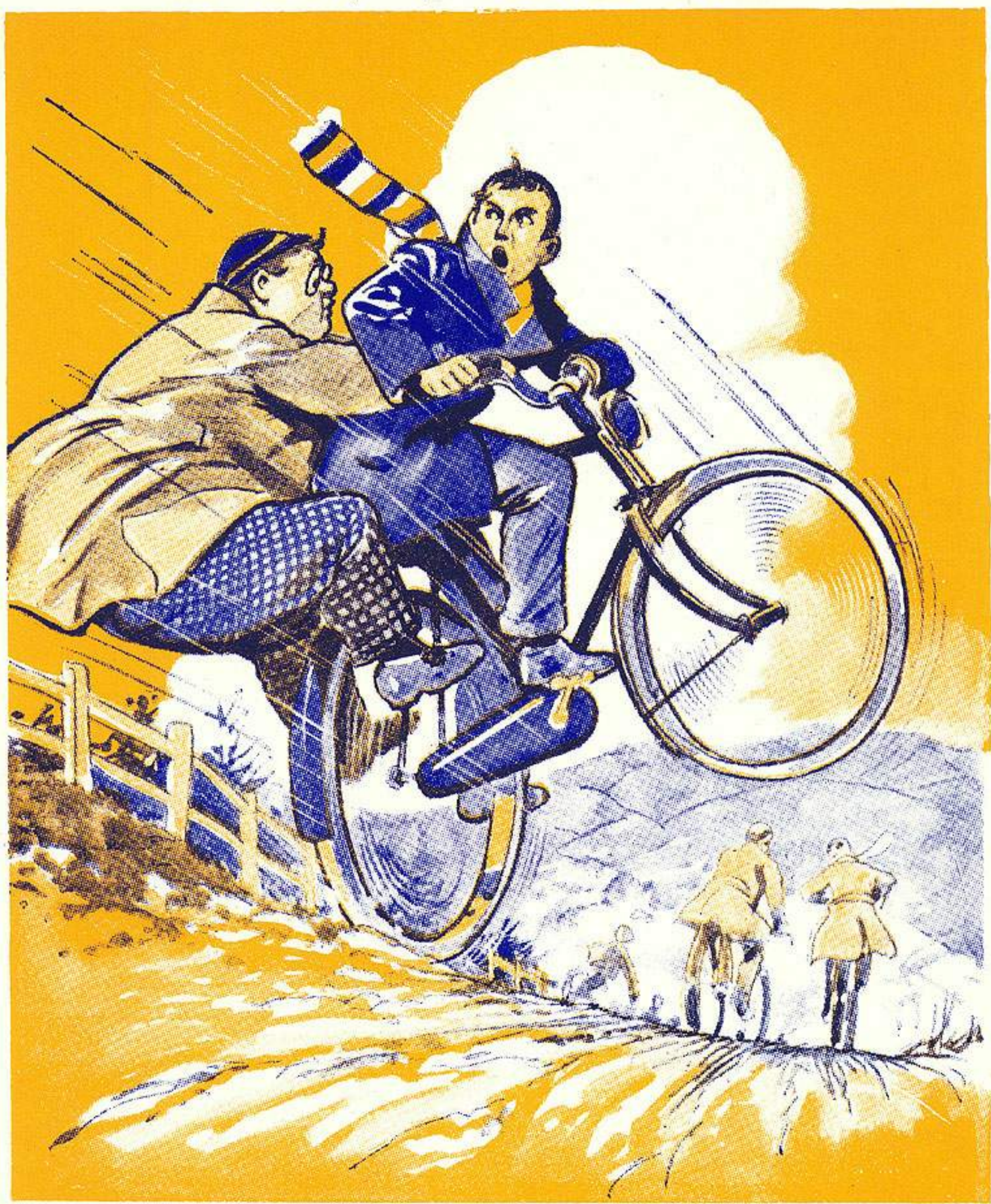


DON'T MISS No. 1 of "THE RANGER" OUT TO-DAY!

The **MAGNET** 2^D





Come Into the Office, Boys!

Always glad to hear from you, chums, so drop me a line to the following address:
The Editor, The "Magnet" Library, The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

WELL, chums, now you've got your teeth well into Stanton Hope's new serial, what do you think of it? Don't you think I was right in describing it as one of the finest serials our paper has ever published? And we have published some good stuff, haven't we?

Gosh! It makes me feel quite old when I look back upon former issues of the MAGNET. It is more than twenty-three years ago since the MAGNET first appeared, and it's still going as strong as ever. Only stories and serials of first-class quality figure in its programme.

The first query this week comes from Harry Trundell, of Skegness, who asks me which is

THE SMALLEST PUBLIC RAILWAY IN THE WORLD?

This is the Eskdale Narrow Gauge Railway, which runs from Ravenglass to Dalegarth in Cumberland, and is composed of seven miles of fifteen-inch gauge track. The passenger coaches are all open, but the railway also carries goods. The largest engine which operates on this line is only 3 feet 10 inches in height. There are five stations on the line, and the entire staff of the railway comprises ten men. I haven't been lucky enough to travel on this curious railway myself, but I expect lots of my Cumberland readers have—and if any of them have any interesting experiences to tell me about it, I'll be pleased to hear them.

Now for a joke for which R. Jones, of Buttercup Farm, Seaton, Hull, has been awarded one of our topping Annuals:

Science Master: "Trees contribute greatly to the heat of the atmosphere."



Tommy: "Yes, sir; the birch has very often warmed me!"



It's up to you now, chum, to win one of our handsome prizes. Send me in a joke that'll raise a laugh, and a prize is yours.

NOW let us have a look at the many queries which are waiting on my desk to be answered.

WHY ARE MIDSHIPMEN SO CALLED?

That is the first query, which comes from John Worrall, of Blaydon. In the old days of the Navy, the men were always berthed in the forward part of the ships,

and the officers aft. The officers were known as "the after guard." Midshipmen in those days were smart men who were looked upon as likely to make good officers, but, before being promoted to the "after guard," they were tried out first. Therefore, as they belonged neither to the fore-castle hands, nor the after guard, they were called "amidship men"—which was shortened in time to "midshipmen." In later years people began to pay for their sons to be allowed to enter the Navy direct as "Midshipmen," and thus to become officers without having first to serve in the fore-castle.

The next letter comes from a Glasgow reader.

HE WANTS TO BE A FILM ACTOR,

and asks me how to go about it. Well, I am afraid that if my chum has no influence with people already in the film business, he had better change his mind. To begin with, all the British studios are in the neighbourhood of London, and all film actors live in or about the metropolis. To get a job on the films a person must be registered on the books of one of the agents who supply actors—and then trust to luck to be chosen to appear.

But there are thousands of people already in the film business, and there is not enough work for a quarter of them. Naturally enough, people without experience must start as "extras" in crowds, and unless they are extremely prominent the chances of their being picked from the crowd are small indeed. Some crowd workers consider themselves lucky if they get ten or twelve days' work a year—and, as they only receive a guinea a day for their work—less expenses—you will see that there is hardly a fortune to be made out of such work.

WHO INVENTED LIMERICKS?

asks J. K., of Sleaford. That's a difficult question to answer. Some people say that they were invented by Edward Lear, who wrote a book of nonsense limericks many, many years ago. Other people say that limericks had been in existence for ages before Lear wrote his book. But I can tell J. K. who have invented some of the jolliest limericks I have read for a long time—and the answer to that question is: "The readers of the MAGNET."

For instance, here is a limerick which

has been written by Gordon Dare, of 2, Wardo Road, Edinburgh. I think it well deserves the Annual which I have sent him for it.

Wun Lung made a wonderful pie

Of ingredients boned on the sly.

Bunter said, with a sneer;
"Gee, this bunny tastes queer!"

"That's not bunny—that's pussy!" said Fry.

I AM afraid space is running short, so I shall have to rely on

RAPID FIRE REPLIES

to answer the rest of the questions I can deal with this week.

What is the fastest ship afloat? (John H., of Taunton.) The North German Lloyd Motor Ship Europe at present holds the "blue riband of the Atlantic." But the British companies are not taking the challenge lying down, and before long we may see a giant Cunarder wrest it back!

Are there any parts of the world still unexplored? (Harry Gibbs, of Bristol.) Yes. No white man has yet trodden in vast tracts of South America, while the great Arabian desert is still "no man's land."

Is it possible to eat when standing on your head? (B. B., of Southam.) Certainly. The act of swallowing is controlled by muscles, and the force of gravity has nothing to do with it. So long as you can stand on your head—which I can't!—there is nothing to prevent you either eating or drinking.

Can any boy go to a barge school? (Tom Pringle, of Wragby.) No. The barge schools which are in existence in this country are only for the boys and girls whose parents work and live on barges.

ENOUGH for this week, or I won't have space to tell you what I have in store for you in our next issue. Look out for

"THE AMATEUR ROGUE!"

By Frank Richards.

It's a bang-up-to-the-minute yarn of the chums of Greyfriars, and you'll appreciate every word of it. Frank Richards has written it in the style of a North-country "pot-pie"—that is with a bit of everything good in it! If you like it, write and tell me; and if you don't like it, write and tell me. But I don't think there'll be many—if any—of the latter kind of letters coming along!

Need I say much about "The Island of Slaves"? I don't think so. Stanton Hope is just the kind of author to write a yarn of this type, and I know he'll hold your interest until the very last line of this splendid serial is penned.

You'll find our other features are as good as ever—"The Greyfriars Herald," the Soccer article, the Greyfriars Limericks, jokes, and, of course, your Editor's weekly chat.

So-long, chums, until next week!
YOUR EDITOR.

ANNUALS, PENKNIVES, and POCKET WALLETS

offered for Storyettes and Snappy Greyfriars Limericks.

All efforts to be sent to: c/o MAGNET, 5, Carmelite Street, London, E.C. 4 (Comp.).

DON'T MISS THIS OPPORTUNITY OF WINNING SOMETHING USEFUL!



THE VOICE OF THE TEMPTER!

By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Selfish!

HOLD on!" Billy Bunter put his head out of the doorway of Study No. 7 in the Remove, and squeaked.

There was a wrinkle of anxiety and a spot of ink on Bunter's fat brow. There was an inky smudge on his nose. There was a pen in his hand; and ink on his pen, and ink on his fingers.

Bunter, apparently, had been busy in his study, though it was Wednesday afternoon, a half-holiday at Greyfriars.

Bunter blinked along the passage at five fellows outside Study No. 1. He squeaked excitedly, and Harry Wharton & Co. glanced round.

"Hold on, you fellows!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" bawled Bob Cherry. "Finished your lines, Bunter?"

"Nunno! I've done twenty or so, out of two hundred," said Bunter. "Hold on, you chaps! Wait for me."

"Wait for you?" ejaculated Harry Wharton. "While you do the other hundred and eighty?"

"Yes, old chap!"

"We can see ourselves doing it!" grinned Johnny Bull.

"The waitfulness would be rather too terrific, my esteemed fat Bunter," chuckled Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh.

"I say, you fellows, I hope you're not going to be selfish," said Bunter anxiously. "I shan't be more than an hour—or an hour and a half, perhaps. I shan't keep you waiting any longer than that."

"You won't!" agreed Bob Cherry.

"You won't even keep us waiting as long as that, old fat bean! Not quite." The Famous Five chuckled.

They were prepared to compassionate a fellow who was detained by lines, on a half-holiday. But they were not prepared to spend their half-holiday indoors waiting for him. Billy Bunter did not doubt that his fascinating company was worth waiting for. The other fellows had strong doubts.

"You see, I'm coming over to Highcliffe with you," said Bunter. "I suppose you want me to come?"

"Something wrong with your supposer, old fat man!" said Bob, shaking his head.

"Oh, really, Cherry!"

"Get that young urchin, Tatters, kicked out of Greyfriars, and I'll make it worth your while——"

And Carne, the prefect of Greyfriars, listens to the voice of the tempter.

"Bosh!" said Harry Wharton. "You don't want to see the football match at Highcliffe, Bunter. You never take the trouble to roll down to Big Side when the First Eleven's playing at home."

"The fact is, I'm frightfully keen on it," said Bunter. "Besides, you're going to stop to tea with Courtenay and the Caterpillar after the match. They stand a jolly good tea."

"Courtenay hasn't asked you, ass!" Snort, from Bunter! William George Bunter attached no importance whatever to a trifling consideration like that.

"Never mind that, Wharton. Anyhow, you can take a pal."

"Yes; we're taking Tatters."

"Blow Tatters!" roared Bunter. "Bother Tatters! If you're thinking of leaving me out and taking that blessed tinker——"

"You've got it!" assented Wharton. "Right on the wicket!"

Billy Bunter glared at the chums of the Remove. His very spectacles gleamed with wrath.

"You ready, Tatters?" bawled Bob Cherry, in the doorway of Study No. 1.

"Jest coming, old covey!" answered the voice of Arthur Cecil Cholmondeley of the Remove. The heir of the house of Cholmondeley had not yet unlearned, at Greyfriars, the vocabulary he had learned as Tatters, the tinker's boy.

Tatters came out of the study. There was a general move towards the stairs.

"I say, you fellows!" roared Bunter.

"Good-bye, Bunter!"

"Beast! Hold on, you rotters—I mean, wait for me, old fellows! Look here, I'll leave these lines and chance it."

"Carne will make you sit up if you do, fathead!"

"It's all your fault that beast Carne gave me lines! He was ratty because you got him in a booby-trap!" exclaimed Bunter indignantly. "That was why he gave me this impot. Making out that I was going down to the pantry was only an excuse. I say, you fellows, don't walk away while a fellow's talking to you. Look here, I'll tell you what! All of you come in and help me with the lines. You can whack them out."

"Fathead! We've got just time to

get over to Highcliffe before they kick off."

"Oh, really, Wharton! I suppose you'd rather help me with my lines, than watch a silly football match?"

"Oh, my hat!"

"The ratherfulness is not terrific, my absurd Bunter!"

"Hold on, I tell you!" roared Bunter. "I say, you fellows, be decent, you know! Leaving a fellow in the lurch!"

"You silly ass!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "Look here, you can roll over to Highcliffe when you've done your lines. You'll be in time for tea, and we'll tell Courtenay you're coming."

"That's all very well," said Bunter, "but how am I getting over to Highcliffe? You fellows are biking it, and I want one of you to give me a lift. My bike's out of order."

"Is it ever in order?" asked Bob Cherry.

"I've asked you to mend those punctures a dozen times at least, Cherry. You can't say I haven't! I've asked you, Wharton! You know I have! In fact, I've asked all you fellows! You can't deny it."

"Go hon!"

"I can't walk to Highcliffe," said Bunter. "Of course, I could ring up for a taxi. But I've been disappointed about a postal order. I'm short of cash."

"For the first time in your life?" asked Bob sympathetically.

"Eh? Yes! Exactly! Look here, if you like to lend me the taxi fare—"

"The likefulness is not terrific."

"Or lend me a bike!" said Bunter. "One of you can stay in and let me have his bike. I don't mind which."

"You—you don't mind which!" gasped Wharton.

"Not at all, old fellow," said Bunter generously. "Any chap will do! And, look here, the fellow who stays in can do my lines for me. See?"

"Oh crumbs!"

"Of course, you'll have to be careful to make it like my fist. Carne of the Sixth is a suspicious beast. He made me do an impot over again the other day, because Toddy had put in a few lines for me. He made out that I hadn't written it all myself. The rotter couldn't take a fellow's word."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, which of you fellows is staying in?" asked Bunter. "Not Cherry—he's too big a fool to get my fist right—"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bob.

"Any of the others. Well, which?" asked Bunter. He blinked inquiringly at the grinning six. Apparently Bunter regarded the matter as settled.

But it was not quite settled!

"The whichfulness is terrific," remarked Hurree Janset Ram Singh. "My esteemed chums, tho' departfulness is the proper caper, or we shall be late for the absurd football match; and punctuality is the thief of procrastination, as the English proverb says."

"Good old English proverb!" said Bob. "Come on!"

"I say, you fellows—" yelled Bunter.

But answer there came none.

Harry Wharton & Co. scudded down the Remove staircase, and Billy Bunter was left to waste his sweetness on the desert air.

"Well, my hat!" gasped Bunter. "Of all the beasts—after all I've done for them, too! Talk about beastly selfishness!"

And Bunter, quite saddened by such selfishness, though really he was used to it by this time, rolled back into his study, and resumed writing lines.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,200.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Ragging a Rascal!

"MY at!" ejaculated Tatters.

"What—"

"Look at that bloke by the car!" said Arthur Cecil Cholmondeley. "That's my blooming cousin, Cyril Rackstraw. What's he doin' 'ere?"

Six cheery cyclists were strung out in a narrow lane skirting Courtfield Common. It was not an attractive route from the point of view of cycling, for it was narrow, it was muddy, and it was rugged. But it was a short cut, and saved half a mile on the way to Highcliffe School, and the chums of the Remove were in a hurry to get to Highcliffe. The Greyfriars First Eleven were at Highcliffe, playing the senior team there, and the juniors were keen to see Wingate and his merry men mop up the Highcliffians.

But they slackened speed as Tatters made a gesture towards the little car drawn up at the side of the lane, with a young man standing by it, smoking a cigar.

Harry Wharton knitted his brows at the sight of Mr. Cyril Rackstraw.

"That rotter here again!" he exclaimed.

The young man standing by the car glanced idly at the cyclists as they came on. Then, as he recognised them, a black scowl came over his face. Evidently the sight of those six cheery faces had no pleasing effect on Mr. Rackstraw.

He stepped back out of the way for the riders to pass. But the cyclists did not pass. Harry Wharton braked and jumped down, and his comrades followed his example.

Rackstraw eyed them evilly.

"So you're here again, Mr. Rackstraw!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"Is that any business of yours?" snapped Rackstraw.

"Yes, rather!" answered the captain of the Remove. "It's the business of all the friends of your cousin, Mr. Rackstraw. You're not wanted anywhere near Greyfriars."

"Ear, 'ear!" grinned Tatters.

"You are superfluous in these parts, Mr. Rackstraw," explained Bob Cherry. "You see, we know that you haven't any business here, except—"

"Except getting up to mischief!" said Johnny Bull.

"Here's Tatters!" said Frank Nugent, with a grin. "Right on the spot, Mr. Rackstraw, if you'd like to try on kidnapping him again."

Rackstraw set his lips.

"You'd better pass on your way," he said quietly. "I'm not in the habit of taking impertinence from schoolboys."

"You'll take whatever we choose to give you!" answered Harry Wharton coolly and contemptuously. "Do you think we don't know your game, Mr. Rackstraw? Ever since Tatters' grandfather found him and took him away from that brute, Tinker Wilson, you've been plotting against him. You put Tinker Wilson up to kidnapping him, and you'd be putting him up to it again if the police hadn't got hold of him."

Rackstraw's face paled a little.

"You—you young fool!" he panted. "Do you know what you are saying? If I should make you repeat your words before your headmaster—"

"I'm ready to do that as soon as you like!" answered Harry. "The Head of Greyfriars knows and our Form master, Mr. Quelch, knows, though there may not be proof enough to send you to prison. That's why you dare not come to the school again. We know jolly well that Mr. Quelch warned you off!"

"The knowrfulness is terrific, my esteemed and execrable Rackstraw!"

"We thought you'd got on to it that it wasn't good enough and had chucked it up," went on Wharton, "and now we find you here again, hanging about, only a mile from the school. What are you doing here?"

"You young cub!" said Rackstraw between his teeth. "Do you dare to question me?"

"Certainly I do! You've got only one reason for hanging about near Greyfriars," said Harry. "You're up to something again. But you must be off your rocker if you're still thinking of trying to kidnap your cousin. Everybody would know at once who had done it. If anything happened to Tatters, the police would call on you first thing."

"Which should convince you that I have no intention of the kind," drawled Rackstraw.

"Then why are you here?"

Rackstraw stared at him. It was obvious that he had never expected to fall in with the Greyfriars fellows in that solitary and secluded spot. But still less did he expect the juniors to call him to account.

His hand clenched.

"I've advised you to go on your way," he said. "You are asking for a thrashing, my boy!"

Harry Wharton laughed contemptuously.

"There's enough of us here to handle you," he said. "That chicken won't fight, Mr. Rackstraw. I want to know what you are doing here."

"Give it a name, Cousin Cyril!" grinned Tatters. "You see, old covey, we know what you're arter. I know that you set Tinker Wilson on to me jest as if you'd told me so. And now you're 'ere again, you've got something up your bloomin' sleeve! Well, what are you arter?"

Rackstraw breathed hard.

"You're quite mistaken, Arthur," he said. He tried to control his rage and speak calmly. "I assure you on my word that you are doing me an injustice."

"Your word ain't worth a bloomin' lot," said Tatters. "You fooled me at first, but you can't fool me now, Cousin Cyril. I know who set the tinker arter me, and I know now who was payin' him to keep me from being found, too, afore grandfather got me from him. Why, I see through you now jest as if you was a winder!"

"I tell you—"

"Aw, chuck it!" said Tatters derisively. "What's the good of telling a bloke a 'eap of blinking crammers?"

"If you dare to hint such a thing to Sir George Cholmondeley—"

"I ain't telling grandfather," said Tatters. "I don't want to get you into a row with 'im, so long as you let me alone. But you begin any more of your games, Cousin Cyril, and I'll tell him fast enough!"

"Do you think he would believe a word of it, you young fool?" sneered Rackstraw.

"Well, I dunno," said Tatters. "If he didn't believe me, I dessay he'd believe Mr. Quelch, if my Form master told him what he knows. Grandfather don't think a bloomin' lot of you, anyhow, Cousin Cyril. He knows jest how much you liked me bein' found and brought 'ome, he does—you thinkin' you was coming in for all the money if I'd stayed with the tinker."

Rackstraw compressed his lips in a tight line. He was, as a matter of fact, doubtful how Sir George Cholmondeley

would have received such a piece of information. The old baronet must have had some inkling of his feelings towards the newly found heir, who had stepped in between Rackstraw and an inheritance of fifty thousand a year.

"Well, you haven't answered yet, Mr. Rackstraw!" said Harry Wharton.

"What do you mean, you young scoundrel?"

"I mean that you've got to explain what you're doing here, if you're up to no mischief."

"I am likely to explain myself to a cheeky schoolboy!" said Rackstraw, with a sneer. "Get out of my reach before I give you the thrashing you are asking for!"

"That means that you can't explain," said Harry. "It means that you've got some cowardly scheme on against

"The jipfulness is the esteemed caper!"

Rackstraw struggled frantically as the chums of the Remove rolled him over in the mud. Cyril Rackstraw was a well-dressed, elegant fellow, something of a dandy. But he did not look much of a dandy when the Greyfriars fellows had handled him for a few minutes.

He looked a wreck! Rolled and rumped, splashed with mud, he sprawled on the earth, gasping for breath.

"Now get out!" said Harry Wharton, breathing hard. "Get into your car and clear, or we'll give you some more!"

"Ear, 'ear!" chuckled Tatters.

Rackstraw staggered to his feet. For a moment he looked like springing at the juniors like a tiger.

were ready to take the risk. They had made up their minds that the rascal who had plotted against Tatters should not be allowed to hang about Greyfriars if they could help it. And in the present instance, at least, they could help it.

Rackstraw, stuttering with rage, went to the car. The ditch was at hand; and it did not look inviting. And he could see that the Removites were in deadly earnest. Either he had to go in the car or go into the ditch. He chose the car.

The chums of the Remove watched him as he sat in the driver's seat and started the engine. The little car shot away up the lane.

It vanished in the distance in a few minutes, going fast.

"Here endeth the first lesson!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "That villain



Ruffled and rumped, splashed with mud, Rackstraw scrambled to his feet, gasping for breath. "Now get out!" said Wharton. "Get into your car and clear, or we'll give you some more!"

Tatters. You're not here for any other reason. Well, you're not wanted here. Mr. Rackstraw, and we're going to make you understand it. Collar him!"

"What?" roared Rackstraw. He started back in astonishment and rage. "If you dare to lay a finger on me—"

"Bag him!" chuckled Bob.

The Famous Five laid more than a finger on Cyril Rackstraw; they laid five pairs of hands, and they laid them on hard.

Rackstraw, livid with rage, struck out savagely as they collared him. Bob Cherry gave a gasp as he caught a drive with his nose, and Johnny Bull yelped as he got one with his car. But Rackstraw had no time for more than that. He went down into the muddy lane with a crash.

"Give him jip!"

But he restrained himself. He had had one ragging, and he did not want another. He reeled against the car, panting.

"You—you young hooligans! I'll report this to your headmaster!" he spluttered.

"Report to him as soon as you like," said Wharton disdainfully. "But just at present you're clearing off. Get into that car and clear, or we'll put you in the ditch!"

Rackstraw glared at him, livid with rage. That the juniors suspected his rascality he knew; but he had never dreamed of the Greyfriars fellows taking the law into their own hands in this drastic manner.

Whether their headmaster would have approved of such methods was rather doubtful; but Harry Wharton & Co.

may get fed-up in the long run if he has a few more like it."

"There'll be a row if he really goes to the Head!" murmured Nugent.

"He wouldn't dare. He knows that Dr. Locke knows what his game is here," said Harry. "Anyhow, we're going to barge him off whenever we see him around Greyfriars."

"Yes, rather."

And, having watched the car out of sight, the chums of the Remove remounted their bicycles and pedalled on for Highcliffe. They had lost some time over Mr. Rackstraw; though they agreed that it was time well spent. But, by dint of breaking speed records, they arrived at Highcliffe School in time to see the ball kicked off.

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THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Bunter the Dodger!

BILLY BUNTER laid down his pen. Ten more lines had run off the pen since the departure of the party of juniors. Bunter had written a total of thirty out of two hundred. And Bunter was fed-up.

It was a bright afternoon—the weather uncommonly bright and sunny for the time of year. Billy Bunter was not a fellow who felt, to any great extent, the call of the open spaces. But he did want to get out. He did not want to stick indoors doing lines when all the other fellows had gone out and the Remove studios were as deserted as the Sahara.

He rose from the study table. Flesh and blood could stand no more. Bunter was going to leave his lines undone and chance it with Carne. He simply was not going to stick indoors because that beast, Carne of the Sixth, was waxy over being caught in a booby-trap. The football match at Highcliffe did not attract Bunter much—he did not yearn to see Wingate kicking goals for Greyfriars. But tea in Frank Courtenay's study attracted him very much.

Owing to the selfishness of Harry Wharton & Co., Bunter had to walk to Highcliffe. By the shortest of cuts it was a couple of miles. Bunter's jigger was in its usual state, crooked; his finances were in their usual state, stony. He had to walk, and a walk of two miles was quite an expedition to Bunter. The mere thought of arriving late for tea was unnerving.

He was going! He rolled out of the study and blinked round him cautiously as he went down the stairs. Whether Carne was in or out that afternoon Bunter did not know. Probably he was in, for he was not a member of the First

Eleven; he had not gone over to Highcliffe to play, and it was very unlikely that he had gone over to watch, as many fellows had. If he was about the school Bunter had to keep out of sight; for if Carne spotted him he was absolutely certain to ask whether Bunter had done his lines. He would take what seemed to Bunter a fiendish pleasure in spoiling his half-holiday. If Carne's eye fell on Bunter there would be no tea at Highcliffe for the Owl of the Remove; that was certain.

So Bunter was very cautious as he rolled down the stairs. He sighted his Form master, Mr. Quelch, and dodged round a corner. But fortunately he did not sight Carne, and he got safely out of the House.

In the quad he blinked this way and that way; but the bully of the Sixth did not seem to be in the offing. Possibly the beast had gone out after all. Bunter rolled down to the gates.

Outside the gates stood a saloon car, with a chauffeur at the wheel. Two Fifth Form men—Potter and Greene—were sitting in it. Another Fifth Form man, no other than the great Horace Coker, was speaking to the driver, apparently giving him directions.

Bunter paused. The car was headed towards Courtfield, which looked as if the Fifth-Formers were starting in that direction. That was the way to Highcliffe.

It was not uncommon for Coker of the Fifth to stand his friends, and himself, a motor run on a half-holiday. It would have been very uncommon for him to give a Lower Fourth fag a lift. Coker was of the Fifth Form, Fifth-Formy, so to speak. Lower Fourth fags were, in their own estimation, Remove men! In Coker's estimation they were negligible microbes. If Billy Bunter asked Coker for a lift, Coker was more likely to give him a lift with his boot than with his car.

But hope springs eternal in the human breast. Bunter resolved to try it on. It was worth while, for the barest chance of getting out of that long walk.

Coker, having finished his instructions to the chauffeur, turned to the door of the car.

"I—I say, Coker!" squeaked Bunter. Coker looked at him.

"Did you speak to me, Bunter?" he asked.

"Yes, old chap."

"Well, don't!" said Coker.

And he stepped into the car.

"I—I say, give me a lift, Coker, if you're going Highcliffe way!" gasped Bunter. "I—I—I want to see the football match."

"You young ass!" said Coker. "It's not worth seeing! Only Wingate and his usual crew of duds!" A football team that did not include Coker of the Fifth was, in Coker's estimation, obviously not worth watching. "Get away from that door, Bunter!"

"I—I say, Coker—"

"Here, cut off!" snapped Potter of the Fifth. Potter did not seem in a good temper that afternoon, possibly because his services had not been required for Highcliffe. "Get out of the way!"

Potter spoke at a fortunate moment for Bunter. It was one of Coker's little ways to take the opposite side in all matters and at all times.

"Don't snap the kid's head off, Potter!" said Coker reprovingly.

"We don't want that grubby fag in the car!" grunted Potter.

That, a moment before, had been exactly Coker's opinion. But as soon as Potter stated it to be his, it ceased to be Coker's. Automatically, as it were, Coker changed over.

"What rot!" said Coker. "No harm in giving a kid a lift, so far as I can see. Why not be good-natured?"

"Look here, Coker—"

"I say, why not be good-natured?" repeated Coker. "We're going half the way, and I don't see why we shouldn't give Bunter a lift. Hop in Bunter."

Bunter grinned and hopped in. Potter frowned, and Greene grunted; but the fat junior cared nothing for the frowns and grunts of Potter and Greene. It was Coker's car; and only Coker mattered.

"We're going round to Woodend, Bunter," said Coker. "We can take you as far as the corner of Oak Lane and drop you there, if you like. That will save you a mile."

"Thanks, old chap!" said Bunter. "If you call me old chap again, Bunter, you go out of this car on your neck!" said Coker.

Coker was not to be called "old chap" by a Lower Fourth fag. The car started and buzzed away up the Courtfield road.

Bunter squatted in his seat with great satisfaction. A lift half-way was something. The car whizzed along towards Courtfield, passing a good many Greyfriars fellows on the road. Courtfield Common came in sight ahead.

"Hallo, that's Carne!" remarked Coker, as he caught sight of a Sixth Form man of Greyfriars on the road ahead.

Bunter gave a jump.

"C-c-c-carne!" he ejaculated.

Bunter blinked round out of the car. Carne was some distance ahead, his back to them, walking towards the common. Bunter had only a back view of him, but he knew Carne at once.

The car rapidly overtook Carne.

Billy Bunter kept his eyes, and his spectacles, fixed on the back of the Greyfriars prefect.

The car was open, and if Carne glanced towards it he was certain to see Bunter. And if he saw Bunter he was certain to call on him to stop. Any other prefect might have let him pass on unheeded, lines or no lines. But not Carne! Carne was the last word in beasts; and he had a "down" on Bunter. Carne of the Sixth was one of the many persons who never realised what a nice fellow Bunter was.

The car was almost abreast of Carne when the Sixth-Former glanced at it. His glance passed carelessly over the Fifth Form men, and rested on Bunter. He stopped and frowned.

Bunter had strict orders to write out his impot before going out that afternoon. Carne, of course, knew that he had not done so; it was too early in the afternoon for that. And the beast, just as Bunter anticipated, was going to stop him, and send him back to the school.

"Here, hold on!" called out Carne, holding up his hand to the car.

Coker stared at him.

The chauffeur glanced round at Coker. Coker signed to him to keep on. The car swept on past Carne.

"Stop!" roared Carne.

"Well, my hat!" said Coker. "I've had some check from the Sixth; but this really takes the cake! Does that silly ass really think that he can stop Fifth Form men who are going for a drive?"

Potter looked back.

Carne, with an angry face, was running after the car. His voice was heard behind.

"Stop!"

But in a moment more Carne's voice was out of hearing, and the prefect

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ceased to run. Carne was no sprinter; but had he been he could hardly have engaged in a race with a motor-car.

"Check!" repeated Coker. "Nerve, you know! These Sixth Form men fancy themselves a lot; but that really is the limit! Did the cheeky ass really think we would stop?"

"I fancy it's Bunter he wanted," said Potter.

"Oh, really, Potter——" gasped the fat junior.

"Oh!" said Coker. "Does Carne want you, Bunter?"

"No! Not at all!" gasped Bunter. "Nothing of the kind, Coker! I haven't got an impot to do for Carne! He never told me to do it before I went out of gates! Besides, I've done it."

"Oh, my hat!" said Greene.

"Well, if he wanted Bunter he should have said that he wanted Bunter," said Horace Coker. "Why couldn't he say so?"

"He didn't have much time to say anything."

"Don't argue, Potter."

The car ran on. In a few minutes it reached the corner of Oak Lane, which ran by the edge of the common. There it halted.

"Jump out, Bunter!" said Coker.

Bunter jumped out. He cast an anxious blink back along the road. But Carne of the Sixth had been left some distance behind.

"You'd better buzz off if Carne is after you!" grinned Coker.

"I—I say, Coker, suppose you run me on as far as Highcliffe?" suggested Bunter.

"You cheeky young ass!"

Coker slammed the door.

"Beast!"

The car turned off the road into the lane on the other side that led to Wood-end. Bunter gave another blink back towards Greyfriars, grunted, and started up Oak Lane. That was the short cut by which the Famous Five and Tatters had gone; and the fat junior could see the tracks of the bikes in the muddy road.

Bunter plugged on. From that point it was little more than a mile to Highcliffe School. But a mile to William George Bunter was a distance to be covered on the instalment system. He plugged on for about two hundred yards up the narrow, muddy lane, on the track of the bunch of cyclists who had preceded him. Then he had bellows to mend, and he stopped and leaned on an ancient oak to rest.

He blinked back along the lane towards the high-road as he rested. And a few minutes later he gave a jump.

Over a distant hedge he sighted a hat; and that hat was turning out of the main road into Oak Lane. That would not have mattered very much; but it was Carne's hat; and only too evidently Carne of the Sixth was under the hat.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

He had been out of sight of Carne when the car dropped him, and he started up Oak Lane. How that beast knew which way he had gone was a mystery. But there was no doubt that Carne was coming up Oak Lane, and in a few minutes he would be in sight of Bunter.

"Beast!" groaned Bunter.

His first impulse was to run. But running was not in Bunter's line, if he could possibly help it. Besides, long before he got out of that winding lane the beast would spot him; and he would be run down in a very few minutes. His second impulse was to hide. And he followed the second impulse.

Fortunately, there was plenty of cover at hand. Just opposite the big oak-tree where Bunter rested, on the other side of the lane, was a thick coppice. Bunter plunged across the lane and plunged into the coppice. Heedless of thorns—Carne was more unpleasant than thorns—Bunter barged into the very heart of a brambly bush, and stood still.

A minute later he heard footsteps. He had only been in time. The footsteps came right on to the coppice. Bunter, with quaking heart, waited to hear them pass.

But they did not pass.

And Bunter, with a thrill of terror, realised that Carne of the Sixth had stopped, and was standing still, not three yards from him.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Ponsonby Begs for it!

"GOAL!"

"Well kicked, sir!"

"Good old Wingate!"

"Urray!" chirruped Tatters, with glee.

On the Highcliffe ground the Famous Five stood in a group, with Arthur Cecil Cholmondeley. Some of the High-

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HA, HA, HA! THAT'S MADE YOU SMILE! NOW HAVE A SHOT AT A JOKE YOURSELF!

cliffe Fourth were with them; among them Frank Courtenay, the captain of the Form, and his pal the Caterpillar.

There were a score or more other men from Greyfriars, who had followed the team; but the home crowd was hardly more numerous than the visitors' friends. Highcliffe was not a keen school; and even a First Eleven match did not draw a crowd.

Frank Courtenay certainly was keen enough. He was keen on winning matches with the junior team, of which he was skipper; and he was even keen on seeing the First Eleven uphold the Highcliffe colours.

His chum, the Caterpillar, affected a tremendous keenness also, and yawned behind his hand when Courtenay was not looking at him. Which was often enough, for Courtenay's attention was mainly fixed on the game.

The game was going strong. Wingate and his men from Greyfriars rather outclassed the home team, in the opinion of all the visitors. But Langley, the Highcliffe captain, was putting up a good game, and his men backed him up fairly well. Not a Greyfriars man there doubted that Greyfriars would win; but Highcliffe, at least, were giving them a run for their money.

The Greyfriars fellows roared as the ball went in from George Wingate's

foot. It was first blood to the visitors.

"A good goal!" remarked Courtenay, as the men walked back to the centre of the field. "A good goal, Caterpillar!"

"Splendid!" said the Caterpillar heartily.

He had been looking the other way, bestowing a nod on some of the knuts of Highcliffe who were strolling down to the football ground.

"The way Wingate bagged that pass from Blundell was good, Caterpillar."

"Rippin'!" agreed the Caterpillar.

"Toppin', old bean!"

"You didn't see it, you ass!" said Bob Cherry warmly. "You were looking the other way."

"Quite!" agreed the Caterpillar urbanely. "I'm takin' Franky's word for it. He says it was a good goal; and Franky knows. Hurrah!"

"Fathead!" said Courtenay, half laughing. "Why don't you keep an eye on the game, Rupert!"

"I was just looking round at Ponsonby," said the Caterpillar.

"Wonderin' what the jolly old knuts are here for."

"To watch the match, of course."

"Well, they're not generally keen on watchin' footer, though I s'pose they'd rather watch it than play it, any day," remarked the Caterpillar. "Hallo, Pon! Wherefore this jolly old thussness?"

Ponsonby, Gadsby, and Vavasour, the nutty knuts of the Highcliffe Fourth, stopped close by the group. Harry Wharton & Co. elaborately took no notice of them. They were on fighting terms with Pon & Co., which was rather awkward for their friendship with Courtenay and his friends.

They hoped sincerely that Pon was not coming along for trouble now. They were on Highcliffe ground, watching the game, and anything like a shindy with Highcliffe men would have been unspeakably bad form. But it would have been rather like Ponsonby to force trouble at such an unpropitious moment.

"Frightfully keen on footer all of a sudden, Pon?" asked the Caterpillar, with a sleepy looking but very keen eye on Ponsonby.

"Oh, frightfully!" said Pon. "I didn't see the start. How's the score? I suppose we're beatin' the cads."

Pon was alluding to the Greyfriars First Eleven as "cads." He was making an elaborate pretence of not seeing a group of Greyfriars juniors, within a yard of him. Harry Wharton & Co. felt their ears burn; but they were careful not to look round at Pon.

The Caterpillar smiled and shrugged his shoulders.

He was quite aware that it was not interest in the great winter game that had drawn Ponsonby away from the attractions of bridge in the study with his nutty pals. He was there to make things unpleasant for Courtenay's Greyfriars friends if he could.

"But what are you watchin' the game for, Caterpillar?" asked Gadsby.

"Franky dragged me here. Almost by the hair of my head!" explained the Caterpillar. "Franky's frightfully keen. He's so jolly enthusiastic that he's glad to see the other side bag goals, if they're good goals. That's what I call a jolly old sportsman."

"They look a clumsy lot of bargoes," remarked Pon.

"Our team?" asked the Caterpillar. "I'm sorry to say I agree. They want a skipper like Franky to keep them up to the notch."

"I don't mean our team, you ass!"

snapped Pon. "I mean those rank outsiders from Greyfriars."

"Pon," murmured the Caterpillar—"Pon, old man, I know you learned your manners in a bear-garden, old bean, and I know you've got just about as much decency as a hooligan in a slum. But draw it mild, old chap! We don't want a rag here—we don't really! Besides, if it comes to a row, you can't stand up to Greyfriars punchin', you know. Why ask for it?"

Ponsonby did not seem to hear that remonstrance. He glanced over the group of Greyfriars juniors, and his eyes rested keenly on Tatters. The Greyfriars junior who had once been a tinker's boy seemed to interest the dandy of Highcliffe very much indeed. The Caterpillar followed his glance, and bit his lip. Harry Wharton & Co. moved a few paces farther off. Bob Cherry's eyes were gleaming, and Johnny Bull was breathing hard. But the Co. wanted to keep the peace if they could, on Highcliffe ground. Courtenay gave the knuts one expressive look, and moved after his friends.

The Caterpillar stayed where he was. Perhaps he hoped to keep Pon's pleasant remarks out of the Greyfriars men's hearing. If so, his hope was in vain. Pon smiled, and raised his voice a little as he went on, making sure that Harry Wharton & Co. should hear.

"By the way, Caterpillar, I saw Skinner the other day—you know Skinner—"

"Remove man?" said the Caterpillar. "I've seen him."

"Yes—not such a bargee as you'd naturally expect a Greyfriars man to be," said Pon airily. "Well, Skinner told me a jolly queer story. They get all sorts of queer fish in that show, you know, but they've got the jolly old limit this time. Would you believe that any Public school would take in a tinker—even Greyfriars?"

"Whisper, and I shall hear!" murmured the Caterpillar.

"I'm rather curious to see the bargee," went on Pon. "Do you happen to have seen the ruffian, Caterpillar?"

"It's the jolly old limit, ain't it?" said Gadsby. "Fancy takin' in a tinker—what? It's the limit."

"Absolutely!" said Vavasour.

Every word was clearly audible to the Greyfriars group, though they had moved out of hearing of a normal tone. Pon & Co. raised their voices sufficiently to be clearly heard.

Tatters' ears were burning crimson. The Famous Five were getting restive. Wingate and his men were making a hot attack on the Highcliffe goal; the Greyfriars captain and Gwynne, and Loder, and Sykes, and Blundell of the Fifth, coming up the field in great style. But it was difficult for the juniors to concentrate their attention on the game they had come over to watch, with Pon's pleasantries in their ears.

"Who's that bloke, you coveys?" asked Tatters, in a low voice. "He's torking about me, he is."

"That's Ponsonby, of the Highcliffe Fourth," answered Bob. "Don't mind him, kid; he's a rank rotter, and he's trying to drag us into a shindy here. Mum's the word."

"Orlright," said Tatters. "Jest as you like; but bust my buttons, I'd like to give 'im a wipe round the kisser."

"Are there any Greyfriars men over here to-day?" went on Ponsonby.

"You haven't noticed that there are, Pon?" murmured the Caterpillar. "Would you mind shuttin' up, Pon? You're gettin' Franky's rag out."

Ponsonby smiled genially. He was quite aware that he was getting Frank Courtenay's rag out—which was his amiable intention. The expression on Courtenay's face was growing grimmer and grimmer.

"There's some of them here," said Gadsby, with a nod towards the Greyfriars group. "I wonder if they've got the tinker with them?"

"Let's go an' see!" suggested Pon. "I'm frightfully curious to see the Greyfriars tinker."

"Absolutely!" said Vavasour.

Pon & Co. moved along towards the Greyfriars men. Harry Wharton & Co. remained where they were. It was evident that the festive Pon was not to be eluded.

"Hallo, you men!" said Pon genially. "What's this I hear about a tinker comin' to your school? Was it a tinker, or a tailor, Gaddy?"

"A tinker, I think," said Gaddy. "Might have been a tailor, though. These fellows can tell us."

"Of course they can," assented Pon. "You wouldn't mind tellin' us, Wharton. Is your new man a tinker or a tailor?"

Wharton kept his back turned to the merry knuts, and made no reply.

"Will you cheese it, Ponsonby?" asked Frank Courtenay, in a low tone.

"Why?" asked Ponsonby, raising his eyebrows. "I'm only askin' your friends about a new man in their school. I'm sure they won't mind tellin' me whether he's a tinker or a tailor."

Harry Wharton & Co. began to regret that they had brought Cholmondeley to Highcliffe to see that match. But they had not expected this sort of thing, even from the cheery Pon.

"From what I hear," went on Pon, "he's a frightful bargee—drops his H's all over the place, eats with his knife, and—"

"That's a bloomin' lie!" said Tatters, turning round. "And if you don't shet up your tater-trap, you silly idjit, I'll shet it up for you, with a bung on the beezel."

"Oh, gad!" gasped Ponsonby.

The dandy of Highcliffe was fairly taken aback by that remarkable form of address. The Famous Five crimsoned with discomfort. They did not mind Tatters' queer mode of expression themselves; they liked Tatters, and were used to his rather weird ways. But this was very discomforting. A number of other Highcliffe men, as well as Pon & Co., stared round at Cholmondeley, and there were grins and shrugs.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Gaddy. "That must be the jolly old tinker! I say, would you mind sayin' that over again?"

"Yes, do say it over again!" gasped Ponsonby. "It's frightfully interestin'. Say it over again, and then get one of your friends to translate it into English."

"Oh, shut up, ugly mug!" said Tatters, his eyes gleaming with anger. "And take your blooming face away, afore I pull your nose."

And, goaded by Ponsonby's mocking grin, and without waiting for the dandy of Highcliffe to take his face away, Tatters reached out and grasped Pon's handsome Greek nose between a finger and thumb.

He squeezed—hard!

Up to that moment, Ponsonby had been enjoying himself. He had been ragging an inoffensive fellow he had never seen before—irritating his old enemies, Harry Wharton & Co., and making Courtenay uncomfortable and

angry. All that was sheer enjoyment to the amiable Pon. But as that finger and thumb, that seemed like a steel vice, fastened on his nose, Pon's enjoyment ceased all of a sudden. He gave a spluttering, gasping yell, and clawed wildly at the fingers that gripped his nose.

"Ow! Groogh! Oooh! Led do by dose!" gurgled Ponsonby.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Famous Five burst into a laugh. The aspect of Ponsonby, with his face crimson, his eyes streaming water, his features working with anguish, clawing frantically at Tatters' gripping fingers, was quite comic. The Greyfriars juniors roared. Courtenay grinned, and the Caterpillar smiled gently.

"I warned you, Pon!" he murmured. "Why can't you take a friendly warnin', old bean? You keep on askin' for things you don't want! Now you've woke up the jolly old tinker!"

"Led do by dose!" gurgled Ponsonby.

He struck furiously at Tatters' grinning face. With his left, Tatters guarded, and his right remained where it was—finger and thumb fastened on Ponsonby's nose like a vice.

Gadsby and Vavasour made a movement forward, to intervene. Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull promptly interposed. They had wanted to avoid trouble; but now Pon had forced it, they were ready for it. Gadsby moved back again, with an elbow shoving his chest; and Vavasour staggered and fell as he was barged off.

"No you don't!" said Bob grimly. "Man to man is fair play; and Pon's asked for it! Now he's got it, and you can leave him to it."

"The askfulness was terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "But the getfulness does not seem to be grateful or comfortful."

"Groooogh! Led do!" wailed Ponsonby. "Oooooogh! By dose! By dose! Moooooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tatters gave the Highcliffe dandy's nose a final twist, which made Pon fairly scream, and let go. Pon staggered back, gasping.

Then Tatters pushed back his cuffs.

"Now, come on, if you want some more, old covey!" he said. And Tatters spat on his hands; a thing that was not done at Greyfriars or Highcliffe.

Ponsonby, clenching his fists, made a furious stride forward. But he made only one stride. Gadsby slipped his arm through Pon's. Having woke up trouble, the Highcliffe knuts, as usual, did not want to face the music.

"Come away, Pon!" murmured Gaddy. "Don't be dragged into a shindy with that gang! Come away, old man."

"He'll come away fast enough," jeered Tatters. "Don't you worrit; he aint keen on putting up his 'ands!"

"Cheese it, old man!" murmured Wharton, and he slipped his arm through Tatters' and drew him away.

Pon—only too willingly—allowed himself to be led away by his friends. He went with a crimson, furious face, one hand to his injured nose. There was an ache in that nose that brought the water to his eyes, and it was red and looked bulbous; not at all the handsome nose that Pon was accustomed to admiring in the glass.

Pon and Co. disappeared towards the House.

"I'm sorry, for this, you men!" murmured Courtenay. "I can only apologize for that boulder."

"All serene!" said Harry. "Hallo,

"Come away, Pon!" murmured Gaddy. "Don't be dragged into a shindy with that gang! Come away, old man!" "He'll come away fast enough," jeered Tatters, "don't you worry! He ain't keen on putting up his 'ands!"



there goes Langley. Looks like a goal for Highcliffe."

And attention was turned on the game again, and Pon and all his works forgotten. The Greyfriars men found it easy to dismiss the matter from their minds. But it was not so easy for Pon, as he sat in his study, caressing his red and bulbous nose. He had begged for it, but that was no comfort to Pon now that he had got it. And as he nursed his nose, Pon breathed rage and vengeance.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Doggo!

BILLY BUNTER hardly breathed. Carne of the sixth had stopped in the narrow lane sunk between steep banks of grassy earth. He had stopped under the ancient oak, against which Bunter had been leaning a few minutes before.

Bunter, for the moment, did not doubt that Carne had spotted him in Oak Lane, and come up from the road after him. He expected to hear the prefect's voice call to him, and had no intention of answering or revealing himself. Carne would order him back to Greyfriars, and it was scarcely possible to disregard a direct order from a Sixth Form prefect. And it was very

probable, in fact fairly certain, that Carne would give him a lick from his walking-cane to start him. Bunter was not going back to Greyfriars if he could help it, and he did not want a lick from that malacca cane. He crouched in the midst of the brambles and hardly breathed.

But Carne did not come plunging into the coppice in search of him as he expected. Carne remained in the lane, under the branches of the oak. And a scent that came on the wind told that Carne had lighted a cigarette.

It dawned on the Owl of the Remove that Carne was not, as he had taken for granted, after him. Carne did not know that he was there, and was not even thinking of him.

Minute followed minute, and Carne still remained where he had stopped, leaning on the oak and smoking cigarettes.

Bunter breathed freely now.

Obviously, Carne had some appointment in that secluded spot, and had been on his way to it when Coker's car passed him. He had been out of sight behind when Bunter left the car, and if he thought of Bunter at all he supposed that the fat junior was still in the car with Coker. Bunter realised that now.

Anyhow, Carne's presence in Oak Lane had nothing to do with Bunter, that was clear, and he had not even

the remotest suspicion that the Owl of the Remove was anywhere at hand.

That was a great relief to Bunter. All he had to do was to understudy Brer Fox; lie low and say "'nuffin'," and wait for Carne to go. Bunter was in no hurry. He was missing the football match at Highcliffe—but that did not worry him. So long as he did not miss tea it would be all right. And there was plenty of time to roll into Highcliffe for tea.

Bunter waited, feeling quite cheerful now. He was completely hidden in the brambly thicket, even if Carne came into the coppice. And the prefect showed no intention of leaving the lane.

Ten minutes had passed—a quarter of an hour. Then Bunter heard Carne moving, and heard a low muttered exclamation of impatience. Apparently Carne had expected someone at the rendezvous before this.

Bunter grinned.

His inquisitiveness was aroused now, and he wondered whom Carne was going to meet in that solitary spot more than a mile from the school. One of his sporting friends very likely—a book-maker perhaps. Bunter knew more of Carne's shady manners and customs than the sportsman of the Sixth dreamed. Perhaps one of the shady crew from the Cross Keys—but Bunter

shook his head at that thought. The Cross Keys was at Friardale, in the other direction from the school. But Carne evidently was expecting someone, and equally evidently it was someone he did not care to meet near the school. Bunter was quite curious to know who it was.

"Confound!" he heard Carne's muttering voice, "what the dooce can be keeping him! It's half-past! What the thump!"

Carne was getting more and more impatient.

He moved away from the trunk of the oak, and threw away his cigarette. Bunter heard him scramble up the steep bank of the lane on the side towards the common, and guessed that he was staring away towards the town. He heard him drop back into the lane again, and grunt discontentedly.

"What the dooce!" The muttering voice came quite plainly to Bunter's ears. "There's been a car here—and cars never use this lane! He's been here—and gone—must have been—I've a jolly good mind not to wait."

Carne was staring at the tracks of tyres in the mud. Between the old oak and the coppice across the lane, it was easy to see that a motor-car had been halted and the tracks were those of a small car. Bunter remembered now that he had noticed tyre tracks in the mud at that spot, as well as the tracks of the bicycles, though he had not heeded them. It was unusual for cars to come up that steep and muddy lane, especially in the winter. Bunter gathered from Carne's mutterings that he expected his acquaintance there in a car.

He heard the Greyfriars prefect moving restlessly about. Carne was growing more and more impatient as the minutes passed.

He had been half an hour on the spot now, and so had Bunter. The fat junior was beginning to share his impatience. A long rest was welcome, but if it lasted much longer, there was danger of being late for tea in Courtenay's study at Highcliffe.

But even for tea at Highcliffe, or a dozen teas, Bunter would never have dared to show himself now. The muttering words from Carne showed that his temper was growing steadily worse as he waited. Bunter heard him swishing his walking-cane, swishing off weeds and twigs in his angry impatience. Bunter did not need telling what that stick would swish if Carne discovered him. Bunter still played Brer Fox.

He heard a sudden exclamation from Carne. Footsteps were audible in the lane. Someone was coming at last.

"You're here, Carne!"

"You've kept me waiting an hour!" snapped Carne. "What the thump do—!"

"It was not my fault. I was here before time—half an hour before time as a matter of fact. But—"

"I can see that your car's been here—I suppose it was your car. I began to think you'd gone for good," grunted Carne. "Where's your car now? You've walked?"

"Yes I've parked the car at some distance—out of sight."

"It would be out of sight here. Hardly anybody comes up this lane in the winter—anyhow, what would it matter?" grunted Carne. "Keeping a fellow hanging about like this—"

"I've told you it was not my fault. I was waiting here for you, when a crew of schoolboys came along—Arthur and his friends, on bicycles. I suppose they

were taking this lane as a short cut to somewhere."

"Oh!" ejaculated Carne. "They saw you here?"

"They not only saw me—they stopped and dared to question me. They laid hands on me."

"Oh, my hat! But why?"

"They had an idea that my presence here means harm to my cousin. They had the cheek to rag me—I've been rolled in the mud—smothered—and—and I was forced to drive away—"

"Great gad! You let a mob of school-boys—"

"Don't be a fool! There were six of them, and they were too many for me."

"Look here, I'll take this up, as a prefect," said Carne. "Ragging a man—dashed hooliganism—I'll get them a licking all round for it."

"Nothing of the kind! The less fuss the better! The sooner they forget that they saw me here, the better I shall be pleased."

"Oh! I suppose there's something in that," admitted Carne. "It was rather unlucky, the young scoundrels butting into you here. I fixed this place as a spot where no Greyfriars man was likely to come by any chance. It was a chance in a hundred. They made you clear off?"

"Yes, smothered with mud—in a filthy state! I've had to stop at an inn and get cleaned. That's why I've kept you waiting. I don't know where those young scoundrels were going, but they might come back this way. Let's get out of sight while we talk."

"Right-ho!"

Billy Bunter's fat heart almost died within him as Carne and his unknown companion tramped up the steep bank into the trees of the coppice. The thick brambles round Bunter stirred and swayed as Carne brushed past them. The two moved round the thicket, which effectually concealed them from view from the lane. Carne, leaning on a tree six or seven feet from the hidden Owl of the Remove, lighted a cigarette.

"All right here, Rackstraw! Go ahead!"

Billy Bunter repressed a squeak of astonishment. He had wondered who Carne's mysterious acquaintance might be. He knew now; the name of Rackstraw was familiar enough to him. It was the cousin of Arthur Cholmondeley of the Remove that Carne was meeting secretly. And Bunter, in a state of mingled terror and burning curiosity, crouched in the cover of the brambles and made no sound.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

The Whip-Hand!

CYRIL RACKSTRAW, leaning on an oak two or three feet from Carne, lighted a cigar. The powerful scent of Havana came to Bunter in the brambles. Rackstraw smoked in silence for a few minutes, Carne watching his face curiously. The grandson of Sir George Cholmondeley spoke at last.

"I've not seen you since that afternoon at the Cross Keys. It won't do for me to show up here too often—what's happened this afternoon is a proof of that. And letters are dangerous. I've been wondering. I suppose you've got something to report?"

"Nothing that you want to hear, I'm afraid," said Carne.

Rackstraw looked at him under knitted brows, with eyes that had an unpleasant gleam in them.

"I've been relying on you," he said quietly. "You know how the matter

stands—I'm a ruined man unless that old fool, Sir George, turns his tinker grandson down. Nothing short of the young scoundrel being sacked from Greyfriars will work that. It should be easy enough—with his training, his association with all sorts of rogues and vagabonds, it's certain that he's a pretty thorough young rascal. It's only a question of nailing him in some black-guardism, which must come as natural to him as breathing. Easy enough for a fellow in your position—a school prefect."

"So I thought," answered Carne.

"You do not think so now?"

"No."

"And why not?" demanded Rackstraw.

"It's not as you supposed—and not as I supposed," explained Carne. "The kid is a young sweep—he talks like a bargee, and so on. But—I dislike him pretty thoroughly, as you know. But it's no good blinking facts. I've been on his trail like a dashed Red Indian. I've watched him, almost shadowed him. Two or three times I thought I had him, but it turned out to be a mistake. He can't be found out and shown up, because there's nothing to find out and nothing to show up."

"Rot!"

"Well, I thought it rot at first," said Carne. "I took it for granted, the same as you did, that a kid with the training he's had would be a pretty thorough-going sweep. It seemed to me to stand to reason. But, as I said, it's no good blinking facts. He's a cheeky young sweep, and I don't like him, but so far as conduct goes, he's as decent as any kid at Greyfriars. I've watched him so jolly carefully that it simply isn't possible for me to be mistaken about it. All I've found out is that there's absolutely nothing against him. I can tell you it was a surprise to me. But there it is."

"I don't believe it!" snarled Rackstraw.

"I didn't at first," said Carne. "But there's no doubt about it. He's just a kid with no harm in him at all. He's made friends with the most decent set in his Form—fellows who would turn him down on the spot if he put up any blagging. They're a cheeky set, and I've had trouble with them, but there's nothing against any of them. And there's nothing against young Cholmondeley. So far as I've been able to discover, he hasn't kicked over the traces in one single instance since he's been at Greyfriars. That wasn't what I expected to find out, but that's what I've found out, Mr. Rackstraw. And that's that!"

There was a long silence.

Evidently Rackstraw was unwilling to believe the report he had received from his ally in the Greyfriars Sixth. He had counted upon it as an absolute certainty that poor Tatters was what might, perhaps, have been expected from his unfortunate early training. That the boy had passed through evil associations uncontaminated had never even occurred to his own evil and distrustful mind.

With all advantages of training and opportunity, Rackstraw knew himself to be a rascal. He was little given to believing in decency in others; like most men, he measured others by his own standard. It is inevitable that a bad man should believe the whole world to be bad.

But if Rackstraw had been disposed to believe in any fellow being perfectly straight, it certainly would not have been a fellow who had associated with
(Continued on page 12.)

"Half-Time" Gossip!



"Old Ref's" a veritable walking encyclopedia where soccer's concerned. He'll solve any intricate problem for you—if only you'll let him. Drop him a line to-day.

ONE of my readers, who is what might be called a Tottenham Hotspur "fan," is somewhat mystified over the "colour" question in relation to recent events. I don't blame him for being a bit fogged. The circumstances are difficult for those who do not know the inside story.

Here are the circumstances. In a recent League match at Tottenham, when the Wolves were the visitors, the Tottenham Hotspur men played in other than their usual white jerseys. My correspondent is right when he says that he understood the rule regarding League games was that the home team had a right to play in its own colours when they clashed with those of the opposing team.

Actually, the shirts worn by the Wolves players should not clash with those worn by the Tottenham men. The Spurs shirts are white and the Wolves shirts are gold. In the match referred to, the teams were actually on the field, each in their own colours.

When the referee appeared on the scene, however, he decided that the colours clashed. The shirts of the Tottenham players were not quite as snow-white as they might have been. The gold shirts of the Wolves players were not so golden as they might have been—a bit washed out, as we might say.

In the circumstances, and according to rule, the Wolves should have changed; but when it was suggested to them that they should change, a difficulty arose. They hadn't brought a change with them, as the officials of the club had not imagined that gold and white shirts could be considered to clash. Hence, there was only one thing for it—the home team, that is Tottenham Hotspur, had to change. That was why the Spurs, although at home, and seemingly against the rule, played in strange colours in a League match, while the Wolverhampton players retained their own jerseys.

THE very next match on the Tottenham Hotspur ground happened to be a Cup-tie. This was against Preston North End, and both the teams concerned, play, in the ordinary course of events, in white shirts. Now, between Cup-ties and League games there is this big difference in the rules, concerning the colours of the opposing players. I have explained that in League games, when colours clash the visiting side must change.

In the Cup, however, if there is a clashing of colours, the rule says that both teams must change.

Those facts will, I think, explain the mystery to the satisfaction of my puzzled reader.

As an interesting side-issue, there was rather a remarkable series of coincidences connected with that recent Spurs—Preston Cup-tie so far as the colour question is concerned. As both clubs usually play in white shirts, both had to change. But, strange as it may seem, the "first change" of both clubs was also the same—from white to blue and white hoops. That wouldn't do, so each club was mulcted in the expense of new shirts for the occasion.

IN other directions—on the field of play—there is rather obviously a difference between Cup football and League football. I am always prepared to argue that the best team of any season is the one which wins the championship of the First Division. To do this, a side must have stood the test in relation to consistency; they must have been better, week in and week out, than their rivals.

As the team which wins the League championship can claim to be the best of the season, they ought, in theory, to win the Cup as well. But it is almost literally true to say that the club which wins the League championship never wins the Cup

in the same season. Anyway, the double feat has not been accomplished for 34 years.

In 1896-7 Aston Villa won the Cup and the League Championship, but ever since then, although many clubs have come near to bringing off the double event, no side has been successful.

The simple fact of the matter is, of course, that the strain of trying to keep going at top speed in both Cup and League, usually proves too big. I could tell you of clubs which have missed both honours because they have tried to capture both. The club which, as a rule, wins the Cup is one in a safe and comfortable position in the League—that is in such a position that they can concentrate on winning the Cup and need not trouble to take too much out of themselves when they are playing League games. Several times in recent years the Cup has been won by a side which finished about thirteenth or fourteenth in the First Division table. That fact emphasises the truth of my point; that, as a rule, it is not wise to look for the winners among the leading clubs in the First Division.

ANOTHER rather strange thing about this Cup struggle—at least, it strikes me as strange—is that some of the most famous clubs have never been successful in "lifting" the trophy. More than half the present members of the First Division—twelve to be exact—are still hoping for their first real success in the knock-out competition. The most striking instances of repeated failures in the Cup, of really good teams, are provided by the experience of Sunderland and Liverpool.

At one time, Sunderland had a side which was called the "team of all the talents." Five times Sunderland won the Championship of the First Division, but they simply could not win the Cup, and have never yet done so.

Liverpool, another old club, have won the First Division Championship four times, but they, too, have always found the winning of the Cup a task beyond their powers.

Why is it that these good sides don't win? If you asked the officials of those clubs that question, they would probably reply that they have never had the bits of luck which are so necessary; and which form such a big feature of Cup football. There may be something in this explanation, and I am quite prepared to agree that no club ever wins the Cup without having some bits of good luck on the way.

ON the other hand, I am tempted to wonder whether some clubs don't fail regularly because they cannot resist the temptation to play a different type of football when they get to the Cup competition. Among the players and the followers of football, there is a widespread impression that the way to Cup success is by a special type of play.

How often, when the Cup-ties are being played, do we see and hear the words, "typical Cup team" used? If those words mean anything, they surely mean to suggest that there is such a thing as typical Cup football. Personally, I don't believe in this idea at all.

It is my definite impression that football which is good enough to win League matches is good enough to win Cup-ties.

The style of the football doesn't matter. The side which changes its style because it is switching over from League to Cup football is asking for trouble. And it gets it.

"OLD REF."

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THE VOICE OF THE TEMPTER!

(Continued from page 10.)

tramps and outcasts, and had been trained in the company of Tinker Wilson. Tatters was the last fellow in the wide world whom he would have expected to run straight.

It was evident that Carne's news was a heavy blow to him.

He was unwilling to believe it. But he had to believe it. Carne's own bitter dislike of the waif was a guarantee that he was keeping faith with the waif's enemy. Carne, it was certain, would have been glad to fasten any accusation on Tatters—had there been anything to fasten! The simple fact was, that there was not.

Blacker and blacked grew Rackstraw's face.

Carne watched him in uneasy silence. Once or twice Carne had doubted his wisdom in cultivating this valuable acquaintance outside the school. He doubted more than ever now as he watched the disappointment, the bitterness, the sheer evil, in the dissipated face of Sir George Cholmondeley's grandson.

"Well, that's that!" said Carne at last. "I'm sorry, Rackstraw, but there it is! I thought it was easy as pie, the same as you did! But it turned out to be a case of makin' bricks without straw. All I've been able to do is to prove that there's absolutely nothin' against the kid—if that's any good."

"I dare say his grandfather would be glad to hear that!" sneered Rackstraw. "You don't expect it to please me?"

Carne laughed a little. "Well, no, in the circumstances, as the little brute stands between you and fifty thousand a year. But there it is; it's no use blinkin' facts. As the jolly old poet says, facts are stubborn things."

"If the facts are not what one wants, they must be altered to suit," said Rackstraw. "You understand, Carne, that my whole future is at stake—everythin' depends on this. That interloper has come between me and a fortune. He's got to go."

Carne shifted uneasily.

"I don't see—" he muttered.

"He's got to go," said Rackstraw quietly. "If there's nothing to go upon, it will be necessary to manufacture somethin'."

Carne started as if an adder had stung him.

"Are you mad?" he ejaculated. "Do you know what you're saying, Rackstraw? You're talkin' to a Greyfriars prefect; not to a boozy loafer in one of your night clubs!"

"It was in a London night club that I first met you," said Rackstraw. "I imagine that you would not be a Greyfriars prefect long if your headmaster knew how you improved the shinin' hour in vacation."

"You mean—you can't mean—that you'd be cur enough to give me away at the school?" muttered Carne, with a scared look.

Rackstraw laughed. It was not a pleasant laugh.

"Well, I don't care," said Carne. "After all, a man can please himself in the holidays. The Head won't like it, but—and, dash it all, how are you goin' to prove that you met me at the Pelican, if you come to that?"

"That's not all," said Rackstraw. "Keep cool, Carne! We're friends. Let's remain friends. I want you to help me in this."

"I can't help you in what you've hinted at. What sort of a scoundrel do

you take me for?" exclaimed Carne. "I've been a bit of a fool, I know. I've kicked over the traces at Greyfriars, but—but—why, you must be mad to think of such a thing!"

"It will be worth your while," said Rackstraw. "If I get rid of that interloping young rascal, I shan't be mean about money."

"Keep your filthy money!" said Carne between his teeth. "By gad, you're offering me money to make up lies about a wretched kid! Why, you rotter, I don't know why I don't smash my fist in your face!" Carne's voice rose passionately. "You're mad—mad!"

"Don't shout," said Rackstraw icily. "Somebody may pass in the lane. I've told you to keep cool. Your contempt for my money, Master Carne, is a little too recent. You've borrowed a good amount—"

"You offered it. I was in a hole. I'll square, too!" muttered Carne. "It won't be easy, but I'll raise the wind somehow."

"That's not needed. You've had thirty pounds or so from me—a mere bagatelle. It can run into hundreds, if you like, once that young scoundrel is kicked out of Greyfriars."

Carne clenched his hands.

"Shut up!" he said. "By gad, Rackstraw, if you don't shut up I'll hit you!"

Rackstraw gave him an evil smile. He threw away the stump of his cigar, bit the end off another, and lighted it. He was perfectly cool—icily cool—in contrast to Carne's passionate excitement.

"Let's have this plain," he said. "Either young Arthur is disgraced with his grandfather and turned down, or else I'm done for. I raised money on my expectations before the young brute was found, and I'm up to the ears in debt. My grandfather wouldn't pay moneylenders; he would be more likely to cut me off with sixpence if he knew that I had ever had dealings with them. He cast off his own son—young Tatters' father—for much less than he would have against me if it all came out. I'm getting near the end of my tether, Carne, and it's Arthur or me. It's goin' to be Arthur, and you're going to help."

"I'm jolly well not!" snapped Carne. "I'll clear now, Rackstraw, and I can jolly well tell you I don't want to see you again!"

He made a movement to leave the coppice.

"Don't go," said Rackstraw icily. "If we part enemies, Carne, you will be sacked from Greyfriars yourself a few hours afterwards."

Carne stopped in his tracks.

"What do you mean?" he muttered huskily. "You—you villain, what do you mean?"

"What I say—neither more nor less. I hoped to carry this through on a friendly footin', but I've taken measures in case you should kick," said Cyril Rackstraw calmly. "I've got your IOU's; that's the first item. Your headmaster would be interested to know what you've spent thirty pounds on in three weeks. A fortnight ago you came to Lantham Races with me, and a friend of mine snapshotted you in the car, sittin' watchin' the races and talkin' with Banks, the bookie. I had—and have—no intention of usin' that little picture. It's a card up my sleeve. Let's remain friends."

Carne, deadly pale, staggered against the tree. He stared at Rackstraw with frightened eyes.

"You—you villain!" he muttered hoarsely. "You awful villain! You've

been gettin' me into a trap, to make use of me!"

"Arthur Cholmondeley of the Remove is goin' to be sacked from Greyfriars," said Rackstraw in a low, distinct voice. "If he isn't, Carne of the Sixth Form is goin' to be sacked. Take your choice! I mean that—every word! We're in this together, Carne, and if I go down, you go down with me!"

He moved away from the oak on which he had been leaning.

"Think it over! I'll see you again. I'll let you know where and when. If you want money—"

"Keep your money!" hissed Carne.

Rackstraw shrugged his shoulders.

"If you change your mind about that, Cobb at the Cross Keys has a sum in hand that you can draw on. I'll see you again next week. I hope you'll have somethin' to report!"

Carne did not answer.

Rackstraw paused a moment, looking at him, and then turned away and walked down to the lane. His footsteps died away in the distance.

Carne remained where he was. He leaned weakly on an oak, as if all his strength was gone. His face was white as chalk, and perspiration stood in large drops on his forehead. Long minute followed minute, and still Carne did not move. A sound came from him at last. It was a groan; a groan so full of misery and despair that made Bunter shudder as he heard it.

The wretched prefect stirred. He dragged himself away from the tree, brushed past the brambles, and went stumblingly down the muddy bank into the lane. Bunter, half frozen with terror in the thicket, heard him go. Carne's stumbling footsteps died away at last, and Bunter was left alone.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

No Tea For Bunter!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. walked cheerily into the House with Frank Courtenay and the Caterpillar. The football match was over, Greyfriars winners by three goals to one. That was about what the heroes of the Remove had expected, for Wingate's team was leagues ahead of the Highcliffe First. But, apart from cheering the victors, they forbore to "rub it in." Highcliffe was not a keen school, but Courtenay was very keen. He had knocked the Junior Eleven into fighting form. But Langley was not the man to do the same for the First Eleven. There was a slight cloud on Courtenay's face as he walked away from the field with his Greyfriars friends, and the Co. tactfully turned the subject away from Soccer.

"I suppose Bunter's here by this time," said Bob Cherry. "He didn't turn up on the footer ground."

"Bunter?" repeated Courtenay.

"I hope you don't mind," said Harry Wharton, half-laughing. "Bunter's butting in for tea. Still, you can kick him if you like."

Courtenay laughed.

"He's welcome," he said. "I dare say we'll find him in the House, if he was walking over."

But Bunter was not seen in the House; neither was he found in Courtenay's study when the juniors went there for tea.

Ponsonby was lounging in the doorway of his study, and his eyes glittered at the Greyfriars party as they came up. His glance fixed on Tatters with a deadly look.

But Pon did not speak; he was not in the mood for any more airy badinage. His nose had suffered too severely for

that. He assumed a sneering, supercilious expression as the Greyfriars fellows passed him, and that was all, and that had not the slightest effect on the Removites. Tatters gave the dandy of Highcliffe a rather warlike look; but Bob Cherry slipped an arm through his and marched him on rather quickly.

"That bloke looked at me!" muttered Tatters.

"Well, a cat may look at a king, old bean."

"Ho was asking for it again!" grunted Arthur Cecil Cholmondeley.

"Come on, old chap!"

Tatters glanced back at Ponsonby. The Greyfriars "tinker" had had a certain amount of chipping in the Remove, in his own school, and he had taken most of it very good-temperedly. But the supercilious Pon seemed to put his back up very considerably. Pon met his backward glance, and curled his lip contemptuously, and Tatters paused. But Bob walked him on, and they went into Courtenay's study.

Tea was a very cheery meal, not the less cheery because William George Bunter had not turned up, as expected. It was really surprising that Bunter had not turned up for tea.

Tea was, as Bunter had anticipated, a very handsome spread, and there was no doubt that the Owl of the Remove would have enjoyed it immensely. But he was not there, and nothing had been seen of him when the cheery function came to an end.

After tea Courtenay walked down to the gates with his friends, to see them off. The six Greyfriars fellows wheeled out their bicycles, waved their hands to the Highcliffe junior captain and pedalled away.

The early winter dusk was at hand, and the rest of the Greyfriars crowd were long gone. In a whizzing bunch Harry Wharton & Co. sped away, followed the path across a corner of the common, and turned into Oak Lane.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

Coming along the lane was a well-known fat figure. Billy Bunter was apparently on his way to Highcliffe, unaware, doubtless, that tea was certain to be over by that time, or perhaps hoping against hope that it was not over. He gave a jump at the sight of the cyclists, and they slowed down.

"I say, you fellows!" gasped Bunter. "Whither bound?" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Highcliffe, of course! You—you haven't left?" exclaimed Bunter—a question that made the juniors chortle. Really, it was fairly clear that they had left, as they were on their way home to Greyfriars.

"The leftfulness is terrific, my esteemed fat Bunter!" chuckled Hurree Singh. "We are now homeward bounders."

"Oh dear! I—I say, you fellows, I—I haven't had any tea!"

"Awful!" said Bob.

"I was coming over to Highcliffe to tea, you know."

"You should have bucked up!" grinned Nugent. "Did Carne make you do your lines over again?"

"I never did the lines," said Bunter. "I chanced it, you know. I started soon after you fellows."

"My only hat!" ejaculated Harry Wharton. "Have you been a couple of hours walking a mile and a half?"

"I've been delayed," groaned Bunter, "sticking in a beastly bush, half frozen! Oh dear! I say, you fellows, I'm frightfully hungry. You might have waited for me at Highcliffe."

"Fathead! They'll be locking the gates by the time you get there," said Harry. "You'd better turn round and

Carne came along," groaned Bunter, "and when he started talking with the other beast I had to keep doggo. I don't know what they'd have done if they'd seen me."

"They! Who?"

"Carne and that other beast."

"What other beast, fathead?"

"That man Rackstraw! They were talking for a jolly long time, and I dared not let them know I was there!" mumbled Bunter. "I was jolly nearly frozen! Ow! I say, you fellows, I've had an awful time!"

Harry Wharton & Co. stared at Bunter blankly.

"You've seen Rackstraw?" exclaimed Harry.

"I didn't see him—you can bet I was



Tatters sailed down the banister with a whiz; and just as he jumped clear at the foot of the stairs, Carne came along. Tatters crashed into the Sixth-Former and sent him spinning!

roll back home, Fatty! You'll be late for call-over."

Bunter groaned dismally.

He had not had much hope of reaching Highcliffe in time for tea, after escaping from his retreat in the coppice by Oak Lane. He had had little doubt that the Famous Five would have left and that he would meet them on their homeward way. Still, it was a blow to him. His fat thoughts had dwelt on that spread in Courtenay's study; and he had hoped against hope. Now it was gone from his gaze like a beautiful dream.

"You fellows got any toffee about you?" he asked.

"Ha, ha! No."

"Any chocs?"

"No. Not even a jolly old aniseed-ball!" cried Bob Cherry, with a chuckle. "Poor old Bunter! If you cut that impot, why the dickens didn't you get across to Highcliffe? You've had lots of time."

"I had to get out of sight when

keeping out of sight," said Bunter. "But Carne called him Rackstraw, so I suppose he was Rackstraw. I say, Carne will be in a frightful temper; and I haven't done my lines. He will take it out of me! I know he will! I hope Rackstraw will get him sacked from Greyfriars like he threatened. That would be topping, wouldn't it?"

"Rackstraw get him sacked from Greyfriars!" repeated Bob Cherry, in wonder. "What are you burbling about, you fat chump?"

"Well, he threatened to—unless Carne gets Tatters sacked."

"What!" roared the juniors.

"Don't yell at a fellow!" said Bunter peevishly. "I say, I'm awfully hungry! Sure you haven't got any toffee?"

"You benighted idiot!" said Harry Wharton, in measured tones. "What silly yarn are you telling us now? Have you really seen Rackstraw?"

"I've told you I didn't see him! I was

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THE VOICE OF THE TEMPTER!

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jolly well out of sight, I can tell you. I say, you fellows, do you think Carne will let me off my lines if I tell him I heard it all? After all, he wouldn't like me to mention it to the beaks, would he?"

"Mention what?" yelled Bob Cherry. "What are you burbing about?"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"
"Has the fat duffor been dreaming, or is he trying to pull our leg?" asked the captain of the Remove.

"Oh, really, Wharton—"
"Only gammon, as usual!" grunted Johnny Bull. "Let's get on! We shall be late for call-over at this rate."

"One of you fellows will have to give me a lift back!" said Bunter. "I'm frightfully tired, as well as hungry. I say—"

"Oh, get on behind me, you fat frump!" said Harry. "If you burst the tyre with your ten-ton weight I'll jolly well burst you!"

"Beast!"
The cyclists remounted, and pedalled on. Bunter mounted on the foot-rests of Wharton's machine and held on to Wharton's neck. It was easy enough to give any other fellow a lift in that manner; but it was not easy with Bunter. The bunch of cyclists went down Oak Lane at a good speed; and Bunter swayed to the right, and then to the left.

"Keep steady, fathead!" yelled Wharton.

"Beast!" gasped Bunter.
Wharton's machine "cavorted" like a buck-jumping broncho. He made wild efforts to keep it steady; but with Bunter swaying to and fro behind him he was attempting the impossible. The bike rocked.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Bunter. "I—I—I'm—I'm g-g-going!"

He went!
Two fat arms were clasped round Wharton's neck, in Bunter's last effort to save himself. The captain of the Remove gave a muffled roar.

"Whooooooh! Leggo! Oh crikey! Oh—ooooop!"

Crash! Bump! Clang!
"Oh, my hat!"
"Yarooooh!"

Wharton and Bunter were distributed in the muddy lane, the bike clanging down beside them. The other riders pulled in, and looked back at the wreck. Wharton sat up gasping.

"You frumptious chump!"

"Ow! Wow! I'm hurt! Wow!"
"You frabjous fathead!" yelled Wharton. "What did you lug me over for, you footling frump?"

"Beast! Ow! Wow! Rotter! Ow!"
Wharton staggered to his feet, and picked up his machine. Bunter sat and roared.

"Come on!" called out Johnny Bull. Bunter scrambled up.

"I say, you fellows, stop for me!" he

yelled. "I say—beasts! I say, old chaps! Yah! Rotters! Old fellows! Brutes! Dear old chaps!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Let the fat idiot have your bike, Nugent, and I'll give you a lift!" gasped Wharton. "I can't ride with that—that—that hippopotamus sticking on the back of my neck!"

"All serene!" said Nugent, laughing. And the party got under way once more, Bunter's fat little legs driving at Nugent's pedals, and Nugent standing behind Wharton on his machine.

"I say, you fellows!" yelled Bunter. "Don't leave me behind!"

"Oh, buck up!"
"Look here, two of you fellows hold me!" gasped Bunter. "Then I shall be able to free-wheel, see? One on each side!"

"Kill him, somebody!" said Johnny Bull.

"Beast!"
Nobody seemed keen on free-wheeling Bunter home to Greyfriars. It was more of the selfishness to which Bunter was sadly used. The fat junior plugged on behind the cyclists, and they arrived at Greyfriars at last. The bikes were put into the bicycle-shed, and they walked up to the House. As they neared the House, Bunter gave a squeak of alarm.

"Oh crikey! There's that beast Carne—"

Carne of the Sixth was going into the House. The juniors glanced at him rather curiously. Carne's face was strangely white, and there was a deep wrinkle in his brow. He did not look at them, and seemed to be unaware that they were there. Much to Bunter's relief the bully of the Sixth did not notice him. The fat junior dodged into the House hastily.

"Something up with Carne, you mon!" muttered Bob Cherry. "Did you notice him—he looks frightfully sick!"

"Too many smokes, perhaps!" grunted Johnny Bull.

Bob shook his head. It was something much more serious than smokes that was the matter with Carne of the Sixth, to judge by his looks. Carne went towards his study; and the juniors saw Loder of the Sixth speak to him. Carne, as if he had not heard, walked on, leaving Loder staring after him in astonishment.

Evidently something was wrong with Carne. But in a few minutes more it was call-over, and the juniors crowded into Hall, and forgot all about their old enemy of the Sixth.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

What Bunter Knew!

TATTERS sorted a bag of chestnuts out of the study cupboard. Prep was over in the Remove studies.

Harry Wharton and Nugent pushed their books away, rose from the study table, and helped Arthur Cecil Cholmondeley to roast chestnuts.

There was a tramp of feet in the Remove passage, the door was hurled open, as if a battering-ram had smitten it, and Bob Cherry tramped in. After him came Johnny Bull and the Nabob of Bhanipur.

After the three rolled a fat figure, and a podgy face, and a big pair of spectacles blinked into Study No. 1.

"I say, you fellows—"

"It's jolly old magic!" said Nugent. "How did Bunter know we were going to have roast chestnuts after prep?"

"Oh, really, Nugent!"

Bunter rolled in.
"The fact is, I shall be glad of some of those chestnuts, you men," he said, blinking at the chums of the Remove. "You know, I missed my tea! I haven't had anything to eat since I came in, except a tin of sardines and a bag of biscuits I found in the study, and I shouldn't wonder if Toddy kicks up a fuss when he finds they're gone. He's selfish, you know! I've had absolutely nothing else, except a cake and a saveloy, and a few sosses. If Smithy asks you fellows anything about them, don't say I mentioned them. He might make out that I'd bagged them from his study."

"Help yourself, you fat chump," said Harry. "There's three dozen chestnuts—"

"Good!" said Bunter. "I can do with them, I can tell you. If you fellows really don't want any—"

"Eh?"
"I can do with the lot," said Bunter. "If you've got anything else in the cupboard, trot it out. I'm still hungry, and three dozen chestnuts won't make a lot of difference to me, you know."

"They jolly well won't, you fat cormorant!" said Nugent. "You can bag half a dozen, if you like."

"If you're going to be mean, Nugent—"

"Kick him!"
"I say, you fellows, no larks!" Bunter guzzled baked chestnuts. "I say, I haven't done my lines. I've been expecting that beast Carne after me, but he hasn't turned up. Do you think he's forgotten?"

"If he has, it's the first time on record," said Bob. "You'd better worry through those lines before dorm, fathead!"

"Well, there's hardly time now," said Bunter. "After all, I can say I did them, and left them in my study as he was gone out. One of you fellows can say that you used them to light the fire without noticing. See? Carne might doubt my word; but if you fellows back me up it will be all right."

"You fat villain—"

"I'll do as much for you another time, of course," said Bunter. "I say, these are jolly good chestnuts. Besides, Carne may keep off the grass now I know what an awful villain he is. What do you think the Head would do, Wharton, if I told him that Carne was in a plot to get a Remove man sacked from the school?"

"I fancy he would give you a flogging, if he didn't kick you out of Greyfriars," answered Harry.

Bunter jumped.
"But it's true!" he gasped. "I—I say, d-d-do you think the Head wouldn't believe me?"

"Believe you! Oh crumbs!"
"The believfulness would not be terrific!" chuckled Hurreo Singh.

"But you fellows believe me, don't you?" demanded Bunter, blinking at the chums of the Remove.

"Do we?" gasped Bob Cherry. "Well, not quite! Not absolutely! I think there's just a sort of slight lingering doubt."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
Harry Wharton looked curiously at the Owl of the Remove. It seemed to him that something must have occurred that afternoon, on Bunter's way to Higheliffe, and he wondered what it was. Bunter had mentioned Rackstraw, and the juniors knew that Cyril Rackstraw had been in the neighbourhood that afternoon. They knew, too, that he was acquainted with Carne of the Sixth.

"Look here, you fat duffer," said Harry. "What are you driving at? If you're not talking out of the back of your silly neck, tell us what you mean."

"Well, let a fellow have a chance at those chestnuts," said Bunter. Two fat paws grabbed chestnuts, and Bunter continued: "You see, I heard them jawing. That man Rackstraw knows a lot about Carne of the Sixth, and he threatened to give him away to the head and get him bunked. Ho jolly well meant it, too, if Carne doesn't fix it somehow for Cholmondeley to be sacked."

"You heard him say so?" ejaculated Bob.

"Yes. I say, these ain't bad chestnuts! I was keeping doggo, you know, in that coppice by Oak Lane. I thought that beast Carne was after me, you know; but it turned out he had come there to meet the other beast. I say, that man Rackstraw is an awful villain. Worse than Carne; though it's true that Carne gave me two hundred lines—"

"This can't be true," said Johnny Bull.

"Why, you beast, I tell you I heard it all!" exclaimed Bunter indignantly. "Mean to say you can't take my word?"

"And what did Carne say, Bunter?" asked Harry, with a keen gaze fixed on the fat Owl.

"He said he'd hit the fellow if he didn't shut up."

"Oh, that sounds a bit more true!" said Johnny Bull. "But he ought to have hit him, instead of saying he would hit him."

Bunter grinned. "That was only gas," he said. "He jolly well crumpled up, I can tell you. Of course, he knows that Rackstraw could get him bunked. They've been to the races together, and all sorts of things. He's lent him money. He's got Carne right under his thumb."

The juniors looked at Bunter and looked at one another.

"Look here, tell us the whole thing," said Wharton at last. "Blessed if I can make head or tail of it."

Bunter crammed his mouth with baked chestnuts, and told the story. He gave a full account of his adventures of the afternoon, and the juniors listened in silence. Unfortunately, Bunter's memory was not particularly good; and when memory failed, imagination filled the blanks. That was Bunter's way. Like the ancient minstrel in the Lay:

"Each blank, in faithless memory void,
The poet's glowing thought supplied."

Moreover, Bunter never could help adding thrilling details to a story. It was one of his little weaknesses that he never could tell a plain, unvarnished tale. He was bound to add trimmings.

When he had finished there was silence in Study No. 1. It was broken only by the champing of Bunter's jaws as he disposed of baked chestnuts.

"Well," said Wharton, at last, "it's pretty clear that the fat duffer heard something, though goodness knows what. We know that Rackstraw had a hand in the kidnapping; and he's none too good for any other dirty trick. But—but—"

"The butfulness is terrific!" murmured Hurreo Singh.

"Well, if it's true, Carne seems to have done the decent thing and refused to touch it," said Bob. "Carne's rather a roister; but he couldn't touch villainy like that."

"I dare say Bunter imagined half of

it," remarked Johnny Bull. "Some of it is imagination; and some of it lies—"

"Oh, really, Bull—"

WRITE
a
GREYFRIARS LIMERICK
and
WIN A POCKET WALLET!

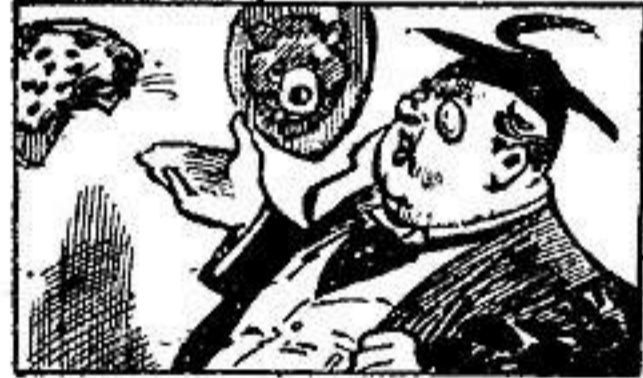
Colin Urquhart, c/o Mrs. McKenzie, Carradale House, Carradale, Argyll, who compiled the Greyfriars limerick illustrated herewith, has been awarded a pocket wallet.



There's a master at Greyfriars, named Prout,



He's pompous, verbose, and so stout.



He says he's a hunter,



But he's a fibber like Bunter—



Their stories the fellows all doubt.

GET BUSY ON A LIMERICK
TO-DAY!

"If there's a fraction of truth in it, it wants some finding," said Johnny Bull. "But we'll jolly well keep an eye open for Carne. We know that he's been after Tatters; that much is true."

"I think there's something in it," said Harry; "but how much, goodness knows."

"The forewarnfulness is the fore-
armfulness, as the English proverb says," remarked Hurreo Janset Ram Singh. "We will keep an absurd eye on the ridiculous Carne."

"My 'at!" said Tatters. "I know that bloke Rackstraw is a bad 'at! But this 'ere is rather thick!"

"I say, you fellows, any more chestnuts?"

"No, fathead?"

Billy Bunter rose. If the chestnuts were finished, Bunter was finished. He rolled to the door; but turned back again.

"I say, you fellows, I forgot to mention—"

The juniors turned to him at once.

"Well?" said Wharton.

"I forgot to mention it, but it's rather important," said Bunter, blinking at him seriously.

"Well, what is it, ass?"

"I'm expecting a postal order—"

"What?"

"But it hasn't come to-day," said Bunter. "If you fellows would lend me the ten bob—"

"You—you—you—"

"And take the postal order when it comes, it would be all right," said Bunter. "What about it?"

The juniors did not answer that question. Bob Cherry picked up a cushion and took aim.

Bunter jumped through the doorway just in time.

The door of Study No. 1 slammed, and Bunter, staying only to yell "Beast!" through the keyhole, departed.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

At the Cross-roads I

L ODER of the Sixth strolled along to Carne's study and threw open the door. There was a glow of firelight in the room, but no other light. Dimly, in the firelight, Loder made out his friend sitting in the armchair near the fire. Even in the dimness Loder could see that Carne's face was strangely white.

"Sitting in the dark?" said Loder, puzzled. "What's the game?"

Carne did not answer.

Loder switched on the light and came in. He threw the door shut behind him and turned to the fellow in the armchair, puzzled and a little uneasy. He had seen Carne looking "sick" before on occasions when certain winners had come in eleventh; but he had never seen him looking so sick as he looked now.

Carne did not stir or glance round; he sat hunched in the chair, staring at the fire.

"What on earth's up, Carne?" asked Loder in wonder.

"Nothing."

"Well, you look as if somethin' was up," said Loder, seating himself on the edge of the study table, his eyes on Carne's white, strained face. "You'd better pull yourself together before you show up in public, Carne. You look as if you'd taken the knock."

Carne gave a short, harsh laugh.

"Is it money?" asked Loder. "Look here, if you're in a bad scrape I've got a few quids—"

"No."
 "Anythin' a man can do?"
 "No."

Loder sat in silence watching him. Carne did not speak. His fixed gaze was still on the fire, and he seemed to have forgotten that Gerald Loder was there.

"You're in a scrape?" asked Loder at last.

"Yes," said Carne without turning his head.

"Serious?"

"Yes."

"It's not gee-gees?"

"No."

"Not——" Loder started and drew a quick breath. "Carne, you're not up for the sack?"

"Yes."

"Great gad!"

Gerald Loder slipped from the table; he stood with his hands thrust deep into his trousers pockets staring down at Carne. Carne's ghastly look had made him feel concerned at first, but now he was feeling alarmed. The two sportsmen of the Sixth were comrades in blackguardism, and if Carne was "up" for the sack it was time for Loder to tremble for himself.

"Look here, give it a name!" said Loder savagely. "If anything's come out—what? Speak, you ass! Don't jabber 'Yes' and 'No' at a fellow! What's come out?"

Carne stirred at last and looked at him.

"Nothing, so far," he answered. "Anyhow, you're not in it. You needn't be alarmed, Loder! I shan't mention your name when I'm bunked. It wouldn't help me to get you bunked, too."

"Well, I'm as deep in the mud as you are in the mire," said Loder; but he breathed more freely. "Get it off your chest, Carne. If nothing's come out so far there must be a chance. Has a beak got on to somethin'?"

"No."

"Somebody outside the school?"

"Yes."

"Who, then?"

No answer.

"Look here, you'd better explain how the matter stands," said Loder. "No good sittin' there lookin' like a stuffed owl. Cough it up, you fool!"

"Oh, leave me alone!" snarled Carne. "I tell you you're not in danger. You're not on in this at all. I'm going to be bunked. You don't fancy I'd give you away because I've got the chopper, do you? Let me alone!"

"But there must be a chance——"

"Yes, there's a chance," said Carne, with a laugh that jarred on all Loder's nerves. "I'm under a man's thumb. He's got me fixed! He's only got to open his mouth and I go up to the Head to be sacked. He will let me off if I come to his terms."

"Then you've got to come to them," said Loder. "How much does he want?"

"I tell you it's not money."

"You're talkin' in riddles!" snapped Loder. "What can the rotter possibly want, except money?"

"He wants me to do somethin' for him—somethin' I can't do! Somethin' you wouldn't touch, though you're a worse fellow than I am. Leave me alone; I've got to think."

"Thinking isn't doing you much good," growled Loder. "You've been stickin' here for two hours or more. If you'd tell me how the matter stands I might help."

"You can't help. And I can't tell you, because——"

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"Because what?"

"Because I'm afraid of myself," muttered Carne huskily. "Because I'm afraid that I'm going to do what that villain wants, to save my skin. And if I do nobody's goin' to know."

"But—but what——" Loder's own face was pale now. "In Heaven's name, Carne, what is it the man wants?"

"Better not ask," said Carne. "I might tell you if you keep on askin'; then you'd be in it."

Loder looked at him in silence. There was something like terror in his heart as he watched Carne's tormented face. He moved to the door.

Carne glanced after him and laughed again.

"That's right," he said; "better clear, Loder—leave me alone. You can't help me out. I'm in it up to the neck. I shall be up for the sack tomorrow unless—unless—— I'm tryin' to make up my mind to face it. But I know I can't face it; I haven't pluck enough. I've got to give in. Keep clear of it and don't ask me any questions."

Loder left the study without replying. He was only too anxious to keep clear of it, whatever it was; and he wondered, with a feeling of fear, what it might be.

Carne, as the door closed on Loder, turned back to the fire, staring at the red embers dully. But he rose from the chair at last and began pacing the room.

"What can I do?"

He muttered the words over and over again.

What could he do? He was at the mercy of the man who threatened him; his own vicious folly had placed him at the man's mercy. If the Head knew what Rackstraw could easily prove, Carne would be expelled from the school the same day. There was no doubt whatever about that. He had done more than enough, a dozen times over, to earn the "sack." All the more because he was a prefect, and trusted by his headmaster, there would be no mercy for him. He would be turned out of the school in disgrace; a black mark placed against his name for ever. And what was he to say to his people when he arrived home in the middle of the term?

He shivered at that thought.

He could not face it—he knew that he could not face it. But the alternative—could he face that?

He disliked the boy. Willingly—indeed, gladly—he would have caught him out in some act of shady rascality, and seen him kicked out of the school. But his watching and spying on Tatters had only revealed that there was nothing against the boy. He had been unwilling to be convinced, but he had had to be convinced. Tatters had passed through bad training and evil associations untouched; evil had glided from his clean, wholesome nature like water from a duck. There was nothing against the boy; there never would be anything, unless——

Carne clenched his hands with rage. For a passionate moment he regretted that he had not dashed his fist into the face of the tempter and taken all risks.

But that mood passed.

He moved about the study, trying to think. There was no way out—he was like a fly in the web of the spider. He had been caught in the network of his own wrongdoing, and there was no escape.

Rackstraw meant every word of his threat. The power was in his hands. Carne knew, at the bottom of his heart, that he would obey the scoundrel's

orders; he knew that he would not, and could not, sacrifice himself; he knew that he would sacrifice Tatters to save himself. He said to himself that he was still thinking it out, that he was not yet decided; but he knew in his bones that the question was decided already.

Tap!

He spun round towards the door, his heart beating like a hammer. His nerves were in rags.

The door opened.

A fat face and a large pair of spectacles glimmered in.

Carne stared at Billy Bunter. Bunter blinked warily at Carne. He did not enter the study.

"What do you want?"

Carne tried to speak naturally. No one must know—no one must suspect—no one must dream that there was anything wrong with him—anything on his mind! To save himself from the punishment of vicious folly he had to tread the path of crime, and he had to be careful. So he told himself, even while his face glared ghastly in the light, and he could barely keep his hands and his lips from trembling.

"I say, I—I did my lines, Carne!" stammered Bunter. "I—I did the whole lot, you know——"

"Lines!" repeated Carne vaguely.

He had forgotten Bunter and his lines. He was not likely to be thinking of Bunter.

"Yes, and——"

"Never mind your lines," said Carne; "you can clear. I—I mean, lay them on the table and go."

"I haven't done them—I mean, I've done them, and—and a chap used them to light the fire by mistake, and—and—I——"

Bunter paused, blinking at Carne. He had got away with such a story once, dealing with Monsieur Charpentier, the French master. He had never ventured to try it upon Mr. Quelch. He wondered, doubtfully, whether it was good enough for Carne of the Sixth.

In other circumstances, that would have been very doubtful indeed. At the present moment Carne was only longing for the junior to go without noticing that there was anything wrong with him.

"All right, Bunter! Never mind! You can clear."

Bunter could scarcely believe his good luck.

Of course, Bunter could never leave well alone. That would not have been Bunter! Carne having swallowed his "whopper," as he supposed, Bunter could not resist elaborating a little.

"You see, it wasn't my fault, Carne! Leaving the impot on the study table, I——"

"Yes, yes, it's all right!"

"Then that ass Toddy bunged them into the fire, you know, and never noticed that they were my lines——"

"Get out!" snapped Carne.

"Oh, all right! I was only going to say—— Yaroooooh!" roared Bunter, as Carne, his assumed self-possession breaking down all of a sudden, strode at him and smacked savagely with his open hand.

The smack rang like a pistol-shot on Bunter's fat ear. Bunter staggered back into the passage, yelling.

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!"

Slam!

Carne's door closed on him. Bunter, still yelling, rolled away. Carne stood shaking, panting for breath. That sudden outburst of savage temper had taken Carne himself by surprise. He had intended to be cool, calm, easy,

normal, good-humoured. He realised that his nerves were in rags, that he had to get a grip on himself.

"I've got to keep cool!" he whispered. "Keep cool, keep cool! I shall be tellin' all the school at this rate! I've got to keep steady!"

He flung himself into the armchair again. His elbows dropped on his knees, his face into his hands.

Ten minutes later Walker of the Sixth opened the study door, and glanced in. He was about to speak, when his eyes fixed on Carne, hunched in the chair, his face buried in his hands. Walker gave him a long, long look, and then quietly withdrew from the study and closed the door.

Carne did not even know that he had been there. He remained motionless, a huddled figure of misery and despair.

He knew what he must do; he knew what he was going to do; and already he was borne down under a load of shame and remorse that seemed heavier than he could bear.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Rummy!

BUMP! Crash! "Oh, my 'at!" gasped Tatters.

Arthur Cecil Cholmondeley was wholly to blame. There was no getting out of that.

That ancient, broad oak banister, smooth and polished, and worn smoother by the trousers of generations of schoolboys, had an almost irresistible attraction for some of the Lower School.

It was strictly forbidden to slide down the banisters. Such a practice was dangerous to limb, if not to life. Also it was considered disorderly for a fellow to come suddenly hurtling out of space and land with a crash of boots; sometimes a sprawling tumble and a yell.

Still, fellows sometimes took the risk. Bob Cherry often sat on that ancient banister and sailed down, leaping clear at the terminus, when the eye of authority was not on him. Now Tatters had done it.

But the eye of authority was near, as he discovered too late. Tatters sailed down the banister with a whiz, and just as he jumped clear at the foot of the stairs, Carne of the Sixth came along by the staircase.

It was impossible for Tatters to stop! He crashed right into the Sixth Form man and sent him spinning.

Carne sprawled and Tatters sprawled. Tatters sat up rather dizzily. He had collected several bumps and bruises in that forced landing.

Carne sat up also.

The expression on Carne's face, for a moment, was almost demonic. He had

been knocked over, and he was hurt. His temper was never good—and it was worse than usual of late. And he had always disliked Tatters. The heir of the Cholmondeleys sat and blinked at him and waited for the thunderbolt. He realised that he was for it now; he had asked for it, and he was going to get what he had asked for, and more.

"Oh crumbs!" said Bob Cherry, on the staircase. "Poor old Tatters has done it this time!"

The Famous Five were coming down, and, but for the catastrophe, they would no doubt have followed down the banisters. As it was, they descended the stairs sedately, as if they had never heard of such a proceeding as sliding down banisters.

Carne staggered up.

"You—you—you——" he gasped.

seldom lost an opportunity of administering "toco." And Tatters, though new that term, was hardly entitled to the immunities of a "new kid" after several weeks at Greyfriars. Even Wingate would have licked a junior who had knocked him over in a flight down the banisters. For Carne to be more considerate and good-tempered than old Wingate was simply amazing.

On the stairs Harry Wharton & Co. fairly blinked. They were even more astonished than Tatters.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, there's Quelch!" murmured Bob.

Mr. Quelch had seen the catastrophe from a distance, and was advancing towards the spot, with rustling gown and frowning brow. Carne's back was towards the Remove master, and perhaps he did not know that he was there.



With a grip of iron the ruffian grasped Bunter and forced his mouth open. Then, tilting the mug, he poured the liquor down the helpless junior's throat!

"I say, I'm sorry, Carne!" gasped Tatters, picking himself up. "I say, I never knowed you was coming along. It was a blooming accident!"

Carne had dropped his ashplant in his fall. He made a gesture towards it.

"Pick that up!" he said.

Arthur Cecil Cholmondeley picked it up dismally, and handed it to Carne. He expected the next order to be "bend over."

To his amazement Carne slipped the ashplant under his arm. His face was quite calm again.

"You're a clumsy young ass, Cholmondeley," said Carne. "And you know perfectly well it's against House rules to slide down the banisters. I'd jolly well give you six if you weren't a new kid!"

Tatters almost staggered with astonishment. Hitherto Carne had

"Don't do that again, Cholmondeley," went on Carne.

"No, Carne!" gasped Tatters.

"You might get hurt—break a limb or something, you young ass! House rules are laid down for good reasons. You've given me a shock."

"I'm sorry, Carne—I'm reely sorry!" said Tatters earnestly.

"Well, well that's all right—a new kid doesn't pick up everything at once," said Carne. "Only bear in mind that juniors are not allowed to slide down the banisters. You can cut off."

Bob Cherry, on the staircase, gazed at his comrades.

"Am I dreaming this?" he whispered. "Am I?" gasped Wharton.

"The dreamfulness must be terrific."

"Is that Carne—the worst bully at

Greyfriars?" murmured Johnny Bull. "This is a jolly old day-dream."

"Carne!" Mr. Quelch's voice broke in. Carne glanced round.

"Yes, sir."

"Am I to understand, Carne, that you are proposing to leave that foolish and thoughtless boy unpunished, when his outrageous action might have led to a serious accident?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

"Well, sir, he's a new kid here," said Carne, "and—and he's had rather a queer training, from what I've heard, before he came here. I thought I might make some allowances."

Mr. Quelch pursed his lips.

He was, as a matter of fact, surprised, as well as the juniors, by Carne's sudden and inexplicable attack of leniency. His first impression, when he witnessed the accident, was that he might have to intervene to prevent the offender's punishment from being too severe.

"Of course, sir, I leave the matter in your hands," said Carne. "So far as I personally am concerned, I don't want the junior punished. But you will naturally decide as you think best, sir."

And Carne moved away.

Mr. Quelch gave Tatters a very severe look.

"As Carne has pardoned you, Cholmondeley, I shall not punish you," he said. "But if you should be guilty of such reckless foolishness again—"

"I won't never, sir!" stammered Tatters.

"Very well—you may go."

And Tatters went gladly. The Famous Five joined him, and they went out into the quad together.

"I say, you coveys, that's rum!" said Tatters. "Fancy Carne letting a bloke off like that! I thought he would skin me."

"Couldn't blame him if he had," said Bob. "You gave him a frightful cosh, you young ass!"

"Yes. Ain't it rum?" said Tatters.

"The rumfulness is terrific," said Hurree Singh, shaking his dusky head. "According to the esteemed proverb the leopard cannot change his absurd spots, or the Ethiopian his ludicrous skin. But the excellent and execrable Carne seems to have changed spotfully and skinfully."

"Blessed if I make him out," said Harry. "He's been down on Tatters a lot for nothing. Perhaps he's sorry, and trying to make up."

"That isn't much like Carne," said Bob.

"Well, no. As Tatters says, it's rum."

"This doesn't sort of bear out what Bunter told us he heard the other day," grunted Johnny Bull.

"No; it jolly well doesn't."

A thoughtful shade came over the dusky face of Hurree Jamset Ram Singh as he talked on with his chums. It was several days since Bunter had told his story of the meeting between Carne and Rackstraw. During those days, at first, Harry Wharton & Co. had had the matter in their minds, and were prepared to keep a suspicious eye open on Carne.

But the bully of the Sixth, contrary to expectation, seemed to have forgotten his old feud against the Greyfriars tinker. He seemed to have forgotten, indeed, that Tatters was in the school at all.

They had not once come in contact until this occasion when Carne, with the best of excuses, could have given Tatters a record licking had he liked. And apparently he had not liked.

"That yarn of Bunter's was nearly all

gammon," said Bob. "He heard something, and got it all mixed. Look here, Inky, what have you got in your old black noddle? I can see you've got something, and I jolly well don't like the look in your eye."

The nabob grinned.

"My esteemed chums," he said, "if you were on the track of an esteemed person, with the intention of mopping him up, would you seek to put him off his guard by a benevolent aspect of friendliness?"

"Of course not, fathead," said Bob. "Naturally, we should let him know what was coming to him to give him a fair chance. What the thump do you mean?"

"But suppose you were an execrable and detestable rascal, my esteemed Bob?" murmured the nabob.

"Oh, my hat! That wants some supposing," said Bob, laughing. "I don't know what a rascal would do. Let's ask Skinner."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Wharton gave the dusky nabob a quick look.

"Inky! You can't think—you can't mean—"

"Draw it mild, Inky!" growled Johnny Bull.

"I think, my esteemed chums," said the nabob quietly, "that the eye of suspicion should remain widefully open in the direction of the honourable and disgusting Carne. The changefulness of the leopard's worthy spots is very rum, as the absurd Tatters remarks, and the rumfulness seems to me terrifically suspicious."

"But—" stammered Nugent.

"If anything should happen to the absurd Tatters to cause his lamentable bunkfulness from this esteemed school—"

"But it couldn't, ass."

"If it did," said the nabob, with quiet persistence, "the ludicrous person who caused it would not desire to be noted as a person who had a down on the ridiculous Tatters. He would prefer to remain entirely in the esteemed and undistinguished background."

The chums of the Remove came to a halt, and all of them stared at the Nabob of Bhanipur. That the Indian junior had a keenness and an astuteness that had been left out of their own composition they were well aware. But the suspicion they now read in his mind gave them a distinct shock.

"You mean," said Harry Wharton slowly, "that Carne leaving Tatters alone, and letting him off, and so on, makes you think that—that he's up to some treacherous game, and wants to keep his tracks covered?"

"That is the esteemed suspicion in my absurd mind," admitted the nabob.

"Rot!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Piffle!" said Nugent.

There was an expression of deep repugnance on five faces. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh smiled faintly.

"You think that my absurd idea is—"

"Gammon!" said the Co., with one voice.

"Let us hope so, my worthy chums!" said Hurree Singh amicably. "But I am older than you—"

"Oh come, how much older, fathead?" asked Bob.

"Several thousand years, my esteemed Bob!" answered the nabob gently. "In India we have forgotten centuries ago much that you have yet to learn in the west. But as your extremely bad poet has remarked, east is east and west is west, and never the twain shall meet. You will not think as I do until—"

"Until when?" asked Wharton uneasily.

"Until the chopper comes down on the esteemed Tatters," answered the nabob quietly.

"Then—then you really suspect—"

"I suspected before," said the nabob. "I do not suspect now—I know."

"Oh, my hat!"

There was a long, uncomfortable pause.

"Let's go and punt a footer about," said Bob at last. "I want something to take the taste of this out of my mouth."

"Let's!" said Harry.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh was alone in his opinion. It was still to be seen whether he would remain alone in it.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

A Chance for Tatters!

"WHAT about Tatters?" asked Bob Cherry.

It was Saturday afternoon.

Harry Wharton & Co. were on Little Side. They had already changed for a Form match with the Fourth; but Temple, Dabney & Co., of the Fourth Form, were not yet on the ground. Cecil Reginald Temple, the captain of the Fourth, never hurried himself on such occasions.

Hazeldene, of the Remove, had stated at the last moment that he wanted to stand out. Hazel had something else on. It did not matter a button to his captain whether Hazel stood out or not; he was by no means one of the best men in the team, neither did the Remove require to play their best men to beat the Fourth. It was only a question of picking out another man to fill his place.

But it was rather irritating. Hazel had been booked to keep goal, and Squiff was worth a dozen of Hazel in goal. But Sampson Quincy Ifley Field, not dreaming that he would be wanted, had gone out immediately after dinner with Russell and Ogilvy, and was not available. So the captain of the Remove had to think the matter out a little. Hazel had turned up to say he would not be playing, and walked off, hardly waiting for a reply. Then Bob suggested Tatters.

"Tatters!" said Wharton, thoughtfully.

The one-time tinker's boy was very keen on soccer, but as he had hardly touched a ball before coming to Greyfriars, he had a lot to learn. He was sedulous at games practice, and his chums helped him all they could, and he had shaped very well in goal. But playing him in a match was rather another matter.

"After all, it's only the Fourth," said Bob. "We could beat the Fourth with a stuffed dummy in goal."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Well Tatters is jolly keen, and I'd like to give him a chance," he said. "Only we don't want Temple to fluke a win."

"No danger of that," said Johnny Bull. "They won't get near enough to goal to worry him much."

"Well, call him," said Harry. "Where is he?" The captain of the Remove looked round. "He generally turns up to watch a game. He's not here."

Tatters, for once, was not on the ground. It was Arthur Cecil Cholmondeley's ambition to play for his Form, though he did not expect to get a chance yet. He had never, so far, missed seeing a Remove game.

"Well, he's somewhere about," said Bob. "I dare say Bunter knows—Bunter knows everything that isn't his business. Hallo, hallo, hallo! Bunter! You're wanted!"

Billy Bunter rolled up.

He was wanted to tell the fellows where Tatters was, if he knew. But Bunter was not yet aware of that.

"That's all very well!" said Bunter. He gave Harry Wharton a lofty blink through his big spectacles. "I'm not at all sure I shall play now."

"What?" ejaculated the captain of the Remove.

"You leave me out of good matches," said Bunter. "Don't you deny it—you do! I offered my services to play St. Jude's and Rookwood! You refused."

"You silly Owl——"

A rotten Form match like this isn't worth a fellow's while," said Bunter.

"You call on me at the last moment because a man lets you down! Well, I'm not at all sure I can play to-day."

The juniors stared at Bunter, and burst into a roar. The Owl of the Remove was evidently under a slight misapprehension.

"Blessed if I can see anything to packle at," said Bunter warmly. "You keep on passing over the best footballer in the Form! Now you find you can't do without me, and you call on me at the last minute! Well——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the footballers.

"Well, I can tell you, that if you're not jolly civil, I won't play, so there!" hooted Bunter.

"You silly ass!" roared Bob Cherry. "You're wanted——"

"Oh, I know I'm wanted," sneered Bunter. "I don't say I'm going to refuse. But look here, Wharton, I'm not going to keep goal."

"That's a jolly old cert," chuckled Wharton.

"And you're not going to stick me in the back line," said Bunter. "I'm best in the front line. You know that. I play centre-forward, or I don't play at all. That's final."

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked the footballers.

Temple, Dabney & Co. did not give the Remove a lot of trouble in a football match. But it was probable that Temple & Co. might have pulled off a win, for once, had Bunter played centre-forward for his Form.

"Well, I mean it," said Bunter. "It's that or nothing, and you can jolly well make up your mind to that, Harry Wharton."

"You benighted ass——"

"It will do the fellows good to see a really first-class centre-forward in the Remove game, for once," said Bunter. "You can go into goal, Wharton. If you can't swank so much there, I dare say you'll be just about as useful. Just about!"

"Isn't he a brute?" said Bob Cherry. "Isn't he the jolly old last word? Bunter, you frightful chump, you're not wanted to play footer—you're wanted to tell us where Tatters is."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh," gasped Bunter, "I thought——"

"Gammon! You couldn't! Look here, where is Tatters?"

"Blow Tatters!" said Bunter crossly. "I suppose you're not thinking of playing that tinker, Wharton."

"Just what I am thinking of, fathead."

"What utter rot! Look here, I'll go into goal, if you like," said Bunter. "After all, I'm a good goalkeeper."

"My dear man," said Bob, "you

can't go into goal—it's not wide enough for you to squeeze in."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly ass!" roared Bunter.

"Here comes Temple," said Harry. "If we can't find Tatters, I shall have to shove another man in. Do you know where Cholmondeley is, Bunter?"

"Gone out!" said Bunter. "You'd better play me, old chap. You see——"

"How do you know he's gone out, ass?"

"Well, I saw him go down to the bike shed."

"How long ago, fathead?"

"Two or three minutes—I mean half an hour—more than half an hour ago—nearer an hour——"

"I'll cut down to the bike shed," said Harry. "If he hasn't gone, we'll play him."

"I say, old chap, I'm sure he's gone—hours ago—two or three hours—I say don't clear off while a fellow's speaking to you—beast!"

Headless of the voice of the charmer, Wharton hurried away at a run. He was keen to give Tatters a chance in a Form game, and he did not want to lose this opportunity.

"Oh, here you are!" he exclaimed, as he arrived at the bike shed. Tatters was wheeling his machino out.

"Ere I am," agreed Tatters. "Want me?"

"Yes, shove that jigger back, you're going to keep goal for the Remove this afternoon," said Harry.

Tatters face fell.

"Oh my 'at!" he ejaculated.

"Don't you want to?" exclaimed Wharton in surprise.

"Don't I just!" said Tatters. "But I never knowed, you see, and Carne

(Continued on next page.)

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asked me to run down to Courtfield for 'im and I said I would."

"Carne!" exclaimed Wharton. "Fagging for the Sixth, you young ass! The Remove don't fag."

"Well, he asked me very civil," said Tatters. "He's in a game this afternoon, and he wants a letter registered at the post office, and a run on a bike won't hurt a bloke. So I said I'd go. Course, I never knowed—"

"Well, that's all right," said Harry. "But I suppose any fellow can post a letter. It doesn't matter if another fellow takes it."

"Well, I s'pose it don't!" said Tatters dubiously. "I said I'd take it—but I s'pose so long as it's posted, it's all right."

"Of course it is. Come on!" "Look here, Wharton, you beast! If you can't listen when a fellow's speaking to you—" Billy Bunter rolled up, breathless and wrathful. "Look here! I refuse to play for the Form now! See? It's no good asking me—"

"Bunter can take the letter," said Harry. "Look here, Bunter, you've got sense enough to go to Courtfield post office and register a letter."

"Catch me!" said Bunter. "I'll lend you my bike," said Tatters. "Catch me fagging along to Courtfield on a bike—"

"Look here, ass," said Harry. "Tatters is going to keep goal, and he's promised to register that letter for Carne of the Sixth. You can take it to Courtfield post office. You'll be back in time for tea—"

"Tea in your study?" asked Bunter cautiously.

"Yes, ass." "Of course, I don't mind obliging a pal," said Bunter. "Where's the letter? I say, put the saddle down for me a bit. I'm not a spindle-shanked daddy-longlegs like you fellows. What are you going to have for tea, old chap? I say—"

But Wharton and Tatters were gone, leaving Carne's letter in Bunter's fat hand. Bunter snorted, put down the saddle for himself, and wheeled the bike away.

Tatters changed in marvellously quick time, and lined up with the Remove on Little Side. Cecil Reginald Temple turned a disparaging eye on the new Remove goalkeeper.

"They're playin' that dashed tinker, you men," said Temple to his friends. "Ho knows as much about footer as he does about the jolly old aspirate. They're really askin' for it."

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

But the Remove, if they were asking for it, did not get what they were asking for. Temple & Co., as usual, did not find it easy to get near the Remove goal. And when at last Cecil Reginald had a chance, and sent in his very best shot, Tatters jumped to it, and fisted it out with a cheery grin. And when Fry's head met it and shot it back, Tatters kicked clear, and the Removites ran the leather up the field. And a dozen Remove men round the field gave Tatters a cheer, which was music to the ears of Arthur Cecil Cholmondeley.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Trapped!

BILLY BUNTER arrived at Courtfield post office, where the registered letter was duly handed over the counter and disposed of. There were a number of people in the post office, as usual, and

it did not occur to the Owl of the Remove that anyone there was specially interested in his movements. Two men of rather "horsey" appearance were lounging by the registered letter counter; they had been there some time before Bunter came in; and when he registered Carne's letter, they exchanged a glance. When Bunter rolled out of the post office, they walked after him. In the High Street, the fat junior remounted Tatters' handsome bike, and pedalled away; and the two horsey-looking men stepped into a car, and drove away in his wake.

Bunter's speed on a bike was not great; moreover, he was not in a hurry. There was plenty of time to get back to Greyfriars for tea, and tea was the only item of importance on Billy Bunter's programme that afternoon. The car had almost to crawl, to keep behind Bunter.

But when the Owl of the Remove pedalled out of the town, coming out on the road across the common, the car put on speed, and shot ahead.

It passed Bunter like a flash, and disappeared in the distance ahead of him, without drawing a glance from the fat junior. At least a dozen cars had passed him, and he gave no more heed to one than to another.

But this particular car, having passed Bunter and left him well behind, turned off the road and ran on the common, stopping behind the screen of a mass of hawthorns, which hid it from the road.

Leaving it there, the two horsey-looking men returned to the road and lounged against a tree, watching in the direction of Courtfield for the fat cyclist to come up.

Every now and then they looked up and down the road, and across the wide expanse of the common, with rather anxious eyes.

The road was not a well-frequented one, but cars passed every now and then, and occasionally a cart or a foot-passenger.

"We got to be quick, Mick, when he comes along," murmured one of the watchers. "Get him out of sight sharp."

Mick nodded. "Easy as pie!" he answered. "But I suppose there ain't any mistake about that covey, Charley?"

"How could there be? We watched him at the post office; and the letter he registered was the one the gov'nor described—and he's got a Greyfriars cap. I read the address on the envelope when he handed it over the counter, so there couldn't be any mistake about it."

"He don't look much like what I expected," said Mick. "The gov'nor never said anything about him wearing specs."

"Well, it's all right. We got to get 'old of the Greyfriars bloke that registered a letter, description given," said Charley. "That's that! Here he comes! Looks a blooming fat idjit, don't he?"

"He do!" agreed Mick.

Billy Bunter came pedalling along the road. He was going very slow, as there was a slight rise in the road at that point. To the satisfaction of the two watchers he dismounted, to wheel the machine up the rise.

When he came abreast of the tree where Mick and Charley waited, he was proceeding at the pace of a tired snail. Certainly, he seemed to be making their task easy for them.

They shot swift glances up and down the road. A farmer's cart came rumbling along, and they waited for it

to pass in the direction of the town. Then, for the moment, the road was clear.

Bunter had passed well beyond them by the time the cart was gone. They ran swiftly on his track.

They reached him in a minute or less.

The fat junior turned his head at the sound of swift, running feet behind him. As he turned, a sudden grasp was laid on him; and before Bunter knew what was happening, he was whisked off his feet and spun away from the road.

The bicycle went to the ground with a clanging crash. Bunter, in a dizzy state of amazement, was rushed across the grass to the screen of hawthorns where the car was standing.

He was too surprised even to squeak. In utter amazement, gurgling feebly, the Owl of the Remove was rushed on, and in a few seconds dumped down into the car.

Charley remained with him there, while Mick sped back to the road, picked up the bicycle, and ran it swiftly out of sight into the hawthorns.

Bunter sat up on the floor of the car, gasping. His spectacles had slid down his fat little nose, and he blinked over them at the two rascals in wonder and affright.

"I—I—I say!" he gurgled.

"Old your row, kid!" said Charley. "You call out, and you'll get a tap on the nob that will keep you quiet!" He showed, for a moment, a life-preserver from the pocket of his coat.

Bunter blinked at him in stupefaction. He did not venture to call out. One glimpse of the life-preserver was enough for him. There was no doubt that a rap on the head from that deadly weapon would have kept him quiet.

"You ain't going to be hurt," said Charley reassuringly. "We're going to look after you a bit. That's all. You keep mum, and you won't get hurt."

"I—I—I say, who—who—who are you?" stuttered Bunter.

There was no answer to that question.

"I say, I've got to get back to school!" gasped Bunter. "I—I don't want to be late for tea, you know."

"Don't you jaw any more," said Charley. "I tell you you're all right! Now open your tater-trap and let me bung this in."

"I—I say—"

"Open your tater-trap!" said Charley, with a glare that made Bunter's voice die away in terror.

A wooden gag was inserted in Bunter's capacious mouth, and tied securely with string. Then a large motor-rug was unrolled, and wrapped over him as he squatted on the floor of the car.

A minute later he heard the buzz of the engine. The car was in motion, and it bumped over the rough grass back to the road. Bunter, sprawling under the rug, heard the voice of one of the rascals.

"What about the bike?" "It's safe in the bushes. Get it away after dark."

"All right."

The car turned into the road, and glided away.

Bunter, in a state of mingled astonishment and terror, lay under the rug. Who these two rascals were, why they had seized him, he could not begin to imagine, any more than he could guess what their intentions were. Their object was not robbery; they had not touched his pockets. He wondered whether it was some rough joke on the part of the pair of rowdies. Mick and Charley looked like racing roughs—the kind of fellows he had seen in the

neighbourhood when the racing was on at Wapshot. He had never seen them before, and he did not believe that they had ever seen him. The whole thing was utterly amazing.

The car had not covered more than a mile when it came to a halt. Then the rug was pulled off Bunter, and he sat up.

He blinked about him dizzily.

"You're all right, you are!" grinned Charley, looking down at the fat schoolboy. "You ain't 'urt, are you?"

He untied the gag and took it from the fat junior's mouth. Evidently it had only been wanted to keep him quiet while he was brought to his destination. With dizzy, terrified eyes, the Owl of the Remove blinked round him, to see what his destination was.

Trees, leafless and frosty, met his view. The car had stopped in Oak Lane, not a score of yards from the spot where Bunter, a few days ago, had hidden in the coppice. He could guess that it had been selected as one of the loneliest spots in the vicinity.

"I—I say!" gasped Bunter, as soon as the gag was removed.

"Don't you jaw!"

He was helped out of the car, and hurried into the coppice. Mick remained with the car; the other rough, with a grasp on Bunter's fat arm, hurried him through trees and brambles.

At a dozen yards from the lane he stopped. Bunter staggered against a tree, his fat brain almost turning round and round in his amazement and terror. What was intended, he could not begin to guess; yet he could understand that no bodily harm was intended. The lurking grin on Charley's face showed that the rough regarded the whole proceedings somewhat in the light of a jest. Bunter was terrified, but he was more amazed than terrified.

"Now 'ere we are!" said the rough, grinning at him. "You ain't 'urt, are you? And you ain't going to be 'urt! You're all right, you are."

"I—I—I say——" gasped Bunter.

"I got something for you 'ere," said Charley. "I got a nice drink for you, young covey! And here it is."

He drew a bottle from his pocket. Bunter's eyes almost started from his head as he saw that it was a brandy bottle.

"I—I say, I—I can't!" gasped Bunter. "I—I don't want to. I—I say, lemme go back to Greyfriars!"

"You cheese it," said Charley. "There ain't nobody a mile from 'ere, to 'ear you; but if you make a row, you get such a tap on your 'ead, that you'll never make any more noise."



Rushing his bike out into the road, Carne mounted it, and scorched away as if he were riding for his life. Fellows arriving at the gates stared at the Sixth-Former in amazement, as he whizzed past them at reckless speed!

The ruffian had evidently come prepared. He took a tin mug from his pocket, poured brandy into it, and added water from a flask. Bunter gazed at him in horror. He had no doubt now that it was a hideous practical joke on the part of the two racing roughs. Why they should have selected him as the victim of the horrible jest, he could not imagine. But what was intended was clear enough now.

"'Ere you are!" said Charley, encouragingly. "Mop it up!"

Bunter shuddered.

"I—I can't! Keep it away!" he squeaked. "I—I say, it would make me squiffy. I say, I should be sacked if I was squiffy. Don't! I've got to get back to the school! Keep away, you beast!"

"Mop it up!" snapped Charley.

"I—I can't! I——"

"I'll 'elp you!" grunted the ruffian.

With a grip of iron he grasped the fat junior, and forced his mouth open. And the tin mug was tilted, to pour the liquor down Bunter's helpless throat. At the same moment there came a hurried trampling through the brambles.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Way of the Transgressor!

"YOU'D better stand out of the second half, Carne."

Wingate looked rather grimly at Carne of the Sixth, as he spoke. He was rather sorry he had given Carne a chance in that game, though it was only a Form match between Fifth and Sixth. But Carne had been very keen to play, and as he seldom or never had a chance in school

matches, the Greyfriars captain had played him.

He had reason to regret it. Carne had not only been in rotten bad form, his play had not only been the worst on record; but he seemed absolutely unable to deal with the game at all. What was the matter with him, Wingate did not know, unless the fellow was ill, and if he was ill he ought to have had sense enough to keep out of a football match.

In the interval, he spoke to Carne, rather sharply. Obviously the fellow was unfit for the game, and it was quite useless for him to keep on. It was better to play the second half a man short, than to have Carne barging blindly about and getting in everybody's way.

"Stand out?" muttered Carne.

"What on earth's the matter with you?" asked Wingate. "You seem like a man in a dream, more than anything else."

"I—I don't feel quite fit!" muttered Carne. "A little dizziness, or something——"

"You might have said so before we started," said Wingate tartly.

"I—I can keep on——"

"You can't! You'd better go and lie down—you look as if you were on your last legs. You're no good to the side."

Carne nodded, and moved off the field. He threw on a coat and muffler, and walked away to the House. The second half of the senior Form match went on without Carne.

He went into the changing-room, which he had to himself for the moment. There, the wretched prefect leaned on the wall for a few minutes. His face was white and tormented.

He had wanted to play in the Form match; to keep up normal appearances. But it had been sheer torture to him. Many times, while play was on, he had actually forgotten that he was playing football at all. His thoughts were far from Big Side at Greyfriars—following a junior on a bicycle bound for Courtfield; an unsuspecting schoolboy tricked into a deadly trap.

Carne had given in—he was a tool in Rackstraw's dastardly hands. But it seemed to him now that he was buying his safety at too terribly high a price. It was the "sack" for him or for Tatters; and he had chosen that it should be for Tatters. He was safe, so far as that went—safe! But what was safety worth, with that overwhelming load of remorse on his conscience?

He moved at last, and changed, and left the changing-room. He told himself that it was too late to stop it now; too late! He tried to think that, had it not been too late, he would have stopped it. Yet he knew that if the act of treachery was to be done over again, his fear for himself would have made him act as he had already acted.

If only the little brute had been what he had once believed him to be—what the young rotter might have been expected to be, from his training. Then he would not have cared so much. But now—

He went to his study and lighted a cigarette. He threw it away half-smoked, and moved about the study like a wild animal in a cage.

"I can't stand it!" he whispered. "I can't stand it!"

He caught a glimpse of his face in the glass and started. It was a face white as chalk that looked back at him.

This was keeping up appearances! What would the fellows think was the matter with him? If they suspected—

But nobody could suspect. That was a comfort, such as it was. There was nothing suspicious in a man sending a junior to register a letter for him at the post office. How could anyone see anything suspicious in that? Tatters might have performed such a service for Wingate, or Gwynne, or for his own Form master. There was nothing in that.

Rackstraw had planned with Machiavellian cunning. Carne had fallen in with his plans. Who would believe, or dream of believing, the wretched schoolboy's story of having been seized by complete strangers, and forced to swallow intoxicating liquor? Such a story was too fantastic. And in the case of poor Tatters, long the companion of a drunken ruffian, it was only too probable that he had acquired such habits amid evil associations—that he was hardened to such things. The Head, taking that into consideration, might pity the miserable wretch; but he would turn him out of Greyfriars as if he had been a leper. Sacked for drunkenness—that was the news old Sir George Cholmondeley was to receive of his grandson! That would be the end of his idea of turning the tinker's boy into a decent heir for the estates and fortune of the Cholmondeleys. Such an end as he might, indeed, have expected in the circumstances! There was no doubt that Rackstraw had planned cunningly.

Restless, Carne left the study and walked down to the football field. He told himself savagely that he must pull himself together. The senior game was still going on; and there were two other games in progress; one of them on the Lower Fourth ground. From the Remove ground a shout came to Carne's ears.

"Well saved!"

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"Good old Tatters!"

Carne stood as if turned to stone.

Tatters! Tatters was the nickname of young Cholmondeley—the boy who was, by this time, in the hands of the two Wapshot racing roughs who had been picked out by Rackstraw for the work. What were those young fools yelling "Tatters" for, when Tatters was far away?

A surge of terror came through Carne like an icy chill. Had something gone wrong? What had gone wrong?

He moved towards the junior ground. His eyes almost devoured the figures of the players. Tatters was not there—he could not be there! No—yes—Carne's eyes fixed on the active figure between the goal-posts! His eyes bulged. It was Cholmondeley of the Remove.

For an instant, Carne's feeling was one of overwhelming relief. The boy was there—he had not gone—the two rascals watching at Courtfield post office would watch in vain. But the relief was short-lived. The plot had failed—and the whole dreary business remained to be done over again! Relief turned to bitter anger in Carne's breast. The young rascal had not taken his letter—he had promised to take it, and then forgotten all about it and played football! Carne's eyes burned at the handsome figure between the Remove goal-posts.

The whistle went. It was the end of the junior game. Now that the match was over, doubtless Tatters would go—after all, the two roughs would still be waiting. Harry Wharton & Co. came off the field in a cheery crowd. Tatters glanced at Carne. He left his friends and cut across to the prefect.

"It's all right, Carne," he said. "Wharton asked me to play, but I got a bloke to take the letter."

Carne's heart stood still.

"You—you—y o u—w h a t——" His voice cracked.

"That letter's posted all right," said Tatters. He wondered at the look on Carne's face, and could only conclude that the Sixth Form man was angry with him for not having taken the letter. "I dessay Bunter's back by this time——"

"Bunter!"

"I lent Bunter my bike to take the letter. He'll be back for tea, anyhow; he won't be late for tea," said Tatters. "It's all right."

Carne turned away from him. He did not answer; he could not. Tatters went back to his friends and they walked away in a cheery bunch. Carne stood limply. The merest chance like this—another fellow going with the letter instead of Tatters—so slight a trifle had knocked the whole scheme into fragments. And—and what had happened to Bunter? The two Wapshot roughs did not know him by sight—they had been told to watch for a Greyfriars junior who posted a certain letter at Courtfield post office that afternoon! Carne, with a thrill of terror, realised that Bunter must have fallen into their hands; that they would believe that he was the destined victim—that the hideous trick planned for Tatters would be played on Bunter!

Tatters had escaped! Bunter would suffer in his place—that wretched fat fool! For some minutes, it seemed to Carne that his brain was spinning.

He woke to sudden action. There might be time yet—time to prevent that ghastly blunder. He raced to the bicycle shed—tore his machine from the stand, and rushed it out into the road. Greyfriars fellows, coming along to the gates, stared in amazement at Carne of

the Sixth, scorching away on his bicycle as if he were riding for his life.

Carne did not heed them—did not even see them! He hardly saw the cars on the road as he whizzed past them at reckless speed. With every ounce of his strength he drove at the pedals, riding like a madman, to stop that hideous blunder before it was too late. Or was it already too late!

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER

Whose Narrow Escape?

"WONDERS will never cease!" remarked Harry Wharton.

"What's up?"

"Bunter's late for tea!"

There was a chuckle in Study No. 1 in the Remove.

The Famous Five had gathered there for tea. Tatters, with a ruddy, bright face, was busy at the fire, turning out sosses and chips. Tatters was rather a good cook; he had cooked often for Tinker Wilson in his old days on the road. All the juniors were hungry; football in a frosty atmosphere gave a fellow a good appetite.

They were all ready for tea; and the surprising thing was, that Billy Bunter was not ready, too. Tea in the study was his reward for taking the registered letter to Courtfield, while Tatters kept goal for the Remove. Bunter was not expected to hurry; but he had had ample time to get back from Courtfield; and he certainly was not expected to be late for tea. Bunter was late for many things; in fact he had a gift for procrastination and unpunctuality; but he was seldom known to be late for a meal. In matters of real importance, Bunter always turned up early.

But he had not turned up now.

Six juniors sat down round the study table to tea; there was still no sign of Bunter. His absence did not cast gloom on the tea-party; rather it cheered them. In the case of William George Bunter, there was no doubt that absence made the heart grow fonder.

The Bouncer came up to the Remove passage and paused to look in at the door of Study No. 1.

"You fellows know what's up?" he asked.

"No; is anything?" asked Harry.

"Bunter——"

"My hat! Nothing's happened to Bunter, surely?" exclaimed Wharton. "Is that why he's late for tea? What——"

"Blessed if I know! Something's up," said Smithy. "He came in with Carne——"

"Carne?"

"Yes, and he's gone to Quelch's study. He was looking frightfully excited about something. Carne was looking rather sick. Bunter was babbling somethin' about going to the police."

The Bouncer went on to his study. He left the chums of the Remove in a state of considerable astonishment.

"What on earth's happened?" asked Nugent. "I should have thought that even that fat idiot could bike to the post office without getting into trouble."

"Goodness knows," said Harry. "Anyhow, he'll make for this study as soon as he's done with Quelch; tea's here."

The captain of the Remove was right on that point. But it was some time before Billy Bunter came up to the Remove passage. He rolled into Study No. 1 at last, however.

(Continued on page 28.)



By STANTON HOPE

The ISLAND SLAVES!

Mystery of the Cargo!

"SOME fresh robbery!" muttered Tony, peering over the parapet. "Don't those chaps know that it's time for them to go home?"

"Would that they did!" moaned Chotajee. "Truly the debased Arabs heed not the words of esteemed British poet who quoth that: 'Early to bed, early to rise, makes sahibs healthful, wealthful, and wise.'"

Again the drums and cymbals were beating and clashing, and by squirming across to the opposite side of the roof, Guy could see a procession of many lanterns approaching from the outskirts of the village. The sheikh was hastily taking up a position before the mosque, with his eldest son and his twenty-five other sons about him, and also his advisers and young warriors.

"H'm! We're not the only visitors here to-night," Guy remarked on his return to the other two. "There are a thumpin' lot of new arrivals for the birthday party!"

"That's queer!" Tony commented. "There's only this village on the island."

"True, old son. There's the chance that a ship may have arrived."

"Whooh!" Tony breathed. "This sounds hopeful!"

Above the beat of the drums and cymbals rose a loud, crying chorus from the Arabs gathered in the square.

"Ras Dhin! Ras Dhin!"

"What's that they're yelling?" Tony demanded. "Perchance, it is the name of some personage," Chotajee replied. "Ras is common name in Near East, and pronunciation of same is in similitude to harsh and grating rasp, as in rasp-berry."

"You ought to get a job as a schoolmaster!" "It is seldom, sahib," responded Chotajee, with due modesty, "that kassab can place such distinction as Failed B.A. astern of his appellation."

Their conversation, held in undertones, died away. A number of Arabs with lanterns were thrusting their way into the square. The shouting grew louder and louder.

"Ras Dhin! Ras Dhin!" The bearded sheikh looked expectant, and drew his burnous—or robe—about him to make himself look as kingly as a village sheikh possibly could. The

It is said that 2,000 MEN AND WOMEN ARE SOLD IN THE SLAVE MARKETS EVERY YEAR. The horrors of this barbaric traffic are revealed in this thrilling narrative.

Arabs carrying the lanterns swung away in two files, and another group of men came into view. And the chums on the roof uttered gasps of amazement, for striding at the head of them was none other than the black, giant Abyssinian of the slave dhow, whose eyes were yellow and cold, like the eyes of a tiger!

"Ras Dhin! Ras Dhin!" The name was flung about exultantly as the giant Abyssinian advanced. "So that's the name of the swab!" Guy muttered. "The dhow must have got out of her course, probably

damaged, and so has put in here. Anyway, this clinches it that old Sheikh Haji is in on the slave game."

They watched the Abyssinian in fascination, remembering the first horrible feeling they had when they met those yellow, inhuman eyes aboard the slave dhow. They noticed that Ras Dhin, the Abyssinian, made no obeisance to the sheikh, but that the sheikh and all his sons and warriors salaamed low to the visitor—a complete reversal of the usual custom.

Both Guy and Tony felt under the same influence of the giant negro as formerly. They had seen that apparent barbarian draw a modern automatic, and shoot down a man without compunction. They knew that if they fell into his hands their death would be none the less certain because it would be slow.

Although the skipper, Hassan, of the dhow had made out that the Abyssinian was only a deckhand, the chums knew that he was someone big in the slave trade—perhaps the sinister chief who was responsible for this revival in the export of "black ivory" from Africa to the Arabian and Persian markets.

For several minutes they remained there while Chotajee, who was fairly quaking at the sight of the Abyssinian, strained his ears to catch the conversation between the mysterious new arrival and the sheikh. The throng in the square was still, and everyone had flocked from the adjoining streets to get a view of the reception.

"I think," Guy whispered, "we'd better be steering a course away from here. Perhaps our chance has come of getting a proper dekko at that dhow."

They turned cautiously on the roof, when their eyes grew wide with dismay. THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,200.

The trapdoor was slowly lifting above a stone stairway.

"Get back!" Guy whispered.

By this time dusk had given way to darkness, but a full moon was lifting into the Arabian night sky. In the light they could see the back of a man hunched against the door and pushing upwards, and Guy slithered forward like a snake.

Then the door fell back with a dull thud on the roof, and the Arab took a step higher. Apparently tired by the festivities of the day, he was about to retire on the roof, which was evident from the fact that he had a heavy blanket under his left arm for covering against the dew. Before he could turn Guy whipped his right arm under the Arab's neck, yanked him bodily on to the roof, and throttled back the cry which arose to his throat.

Immediately, Tony and Chotajee slithered forward and tied the man's hands and ankles with the ropes of camel hair he had round his head, and assisted while Guy securely gagged him.

"My hat! Let's hope no more of the family come up here," Guy panted, as he shut the door down again. "Let's beat it while the going's good!"

One by one, they quietly swung down from the roof at the back part of the building where they had ascended, and, like three phantoms, hurried through the narrow streets with their mud walls and casements, which almost touched overhead.

Tony led the way, the babu followed, and Guy acted as rearguard. Pariah dogs outside the village howled mournfully, but the Arabs were used to such sounds, and nothing untoward happened to give away the presence of the fugitives.

The night was warm, but their wet clothes chafed unpleasantly, especially as the flying sand during the hurricane had penetrated every part of their garments.

Their hearts beat fast as they hurried through the outskirts of the village, over the rough, sandy ground, in the direction of the cove where they had landed. Their own boat had been wrecked, so there was a prospect ahead of them of not only taking a peek into the dhow by which Ras Dhin must have arrived, but also of helping themselves to some craft for the voyage to the mainland. Two or three lean and hungry pariah dogs followed them for some distance, but they got rid of the brutes and breathed more freely.

"What was all the palaver between Ras Dhin and the sheikh, Chota?" Guy inquired.

The little Bengali answered in his weird English that it seemed to be of small importance. Nothing had been said about slaves, but Sheikh Haji had told the Abyssinian that the dates were ready for him to put aboard.

There was no sign of a sail in the cove where they had landed, but by the light of the moon they saw the rakish mast of a dhow in that other cove which had been the alternative landing-place. They made their way in that direction, and scrambled over the volcanic rocks of the headland which divided the two small bays.

Ay, there was the dhow, and a long, canoe-like craft, a bellum, was tied astern, with the mast and sail lengthways in it.

"Hallo!" Guy exclaimed. "Something is going on aboard her!"

The dhow was showing no lights, but there was a good deal of activity among the crew who remained aboard. Splash after splash sounded as crates and bales thumped into the sea.

"They're starting to jettison her cargo," Tony said. "What's the big idea of that, I wonder?"

From previous examination of the dhow at sea they knew that her cargo was supposed to be only cotton, tobacco, and hides, which were exports from Tajura. Whatever other stuff might have been aboard, this cargo in itself was valuable, and not the kind of thing likely to be jettisoned without some important reason.

"My idea is," Guy muttered, "that the dhow's getting rid of this stuff to put other cargo aboard."

"You mean slaves?" Tony asked.

"No, I don't think so. I'm more inclined to think that there are slaves already aboard, although we didn't have a chance of finding 'em. What was it the old sheikh said were ready for that black swab? Dates, wasn't it?"

"Indeed, that is what the debased sheikh made remark to the unspeakable Abyssinian," Chotajee nodded. "But, sahibs, I see no dates in readiness for exportations."

"That's because you've lost your spectacles, Chota," smiled Guy. "There's a jolly great pile of sacks which might contain dates, on that natural ledge of rock above the beach. Let's go and take a peek at them."

"If the s-sahib desires," Chotajee stammered. "But to quote from vocabulary of sons of Erin, for love of Mike take carefulness!"

In renewed keenness, Guy and Tony moved cautiously forward, determined to examine that big oblong pile of sacks. They hoped, too, for a chance of getting aboard that dhow again and completing the job of searching it which had been interrupted by the hurricane. Then, with information which might help to put down the terrible slave trade which had developed again, they could think of getting back to the gunboat, which doubtless would be cruising round in search of them.

Keeping well away from the beach, they cautiously crept through a clump of date palms and came upon the store from the rear. The first sacks which Guy opened with his knife contained dates, and then and there they ate a number of them, for they had had no food since they had left the Falcon.

"Now have we regained proverbial luckfulness of Navy," mumbled Chotajee.

THE FIRST CHAPTERS RETOLD.

LIEUTENANT GUY EASTON, SUB-LIEUTENANT TONY DUNN and CHOTAJEE, a Bengali interpreter, are sent to board a suspicious-looking dhow heading a southerly course out of the Red Sea. On the return journey, however, they are shipwrecked and cast on the Island of Khoof, off the Arabian coast. Arriving in the village, Guy and his companions find a great festival taking place. Clambering on the flat roof of an Arab dwelling they see Sheikh Haji and his soldiery gloating over two captive Somalis—ons swaying on the end of a rope, and the other, armed with an ancient rifle, aiming to snap the rope—a "sporting" offer which means liberty or death for both. Guy, however, steps into the breach, firing swiftly on the heels of the Somali and snapping the rope like packthread. The prisoners, according to the sheikh's promise, are set free. Meanwhile, Guy and his companions are awaiting their chance to get away unseen, when there comes the sound of babbling voices and a rush of feet in the square. (Now read on.)

"This is Heaven-sent opportunity for stoking up, as nautical mans put same. Indeed, sahibs, I was feeling weakfully woeful in the cistern."

"Well, strengthen the old system with some more datefulness," chuckled Tony. "Nothing underneath those sacks, Guy?"

Very quietly Guy had pulled down two or three sacks and laid them on the ground, and was peering closely at the store.

Then a low whistle left his lips.

"Phew! Just take a dekko at this!" said Guy, "and you'll jolly well see why that swab Ras Dhin and his dhow have come to this island!"

The Capture of Chota!

IT was difficult to see, but by pushing his head against the sticky sacks Tony was able to make out some oblong boxes with stencilled markings on them.

"I'll keep the sacks aside," Guy muttered. "Try to make out what it says on that top box, old man."

Although possessed of more than the high standard of sight required in the Royal Navy, Tony at first had a job to read any of the markings.

"Can't quite make out what the dickens they are," Tony grunted, "but these on the side of this box are Roman numerals by the cut of their jib. Ah, belay there a jiffy! I can read the letters U S E."

The little Bengali, who acted as store-keeper aboard the Falcon, blinked through his round spectacles.

"Perchance you have made a mistakeful bloomer, sahib," he suggested. "The more likelihood is that esteemed stereography is 'Stowaway from boilers,' which is common on suchlike crates and boxes destined for conveyances in steamships, dhows, and other cargo crafts."

But Guy drew the date sacks rather more to one side, and Tony got a slightly better chance of seeing in the gloom.

"I can make out 'U S E R,'" he said, "but that's not sense. There's an 'M' in front, but another letter, which isn't quite clear, between that and the 'U.'"

"My honourable liver!" Chotajee said. "Did I not read in current number of esteemed periodical, 'Indian Boycotter,' that debased Turks have shipfully dispatched ten thousand sacred cats to outlandish island? Can it be that on voyage sundry felines have kicked buckets, as saying is, and mortal remains of same have been laid restfully in small size coffins bearing English label of 'Mouser'?"

"Mouser!" Guy breathed. "Tar me, he's said it, Tony! The only thing is that the word is spelled 'Mauser.'"

Tony drew a sharp breath.

"Mauser rifles," he muttered. "So that's the giddy game! It's a dried date to a month's pay that Ras Dhin has got 'black ivory'—slaves—aboard the dhow, and he put in here to pick up some more cargo in the shape of rifles and ammunition."

The two young officers of the Falcon were beginning to piece things together. Slaves and rifles were being run in the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf, and that evening they had helped in the escape of two Somalis who had fallen into the hands of Sheikh Haji of Khoof. They had heard him tell Ras Dhin, the giant black Abyssinian with the eyes of a

tiger, that the cargo of dates was ready for shipment, and soon the dates and the boxes of rifles and ammunition which they concealed would be put aboard the dhow lying at anchor a short distance from the beach.

"Where the thump are they shipping these?" Tony inquired.

"To Persia," Guy answered, "and from there it goes through by the caravan routes into Afghanistan to arm the Afridis. They are the tough boys who are going to hot up things for us again on the North-West Frontier, and before you get your next promotion, old top!"

"What I can't make out, either," Tony persisted, "is where these guns and things come from."

"It's as plain as your face," Guy told him. "They come from Abyssinia and Somaliland. When they cleared up German East Africa in the War, tens of thousands of unarmed prisoners were taken. What had happened to their rifles no one knew; but you bet, old son, they were cunningly hidden in various great dumps in the mountains and jungles. Since then the German arms used in East Africa have been trickling through to the coast of the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, and now it seems they are on a new journey to Afghanistan via Arabia and Persia."

Over the sea, which had died down since the hurricane, they could make out the dark silhouette of the dhow and hear the creak of ropes, the rattle of blocks, and the occasional splash of water as some of the cargo of cotton and hides were jettisoned. When there was room in their holds they would put a far more valuable cargo on board; and as the dhow had already been searched by a warship's crew, it was long odds that she would not again be stopped.

"Look here," Tony said, "we can't stand by and see this batch of rifles bunged off to the affrightening old Afridis for use against our own fellows."

Guy grinned.

"I was thinking the same thing, old-timer," he said.

"Well, what about it?"

"We can't heave 'em into 'the ditch,'" Guy returned, "and, not having a giddy cargo steamer handy, we can't tootle off with 'em. Now, let's think. Here, Chota, old cherub, help yourself to a few more dates. Better stoke up now, while you've got the chance."

He looked about him, and the smile became broader on his face.

"There's a good deal of wreckage," he remarked, "and some of this reed matting from the top of the dump would help fine to start a jolly good blaze."

The little Bengali gulped loudly, and Guy and Tony glowered.

"Scared?" Guy grunted.

"N-no, sahib," the babu choked; "it was the dateful stone that went willy-nilly down honourable throatfulness. Nevertheless, would we not be advised to take the counsel of immortal British pard Shakespeare who quoth: 'Let us bewarefully take carefulness not to out-sport discretion by too sportful sportsmanship.'"

"There's going to be some giddy sportsmanship if we set fire to this lot!"

Tony chuckled. "Seeing it's the birthday of the sheikh's eldest son, we can't do better than provide 'em with a jolly good firework display!"

The two naval chums were full of enthusiasm for the project, and cared not a jot for the terrible personal risk which would be incurred by the destruction of those rifles, which otherwise would surely be used one day against the British on the North-West Frontier of India. On his part, Chotajee rolled his eyes, and muttering "It is kismet"



CHOTAJEE, the Bengali, who acts as storekeeper aboard the Falcon.

(fate), set about helping to collect splintered pieces of wood and other wreckage.

They worked fast, aware that at any time the shore party of Arabs might return from the village, or others come to the beach from the anchored dhow. Probably Ras Dhin, the Abyssinian, would be entertained by the sheikh to a feast that evening, but there could be no certainty even of that.

With the perspiration rolling from them in the warm Arabian night, Guy and Tony quietly dragged down a deal of the matting and arranged it at the foot of the store dump, that it might give a good start to the fire. Once that fire was well ablaze, they had little fear that the Arabs would be able to extinguish it.

"All serene!" Guy whispered. "Now where's Chota?"

Tony looked round.

"Last I saw of him," he muttered, "he was raking about for fuel among those date-palms. I'll go and fetch the clump and—"

He broke off short, and both chums stiffened in the deep shadows of the store-dump as a gurgling cry, followed by a sudden chorus of gruff voices ejaculating abuse in Arabic, came from the direction of the palms.

"Great gales!" Tony gurgled, "He's been scuppered!"

In his impulsive way he made a quick step forward, but Guy, who had the knack of keeping cool in the most desperate circumstances, gripped his arm and drew him back.

"Wait, young 'un!"

Hardly had he spoken than shadowy figures became visible among the date-palms. A number of struggling Arabs came into the open, followed by a score of others, who had been a short distance in the rear of the first party. They consisted of members of the dhow's crew, and some of the village Arabs, who had been returning silently to the beach by orders of Ras Dhin and the sheikh. One of them, ahead of the rest, had seen Chotajee groping among the palms before the little Bengali had become aware of the approaching party, and a sudden rush had overcome him before he had been able to take flight.

Now a mob of excited Arabs were hustling and buffeting the luckless babu, whose thin voice could be heard in a disjointed way giving protest in Hindustani, Arabic, and his weird English.

"Kya hai? What is the matter? Ooooh! That is my honourable head. Chale-jao! Go away! I am British subject—yaroooh!—I summon police-wallahs! My sainted aunts!"

Tony's eyes glistened like steel. "They're shoving him down the beach," he muttered. "By heavens, they're going to take him off to that slave dhow!"

His hand dropped in his tunic pocket, and before Guy realised his intent he whipped out the automatic pistol which he had received from Guy back in the village.

A burly Arab among the shoving mob uplifted a stick to bring it down upon the little babu, who could not be seen by the chums. Tony jerked up the automatic and took a hasty glance along the sights in the gloom—and pressed the trigger.

Click!

The hammer fell harmlessly, and with a savage groan he jerked open the pistol, to discover that after that misfire a cartridge had jammed in the breech.

"Come on!" he muttered hoarsely. "Grab a chunk of that wood! My hat, we'll jolly soon hand out a few sick headaches among those yelping swabs!"

"Belay, you fire-eating fathead!" Guy snarled. "Have you gone off your rocker? What help would that be to Chota? Whereas, if we pipe down for a time and keep our liberty we might be able to bring off a stunt for his rescue."

"You're right. But it's good-bye to our firework display!" Tony groaned.

"Why?" Guy demanded. "We'll do in this batch of rifles if it's our last stunt on earth! Besides, old man, the fire will cause a diversion, and we may have a better chance of getting out to the dhow, release Chota, and buzz off in a bellum."

Both were still wet from their ducking in the sea, when they had landed, some time before, but Guy had a patent lighter, with petrol in it, which he made serviceable by trimming the wick.

"We'd better see that the coast is clear," he muttered, "before we start up this Guy Fawkes stunt."

(Guy and Tony know full well the penalty of their desperate enterprise if they are caught by the minions of the terrible Ras Dhin. But Chota must be rescued by hook or by crook! Don't miss the further thrilling adventures in next week's gripping instalment.)

THE VOICE OF THE TEMPTER!

(Continued from page 24.)

"I say, you fellows," he gasped. "I say, tea ready? I'm frightfully hungry! You might have waited for a chap!"

"Lots and lots," grinned Nugent. "Here you are, old fat bean; we've kept it warm. Where have you been all this time, fathead?"

"That ass Quelch kept me talking!" said Bunter. "Looked as if he didn't half believe it at first, but he had to believe Carne, of course. I say, give a fellow a chair! I say, I hope you've left me more than six sosses! Six sosses ain't much use to me. I say—"

"Has anything happened?" asked Wharton.

"Yes, rather! I say, two roughs got hold of me as I was coming back from Courtfield. They hooked me away to that place in Oak Lane—you know the place—and were going to make me swallow intoxicating liquor—"

"Intoxicating liquor?" gasped Bob.

"Yes. Two roughs from Wapshot, I fancy, from their looks. I'd never seen them before. I suppose it was a practical joke on a chap—their idea of a practical joke, the beasts! Not much of a joke for me if I'd been sacked for getting squiffy! Carne came up in the nick of time. I can tell you, I never thought I'd ever be so glad to see that beast! He came butting in and knocked a mug of brandy out of the brute's hand—"

"Carne did?" gasped Wharton.

"Yes, it was rather plucky. There were two of them; and they were a pair of hooligans, I can tell you. But they never touched Carne. He said: Leave him alone! Get out of this! Just that—nothing more. And they bunked into their car and cleared."

"Great Christopher Columbus!" said Bob. "Mean to say that you've spun a yarn like that to Quelch?"

"It's true, you ass! Carne knows. He rescued me."

"How did Carne happen to be there? He was on the football ground when we finished the game."

"I don't know. He had his bike with him. I suppose he went out for a ride. Anyhow, he was there, and he scared them off. They went just like lambs when he ordered them off."

Bunter gobbled sausages and chips, while the juniors stared at him in blank astonishment.

"Any more sosses? You might have

kept a few for me! Any cake? You might have had a cake! You haven't got much jam! Still, I suppose you fellows don't want any." Bunter gobbled jam. "I say, you fellows, it's all right about Cholmondeley's bike! I've told Quelch where they put it and he's asked Wingate to get it in. Any more jam?"

"Is there a word of truth in what you've been telling us, Bunter?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Beast!"

Bunter blinked over the tea-table. He had cleared it in almost record time. He rose to his feet.

"I'll go and see if Smithy's finished tea—I mean, I'll go and tell Smithy about it—"

The Owl of the Remove rolled out of Study No. 1, leaving six astonished juniors there.

But the most astonishing thing about Bunter's astonishing story was that it was apparently true.

After tea, all the Remove was buzzing with it—all the school, in fact. It was known that Mr. Quelch had communicated with the police.

Carne of the Sixth was asked by a score of fellows what had happened, and he explained that, taking a bike ride along Oak Lane, he had come on the rascals who had hold of Bunter and made them let him go. The only explanation seemed to be that a couple of racing roughs, probably under the influence of liquor, had intended to play a stupid and brutal practical joke on a schoolboy.

"Poor old Bunter!" said Bob Cherry, when the Famous Five discussed the strange affair in Study No. 1 after prep. "The fact is, he's had a jolly narrow escape. If Carne hadn't butted in, who'd have believed him when he told such a yarn afterwards?"

"And the esteemed Tatters has had a narrow escape, my worthy chums," murmured the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Tatters?" said Harry. "How's that? Oh, you mean, because Bunter went to the post office instead of Tatters?"

"Exactly!"

"I suppose those brutes might have got hold of Tatters instead, if he'd been there instead of Bunter," assented Harry.

"Inky, old man!" said Bob Cherry.

"I don't like the look in your eye."

The nabob grinned.

"My esteemed chums," he murmured. "It was the excellent and

execrable Carne who sent Tatters to the post office."

There was a general jump in Study No. 1.

"Inky! You're potty! You can't mean—" gasped Wharton.

"The estimable Carne did not know that Bunter had gone instead till after the match. And then, all of a sudden, the delectable Carne went for a bike ride, which happened to take him to the spot where Bunter was in the hands of the ludicrous roughs—where Tatters would have been in their disagreeable hands had not Bunter gone to the post office instead—"

"Inky!"

"But if it had been Tatters in their hands," said the nabob very quietly, "I do not think that the worthy Carne's bike ride would have taken him in that direction. I think the absurd Tatters would have gone through it and would have been found in a state of delightful and disgusting squiff-fulness, and would have been sacked from the school and—"

"Good heavens!" breathed Wharton.

"I thinkfully opine that the worthy Carne stopped it because his friends had got the wrong pig by the esteemed ear," said Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh. "I do not think that this game will be played again, because, after what has happened to Bunter, it would be too thin. Next time it will be something different. But there will be a next time, my absurd chums."

There was a long silence in Study No. 1.

"I can't believe it!" said Harry Wharton at last. "I can't, Inky! But—but—Tatters, old man, you'll never let Carne send you out of gates again for anything—for any excuse whatever—"

"No fear!" said Tatters.

"But—but I can't believe it, all the same," said Harry. "I just can't! We'll keep a jolly sharp eye open after this. But—" He shook his head, and the other fellows shook their heads. Only the dusky head of Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh was not shaken.

The Nabob of Bhanipur was still alone in his belief. But from that day the sharpest eyes at Greyfriars were intent on Carne of the Sixth.

THE END.

(Whatever you do, chums, don't miss the next yarn in this popular series: "THE AMATEUR ROGUE!" It shows Frank Richards at his very best.)

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