupied by Temple, Dabney, & Co., of the Upper Fourth. He found the lofty Temple and his lofty chums at home, and Bunter rolled inside.

He rolled out again much quicker than he had rolled in, however—with three boots and a couple of cushions behind him.

"Beasts!" roared Bunter.

He picked himself up and wandered on to the Fifth Form passage. It struck him that the Fifth might not yet have heard any suspicious rumours about his postal-orders.

"Coker's the man!" he muttered with sudden inspiration. "He's a beast, like the rest of the beasts, but he's got lots of tin to chuck away. Here goes!"

Bunter rolled into Coker's study, being careful to knock beforehand this time. It had dawned upon him that some people made a fuss about "such potty little things."

Coker was seated on the table chatting with his chums, Potter and Greene. He stared rather curiously at Bunter.

"Hallo, you fat little beast!" he exclaimed. "What do you want here—eh? Get out!"

It was not a very promising greeting. Bunter hoped for the best, and proceeded with his errand.

"Oh, really, Coker, old chap," he said humbly. "I only came to ask a favour of you—"

"If it's anything to do with dashed postal-orders—" began Coker darkly.

"Ahem! As a matter of fact," said Bunter cautiously, "it does happen to be that, but not what you think, old man! I'm not come to ask you to cash a postal-order that's coming, but one that's come."

Potter and Greene chuckled, and Coker got slowly off the table.

"So that's it!" he ejaculated. "I've heard something about your postal-orders, Bunter. You want me to cash one or two, I suppose?"

"That's it," said Bunter genially, quite failing to see the danger-signals that would have been plain enough to anyone less obtuse than he. "Knowing what a jolly considerate and good-natured chap you are, Coker—Here, wharrer you at? Yarrrough!"

Bunter yelled as a grip of iron closed on his collar. He yelled still more as Coker started to lift his boot vigorously up and down, at each upward lift catching Billy's fat person with his toe vigorously.

"You fat little worm!" roared Coker. "I'll teach you to come here trying to bamboozle us into cashing your dashed shady postal-orders. You pinched 'em, I suppose? I've heard all about it. Out you go, you fat little burglar!"

He gave Bunter's person a final lift—a kick that almost carried the hapless junior out into the passage. Bunter flew for his life, yelling.

Coker was no good, that was only too plain. Evidently he had heard rumours after all.

Bunter decided not to try any more Fifth Formers at all events. But though rather dispirited now, he had no intention of giving it up by any means. He

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was getting desperate, also he was getting fearfully hungry. And all his ready cash had nearly gone. He felt very bitter indeed against Mrs. Mumble, and her suspicious nature.

"Blessed if I don't try old Prouty," he muttered, stopping outside the Fifth Form master's door. "He's soft enough to change 'em without asking questions. Better not try him with more than two, though."

Bunter knocked on the door, and Mr. Prouty's deep voice bade him enter. There was no doubt about it, Billy Bunter certainly "had a nerve," and he was a sticker!

He was inside the Fifth Form master's study barely a minute, and when he emerged again he was grinning, as he rattled two silver coins in his pocket.

"Never even looked at the blessed things, or asked a question," he murmured. "Good! That's two more, anyway! My hat! Blessed if I don't try those beasts in Study No. 1 after all. I'll tell 'em Prouty cashed two, and perhaps they'll not funk the blessed things then."

It was rather a forlorn hope, but Bunter was feeling a bit more optimistic now. He rolled along to Study No. 1 without further ado. He looked into the study, and grunted as he noted that the room was empty. Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent were out.

"Blow it!" growled the fat youth. "Never—Mum-my hat!"

Bunter's eyes gleamed as they fell upon something standing on Harry Wharton's desk in the far corner of the room. It was a large metal cash-box, painted black.

Bunter knew what it contained. Harry Wharton was the treasurer of the junior footer club, and that box contained the footer funds.

"What luck!" breathed Bunter. "I—I wonder if it's open."

He tip-toed across the room, after carefully closing the door. To his joy the key was in the lock of the cash-box.

"Well, the careless dummy!" murmured Billy Bunter, blinking rather hesitatingly at the box. "Why, some dishonest chap might easily come along and open the box. I wonder—"

Bunter's hesitation was brief. With ears alert for the slightest sound in the passage outside, Billy Bunter fumbled with the key, and opened the box cautiously.

"Oh, good!" he murmured. "It serves the careless beast right, anyway. It's not as if I was going to pinch the blessed money. Here goes!"

He took from the box a ten-shilling note and counted out ten shillings' worth of silver. The note and the silver he shoved in his pocket with a soft chuckle.

"That's that!" he murmured. "Now for the postal-orders! My hat! This is a jolly good way of getting 'em cashed! They won't be found for days, I expect. And I can easily swear it wasn't me. They can't prove I changed the blessed money. Besides, what does it matter? One lot of money's as good as another!"

And, having satisfied himself on that score, Billy Bunter took out his bundle of postal-orders. He counted out twenty and placed them into the box. Then he closed and locked the box, with a soft chuckle.

This done he hurried across to the door and slipped out—straight into the arms of Harry Wharton & Co!

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! The Bunter bird!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Now, what's the fat poacher been up to in your study, Harry?"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

Bunter tried to slip past, but Harry Wharton was too quick for him. He hooked his fingers into the squirming fat junior's jacket collar and hauled him back into Study No. 1.

"We'll soon see what he's been up to," he said grimly. "Look in the cupboard, Franky. There was a cake there when we went out three or four minutes ago. See if it's there now."

"Leggo, you beasts!" roared Bunter. "I haven't touched your measly cake! I didn't even know there was one there! If I had known—I mean, I don't care twopence if you have a cake or not! Lemme go!"

"The cake's here, all serene," announced Nugent after an inspection. "Nothing else gone, either. What's the fat ass been up to?"

"Out with it, Bunter!" snapped Harry. "What—Hallo! What ass has knocked the ink over on my desk? Great pip! I left the key in the cash-box! Has that fat toad been at it, I wonder?"

"I haven't touched the blessed cash-box!" roared Bunter in sudden alarm. "Besides, you shouldn't have left the key in it, Wharton! Jolly careless of you, I think! Lemme go!"

Bunter started to struggle frantically, but the juniors' suspicions were fairly roused now. Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull held the wriggling Bunter, and Harry unlocked the cash-box and peered inside.

He saw the postal-orders at once, and gave a roar.

"Well, I'm hanged! Look here, you fellows!"

He held up the little roll of postal-orders. The Famous Five blinked at them in astonishment.

"So that was the game!" ejaculated Harry. "The fat toad's changed them for cash out of the box. Well, of all the dashed nerve! Bunter, you great fat burglar—"

"I say, you fellows, it was only a lark!" gasped Bunter, blinking at Harry Wharton pathetically. "Besides, what does it matter? It's cash, ain't it? I say, Harry, it won't be so much to yank about, you know. Easier to carry, too. And besides—Yarrrough!"

Bunter ended with a wild howl, as Harry Wharton stuffed the wad of postal-orders down the back of his neck.

"Now, Bunter, my pippin," he exclaimed grimly, "you've passed the limit, you cheeky rotter! Hand over that quid you've taken!"

"Oh, really, Wharton, what does it matter—"

"Hand it over!" roared Harry Wharton furiously. "Hold the fat cad, you chaps—"

"It's all right—I'll hand them over!" howled Bunter, fearful of the juniors searching his pockets. "Leggo my wrist, Cherry, you beast!"

Bob Cherry grinned, and released one of Bunter's fat wrists. Bunter jammed his hand into his pocket and produced the ten shillings in silver, then the ten-shilling note.

He handed them to Harry Wharton with a groan. Harry's face went grim, and he put the money safely in the cash-box. After locking it he placed the key in his pocket.

Then he crossed the room and took a cricket-stump from among some lumber at the bottom of the lower cupboard.

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Bunter watched in no little trepidation. He had no illusions as to its purpose.

"I—I say, you fellows!" he stammered. "You might let a chap off! Don't I tell you it was only a lark—just a joke, you know!"

"So's this—for us!" said Harry grimly, showing Bunter the cricket-stump. "Bend him across the table, you fellows!"

"Yarrough! Oh crumbs!"

Bunter howled in fearful anticipation as Bob Cherry and the others lifted him and placed him in a suitable position across the table. He howled still more—in fact, very much more the next moment.

Whack, whack, whack!

"Yarrough! Ow! Murder! I won't do it again, I tell you! Yoooup! Oh crumbs! Yarrough!"

Whack, whack, whack!

A dozen times Harry brought the stump down across Bunter's tightly-stretched trousers, and the study resounded with Bunter's wild howls.

"Better take it quietly!" advised Harry grimly. "If Quelch comes along he'll want to know the why and the wherefore."

"Grough!"

The warning had its effect, and Bunter's yells ceased. He collapsed, groaning, when Harry Wharton dropped the stump.

"Let that be a lesson to you, Bunter," said Harry. "I didn't lay it on as hard as you deserved, you fat idiot! Now get out! And if you'll take our tip you'll take those dashed postal-orders back to where they belong—before it's too late!"

"Ow! Yow-wow! Grough!"

Bunter's reply was unintelligible. He rolled out of the study, groaning and rubbing himself dismally. He was finding it decidedly painful, as well as difficult, to dispose of his postal-orders.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

A Splendid Offer!

SKINNER & CO., greatly to their disappointment, were unable to carry out their little plot against Bunter—that noon at all events.

On entering the room where the amateur theatrical properties were stored they found Mr. Capper, the master of the Upper Fourth, in possession there. He was going through some old exercise books apparently, and he looked like staying there for some time. So Skinner & Co. had to postpone the idea until after afternoon classes.

In class that afternoon Billy Bunter came in for still more attention from the Remove in general. Most of them had heard all about what had taken place in Study No. 1 over the footer funds, and the story had enhanced Bunter's reputation as a "nervy bounder" not a little.

The affair of Bunter's postal-orders was becoming the favourite topic of conversation by this time, and speculation was rife as to how it would all end. The general view was that Billy Bunter himself would end up by finding himself in quod.

Bunter himself did not seem to trouble much what the rest of the Remove thought. He declined to discuss the matter at all, and he made no efforts to persuade any more of the Remove to cash any postal-orders. Perhaps this was because he knew perfectly well that none of them would touch one of the somewhat notorious postal-orders with a barge-pole—to use Skinner's phrase.

Strangely enough, however, Bunter found he was wrong there. As he came out of the Form-room at the end of afternoon class, Fisher T. Fish tapped him on the arm.

"I guess I want a word with you, Bunter," said Fishy, somewhat mysteriously. "Come along to some quiet spot, Bunter, old man, somewhere where we can spill the chin-music unheard. Get me?"

Bunter blinked at him morosely. He was not a little astonished. Fishy had been haunting him since the previous evening, and only the fear of Peter Todd's fists had prevented the transatlantic junior from carrying out his threat of making "potato scrapings" of Bunter.

And now, here Fishy was, whispering to him like an old pal with a secret to divulge.

"If it's about that blessed six bob—" began Bunter sulkily.

"I reckon you're off your hoss there, Billy," grinned Fisher T. Fish. "I kinder reckon and calculate that I've given up that hank for a bit, though it's business I'm after, jest a few, I guess. Look hyer, Bunter! Is it the straight goods that Prouty cashed one of those postal-orders?"

Bunter gave a feeble grin.

"Two of 'em," he said, nodding. "But I've spent the two bob, if that's what you're after, Fishy—"

"Nix on that!" grinned Fishy. "I guess I'm not hankering after small fry like that. I reckon if Prouty cashed some of those postal-orders, then there's nix against me doin' it—see?"

Bunter's face cleared, and he grinned. "You want to cash some of them, Fishy?" he said eagerly. "Mum-my hat! I knew you weren't really a bad sort, Fishy, though you are a beastly American skinflint—"

"Look hyer, you galoot—"

"Come round by the cloisters, we can talk there," interrupted Bunter hurriedly. "I don't mind telling you, Fishy, that I've got a fair number of postal-orders I want cashing. My aunt—I mean my uncle—that is to say, my pater sent me a whole heap—bob ones. He says I'm to spend one every day, no more."

"Oh, jemima!"

"That's all rot, of course," said Bunter, shaking his head. "Fancy spending only a bob a day! Bosh, I call it! Anyway—"

"Aw, shucks on that stuff!" grinned Fishy. "I reckon I've got my eye teeth cut, Bunter. Aw! Cut that out! I reckon I don't care a dime where you got 'em from."

"Oh, really, Fishy—"

"If there's nothing wrong in old Prouty cashing the pesky postal-orders, then I reckon there ain't much amiss with this jay doing likewise," grinned Fishy, with a wink. "Say, what about moseying on?"

Bunter nodded, and the two conspirators made their way out of the School House. In the shelter of the shadowy cloisters Fishy stopped.

"Now, Bunter, I reckon we kin get right down to business. How many of the pesky orders have yew got?"

"How many do you want to cash?" demanded Bunter cautiously, his eyes gleaming.

"I guess I ken take all you've got, Bunter!"

"Cash down?" inquired Bunter.

"Yep! Well, how many?"

"Thirty," said Bunter, after a pause.

"That's thirty bob. Let's see your blessed money first, Fishy; I know you!"

"Aw! Don't get on the hustle stunt, Bunter. I reckon I forgot to mention that I'm not on the philanthropy stunt

—not much, sir-r-r! This hyer's business. I'm offering yew eightpence each for the greenbacks—cash down, and no receipt given."

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "Why, you rotter—"

"Take it or leave it, Bunter!" grinned Fishy. "I kinder reckon yew'll find it difficult to dispose of the pesky things to any other guy. I guess I've got to make a profit on the deal—just a few!"

Bunter's face fell. But after a moment's reflection he decided to close. After all, a quid was a quid, and he saw no other prospect of changing the postal-orders any other way.

"Hand the quid over!" he grunted.

"Let's see the greenbacks first!"

"Look here, Fishy—"

"Look hyer, Bunter—"

They argued for a moment, and then they compromised—each handing over his part of the bargain at the same moment.

"Look here, Fishy," said Bunter curiously, as he pocketed the pound-note with a chuckle, "what are you going to do with the postal-orders? You won't mention you got 'em from me, will you?"

"Aw! Don't ask pesky questions," grinned Fishy. "I reckon I wasn't born yesterday. You won't catch this hyer guy mentioning anything or anybody over this deal. Yep. I've got to be skedaddling now, I reckon."

With that the American junior left Billy Bunter and trotted away. And a few minutes later Fisher T. Fish was cycling hard for Rylcombe.

In his pocket were a number of the postal-orders; the rest were hidden away in the American junior's locker. Fishy was too cute a business man to attempt to cash too many at once. He meant to do that, like the immortal Eric, little by little. At such a profit he could afford to wait to cash the rest.

When nearly into the village Fishy jumped from his machine, and, after a quick glance round, he slipped behind a hedge. Taking his cap off, he crammed it into his pocket and jammed another cap on his head—a rough, tweed cap. From another pocket he took a pair of horn-rimmed spectacles and slipped them on. Then he turned his coat collar up.

"I guess that's the goods," he murmured with a chuckle. "I reckon there's no guy smart enough in this hyer sleepy old village to spot who I am. And if there's trouble, it won't be this guy to get it. I took 'em from Bunter innocently—just like Prout and the rest of 'em did. I guess I'll try the grocery store first. I rather fancy some of our galoots will be in Uncle Clegg's."

And with another chuckle Fisher T. Fish mounted his bike and rode into the village. At Chunkley's Stores he dismounted and entered.

"Box of matches I guess I want," said Fishy to the assistant. "I reckon you won't mind cashing a postal-order for a bob?"

"Certainly not, sir," said the assistant.

"Perhaps you wouldn't mind cashing these other two, also?" suggested Fishy carelessly, shoving another couple of postal-orders on the counter.

"Not at all, sir."

The American junior took his matches, and the assistant looked rather hard at Fishy, and then he went to the till with the postal-orders. It was rather unusual to get strangers in Friardale, especially strangers who wanted to cash postal-orders three at a time.

At the till the assistant looked carefully at the postal-orders, and he noticed

(Continued on page 16.)



Our Contributors give us their opinions—some valuable, others priceless!—in rhyme!

BILLY BUNTER:

True happiness, I always think, consists of lots to eat and drink. You can't have pleasure unalloyed, when you possess an aching void. For when you're famished and unfed, you often wish that you were dead. A good square meal of Mimbie's tarts, true happiness and joy imparts. And when you're eating current buns, your thoughts and looks are happy ones! There is a twinkle in your eye, when tucking into rabbit-pie. Those choklit fingers—called eclaires—make you forget your woes and cares. If happiness and joy you need, the tessipy's a harty feed!

LORD MAULEVERER:

I think true happiness, begad, depends on how much sleep you've had. You can't be happy, blithe, and gay, unless you snooze six hours a day. You can't start dancing with delight, when you have spent a sleepless night. The finest thing to make you happy is forty wiuks—goo'-ni', old chappie!

PETER TODD:

True happiness depends on health; not, as some people think, on wealth. How can you laugh your way through life, when pains attack you like a knife? When you have pangs of indigestion good spirits are beyond the question. But when you're feeling well and fit, with shoulders squared and muscles knit—then happiness is bound to follow. Theimps of Care are beaten hollow!

WILLIAM GOSLING:

I don't believe in 'appiness, but surliness an' snappiness. You can't indulge in larfin' tactics, when you are smitten with rheumatics! The optimistic fellers say, "A merry 'eart goes all the day." But it's a knotty problem, wery, to cultivate an 'eart wot's merry! When sharp rheumatic pains goes through me, I can't 'elp feelin' glum an' gloomy. An' if an optimistic feller suffered the same, I bet 'e'd beller!

BOB CHERRY:

"Work while you work, and play while you play; that is the way to be happy and gay." It's solid philosophy, anyway!

BOLSOVER MAJOR:

A slogging contest in the gym will keep you sound in wind and limb. And knocking other fellows out promotes true happiness, no doubt. But when YOU are the victim—well, then there's another tale to tell!

HORACE COKER:

Here with a motor-bike (it's my best pal), A can of oil, an iron nerve—Jove, how I'd snap my fingers at the bobbies; For bobbies are but nuisances.—(Bow-wow! —Ed.)

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EDITORIAL!

By Harry Wharton.

WE managed, once upon a time, to print an issue all in rhyme. Can we achieve the feat again? Here is our answer, clear and

plain.

This week we've blossomed into verse. (I'm thankful we feel none the worse!) It meant an overdose of toil, burning the merry midnight oil. For versifying, goodness knows, is much more difficult than prose. But we've succeeded, all serene; contributors were mustard keen. They diligently made a start by practising the rhyming art. They found that "fun" would rhyme with "sun"; that "bun" would rhyme with "Sally Lunn"; that "pain" would harmonise with "cane"; that "brain" would go well with "insane." And so they managed, bit by bit, to make their rhymes and jingles fit.

We trust that our poetic labours will please you and your friends and neighbours. There's verse by Bunter, Smithy, Toddy—in fact, there's verse by everybody. Even young Nugent of the Second, although a brainless imp he's reckoned, has given us a yarn in rhyme. He'll be a Shakespeare yet—in time!

I must buck up and finish now, and terminate this brief "pow-wow." Not that I'm lazy; but the fact is, I'm wanted down at footer practice. Wherever there is any sport on, you'll find yours truly,

HARRY WHARTON.

KEEP SMILING!

By our Dusky Optimist, Hurree Singh.

When you have got the humpfulness, and feel down in the dumpfulness; when troubles on your trackfulness are like a wall of blackfulness; when all your gay and jolly days have turned to melancholy days; it's no use saying frownfully, "The world is upside-downfully!" Tackle your troubles manfully, as bravely as you canfully; and they will bid good-byefulness in twinkling of an eyefulness. No earthly use repining, boys, for there's a silver lining, boys, behind the dark cloud shining, boys. Away with gloom and tearfulness! Keep smiling, full of cheerfulness! These words are written inkfully, for you to ponder thoughtfully. A merry heart and gayfulness will take you all the wayfulness! So mind you grin the grinfulness; then you will win the winfulness!



FOOTER'S the order of the day. It is at Greyfriars, anyway! In sunny or in frosty weather, we love to chase the bounding leather. But on the wet and foggy days, we have the Cross Word Puzzle craze to occupy our hours of leisure. They are a source of keenest pleasure. Lots of the fellows, it is plain, have Cross Word Puzzles on the brain!

WE played a footer match last week with Coker and his Fifth Form clique. The game was watched by half the school, and Coker made a fine "Tom Fool." He blundered here, he stumbled there, barging and charging everywhere! We won the match by two to nil. The Fifth feel sore about it still. I rather pity them, poor souls. You see, old Coker scored our goals!

TO-DAY we exercised our limbs against the sportsmen of St. Jim's. They have a smart and skilful side—a fact which cannot be denied. Tom Merry is a ripping leader; his fame is known to every reader. It was a keen and thrilling tussle. We battled hard with brain and muscle, and gained the verdict by a goal; then heard the shouts like thunder roll! "Well played, you fellows!" came a roar. "You've put the Saints to rout once more!"

ONE day we had a paper-chase. It proved a far from thrilling race. You see, old Mauly was the hare. (The slacker drives me to despair!) We followed hot upon the trail, and found his lordship, puffed and pale, reclining on a rustic seat. He'd scarcely run a dozen feet! He said to us, in tones appealing: "Begad! I've got that sleepy feeling! This paper-chase is too much fag. There's no more paper in my bag." We hauled the slacker to his feet, then hoisted him across the seat, and lammed him with a cricket-stump. It served him right, the lazy champ!

AT Greyfriars School is often heard the shrill voice of the Bunter-bird. "I say, you fellows! You'll agree there's not a finer man than me, to skipper the Remove Eleven. I learnt to play when I was seven. My passing is a work of art; my shooting, too, is jolly smart. In fact, my charming cousin Elsie declares I'll one day play for Chelsea. So make me skipper with despatch; then we sha'n't lose a single match!" Such sentiments are tommy-rot. I'm pretty sure we'd lose the lot!

WRITING this column all in rhyme has taken me a fearful time. I wish I had Dick Penfold's knack of making "forward" rhyme with "back." To him it's just like shelling peas. He writes with fluency and ease. To me it is a fearsome task. 'Tis done! Before the fire I'll bask!

Supplement 4.



The Midnite Feest!

A Story of St. Sam's in rhyme.
"Dicky" excels himself this time!

"THERE'S trouble with the kitchen staff," Jack Jolly muttered, with a larf.

"What sort of trouble?" ventured Merry.

"It is a serious bizziness—very!"

"Why larf about it, then?" asked Bright. "You're simply crowing with delite!"

Jack Jolly chuckled more and more. He larfed until his ribs were sore.

"The cooks have gone on strike," he said. "They've been offended by the Head. Old Birchmull has been komplaining; he says the kitchen staff want braining! 'The masters' food is simply hateful! I will not eat another plateful! The way they undercook the meat makes it impossihal to eat. The way they make their rabbit-pies brings tears of sorro to my eyes. The boys are fed in proper style; the masters' food is worse than vile!"

"The Head delites to let off steam," said Merry. "He's a perfect skream!"

"He's made cook ratty," Jolly said. "She's simply furious with the Head! She's coming out on strike to-day. The kitchen's locked up, anyway! She told the Head: 'You'll get no pies or stews till you appologise! I will not cook another meal, so savvidge and annoyed I feel! I'll neither bake, nor roast, nor fry—'"

"Oh crumbs!" said Merry, with a sigh. "That means no grub for all the school! Why are you larfing, Jack, you fool?"

"It dazzent worry me," said Jolly. "I see no need for mellankolly."

"But we shall starve!" cried Bright in horror. "We'll all be fammashed by to-morrer!"

Jack Jolly smiled a sunny smile. He's always grinning—that's his stile. Said he: "My dear old Auntie Prue has sent me five whole quids to blue. Down to the villidge we will scamper, and purchass a tremendus hamper. Poodings and pies and cakes and buns will fortify the fammished ones. A midnite feest we'll have to-nite—"

"Oh, what a 'Jolly' wheeze!" said Bright.

And so they planned to feed the Form, when midnite sounded in the dorm.

Meenwhile, the lightning strike of cooks kept the whole school on tenter-hooks.

No dinner and no tea was served. The Head grew restless and unerved.

"Those wretched strikers, I could kick 'em!" he said, addressing Mr. Lickham. "They've cut off everybody's diet. There's pretty sure to be a riot!"

"To think," said Mr. Lickham sadly, "the kitchen staff should act so madly! I'm ravennus, and so are you, sir. I see your belt is getting looser."

"The Head looked savvidge as he felt. Said he: "I do not wear a belt!"

"Pray don't be angry, I beseech! But pray eggscuse my hasty speech. I meant to say that lack of dinner is making your proportions thinner!"

Supplement ii.]

The Head paced up and down his study. His countenance with wrath was ruddy.

"I won't give in!" he flashed, red-hot. "Appologise? I'll sack the lot!"

And so the kitchen strike prosceeded. The Head's feerce threats went all unheeded. The cook was obstinate and firm. 'Twas the sensation of the term!

But Jolly and his chums that night were Jolly, Merry, also Bright! They had no reezon to be sad, bekawse their leader—lucky lad!—possessed a five-pound note to blue. He felt elated—wouldn't you?

The hamper was of such a size to gladden any glutton's eyes. And Tubby Barrell said with glee: "Oh, what a stunning spread 'twill be!"

"It will be simply grate!" said Bright. "We'll gather round by candle-lite, and feed on cakes and tarts and skones, till we kollapse with paneful grones!"

The chaps were hungry as could be. They'd had no dinner and no tea. And when the midnite chimes rang out, Jack Jolly gave an eager shout.

"Bring forth the hamper!" he exclaimed, leaping from bed with cheeks inflamed.

Candles were lighted here and there, and in the brite and glittering glare, the fellows squatted on the floor, devouring pastries by the score.

"Pour out the good old jinger-wine!" said Tubby Barrell. "This is fine!"

"Pass the doe-nutts, if you please—"

"Pass the sandwiches and cheese—"

"Carve a slice of current cake—"

"This is prime, and no mistake!"

The feest prosceeded merrily—a topping spread, yea, verily! But suddenly there came a hush. On Jolly's face appeared a blush. For in the doorway of the room, the feesters saw a figger loom!

"It's Mr. Lickham!" muttered Bright. "Quick! Shove the hamper out of sight!"

"Too late, too late!" arose the cry. For Mr. Lickham's eager eye had seen the chicken and the ham, the gorgonzoler and the jam. He gazed upon the festive scene. "Boys, what does this commotion mean?"

Jack Jolly tried in vain to speak. He simply gave a feeble squeak. The others moved towards their beds, with drooping shoulders and bowed heads.

"COME SING TO ME—"

Next Monday there will be, dear boys, a "SINGING" number, in which the joys and other sides of such a pastime are well described—but NOT in rhyme.

Now don't you miss this "vocal" treat,
"Singing" from us is hard to beat;
We've "warbled" in your ear before,
Stand by then, chums, for a grand encore.

The master of the Fourth stood there, and ran his fingers through his hair. At sight of that attractive spread, the wretched master lost his head. With hunger he was pail and lean; he had a haggard, careworn mean.

"Jolly," he said, in feeble tones. "I'm nothing but a bag of bones! I've had no dinner and no tea—a skollington I soon shall be! If only I may taste your fare, I won't report this conduct—there!"

"Pile in!" was Jolly's cheerful answer. "Eat all the doe-nutts that you can, sir!"

So Lickham laid aside his gown, and on the floor he squatted down. In wonderment the fellows eyed him, and some of them sat down beside him. They gasped to see his molars munching; it was just like a lion lunching!

"My boys," he blurted out at last, "this is an eggsellent repast! For many moons I have not tasted such goodly fare. Let none be wasted!"

Then Mr. Lickham, as he spoke, turned purple and began to choke. There came the russle of a gown. The Head stepped in, with fearsome frown. "Why, Lickham, bless my sole!" said he. "What means this merriment and glee? Why are you sitting on the floor, devouring cakes and buns galore? Your indigestion will be cronick! Methinks you will require a tonnick!"

Old Lickham blinked up at the Head. "I felt so faint and queer," he said, "I simply had to have a feed. Pardon this gluttony and greed!"

There was a long and awful paws—the Head's expression was the caws. What would he do to Mr. Lickham? And to the fellows? Would he kick 'em?

Soon his expression grew less tragic, and his frown went as if by magic. He gazed upon that tempting tuck, and simply didn't have the pluck to trample down the keen temptation to join that schoolboy sellybration!

"You are forgiven, boys," he said, "provided you go back to bed. Lickham, I pardon you as well. Now, kindly leave me for a spell!"

When Lickham shuffled to the door, the Head sat down upon the floor, no longer looking feerce and vicious. "These tarts," he mormered, "are delicious! Whoever organised this spread had lots of wisdom in his head."

Jack Jolly was the person meant. He chuckled at the compliment.

The Head enjoyed a good tuck-in. "That's fine!" he muttered, with a grin. "Jolly, you've saved me from starvation, and filled my sole with jewhilation! Good-night, my dear young friends—good-night!"

"Why, he can hardly walk!" gasped Bright.

Next morning there was ripping news. The kitchen staff had changed their views. They all returned to work once more, cooking the dinners as of yore. Their lightning strike, you may depend, will never be forgot.

THE END.



(Continued from page 13.)

what was wrong with them at once. At the same moment he seemed to remember something.

Calling the errand-boy to him, the assistant whispered something, and the boy rushed out of the shop. Fishy stared after him.

"Had to send him out for change," lied the shop-assistant glibly. "You don't mind waiting, sir?"

"I guess I don't."

So Fishy waited, and he was still waiting—though very impatiently—some four or five minutes later when the errand-boy returned, grinning all over his face. Behind him was a burly, familiar figure in blue.

It was P.-c. Tozer, the Friardale constable. Fisher T. Fish blinked at him.

"Waal, I swow!" he gasped in alarm. "I—I kinder reckon—"

"That's him!" announced the assistant, pointing at the American junior. "And these are the postal-orders," he added, handing them over to the podgy guardian of the law. "You'll notice they're not stamped or initialed, and they're for a bob each. Wasn't there some bob postal-orders among that lot as was pinched from Pegg post-office?"

P.-c. Tozer consulted his pocket-book with portly dignity, and with one eye on Fishy.

"It's a catch!" he said, nodding. "Fifty of 'em there was—fifty new, unissued postal-orders. You'll come along with me, young feller."

Fishy stood transfixed, until the constable rolled towards him, and then he acted desperately. Butting the constable in the ribs, he jumped for the doorway.

"Grough!" gasped P.-c. Tozer.

He doubled up like a punctured balloon, and sat down in an opened sack of flour behind him. Fishy was through the doorway and flying down the street next moment.

"Stop 'im!" bellowed the furious constable, scrambling with difficulty out of the sack of flour.

He rushed out of the general store with the assistant and the errand-boy at his heels. All three went down the village street after the flying American junior, yelling as they went.

"Stop 'im! Hey! Stop that feller!"

"Oh, jumping Jerusalem crackers!" panted Fishy.

He had been in too big a hurry to bother about his bike, but he wished he had stopped for it now. There were a fair number of people in the High Street, and they stared at the chase, fortunately for Fishy, not having the wits to attempt to stop him until too late.

But just before he reached Uncle Clegg's shop five juniors came out of the shop to where their bikes were standing at the kerb.

They were Harry Wharton & Co., and they stared round on hearing the commotion.

"Hallo: what the thump—"

"Stop thief! Hey! Stop that feller!"

"My hat! It's a giddy thief!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Look at old Tozer! I say, it's up to us to collar the merchant."

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"Yes, rather!"

The juniors jumped into the roadway on the instant, anxious only to do their duty by aiding the police. Fishy yelled and swerved to dodge them, but Bob Cherry collared him low and brought him crashing down.

"Yarrough!" roared the American junior, his spectacles flying yards away.

"You silly galoots, lemme go! Can't you see I'm Fishy, you idiots?"

"Fishy!"

"Great Scott!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"It is Fishy!" said Harry Wharton, in amazement. "Oh, great pip! Let him go, you asses! Fishy, you dummy, collar my bike—quick!"

Fishy was already on his feet, and he fairly wrenched the bicycle from Harry's eager hands. He leaped into the saddle just as the crowd came charging up.

"No, you don't, me lad!" panted P.-c. Tozer.

The constable's hand just missed the saddle of Harry's bike, and the next moment Fisher T. Fish was racing away down the village street, the pedals fairly whirling round under his feet.

"Well, my hat!" ejaculated Harry Wharton, staring after him blankly. "What on earth can have happened, you fellows?"

"Blessed if I can guess!" grinned Bob Cherry. "I say, the bobby didn't spot anything. What about pretending to go in chase of Fishy?"

"Good wheeze! Let me ride on your back step, Bob."

The juniors mounted without delay. P.-c. Tozer and the rest of the villagers had given up the chase for the moment as hopeless and were returning.

In a flash the juniors were mounted and riding hard on the trail of the hapless Fishy, Harry Wharton standing on the back step of Bob's machine. They flashed past the disgusted constable and the villagers, and soon they were in the Friardale Lane, racing hard after Fishy.

It was not until they were almost at the gates of Greyfriars that they caught Fishy up, however. As the Famous Five rode alongside him Fishy eyed them dismally.

"Ave they after me?" he panted. "Gee-whiz! I reckon that was a narrow shave for this guy! Oh, jemima!"

"You're safe enough now, Fishy," grinned Bob Cherry.

"Let's have my bike!" called Harry Wharton.

The juniors dismounted, and after a sharp look behind him Fisher T. Fish did likewise, and handed the machine over to Harry Wharton.

"I guess that old gridiron saved this guy's bacon, Wharton!" he gasped. "I guess I've been a goldarned fool to shove my oar into this hyor pesky postal-order business. Yep! I see it now!"

"Postal-order!" echoed Harry Wharton.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry. "We might have guessed Bunter was at the bottom of this. What's happened, Fishy?"

"I guess there ain't nothing to laugh at!" groaned Fishy dismally. "I guess this guy's had a narrow escape. And, oh, Jerusalem crickets, I've left my pesky bike behind!"

Fisher T. Fish fairly wrung his hands and almost wept with dismay.

"My goldarned gridiron!" he moaned. "And three bob gone, too! Three silver shillings! Oh jemima! I guess I'll make apple-shavings of that galoot Bunter for letting me in for this! Three bob and a bike! I guess I've got

to get that bike back somehow, though!"

"What on earth has happened, you ass?" demanded Harry Wharton.

Fishy groaned again hollowly, and then he explained.

"I reckoned I was on to a snip," he groaned. "I reckoned the risk wasn't worth a dime. I reckon I was wrong. I reckoned because old Prouty had cashed some of that pesky fat galoot's postal-orders that I should be safe enough to do likewise. I reckoned on clearing some spondulicks over it. Oh, great jumping Jerusalem crackers!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Wharton quite failed to find any sympathy for the crafty American junior. They roared with laughter: they could not help it.

"I guess you jays needn't do the heehaw stunt!" snarled Fishy bitterly. "I guess it's no cackling matter! My bike. My three bob! And, oh, my hat! How'm I goin' to get my durocks back on the quid I've handed over to that fat clam Bunter? I guess I'm after that fat swindler before he shoots it all into Mrs. Mible's till! Oh, jumping snakes!"

As the thought struck the American junior he rushed away through the gates like a streak of lightning.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Wharton & Co. roared.

"Well, my hat! What a scream!" panted Bob Cherry. "Poor old Fishy! It's not often the crafty old Shylock is left, but it looks as if he's been badly left this time!"

"Serves him jolly well right, too!" grinned Johnny Bull.

That was the opinion of the Famous Five as a whole. In his efforts to get something for nothing the transatlantic junior had over-reached himself this time. And there was a plentiful lack of sympathy among Harry Wharton & Co.

"It's not finished with yet, though—you mark my words!" said Harry seriously, as they walked their bikes across to the cycle-shed. "They've got Fishy's bike, and they'll trace its owner soon enough. There's trouble ahead for Bunter, as well as Fishy!"

And Harry Wharton was right there.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

An Arresting Incident!

"HALLO! Great pip! What the thump—"

Harry Wharton stopped, with a gasp—as did his four chums. They had just housed their machines in the cycle-shed, and were wending their way round to the School House, when their eyes beheld rather a remarkable sight.

Just as they were passing the old woodshed near the chapel they saw a figure emerge from the gloomy interior. It was the form of an exceeding podgy policeman, and he came slinking out in an exceedingly suspicious manner.

"Well, my hat!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "Old Tozer! What on earth is—"

"It looks like Tozer," began Harry Wharton, staring hard at the familiar form in blue; "and yet it doesn't seem like him somehow. Hallo!"

Harry gave a sudden cry of bewilderment. Hard on the heels of P.-c. Tozer—if it could be that official of the law—came a little crowd of grinning juniors. The juniors recognised Stott and Snoop and Bolsover and Bulstrode and quite a number of Remove fellows.

"Wonder what's on?" muttered Harry.

"Come on, you fellows, we mustn't miss this!"

"Rather not!"

The puzzled juniors raced forward and tacked themselves on to the chortling procession.

"What the thump's this game, Bulstrode?" demanded Harry Wharton. "What's old Tozer after?"

"Bunter!" explained Bulstrode cheerfully. "The fat ass has been sailing pretty close to the wind for a good bit now. He's overdone it over this postal-order business, though. Skinner—I mean, old Tozer—is going to arrest him!"

"Oh!" gasped the juniors.

They understood now, and delighted grins came over their faces.

"So—so that's Skinner!" ejaculated Harry, nodding to the figure in blue. "My hat! I can see it now, of course. Whew!—What a wheeze!"

"Do the fat ass good to give him a fright!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "It'll perhaps make him pull up before it's too late and he does actually land in clink."

"Ha, ha! Yes!"

The figure in blue looked round suddenly.

"Sure the fat burglar is in the tuckshop?" he exclaimed in deep, gruff tones.

"Absolutely sure!" chortled Bulstrode. "Where on earth else do you expect to find him?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Sure the coast is clear?" demanded the "constable" again.

"All serene," called out Bolsover.

"Good! Here goes then. Back up, you fellows!"

"What-ho!"

The voice was Skinner's own this time, and as he left the shelter of the

chapel wall the rest of the procession followed him. It was not a long distance to the tuckshop nestling beneath the old elms, and in less than a minute the form in blue had crossed the intervening space in safety.

When he reached the doorway of the tuckshop the whole crowd of eager juniors were at his heels. They were frantically keen to see the "arrest" of Billy Bunter.

As they blinked over Skinner's shoulder into the tuckshop they saw Billy Bunter at once—and they heard him, too. He was with Fisher T. Fish. And Fish had Billy Bunter's head in chancery, and was punching away at Bunter's face as if for a wager, to the accompaniment of terrific yells from Billy Bunter.

P.-c. Skinner took a pair of handcuffs from his pocket and entered the shop, jingling them in his hands.

"Ere, 'ere! What's all this?" he exclaimed in deep, official tones. "Fighting, hey? I'll have to arrest you twice over then, Master Bunter."

At the sound of the heavy tramp of Skinner's No. 11 boots Fishy had dropped Bunter and looked round. As he beheld the ominous figure in blue he fairly shook from head to toe.

"Oh, great jumping snakes!" he groaned. "Ow! Oh jemima!"

Bunter also looked round, and as he beheld the man in blue his wild howls ceased, and, like Fishy, he fairly shook.

"Oh lor'!" he groaned. "Oh dear!"

It was only too clear that both Bunter and Fishy had guilty consciences.

Mrs. Mimble, who was looking much agitated, gave a gasp.

"G-good gracious, Mr. Tozer!" she gasped. "What ever is the matter?"

"Matter?" was the gruff reply. "This 'ere is a case of receiving stolen property, Mrs. Mimble. I'm sorry to have to harrest Master Bunter; but dooty is dooty!"

"Ow!"

Bunter gave a yelp. Fisher T. Fish gasped aloud with deep relief. To his utter amazement, the constable did not address him, nor did he even glance at him. Skinner's clever make-up had completely deceived him, and he had imagined the village constable had followed him from the village.

He knew different now, however. And, watching his chance, Fishy slipped round the podgy official and bolted through the doorway.

But the hapless Bunter had no chance to do likewise. P.-c. Skinner's hand fell on his shoulder.

"I harrest you, Master Bunter!" he exclaimed in deep, impressive tones. "For a receiving of stolen postal-orders which is the property of 'is Majesty."

"Ow! Oh dear! It's all a mistake!" howled Bunter frantically. "It wasn't me! I don't know anything about any postal-orders. Ow! Never even seen one! Ow! Besides, I found 'em—you can't deny that!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I warns you afore you goes any farther," said the disguised Skinner, "that anything you sez will be thundering whoppers—I mean, will be used against you at your trial, Master Bunter."

"Ow! Oh dear! I say, you fellows, go for him! Knock old Tozer down while I get away. Ow! Fetch Quelchy someone!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors roared, but Bunter was too terrified even to notice that fact.

CAN YOU SOLVE THIS ONE?

Cross word puzzles are all the rage, In future, chums, upon this page You'll find a simple problem.

PUZZLE No. 5.

All you will need is a pencil, rubber, and a little patience.

I want it to be clearly understood that these puzzles are published merely for your AMUSEMENT. There is no competition attached to the scheme. Readers are, therefore, requested not to send in their solutions.

Next week's MAGNET will contain the solution of this week's cross word puzzle, together with a new puzzle. Now for a few tips on solving cross word puzzles.

In the diagram alongside you will see a number of white and black squares, in some of which appear numbers. Each number in the puzzle indicates the position of the first letter of the word whose definition you will find in the clue column alongside the same number in the square. From this clue you are to decide what the word is, and to place each of its letters in one square until the number of white squares allotted to this word has been filled.

Each word reads from left to right (across) or top to bottom (down) according to the positions indicated in the clue column.

Remember that each black square separates one word from another.

When you have completed the puzzle you will find that all the words that cross interlock.

It is advisable to pencil the letters in lightly at first, so that should they be wrong you will be able to erase them with a rubber, without mutilating the diagram. Now get busy, chums!

CLUES DOWN.

1. Boy's name.
2. Short for "advertisement."
3. Female sheep.
4. A vegetable.
5. A district of London.
6. Thick-headed.
8. Wicked.
10. To fancy.
11. Negative.
12. A Japanese ounce.
13. Condition of dog's collar.
15. Writing—distinct from poetry.
16. Vegetable that makes you cry.
21. Stained with rust.
22. A bird.
23. A commotion.
24. An enemy.
25. What a hard-hitting batsman does.
27. Singles.
28. An article.
32. The King.
34. Conjunction.

CLUES ACROSS.

1. Famous British sailor.
4. Made into loaves.
7. Tiny.
9. Girl's name (abbreviated).
11. Not ever.
13. Prefix meaning "not."
14. Lines.
17. A fresh-water fish.
18. A single time.
19. Depart.
20. Nearly ill.
21. An increase of salary.
24. Enemies.
26. Without emotion.
29. A point of the compass.
30. To join forces.
31. Word of refusal.
33. Before.
35. Found in the MAGNET Library.
36. Awarded for good conduct.

CROSS WORD PUZZLE No. 5.

1		2		3		4		5		6
				7		8				
9	10		11				12		13	
14		15						16		
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Solution and a New Puzzle Next Monday.

THE SOLUTION OF LAST WEEK'S PUZZLE APPEARS ON PAGE 20.

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"Now, then, let's have the darbies on!"

"Ow! Yarrrough!" roared Bunter. "Rescue, you fellows! Yow! Rescue, Wharton! Oh, help!"

Bunter yelled frantically as Skinner twisted his wrists and slipped on the handcuffs. There was a snap and it was done.

The hapless Billy Bunter stood, almost weeping with horror, with "Tozer's" hand on his shoulder, and the steel bracelets on his wrists.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

His schoolfellows' heartless hilarity almost made the fat junior explode with indignation and emotion.

"You heartless beasts!" he shrieked, glaring at them bitterly through his big spectacles. "Why don't you help a chap? Don't let this beast take me away, Wharton. Yarrrough!"

Bunter yelled as Skinner grasped him and yanked him towards the door.

"Kim on!" he said gruffly. "I 'opes this 'ere will be a lastin' lesson to all these other young himps! Kim on!"

"Grough!"

There was no help for it—Bunter had to go. Had the practical joking Skinner been wise he would have been satisfied with his success. But Skinner was not wise—or satisfied. He wanted to march the squirming Bunter through the gates badly. So he dragged Bunter out of the tuckshop, and there was a roar as the two emerged into the open.

"The silly idiot!" grinned Harry Wharton. "That's just Skinner all over—he always overdoes things. He'll be spotted by Quelch or someone as sure as fate."

But apparently Skinner did not think so—or if he did so he was heedless in the elation of his success as an impersonator. Followed by the laughing crowd—a crowd which grew bigger every second—he marched the almost hysterical Billy Bunter towards the gates. He had almost reached them when a figure in cap and gown came through the gates. It was Mr. Prout, who had just slipped out to post a letter in the wall pillar-box.

"Oh, great Scott!" gasped Bob Cherry. "That's done it!"

It had indeed! Mr. Prout stopped dead and stared, transfixed, at the sight of Bunter, handcuffed and being led away by a constable.

"G-good gracious!" he ejaculated in horrified alarm. "Bub-Bunter, my dear boy—constable, my dear man—Good gracious!"

"Stop him!" howled Bunter tearfully. "Ow! Don't let him take me away. Yow! Rescue!"

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated Mr. Prout, blinking from the constable to his prisoner. "I am amazed, astounded! A Greyfriars boy—under arrest! Good gracious! Constable, what does this mean?"

Skinner released his grasp on Billy Bunter, and trembled. He wished from the bottom of his heart that he had not been quite so zealous in carrying out his duty as a "constable" now.

"I—I—I—" he gasped.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The crowd—or, rather, those "in the know"—roared at the expression of dismay and indecision on Harold Skinner's face.

Mr. Prout looked round him in scandalised anger.

"Silence, boys!" he thundered. "How dare you give rein to hilarity at such a time. Constable, is Dr. Locke aware of this—this amazing situation?"

Skinner did not reply to that. He felt a dismal premonition that Dr. Locke would very soon know now in any case.

There was a stir in the crowd, and Wingate, the captain of Greyfriars, came closer. There was a grim expression on Wingate's face as he stared for a moment at "P.-c. Tozer."

"Excuse me, sir—" he was beginning, when at that moment a dramatic interruption occurred.

Through the gates before them loomed a burly form in the blue uniform of the police force. It was Police-constable Tozer—the real one this time!

Mr. Prout almost yelled; he blinked at the man in blue as if he were petrified. So also did Bunter, and the rest of the crowd who were not in the joke.

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated Mr. Prout, putting his hand to his head. "What—what—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

At that moment the real P.-c. Tozer saw the false one, and the expression on his face was too much for the Removites. They roared.

"Ere—ere!" ejaculated the constable, staring aghast at his double. "Why, blowed if it ain't me! My heye!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wingate," gasped Mr. Prout, "I—"

"I think it is pretty clear what this means, sir," smiled Wingate. "This is an impostor! He is a practical joker, I fancy. From his size I should say—"

As he spoke Wingate made a sudden jump forward, and his grasp closed on one of Skinner's side-whiskers. It came away in Wingate's hand.

"Great Scott!"

"Stop him!" roared Wingate.

For even as Skinner's clean-shaven cheek was revealed that luckless joker made a flying jump, and went streaking across the Close.

Though Wingate's act had revealed a boyish face neither Mr. Prout nor Wingate had recognised him, and Wingate, at all events, was determined to discover his identity.

He was off after Skinner with a rush.

"My heye!" ejaculated the scandalised P.-c. Tozer. "An impostor, hey? I'll soon teach 'im to play tricks with the Force!"

And Tozer also went after Skinner. He was followed by the crowd in one headlong rush, most of the juniors yelling with laughter.

"Here!" howled Billy Bunter, glaring after them, with his manacled hands outstretched. "Take these things off! Oh crumbs! Come back!"

But nobody heeded Billy Bunter.

Skinner had made a beeline for the wood-shed; but Wingate seemed to guess his objective, for he shot across with the speed of the wind to cut him off.

Skinner saw this through the corner of his eye, and he turned desperately and made for the School House doorway.

"Stop him!"

A group of three seniors were coming down the steps into the quad, and they were Coker, Potter, and Greene.

"Great pip!" ejaculated Coker as he saw the racing figure in blue with the crowd streaming on his track. "Mummy hat! I say, stop this merchant, you chaps!"

"What-ho!"

The three seniors spread out and waited for the hapless Skinner.

"Lemme go!" howled Skinner.

He chose Coker as being the less dangerous of the three, and, ducking his head, he charged full-tilt at him.

"Stop the young rascal!" roared Wingate.

Coker did his manful best to obey. He grabbed at Skinner, who ducked and butted him below the chest. As Skinner was going at a good speed it was no light matter.

"Ow! Yarooooop!"

Coker gave a choking yell and collapsed, roaring. Skinner dodged under Potter's outstretched arm, and, leaping up the School House steps, he vanished through the doorway into the House.

But Wingate was hard on his heels now, and Skinner knew it would be touch and go. He raced across the Hall and fairly flew up the stairs. Reaching the top he raced for the Remove passage. If he could only reach his own study he felt he would be safe.

But, alas! for his hopes. As he entered the passage he ran full-tilt into someone coming along from the opposite direction. It was Mr. Quelch, and the collision was terrific. The Remove master reeled backwards and sat down with a gasp resembling the escape of air from a punctured balloon.

"Ow!" panted Skinner. "Oh dear!"

The junior realised he had "done it" now with a vengeance, and he lost his head completely. At all costs he must find sanctuary—somewhere where he could shed the incriminating garments.

In sheer desperation Skinner raced on and dived through the nearest open door. It proved to be the doorway of Lord Mauleverer's study, and, once inside, Skinner slammed the door and grabbed for the key.

Then he groaned aloud; the key was missing from the lock!

"Oh, my hat!" groaned Skinner.

At his wits' end, the junior looked wildly about him. He could hear the tramp of feet in the passage, and Mr. Quelch's angry voice. And in that moment of sheer desperation the practical joker remembered something.

Dashing to the window he flung up the sash. Outside the window was a spreading elm, two of the branches of which almost scraped the window itself. Skinner remembered that Sir Jimmy Vivian had bragged that he had made his way to the quad below by means of the tree more than once.

But dare he attempt it?

At any other time Skinner would never have dreamed of attempting the task. But the sound of the door-knob rattling just then settled the matter for Skinner.

With a gasp of alarm he scrambled through on to the stone ledge below the window. Then he reached out and grasped the nearest bough, which was just about his height from another thick bough below it.

A moment later he was working his way along it with his feet resting on the bough below.

To an agile and cool-headed boy the task was easy enough and presented little danger. But Skinner was by no means cool-headed just then, and before he had taken a dozen side-steps along the boughs he met with disaster.

As he neared the trunk the two boughs ran closer together, and suddenly Skinner's tunic caught in a projecting spike, pulling him up short.

The unexpected jerk caused Skinner's trembling feet to slip, and with a yell of fear Skinner fell, his weight dragging his hands from their hold on the thick bough.

But he did not fall far. There followed a sudden tearing of cloth, and Skinner felt a sudden terrific jerk at his back.

The next moment he was hanging suspended from the lower bough by his

belt and tunic, which had caught on a jutting spike of broken bough.

P.-c. Tozer and Mr. Prout, who were below, stopped dead with amazement.

At the same moment Wingate and Mr. Quelch appeared at the window. They stared in great alarm at the helpless figure of Skinner below them.

"Good heavens!" gasped Mr. Quelch in an agitated voice. "The man will be— Bless my soul, it is a boy! It is Skinner of my Form!"

The hapless Skinner could be recognised easily enough now. His helmet had gone, likewise his false hair and eyebrows.

"Bless my soul! This—this is too much!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch, his eyes gleaming with anger. "The boy must be rescued, however. At any moment he—"

"I'll see to him, sir!" said Wingate grimly.

He ran from the room, sending the staring crowd in the doorway flying to right and left. Mr. Quelch hurried out-of-doors after him, followed by the excited spectators.

When the Remove master reached the spot below the tree he found Wingate and Walker of the Sixth clambering up the tree towards the luckless Skinner, who was yelling wildly for help, but not daring to move.

The crowd and Mr. Quelch watched breathlessly as Wingate slipped along the bough and his grasp closed on the belt round Skinner's waist.

"Keep quiet, you young ass!" called Wingate. "We'll soon have you all serene!"

"Hurry up!" wailed Skinner. "Yow! I'm falling, I think!"

"Rot!" grunted Wingate. "Grab hold of the bough when I lift, you young idiot!"

Wingate hauled, and a moment later Skinner's trembling hands had gripped the bough, and the rest was easy. With the help of the captain and Walker, Skinner reached the ground in safety.

A loud cheer with more than a trace of irony in it greeted him.

"Skinner!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch, his eyes glittering with wrath. "Skinner, you utterly foolish boy, what does this absurd masquerade mean?"

"Ow! Oh dear!" panted Skinner. "It—it was only a joke, sir!"

Mr. Quelch looked Skinner over sternly. The rest of the crowd looked at him with broad grins. The hapless practical joker looked a sight. His features were smeared with grease-paint, the padding had slipped down from below his tunic, and he looked a very woebegone picture.

"Only a joke!" echoed the Remove master grimly. "You have caused me grievous bodily injury, and I understand you have played a foolish and ridiculous joke upon Bunter. It is a joke for which you will pay dearly, Skinner!"

"It—it was only a lark, sir!" groaned Skinner. "I only meant to give Bunter a fright!"

"Very well, Skinner. You will follow me to my study. One moment, though," added Mr. Quelch. "There is one thing I do not understand. Why are you here, constable?"

As he spoke, Mr. Quelch turned to Police-constable Tozer, and that worthy gave a dignified grunt.

"Which I'm 'ere on dooty, sir," he said, glaring at Skinner. "And what this 'ere young himp's doin' dressed up as me, beats me holler. I jest come to see the 'cadmaster on important business."

"If it is anything I can deal with—" began Mr. Quelch.



"I warns you afore you goes any further," said the disguised Skinner, "that anything you sez will be used against you at your trial, Master Bunter." "Ow! Oh dear!" groaned Bunter. "T-t-trial! I say, you fellows, go for him—knock him down while I get away!" "Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors in the doorway. (See Chapter 8.)

"Which it's a werry serious matter, sir," said P.-c. Tozer darkly. "Case of receiving stolen property, if it ain't somethin' worse. I come to see the 'Ead about a young gent name of Fish. He was caught a-trying to change some postal-orders in the village—postal-orders what's bin stolen from the Pegg post-office."

"G-good gracious!" gasped Mr. Quelch.

There was a buzz of astonishment.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Poor Old Bunter!

"GREAT Scott!"

"Postal-orders!"

"Bunter's, I'll bet!"

The very mention of postal-orders was enough for the juniors, and a chorus of exclamations and comments went up at once. Harry Wharton & Co., of course, had heard what had happened in the village, and they were not surprised.

"Phew! Fishy's for it now!" murmured Harry Wharton.

"So's Bunter!" remarked Frank Nugent. "It'll all come out now. My hat! Look at Fishy's face!"

All eyes were upon Fisher, T. Fish. That sharp youth was looking the picture of dismay.

"Fish!" gasped Mr. Quelch. "Can this be true, boy? Is it possible that you were discovered attempting to change stolen postal-orders?"

Fishy licked his dry lips and groaned. "I guess it's all a mistake, sir!" he mumbled. "I guess some galoot's been using my name—"

"Which there ain't no mistake, sir!" granted P.-c. Tozer. "Which this 'ere young gent was the feller, right enough. 'E was a skinny chap, with a face like a 'awk—jest like this young gent. And he talked like an American, too, I understands. 'E got away, but he left 'is bike behind, which 'ad 'is name on the saddle."

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch, eyeing the wretched Fisher T. Fish sternly. "There seems to be no doubt that the person was you, Fish. Your guilty face alone satisfies me upon that point, Fish."

Fishy's face was almost green with fear. He realised there was no help for it now.

"I guess it wasn't my fault," he groaned. "I guess I'm the innocent guy on this hyer stunt. I reckon I cashed those postal-orders for Bunter, not knowing the pesky things were stolen, sir."

"Bunter!" ejaculated Mr. Quelch. "So—so Bunter is involved in this amazing affair?"

"Yep, sir. I guess he's been cashing these postal-orders right and left, sir. I guess I got the pesky things from him, and I guess I only did what others have done. Mr. Prout will tell you he cashed one for the fat clam."

"Good gracious!"

It was Mr. Prout this time. He had arrived on the scene just in time to hear P.-c. Tozer's charge, and his face was pink.

"Good heavens!" he gasped. "The boy is quite right, my dear Quelch. I certainly did cash two postal-orders for Bunter. Is it possible that they were stolen ones?"

"If you 'appen to 'ave 'em with you, THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 891.

sir, I can soon tell you that," said P.-c. Tozer pompously. "There was fifty bob ones as ain't never bin issued. They got no stamp on, nor no initials."

Mr. Prout fumbled inside his wallet in great agitation, and after a moment he produced two postal-orders. He blinked at them and jumped.

"They are undoubtedly stolen ones!" he ejaculated, handing them to Mr. Quelch. "Good gracious! This is terrible, my dear Quelch! That wicked boy, Bunter—"

"Where is Bunter?" demanded Mr. Quelch, glaring about him. "Wingate see—"

"He was here a moment ago, sir," said Wingate.

"He is not here now, however," said Mr. Quelch grimly. "Wharton, do you know where the wretched boy is?"

"Ahem! I—I fancy he went round by the chapel a few moments ago, sir!" stammered Harry.

"Very good! Will you find him, Wharton, and bring him to Dr. Locke's study without delay? Mr. Prout, this matter is most serious, and must be looked into without delay."

"Outrageous!" puffed Mr. Prout angrily. "That wretched boy dared to come to me—"

"The matter must be placed before Dr. Locke," said Mr. Quelch. "Constable, will you accompany me? And," went on the Remove master, fixing his eyes grimly on Fisher T. Fish and Skinner, "you two boys will also accompany me."

"Oh, dear!"

"Oh, jemma!"

Looking far from happy, Skinner and Fish followed Mr. Quelch, Mr. Prout, and P.-c. Tozer indoors. Harry Wharton nodded to his chums, and hurried away in search of Bunter, leaving the rest of the crowd in an excited buzz.

"Well, my only hat!" gasped Bob Cherry, as the Famous Five hurried away together. "This looks like the sack for Bunter at last!"

"It serves the fat ass right, blessed if it doesn't!" grunted Harry. "We warned him, and Toddy warned him!"

"Wonder where on earth the fat ass got them from?"

"Goodness knows! Anyway, let's find the fat ass! I spotted him sneaking away just after Tozer said what he'd come about."

The juniors hurried round by the chapel, their eyes keenly on the alert for Billy Bunter. They guessed the hapless fat junior was hiding somewhere at the back of the school.

He was nowhere round the chapel, however, and the juniors were about to make for the cloisters when the sound of a voice pulled them up short.

"I say, you fellows—"

It was Bunter's voice, and it seemed to come from the bowels of the earth.

"What the thump!" ejaculated Bob Cherry, blinking round in amazement. "That was Bunter's—"

"I say, you fellows, has that awful beast Tozer gone?"

This time the startled juniors located the voice, and they gasped as they saw where it came from. As they gazed blankly about them Frank Nugent's sharp eyes caught sight of a gleaming pair of spectacles showing through a grating in the school basement.

"Here he is!" yelled Frank. "In the blessed coal-cellar! Great Scott!"

"I—I say, you fellows—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors roared as they saw Bunter's face pressed against the iron bars

of the grating. The fat junior had evidently deemed the school coal-cellar a safe hiding-place.

He blinked appealingly at the juniors, his fat face smudged with coal dust, his hands, which were still handcuffed, clutching the bars of the grating.

"I say, you fellows!" he gasped pathetically. "It's nothing to laugh about, you beasts! Has that awful beast Tozer gone yet?"

"He's gone to the Head," said Harry grimly. "And you've got to go to the Head, too, Bunter."

"Oh dear! I say, you fellows, I'm not coming, you know. Tozer's after me—I know he is!" groaned Bunter. "I say, tell him I've gone away—tell him I've gone to—to Courtfield, will you?"

"No, we won't, Billy!" snapped Harry. "We've been sent to fetch you, Bunter, and you're coming. Come on, out of that!"

"Oh, really, Wharton, you heartless beast! I'm not coming! That blessed bobby wants to arrest me! I'm not blessed well com— Yarrrough! Here, leggo, you beasts!"

But the "beasts" did not let go. They grasped the bars of the loose grating and hauled at it. Bunter yelled and clung on to the bars grimly, but against the five his efforts were unavailing. The juniors were sorry for the fat youth, but they meant to carry out their orders, for all that.

With Bunter still hanging on grimly to the grating, the juniors dragged it up, and then they dragged hold of the yelling Bunter.

At that moment Wingate came running up, and he stopped and gasped at sight of Bunter. With his manacled hands, his dirty face, and still dirtier clothing, Billy Bunter looked a sight for the gods.

"G-good lor'!" gasped Wingate. "You've found the fat idiot then, Wharton!"

"Here he is!" grinned Harry.

"I'm not coming, I won't come!" howled Bunter dismally. "I say—"

"Aren't you?" remarked Wingate grimly.

He grasped Bunter by the collar, and planted a hefty boot behind the fat junior.

"Get moving!" he snapped, "unless you want me to boot you all the way!"

"Ow! Yarrrough! Beasts!"

Bunter "got moving"—there was little else for him to do. And there was a yell as the little party approached the School House steps, where a crowd was gathered, waiting.

"Great pip, here he comes!"

"Poor old Bunter!"

"I knew it would come to this some day!" said Bulstrode sadly. "This means quod and skilly for Bunter."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a plentiful lack of sympathy for Billy Bunter, apparently.

But Bunter scarcely noticed the crowd. With Wingate's hand on his collar, he was marched up the steps and along to the Head's study.

As they approached the door, it opened, and Skinner of the Remove emerged. He was almost doubled up, and he was groaning and gasping like a cheap gramophone running down. Evidently Dr. Locke had started proceedings by disposing of Skinner's case first of all.

Skinner staggered away, and Wingate knocked on the Head's door and marched the hapless Bunter inside.

"Bless my soul!"

The Head, who was seated at his desk with Fisher T. Fish standing before him, fairly gasped as his eyes fell upon the dismal figure of Billy Bunter.

"Here is Bunter, sir," exclaimed Wingate, his mouth twitching. "He was found hiding in the coal-cellar, sir."

"Good gracious!" gasped Dr. Locke, fairly blinking at Bunter. "Why, the boy is still wearing handcuffs! Bless my soul! Constable, have you—can you—"

"Which I'll soon 'ave 'em off, sir," said P.-c. Tozer.

Luckily the handcuffs, though the property of the Remove Dramatic Society, were of the regulation pattern, and getting out his key, P.-c. Tozer soon had them off. Bunter fairly gasped aloud with relief.

"Now, Bunter," rumbled the Head, "we may now have an opportunity of getting to the bottom of this astounding affair. Fish, you state that you purchased thirty postal-orders for one shilling each from Bunter?"

"Yep, sir—"

"Fish!" thundered the Head angrily. "Will you speak in English, and desist from using those abominable American slang words in my presence?"

"Ow! Yep—I mean, yes, sir!" gasped Fishy. "I guess—I mean, I bought them in all good faith, sir—"

"That is nonsense, Fish!" thundered the Head again. "The very fact that you disguised yourself when you visited the village is proof that you know, or suspected, that there was something wrong with them. Did you pay Bunter the full face value for the orders, Fish?"

Fishy groaned.

"I guess—I mean, n-no, sir. I paid him eightpence each for them—a pound, cash down. It was a business deal—"

"That is enough, Fish!" snapped the Head, his brow thunderous. "Your part in this amazing affair is now perfectly clear to me. Now, Bunter, I will deal with you."

"Ow!"

Bunter's legs fairly trembled beneath him as the Head fixed his glance upon him.

"Bunter!" exclaimed the Head sternly. "First of all, I demand to be told how and from where you obtained those wretched postal-orders?"

"Ow! I say, sir, it's all a mistake! There—there never were any postal-orders at all."

"What?"

"I'm quite innocent, sir, innocent as a newly-born baby, sir! I've never even seen any postal-orders. Fishy's telling fibs, sir—awful whoppers! He's doing it to save his own skin, sir. Ho—he always was a fibber!"

"Waal, I swow!"

(Continued on page 27.)

SOLUTION OF CROSS WORD PUZZLE No. 4.

P	R	O	U	T		T	W	I	G	G
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HARD LUCK! Just when success stares Jack Drake in the face a cruel fate decrees that Dr. Fourstanton, the chief of the motor bandits, should elude the net and live to give the plucky boy sleuth "another run for his money."

THE DEPUTY DETECTIVE!

By Hedley Scott.



A Thrilling Detective Story Featuring JACK DRAKE, Ferrers Locke's Plucky Boy Assistant.

The Getaway!

"STOP him!" Jack Drake ran to the door and tugged furiously at the handle.

But the door was locked.

With a bitter exclamation the boy sleuth turned to see the extent of the damage the bandit chief had done to Walter Braithwaite.

"Groooough!"

The Fourth-Former was staggering to his feet, his right hand tenderly caressing a swelling on his cheek.

"We've let him go!" exclaimed Drake bitterly. "Fool that I am! He's locked us in!"

"The window!" gasped Braithwaite. "You can climb down the water spout and hop back into the House."

"Good for you!" said Drake.

And without waiting to see whether the Fourth-Former intended to follow, the boy sleuth raised the sash of the window and clambered astride the sill. His outstretched hand felt for and caught hold of the water spout that ran down the face of the wall. Little the boy sleuth cared that a slip meant certain death. Little did he know that he was perched perilously forty feet above the gravel drive. His attention was on the water spout.

His quarry had escaped him, had beaten him. But there was a bare chance that he might retrieve his mistake.

Two seconds later Drake was swarming hand under hand down the water spout. He did not see Braithwaite's shrinking face peer anxiously at him from the open window above, did not hear the junior's shout to him to be careful.

Drake's feet touched the ground at last. With an ejaculation of triumph he raced round the gravel drive and into the house. During his descent via the spout the sleuth had kept a vigilant watch on the big gates of the school. No one had left. That meant Dr. Fourstanton was still in the House.

As he ran Drake felt for his revolver. It gave him a certain amount of comfort and confidence to find it in his pocket. So eager was he to forestall the Head's chances of escape that he failed to remember the extraordinary spectacle he presented. He was clothed

in a pair of morning trousers, frock-coat; his patent leather shoes were clothed in white spats. His face, however, was out of all keeping with such elderly attire, for he had plucked away his disguise when he had named Dr. Fourstanton as the chief of the bandits.

Two or three juniors lounging about in the passage turned and stared at the extraordinary sight of a boy in a frock-coat and striped trousers running amok with a revolver in his hand.

A fag in the Second Form let out a howl of terror as Drake bore down upon him, and fled for his life.

Smiling grimly, Drake sped on. He realised now the weird and wonderful

CHARACTERS YOU WILL MEET.

JACK DRAKE, a boy of fifteen with a gift for detective work, the assistant of Ferrers Locke, the world-famous scientific investigator.

INSPECTOR PYECROFT, of the C.I.D. at Scotland Yard, a friend of Locke and Drake's.

THE CHIEF, a mysterious person who directs the coups of the notorious motor bandits, and of whose identity nothing is known to the police.

While Locke is away on the Continent Drake is given the opportunity of handling his first case, his instructions being to lay the rascally motor bandits by the heels.

He soon discovers that the chief of the motor bandits is in some way connected with a school.

After a whole heap of exciting adventures, in which Drake has many narrow escapes from death, the boy sleuth traces his man to Hurstleigh College. Disguised as an uncle of Walter Braithwaite—a junior boy at the school who has been let into the secret—Drake has tea with Dr. Fourstanton.

In Dr. Fourstanton Drake identifies the master-mind at the head of the motor-bandit organisation. Whipping off his facial disguise, the boy sleuth challenges the Head with his double life, keeping him covered meanwhile with a loaded revolver.

Walter Braithwaite is walking to the telephone prior to phoning for the police when, with a suddenness born of despair, Dr. Fourstanton snatches hold of a cup of scalding-hot tea and sends the lot clattering into Drake's face.

Braithwaite springs at his headmaster as he bolts for the door. He receives a blow full in the face which stretches him on the ground. Next moment the Head has fled from the room, slamming and locking the door on his would-be captors.

(Now read on.)

picture he presented. At the trot he turned into the Sixth Form passage.

Then he stopped.

At the end of the passage, outside the door of a room marked "Private," was a group of Hurstleigh juniors and seniors, all talking and yelling excitedly. In their midst was the tall figure of Dr. Fourstanton. His face was pale, his eyes continually roved towards the door marked private—the door of his own room.

"He's mad!" Drake heard him say to the juniors clustered around him. "He tried to kill me!"

"We'll collar him!" chirruped one junior boy. "Cheek! Braithwaite ought to know better than to bring a madman into the school. Why—"

The boy broke off suddenly as he caught sight of Drake coming along the passage. With wildly staring eyes, that shifted alternately from the revolver the sleuth carried to his youthful face, despite the odd pencilled lines, he shook a trembling finger in the lad's direction.

In a moment the crowd was in an uproar. All faces turned towards Jack Drake.

"There he is!" muttered the Head in a parched whisper. "He means to k-kill me!"

"Him!" said Snell of the Fifth contemptuously. Snell was a fighting man of repute. "Why, that little worm couldn't kill buttercups. You leave him to me, sir!"

"But be careful, Snell," said the Head, his eyes darting hither and thither, seeking a way of escape. "He is armed—he is dangerous!"

"I'll trouble you to put up your hands!" snapped Drake, pointing his weapon at Dr. Fourstanton's head. "This game isn't going to last any longer."

"Collar him!" shrilled one voice from the crowd. "Why, he's not a man at all! He's only a kid!"

A gasp of amazement went up when that startling fact was fully recognised. "He's mad!" muttered the Head. "Keep him away, boys!"

"Stand where you are, you fellows!" Drake's voice was menacing. "I want Dr. Fourstanton! I want the chief of the motor-bandits, and Dr. Fourstanton is that man!"

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"Off his rocker!" That was the whisper passed round the crowd.

"I know it wants a bit of believing," went on Drake. "But a court of law will prove all that. Meantime I must put the bracelets on that scoundrel!"

"You funny idiot!" sneered Snell, advancing a pace. "What the thump is this game? You ought to be in Colney Hatch, youngster."

"You'll be in kingdom come, if you don't stay where you are," rapped Drake, for the burly Fifth-Former was moving directly in front of Dr. Fourstanton, which meant that the boy sleuth no longer had him under observation.

"Collar him!" A subdued voice came from amidst the crowd of juniors and seniors. "He wouldn't fire that blessed gun at us. He'd swing for it if he did."

Only one brain had reasoned the situation out on those lines, but the notion caught on at once. Bitterly Drake realised that he was beaten again. He could not possibly fire at the crowd.

No one knew better than himself the game of bluff he had played with the revolver.

"Secure him!" rapped Dr. Fourstanton, who had now recovered his composure, "and I will go for the police."

"At him!"

Snell of the Fifth advanced truculently. His approach was only a ruse, however, for creeping up behind Drake were two burly seniors. At a nod from the Head the two hurled themselves upon the boy sleuth, bringing him to the ground in a struggling heap. His revolver was plucked from his hand and thrown out of the landing window. Next moment the whole crowd of scholars was descending on top of him.

Fighting like a wild cat, for Drake knew that his quarry would escape him yet again if he stopped and "acted like a gentleman," the boy sleuth managed to struggle to his feet. Only for a moment, however, was he allowed this restricted freedom. Dozens of hands grabbed at him, and down he went again. Before his head disappeared beneath a heap of struggling boys Drake caught sight of Dr. Fourstanton's mocking face. When next he was able to view the passage, directly before the door marked "Private," Dr. Fourstanton had gone!

"You fools!" exclaimed Drake angrily. "You meddling idiots! I—Yaroooh!"

A stray elbow jabbed him in the eye painfully, stray boots, too, were using him as a doormat, the breath was knocked and squeezed from his body.

Gasping and spluttering, his face crimson with pain and anger, Drake was hauled to his feet. On each side of him stood two hefty Sixth-Formers, both showing signs of wear and tear.

"Now, you young wild cat," grunted the taller of the two, "you'll be able to finish your little game in a padded coll. Hang on to his arm, Matthews. He's abnormally strong."

"I'll hang on," grunted Matthews.

"Hallo, where's the Head?"

"He's gone to fetch the police," volunteered one small fag. "He told me to tell you."

"Good!" grunted Matthews.

"He's not gone to fetch the police!" shrieked Drake. "He's escaping while you are all talking like a lot of fatheads. He's the bandit chief, I tell you!"

"We've heard all that before," growled Matthews. "And who are you—Cock Robin?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A laugh went up from the boys at Matthews' retort. It goaded Drake into a fury. For five minutes he lashed the whole crowd of them with his tongue.

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He struggled afresh, but he was helpless in the grasp of so many.

"Wish the Head would fetch that policeman along quick," grunted Snell, fingering a swollen nose tenderly.

"He's not gone for the police," repeated Drake. "Why the thump should he go for the police when he's got a phone in his room? I'm not mad, I tell you!"

For the first time the Hurstleigh fellows began to wonder whether they had made a mistake. The Head had been gone over ten minutes now. And why hadn't he phoned for the police?

"Where's Braithwaite?" suddenly asked Drake. "Find him, quick! He'll prove what I say. He was in the Head's room when I saw him last. I don't think he followed me out of the window."

A junior boy raced towards the door marked "Private." From within came the sound of blows; someone was thumping heavily upon the panels.

"Who's there?" called out Matthews.

The thumping ceased.

"Braithwaite!" came the reply through the panels of the door. "You meddling fatheads! I've been thumping on this rotten door for over ten minutes! Let me out! And don't let the Head get away, you chaps!"

The crowd of juniors and seniors looked sheepishly at Drake. It really seemed as if there was truth in what he had said.

"Open that door!" commanded Matthews of the Sixth.

Matthews was a prefect, and his order was obeyed on the instant. Five or six juniors began to hurl themselves at the stout oak panels. Drake smiled sardonically as he listened to the din. What did it matter now? Dr. Fourstanton had got a fifteen minute start of him. He could be eight miles or more away from Hurstleigh by this time if he took to his car.

Crash!

At last the lock gave way under the strain. The door flew open. In the aperture stood Braithwaite of the Fourth, a dark bruise on his cheek just below the eye. His face fell when he saw Drake a prisoner between the two Sixth-Formers.

"Messed the whole thing up!" said Drake. "These fatheaded chumps want talking to, Braithwaite. Perhaps you'll convince them that I am not mad! Per-

haps you will tell them what passed between Dr. Fourstanton and I in that room yonder twenty minutes ago?"

Thereupon Braithwaite explained to an amazed and half incredulous audience. But he was believed at the finish—so much pointed to the truth of his statement.

"Well, I'm hanged!" gasped Matthews, as the Fourth-Former concluded. "Who ever would have thought that the Beak was the bandit chief? There's no doubt about it now, though," he added. "He's been gone twenty minutes or more to fetch a policeman."

"Oh, my hat!"

"The villain!"

"The blessed rogue!"

That was how the junior members of the crowd expressed themselves when Braithwaite had finished.

Meantime, Drake was explaining affairs to two or three of the masters who had hastened to the spot to find out what all the din was about. They listened to his story in horrified amazement.

"And now, if you have no objection, gentlemen," said Drake ironically, "I'll take my departure. Months of work have been wasted over this regrettable mistake. I've jolly well got to start all over again."

The Hurstleigh fellows were profuse in their apologies, but the damage had been done. Upon questioning the gatekeeper it was discovered that the Head had driven out of the school in his car and had taken the road to London.

The obvious course, Drake reflected, would be to phone all the police-stations along the route Dr. Fourstanton intended to follow. A strict watch could then be kept for the number of his car.

Drake was about to adopt that measure, when he remembered the automatic number-plate the chief's car carried. There was not much use in giving the Head's official car number in the circumstances. And his car was like hundreds of others on the road—a Dainder, painted dark blue.

"Which as 'ow he seemed in a frightful state of perturbation!" grunted the porter. "Flew through the gates like a reg'lar Jehu, he did! Thought he was going to pile up his car on the corner posts!"

"London," said Drake thoughtfully.

"Well, that's something! I—"

He broke off as the village postman hove in sight. Drake watched the letters change hands as the gatekeeper shuffled towards the man.

"I suppose you haven't any letters for Dr. Fourstanton?" queried Drake, not knowing quite what prompted him to ask.

"Which there's onc," grunted the gatekeeper.

Drake exchanged glances with Mr. Mitchell, the master of the Fifth Form.

"Would you object to my opening that letter in your presence, sir?"

Mr. Mitchell considered for a moment. Then—

"In the circumstances, I think you are justified in opening that letter," he said. "But what information do you hope to obtain?"

"That I can't say," said Drake, with a smile. "Instinct prompts me to read it, that is all. In my profession, sir, instinct plays a very important part."

Mr. Mitchell himself opened the letter, read the contents, and handed the missive to Drake.

"Nothing to be gained from that," was his remark.

And so thought Drake for a moment.





At a nod from the Head two burly seniors hurled themselves upon Jack Drake. The boy sleuth's revolver was plucked from his grasp. Next moment the whole crowd of scholars was descending on top of him. Fighting like a wild cat, Drake tried to scramble free, but the odds were against him. (See page 22.)

The communication was the confirmation of a contract between a firm of Thames watermen and Dr. Fourstanton. It ran:

"Sir,—I shall be pleased to accept your commission at the figure you quote. My tug will be in readiness at Wapping, where, I understand, the cargo is to be taken on board at seven-thirty p.m., Wednesday.

"I shall be there in person to meet you.

"Yours faithfully,
"WILLIAM SHARPLING."

"Hum!" Drake regarded the letter thoughtfully. Then he turned to Mr. Mitchell. "Do you happen to know what all this means? Isn't it rather unusual for a headmaster to have dealings with a firm of Thames watermen?"

"It conveys nothing to me," answered the Form master.

Drake was silent for a moment. And then—

"Jove!" he exclaimed. "I've got it!"

His eyes sparkled with a new light. In his exuberance he had the utmost difficulty to refrain from thumping a learned Form master's back.

"William Sharpling," he muttered half to himself. "The Tin Lizzie! Oh, great Scotland Yard!"

"Wha-at?" gasped Mr. Mitchell. "What did you say? You've got it? Got what?"

"The mumps!" said Drake, with a grin; and, to the astonishment of Mr. Mitchell and a group of scholars, he raced for the gates and disappeared into the roadway beyond.

That was almost the last Hurstleigh

saw of Jack Drake. When the curiosity mongers reached the gates and peered out into the road they caught sight of a youthful figure garbed in frock-coat, morning trousers, and white spats clambering on the tailboard of a carrier's car which was speeding Londonwards.

The Hurstleighites began to wonder, after all, whether Drake was sane. They gazed at the retreating car and its peculiar "load" on the tailboard in dumb-founded amazement. Then they looked at each other blankly and murmured:

"Well, I'm blessed!"

So Near and Yet—

JACK DRAKE settled himself as comfortably as he could on the tailboard of the car and began to think things out. That letter he had requested to read had opened up a fresh trail for him.

"What the thump is the cargo the Head of a respectable school wants shifting?" he mused. "In this case it appears pretty obvious to be the loot from some of the recent burglaries. And William Sharpling—" He chuckled. "Oh, blessed is a memory! William Sharpling is none other than Bill Sharpling, the skipper and owner of the Tin Lizzie! He will be pleased to see me!"

The boy sleuth allowed his mind to revert to the time when Bill, the skipper of the Tin Lizzie, and his first mate and man-of-all-work, had rescued him from the packing-case. He chuckled.

"Fourstanton hasn't reckoned on my receiving this little note, I'll wager!" he muttered. "Lemme see, the letter says seven-thirty, Wednesday—that's to-

night. I'd wager my reputation Fourstanton visits old Bill Sharpling before he makes a break to get out of the country."

For a long while Drake sat musing on the tailboard. At last he made up his mind as to the best method of procedure. He would telephone Inspector Pycroft at the first opportunity that availed itself.

His chance came sooner than he imagined. The carrier's car was nearing a town. Drake's bump of locality was very pronounced.

Godalming. He recognised the narrow High Street immediately.

To the amusement of several passers-by, a frock-coated youth dropped lightly from the tailboard of the van and hurried into the local post-office.

Ten minutes later the boy sleuth was through on a trunk call to Scotland Yard.

As luck would have it, Pycroft himself answered the phone. His voice was vibrant with excitement when Drake had concluded his story.

"Good lad!" exclaimed the C.I.D. man. "Good lad! Dr. Fourstanton—well, I'm jiggered! Headmaster of Hurstleigh School?"

"Surprises you—what?"

"Gee! Reckon I'll get on to where Sharpling picks up that cargo at Wapping. There are a whole heap of wharves there, my lad. If the cargo is what you surmise it to be, Fourstanton is pretty certain to be on the spot before he hops it for good!"

The C.I.D. man rang off; and Drake walked out of the post-office. He almost collided with a tall, military-looking gentleman who was coming in.

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"What— Bless me if it isn't Drake! How are you, my lad? And— Thunder! What on earth are you doing in that rig-out?"

Drake felt his hand pumped vigorously. Looking up, he saw the bronzed features of Major Carstairs—an old friend of his and Ferrers Locke.

"This is a bit of luck and no mistake," said the lad, with a smile. "How are you, sir?"

"Bonny!" boomed the major, still pump-handling Drake's arm. "But, bless me—"

He gazed quizzically at the boy's attire.

The boy sleuth laughed. Then he explained.

"And you've found out who the rascal is—eh?" asked the major. "Splendid, my son! Splendid!"

"I'm off to town now to catch up with Mr. Fourstanton," said Drake cheerfully.

"Then you're coming along with me in the car. I'm bound for London!" boomed the major, taking the lad by the arm. "Just hold on a minute while I get some stamps!"

This was luck indeed. Major Carstairs was a noted offender where speed limits were concerned. The boy sleuth fervently hoped that his ideas of speed had suffered no change, for he was anxious to get back to town as quickly as possible.

He had no cause for doubt really. Major Carstairs entered into the spirit of the thing. His powerful Rolls-Royce car simply flashed along the London road at a pace well in excess of the speed limit.

"Let her rip, my boy, that's my motto," came the major's voice above the rush of the wind. "Providing your driver is a driver, let her rip!"

"You're letting her rip right enough," chuckled the boy, who was thoroughly enjoying himself. "We're touching sixty miles an hour!"

The miles were eaten up under that high-powered car. Signposts flashed by at every few minutes. The outskirts of London were reached without a hitch, without encountering a too zealous officer of the law.

But at Richmond Major Carstairs was forced to slow down. Lucky for him he did.

About thirty yards in front of the

Rolls-Royce was a Daimler car also travelling at a good speed. Suddenly, without warning, a lorry pulled out of a side turning just ahead of the Daimler, almost filling the entire width of the road.

The driver of the Daimler saw his peril and jammed on the brakes. They screeched out an unpleasant note under the sudden strain, but still the car went on.

"Look out!" pedestrians were yelling at the top of their lungs.

"He'll be into the lorry!"

The driver of the Daimler pulled hard on the steering-wheel in an endeavour to mount the pavement and clear the obstruction in front. But the speed at which he was travelling was too dangerous for such an experiment.

The offside wheels came off the ground in a shower of dust, the car tilted perilously on its side. Then—

Crash!

The offside of the Daimler struck the bonnet of the motor lorry with a sickening crash. There was a rending of wood-work, and the jingle of broken glass, mingling weirdly enough with the roaring and spluttering of the engine. Then through the air shot a human figure—the driver of the Daimler.

He landed with a dull thud on the pavement and lay ominously still. A moment later the wrecked car toppled over completely, coming to rest within a few inches of his prostrate form.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Major Carstairs in horror, and Drake echoed his sentiment.

The Rolls-Royce came to a standstill almost within its own length, and Drake and the major alighted.

By the time they had pushed their way through the crowd that had soon collected, the local ambulance had arrived. The injured man was lifted in strong arms and swiftly taken into the ambulance. Another two minutes and the ambulance was tearing at break-neck speed to the hospital.

"Jolly smart work that," said Drake. "Wonder who the chap was?"

Naturally no one in the crowd knew, neither did the constable. The identity of the injured man would be established at the hospital.

Major Carstairs' name and address were taken by the policeman, as also

were those of his companion, for the purpose of giving evidence at the inquiry.

Considerably sobered in spirit, Drake and the major re-entered the Rolls-Royce and drove at a slower pace to Westminster. There Drake parted from his old friend, and made his way to Baker Street for a change of clothing.

"Now for the end of the chase," he muttered as he stepped out of the house in Baker Street, attired in ordinary clothes. "Pycroft will be waiting to rope in that Fourstanton merchant by now, I'll wager! His number's up!"

But Drake was wrong. Had he known how near he himself had been to the rascally motor-bandit during that bracing drive from Godalming, he would have kicked himself, for the driver of the Daimler car was Dr. Fourstanton, although no papers found upon his person established him in that identity!

And Dr. Fourstanton, his head swathed in bandages, was lying unconscious in Richmond Infirmary, causing great anxiety to a trio of painstaking surgeons who were endeavouring to bring him round.

It really looked as if the leader of the notorious gang of thieves would cheat the law at the last moment, for he showed no signs of returning consciousness.

But of this, naturally, although unfortunately, Drake knew nothing.

Trapped!

INSPECTOR PYECROFT lost no time in setting the snare for the chief of the motor-bandits. Within ten minutes of receiving Drake's telephone message, the C.I.D. man was proceeding towards the East End of London. His outer attire spoke eloquently of the loafer—the out-of-work seafaring man. His straggling beard, unkempt hair, and weather-beaten face, gave considerable strength to the imposture; the short, blackened clay pipe that dropped from his lips threw off the noxious odour of a cheap shag.

With the habitual swaying of the shoulders that proclaims a man born and bred to the sea, Pycroft lurched in at the door of the Swinging Lantern at Wapping at exactly five minutes past five.

Behind him, acting independently, were two other C.I.D. men, ready to lend a hand in any proceedings that might eventuate.

They lounged against a corner of this disreputable riverside tavern and seemed to be embroiled in some deep argument. Their eyes, however, were keenly watching the swing door of the tavern through which their superior officer had passed.

Pycroft lurched up to the counter, and in a thick, husky voice, bellowed for some refreshment.

The Hibernian bar-tender hastened to obey, although his cunning eyes were scrutinising this fresh patron to the Swinging Lantern, and summing him up.

He apparently seemed satisfied that in the C.I.D. man there was nothing more vicious than an overpowering desire to shift as many glasses of liquor as he could.

"Ask 'em to 'ave a drink," boomed Pycroft, indicating with a sweeping movement of the hand the other occupants of the bar. "Ask 'em all—don't stand there like a mummy, man, or I'll put a belayin' pin about you!"

There was a rough cheer from the shady-looking habitués of the place at Pycroft's words. These derelict specimens of humanity were quite prepared to acclaim this thirsty seaman a good fellow providing he kept their glasses filled

KENT READER WINS A "FIVER"!

RESULT OF "CROSS WORDS LIMERICK" COMPETITION No. 1.

In this competition THE FIRST PRIZE OF £5 for the best "last line" sent in has been awarded to:—

JOY MATSON,
Elmdene,
Horns Cross,
Greenhithe, Kent,

for the following:—

"Full marks" you shall get—on your back.

THE TWELVE CONSOLATION PRIZES OF POCKET-KNIVES for the twelve next best have been awarded to the following competitors:—

CLIFFORD ALBRECHT, 2, Oak Avenue, Heaton Moor, near Stockport.
S. ARMITAGE, 18, Manor Street, King's Mill Lane, Huddersfield.
J. BEDFORD, 19, Grove Street, Wantage, Berks.
E. BENNETT, 35, Blackburn Road, Darwen, Lancs.
WILLIAM DUMBRECK, 2, Union Road, Linlithgow.
B. GLOVER, 7, Woodsley Terrace, Clarendon Road, Leeds.
F. GREGG, 19, Dillwyn Road, Lower Sydenham, London, S.E. 26.
FRANK GRIFFITHS, 4, Friar Street, Everton, Liverpool.
LESLIE LOGAN, 41, Wellesley Road, Gunnersbury, London, N.W.
FRED MATHER, 8, Stover Place, Exeter, Devon.
HARRY NEWAY, 38, Victoria Street, Small Heath, Birmingham.
NELLIE SHROLL, 41, St. Albans Road, London, N.W. 5.



Crash! The offside of the Daimler struck the bonnet of the motor lorry with a sickening crash. There was a rending of woodwork and the jingle of broken glass, mingling weirdly enough with the roaring of the engine. Then through the air shot a human figure—the driver of the Daimler. (See page 24.)

The bar-tender, too, was prepared to put up with a deal of "cheek" from him providing he spent his money liberally.

In a few moments the bar resounded to a series of outbursts of coarse laughter, of "good 'ealth's," and "mine's a-thanky, mate!"

To do the C.I.D. man justice, he played his part to perfection. His object in visiting the Swinging Lantern was to obtain, if possible, news of the Tin Lizzie and where the "cargo" was likely to be picked up.

"Just 'ome, mate?" asked one grimy-looking fellow, with a shaky hand, whom Pycroft at once recognised as one of the cleverest cracksmen in London.

"Jest!" bellowed Pycroft. "And right glad I am, messmate, to tread old London again!"

Thereafter, Pycroft regaled his companions with fictitious accounts of his adventures on the high seas and thoughtfully saw to it that their glasses were kept filled. Bit by bit he worked the conversation round to riverside shipping, until one of the company mentioned Bill Sharpling's name.

"Bill Sharpling," muttered Pycroft thoughtfully. "Swap me—old Bill! I wonder now if he's the boy I know—Billy Sharpling!"

"He's the owner of a sink tug, mate," said another of the crowd. "The bloomin' Tin Lizzie, I believe?"

"Yer don't say?"

"Yus. Wot's more, I believe he'll be down this way to-night," said the talkative member of the crowd helpfully. "He's putting in at Jepson's Wharf for a cargo!"

Pycroft could hardly contain his satisfaction at this piece of news. He made a mental note of Jepson's Wharf. That was the key to his plan.

Before setting out for Wapping the C.I.D. man had paid a visit to Bill Sharpling's office in Leadenhall Street, THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 891.

with the intention of finding out where the "cargo" for Dr Fourstanton was likely to be picked up. The only clerk the office boasted informed Pycroft that the "guv'nor always kept his business to himself." The clerk knew there was a cargo to be taken up that evening—and that was all. Moreover, Mr. Sharpling, he informed the C.I.D. man, was "on a job," and that he hadn't been into the office all day.

Jepson's Wharf! Pycroft began to show signs of having "carried" more liquor than was good for him as the best possible means of parting with his companions of the Swinging Lantern. He carried out this performance so well that he was allowed to lurch out of the swing door after he had paid three more rounds of refreshment.

But the moment he was outside a skinny-faced youth, who assisted behind the bar, drew his employer on one side and whispered in his ear.

The proprietor of this dingy establishment was quick to act, for the youth assisting him had an uncanny knack of "spotting" a "split" or a cop.

"You're sure, Skeleton?" demanded the proprietor, seizing the thin, pale youth by the arm. "You're sure?"

"I'd stake my week's wages on it!" said the other whiningly.

"Well, you wouldn't lose much if you lost!"

The proprietor flung the youth away brutally, and spoke in low tones to a patron on the other side of the counter.

"That's why he's so keen on Sharpling's whereabouts," said this individual when the Irishman had finished. "Streuth, you make me go hot and could all over! I don't like being entertained by a Scotland Yarder!"

"Do me a favour," grunted the proprietor in a tone that conveyed more command than request. "Nip round the corner and phone Jepson's Wharf.

The boys are there. Yer see, I happen to know something about that cargo Will Sharpling's picking up—more than Bill does 'imself, I'll wager!"

"I get you!"

"Phone the boys there's a tec on the trail. 'Spect he's got some pals with him, too," added the proprietor of the Swinging Lantern. "The boys'll know what to do with 'em!"

The messenger drained his glass of liquor and lunched out of the bar, his exit exciting little comment amongst the others, it being the custom of this individual to make himself scarce after "free drinks."

Meanwhile, Pycroft rolled towards the docks in an unsteady series of evolutions that drew humorous comments from the passers-by. A quarter of an hour after him came the other two C.I.D. men.

It was in another place of refreshment that the two forces joined up—Pycroft seeing in his two colleagues a couple of old pals whom he hadn't met for years, and acting accordingly. Everyone in the bar must have known that here was an old salt making a spree of it and having the good fortune to run into a couple of messmates, by the way he wrung their hands and greeted them.

But once the crowd in the bar had allowed Pycroft and his friends to sink into the background, as it were, the senior C.I.D. man became frightfully serious and considerably less boisterous.

In low tones he passed on the information he had gleaned in the Swinging Lantern, and as softly gave his orders.

Half an hour later three "old salts," arm-in-arm, were heading for Jepson's Wharf, singing uproariously at the top of their voices.

"Ere we are, my hearties!" roared Pycroft as the trio came upon a dirty THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 891.

jumble of brick buildings that faced the river. "I 'spect old Bill will be pleased ter see his old messmate."

Pycroft's ruse was to get inside the wharf sheds and await events. Knowing that Bill Sharpling wouldn't be in the district until nearing seven o'clock, it was safe for him to claim Bill as an old friend and express a desire to see him.

The ruse appeared to satisfy the single watchman at the wharf when he intercepted the trio.

"Bill will be along about half-past six," he said. "He's got a cargo here to shift to Gravesend. You kin wait if you like or you kin come back," he added.

"Oh, we'll wait, my buck!" said Pycroft boisterously.

"Then you'd better find a seat. 'Ere—come into the warm."

The watchman moved off in the direction of the nearest shed and swung open the heavy door. He switched on the single electric light the shed contained, and invited the trio of C.I.D. men to enter.

Warily Pycroft & Co. walked in.

All three of them noted the packing-cases neatly stacked in a row at the far end of the shed and labelled "Gravesend."

"This 'ere the cargo?" demanded Pycroft.

"It is," came the answer. "Chap's yacht boin' rivitted down at Gravesend. I think this is all tinned stuff."

"Oh!" murmured Pycroft. He had a fair idea that the "tinned stuff" would, on inspection, prove to be valuable gold and silver plate.

The watchman lurched away towards the door.

"Scuse me, mates!" he said. "I must keep an eye on the place—"

"Stay where you are!" said Pycroft sharply. "We want to talk to you—"

His words trailed off into a yell of alarm as the watchman made a sudden bolt for the door, seized a long, narrow bar of steel and wrenched at it.

In a moment the major portion of the floor—that part, at least, upon which the Scotland Yarders were standing—divided into two parts that hinged downwards like the doors of a cupboard viewed from a horizontal position.

The C.I.D. men felt themselves sliding towards the gap thus created, and were unable to lift a finger to stay their progress.

The floor swung downwards and inwards until the two sides came to rest vertically with the brick walls of the collar below.

Pycroft and his companions went headlong to the bottom of the cellar, a drop of ten feet or so, in an amazed and damaged heap. Pycroft was the only one of the trio who got off merely with a nasty bumping. His two colleagues struck their heads on the stone flooring and lay sprawled upon the flagstones, unconscious.

And as Pycroft, with something like despair in his heart, glanced upwards, he saw the false floor of the shed swing back into its normal position. Then the cellar was plunged into stygian darkness.

Pycroft's hand strayed to his revolver. He wondered what chance he had of attracting attention if he fired the weapon at the floor above his head. He doubted whether a bullet would pass through the four-inch timber—he had observed the thickness of it as he hurtled downwards.

And while he stood there undecided, severely shaken up and wondering what fate awaited him and his two unconscious companions, a sudden hissing sound proceeding from somewhere to his left made him dart back in horror. Next moment he was feeling his way along the wall of the cellar—damp walls, mildewed walls, slimy to the touch.

In a flash the horrible realisation of what was happening, of what terrible fate awaited him and his colleagues, came to his agitated mind. The hissing sound was growing in volume with every passing second.

Water was pouring into the cellar! With an ejaculation of horror, the C.I.D. man traced the spot where the water gushed in. He found a sluice-gate, about a foot square, on a level with the stone flooring, through which a mighty volume of water was now streaming.

The river tide was in; he realised that as he glanced feverishly at the luminous dial of his watch.

Every second gallons of water were pouring into the cellar via the sluice-gate. The fate that had been prepared for him sent a cold shudder down his spine.

He was to die by drowning—a lingering death, for the cellar would take some considerable time to fill. And his companions were unconscious!

"Good heavens!" The ejaculation came from parched lips as Pycroft gazed wildly about him.

Then, with a hoarse cry, the C.I.D. man sprang to the open sluice-gate, felt the dimensions of it, and sat down on the stone flooring, over which was rapidly spreading a stream of water, in an endeavour to block the inlet.

For ten minutes he sat there, his back filling the greater portion of that open sluice-gate, and thus stemming the inrush of water. But those ten minutes nearly killed him. His back muscles were soon numbed with the cold, his teeth were beginning to chatter, the pressure of the water was increasing with every second.

And the floor of the cellar was already six inches under water.

(Continued on page 28.)

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(Continued from page 20.)

"Silence!" thundered the Head. "Bunter, you utterly stupid and untruthful boy—"

"It's a fact, sir!" gasped Bunter. "I never found any postal-orders at all, and I never cashed any. Certainly not, sir! Besides, it's all Mrs. Mimble's fault for—"

"Mrs. Mimble—"

"That's it, sir. If—if Mrs. Mimble hadn't refused to cash any more of the postal-orders for me, this wouldn't have happened. I should never have had to sell them to Fishy, and he never would have been caught, would he, sir?"

"Bless my soul! Bunter, you—"

"So you see, it's all a—a mistake, sir," gasped Bunter desperately. "I'm perfectly innocent, sir! If Fishy says I sold him them for a quid, he's telling whoppers, sir. Besides, he swore he wouldn't tell anyone about it, sir, the awful beast!"

"My heye!" gasped P.-c. Tozer, staring as if fascinated at Bunter.

"And as for me finding the postal-orders," went on Bunter, blinking at the Head. "That's quite a mistake, too! Perhaps Fishy found them in Friardale Lane; but I didn't! I suppose he thought that findings were keepings, the awful rotter!"

"Bunter!"

Bunter jumped.

"Bunter, you utterly obtuse and stupid boy!" thundered Dr. Locke. "Do you not realise that you have already told us where you found the postal-orders? So you found them in Friardale Lane—"

"Eh? Not at all, sir—certainly not! I know nothing about them. Quite a mistake."

Dr. Locke walked to his desk and took therefrom a cane. He rapped it on the desk sharply, and Bunter almost leaped into the air.

"Now, Bunter," said the Head in a quiet, ominous tone. "There seems to be only one way of obtaining a truthful story from you. Unless you tell me all you know of this astounding and disgraceful affair without further quibbling and falsehood. I shall cane you severely until you do."

"Ow! Oh dear!"

Bunter did not hesitate long after that. Within five minutes he had told the Head all—truthfully this time.

He finished tearfully at last, and the Head gazed at him more in sorrow than in anger.

"Bless my soul, Bunter!" he exclaimed faintly. "I—I really do not know how to deal with you. You have acted disgracefully, and yet it is plain to me that you did not realise the seriousness of your actions. But for that fact, I should certainly consider the question of allowing you to remain at this school. Both you and Fish have, however, acted in an abominable manner, and I propose to administer a severe flogging to you both."

"Oh, great snakes!"

"Oh dear! I—I say, sir, I'd much prefer to let the matter drop, sir, really I would!" groaned Bunter.

But the Head, strangely enough, seemed annoyed by that "generous"

statement. He whispered to Wingate. Wingate hurried out for Gosling, who usually officiated in such matters as a flogging, and a few minutes later a loud swishing sound and sundry howls were floating out from the Head's study, telling all and sundry that Billy Bunter and Fisher T. Fish were suffering for their misdeeds.

All Greyfriars knew the full story that evening, and all Greyfriars roared over it. There was no sympathy for either Fishy or Bunter; and all agreed that they had only got what they deserved. It was known that the Head had been on the telephone in communication with Inspector Grimes, of Courtfield, and it was generally supposed that he had "squared" matters with him. It was supposed, from the fact that P.-c. Tozer was smiling beamingly when he left Greyfriars that evening, that the Head had "squared" matters with that portly individual also.

But before the Friardale constable left the school, he had a chat with Harry Wharton & Co., and from them he got a good description of the youth who had fought with Bob Cherry that afternoon, and who Bunter believed had dropped the wad of postal-orders. And Bunter proved to be correct, for by means of the description the police traced the youth, and succeeded in recovering the rest of the stolen money. For all of which—greatly to the hilarity of the juniors—Billy Bunter had the astounding "nerve" to claim the credit.

Thus ended the Great Postal-Order Mystery!

(Look out for next week's grand story of Harry Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars, entitled, "Bunter, the Prophet!" A scream from start to finish!)



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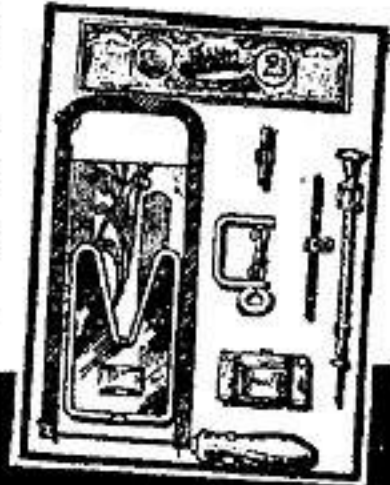
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THE DEPUTY DETECTIVE!

(Continued from page 26.)

The position was enough to make the bravest heart quail. Pycroft licked his lips and waited for the end. In one hour he reckoned he would be swimming for his life—swimming on the top of that increasing pool of water until his head struck the under side of the flooring and forced him to sink and give up the struggle.

He called harshly to his two companions, hoping fervently that they were now recovered enough to make a fight for it. To his unanswerable joy two faint calls reached him.

"Is that you, Pycroft?"
 "Yes. Make your way over to me. I'm trying to stop this water pouring in!"

In the darkness the two C.I.D. men crawled over to their companion. In tense tones they discussed their position. They tried the expedient of firing their revolvers at the thick flooring above, but by the answering note of the bullets the Scotland Yarders deduced the fact that the under side of the flooring was encased in steel.

Turn by turn they took at the open sluice-gate, squatting in a row the better to withstand the force of the inrush.

But each one of these plucky policemen knew in his heart of hearts that it was a vain struggle.

The floor of the cellar was now a foot under water, which rendered their only hope of stemming the inrushing water more difficult than ever. It meant that they were sitting in a foot

of ice-cold fluid that was robbing them of their vitality.

"We're done!" groaned Pycroft. "Er, sorry, boys, I walked you into this mess."

"Shucks!" said one of the C.I.D. men. "You've nothing to reproach yourself about, sir. Someone spotted us before we reached this wharf—that's all."

"And put the watchman bloke wise," said his companion. "We're not going to whine, sir," he added. "Reckon we can face death a deal sight better than the rogue who sent us down here."

Thus did these plucky representatives of the law resign themselves. Theirs was a risky profession, more risky than the average scoffer of law and order and police red tape ever imagined in his wildest dreams.

"Shake, pard!" said Pycroft huskily, as he found the water rising to his armpits. "We shall have to swim a bit in a couple of minutes, and we

shall want our hands and arms then. Shake!"

Five minutes later Pycroft & Co. were swimming round and round that cellar, calling at intervals to each other in reassuring tones.

Steadily the water rose until it half filled the cellar.

"Turn on your backs," called out Pycroft in the darkness, "and float. We shall tire ourselves out swimming about like this."

The C.I.D. men saw the wisdom of their superior's advice and acted upon it.

Floating on their backs with a minimum amount of exertion, they stared at the faint sheen of the metal flooring above them. The minutes seemed to drag by on leaden wings, but the water reached a higher level all too quickly.

"Keep your pecker up!" exclaimed Pycroft, when his head was but a foot from the under side of the flooring. "As soon as I can get near enough I'm going to thump the floor with the butt of my revolver. One never knows—there might be friends above."

"While there's life there's hope," quoted one of his companions optimistically.

Another ten minutes elapsed. The water had risen to a level but eight inches from the under side of the flooring, and the C.I.D. men's optimism was beginning to wane.

The end was near. The messenger of the proprietor of the Swinging Lantern had carried out his errand, and was at that moment partaking of his reward in liquid refreshment.

(Look out for the concluding chapters of this amazing story in next week's bumper issue of the MAGNET, chums! There's a big surprise in store for you!)

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