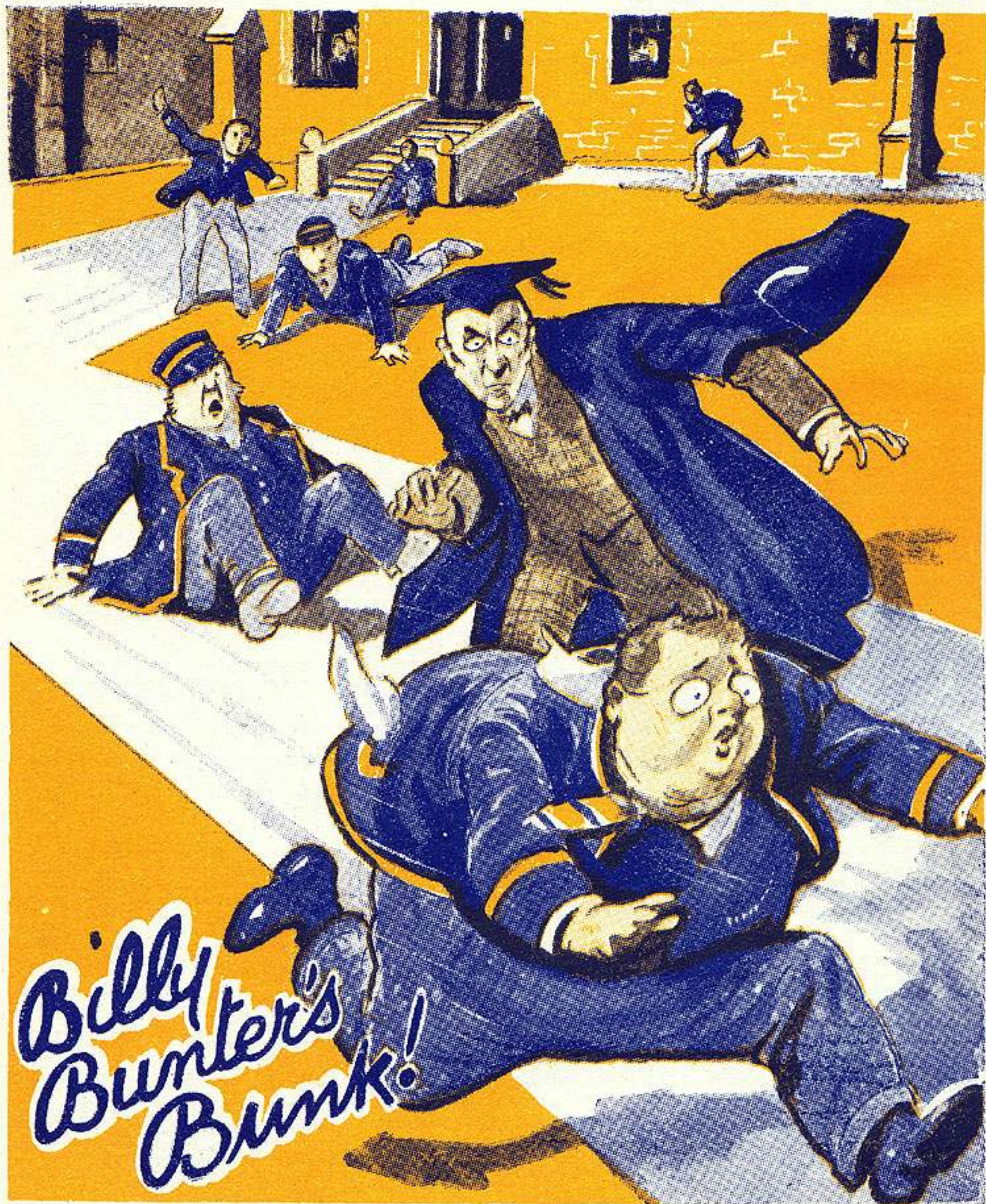


BUY THIS PAPER, BOYS, and BANISH THE "BLUES"!

The MAGNET 2^D



*Billy
Bunter's
Bunk!*



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., The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

HERE is a string of posers for you! Do you know what a camel carries in its hump; anything about islands that float and sail; how the cantilever system of bridge building works; how much tourists spend in France in a year? Or—but I could go on for hours telling you some of the questions which knowledge-seeking readers ask me! We had better take them one by one, and deal with them in proper order.

Harry Turner, of Gateshead, wants to know something about

THE CAMEL'S HUMP

Does a camel carry its supply of water in its hump? No! Actually, the "water tanks" of a camel are in its stomach. The hump carries its fat—in other words, its food. Although a camel can go for a very long time without a drink, it can also dispense with food, owing to the fact that it is able to live on its reserves of fat. So the answer to "what gave the camel the hump?" is "Too much fat!" Billy Bunter had better beware!

NOW to this question of floating islands. Jack Trent, of Exeter, has heard that there are islands which float, and he wants to know if it is true. Certainly it is! Floating islands are found in various parts of the world, and one of the most curious is in Lake Michigan. This particular island is something of a nuisance, for it keeps vanishing and re-appearing most mysteriously. In the early part of the year it sinks below the waters of the lake, but somewhere about August it bobs up again and remains afloat throughout the winter.

As, of course, it impedes navigation, attempts have been made to sink it for good, but no matter how many rocks are placed on it, up it comes again! In a lake in the Rockies there is

ANOTHER INTERESTING ISLAND

which not only floats but actually sails around! This is in Henry's Lake, and it is estimated that the sailing island covers as much ground—or rather, water—as five miles per day! How would you like to live on an island that changes its position each day?

DO you know the idea behind cantilever bridges? K. J., of Welwyn, doesn't, so he asks me about it. Well, the principle is arranged on a question of balance. I dare say most of you know that it is easier to carry two buckets of water than one, because the bucket in the right hand balances the bucket in the left hand. In a cantilever bridge, one part of the bridge balances the other.

THE LONGEST CANTILEVER BRIDGE

in the world at the present time is the Quebec Bridge, which is 3,238 feet in length. But a new bridge is at present being constructed over the Hudson River, to link up New York with New Jersey and when this is finished, in 1932, it will be the

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largest in the world. It will be 4,670 feet in length, and 140 feet wide.

I WONDER if you fellows realise how much money is spent on holidays? I dare say you know how much you spend personally, but has it ever struck you how much the total comes to? It may come as a surprise to you to know that

A FORTY-MILLION POUND HOLIDAY

is taken by tourists in France every year! Continental holidays are most popular nowadays, and it is estimated that visitors to France spent not less than forty million pounds last year! France has certainly discovered the wisdom of attracting people to her shores!

Talking about holidays, wouldn't you like to share the holiday which has just been completed by a Yorkshireman? He and a companion set off from England on a motor-cycle and pillion, and before their holiday was over they had gone right round the world! They travelled 21,800 miles and visited fourteen different countries. Naturally they bumped up against a number of adventures, and were once arrested as spies, while, on another occasion, they were attacked by a tribe of Bedouins. But they both agreed that it was worth it!

IF you fellows are sensible, you'll always take a knife with you when you go on holiday. And if you haven't got a knife, or your old one is getting worn out, have a shot at getting one free by sending in a yarn that will appeal to other MAGNET readers. For instance, Edgar Roberts, of Elmstide, Kingskerswell, S. Devon, has won a knife this week for the following joke:



when I've finished 'tight.'

Teacher (addressing young Tommy Jones): "What is the meaning of 'appetite'?"
Tommy Jones: "When I'm eating my tea I'm 'appy,' and when I'm finished I'm 'tight.'"



BOOKS, PENKNIVES, and POCKET WALLETS, offered for storyettes and 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!

As well as knives, I have plenty of splendid pocket wallets and magnificent books, and I am giving them away in return for a joke, a limerick, or a letter describing something that is likely to interest other readers. Now, chums, it's up to you!

I haven't finished all the queries yet, so here is a selection of

REPLIES IN BRIEF.

Can you tell me how to make a cheap invisible ink? (E. M. of Altringham.) The cheapest invisible inks are milk and onion juice. Use a clean, new nib and write on paper that is not glossy. To bring up the writing, hold the message before the fire to allow it to get heated.

Can mice be trained to dance? (Jim B., of Chester.) Not ordinary mice, but you can obtain Egyptian waltzing mice, which "dance" most amusingly.

Was the Crystal Palace built at Sydenham? (F. K. of Ealing.) No. It was first built for the Great Exhibition in Kensington, and was afterwards removed to its present position.

Is it possible to make gramophone records at home? (J. H., of Birmingham.) Several recording outfits have recently been put on the market, and before long it will be quite possible for anyone to make really good "home-made" records—and their own "talkies" if they wish to!

How to join the army. (T. G., of Lincoln.) You should ask at your local post office for a free copy of a booklet which gives all the information required concerning how to join the army, and the pay, etc., of the different branches.

Here's a snappy Greyfriars limerick for which C. H. Blunsom of 23, Peel Road, South Woodford, Essex, will receive a topping book:—

Said Quelchy, one eye in the Form,
As his boys were en route for the dorm,
"If I hear any noise
From this Form, my boys,
The seats of your trousers I'll warm!"

Now get busy, you fellows, and have a shot at winning one of these handsome prizes.

THERE is one question I am never asked, and that is: "Which is the finest boys' paper published?" The reason is that the answer is known by every one of my readers. The MAGNET, of course! And when you get next week's issue, you'll be more convinced than ever that your favourite paper heads the list!

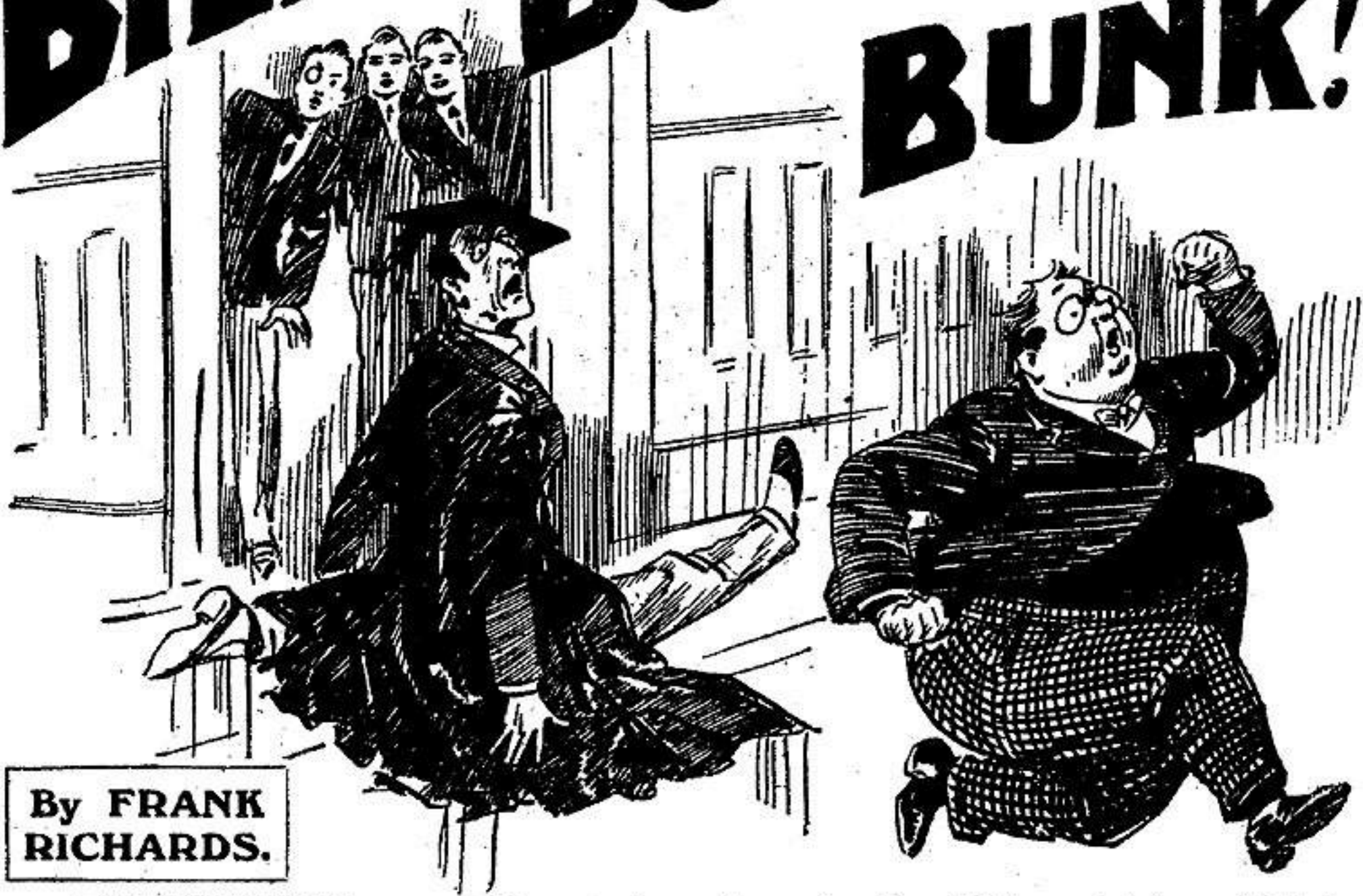
You'll simply revel in Frank Richards' long complete tale of the chums of Greyfriars. It's called: "THE MAN FROM THE STATES!" and it's just crammed full of thrills and fun! Frank Richards makes his characters "live"—which is why he has such a wonderful following of readers.

There are also thrills and fun in "The Island of Slaves," and the "Greyfriars Herald" respectively, both of which appear, as usual, next week.

And don't forget to "come into the office, boys," and we'll have another interesting little chat!

YOUR EDITOR.

BILLY BUNTER'S BUNK!



By **FRANK
RICHARDS.**

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Something Like a Stunt!

“**O**LD Quelch—”

Henry Samuel Quelch, the master of the Greyfriars Remove, gave a start.

His jaw set grimly.

Billy Bunter's fat voice came quite clearly to the ears of his Form master, round the trunk of the massive old elm; though Billy Bunter, obviously, was quite unaware of the fact.

Class was over at Greyfriars. Mr. Quelch, rather thankfully, was done with his Form. His Form, still more thankfully, were done with Mr. Quelch.

Mr. Quelch had taken a little walk under the elms. He had sat down on one of the old benches, under one of the old elms. It was a very warm and very pleasant day for March; and Mr. Quelch was feeling rosy and peaceful, and quite good-humoured till Billy Bunter's voice floated to his ears. Then he did not look so good-humoured.

Of course, the Remove master was well aware that members of his Form never, or hardly ever, spoke of him as “Mr.” Quelch. He was naturally Quelch, or Quelchy, to the Removites. But there was a limit. “Old Quelch” was disrespectful.

“Old Quelch,” rattled on Bunter, on the other side of the elm, “was frightfully ratty in class to-day.”

“That's no news, fatty!” came Bob Cherry's cheery voice.

“The newfulness is not terrific, my esteemed fat Bunter!” came the silky voice of Hurreo Janset Ram Singh.

“Form masters often get ratty towards the end of term!” remarked Frank Nugent. “They get rather fed up with fellows—same as fellows do with them.”

Mr. Quelch half-rose.

Some members of his Form, sauntering under the trees, had stopped—on the other side of the elm. Evidently they did not know that their Form master was in the offing. Mr. Quelch had no desire to listen, unseen, while Remove fellows expressed their views on ratty Form masters.

“Oh, come on!” He heard Johnny

When Billy Bunter tells the truth it's time for the skies to fall—and for Billy Bunter to bunk!

Bull's voice, and Mr. Quelch sat down again.

“I say, you fellows, hold on!” exclaimed Billy Bunter. “It's rather important!”

“What's important, you fat duffer?” asked Harry Wharton.

“Old Quelch—”

“You'd better let Quelchy hear you calling him ‘Old Quelch,’” said Bob.

“You'd get six!”

“I say, do listen to a chap! Old Quelch was specially down on me to-day. He made out that I hadn't done my prep.”

“Well, you hadn't, you fat slacker.”

“Oh, really, Cherry! Of course, that was only an excuse. He's been down on me all this term. I'm not one of his favourites like you, Wharton.”

“How am I a favourite, fathead? I've never noticed it.”

“Well, he said your con was good.”

“So it was good, for once.”

“Well, so was mine,” said Bunter. “Good enough, anyhow. If old Quelch thinks I'm going to waste a lot of time mugging up rotten Latin, I can jolly well tell him he's mistaken.”

“Yes, I can hear you telling him that—I don't think!” chuckled Bob Cherry. “Put some exercise books in your bags first.”

“Look at the way he was down on me in history class,” said Bunter. “Just because I said it was Edward the Seventh who dissolved the monasteries.”

“Ha, ha, ha!”

“Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! Well, look here, I'm fed up with old Quelch! Fed up to the chin!” said Bunter impressively. “And I'm jolly well not going to stand him any more.”

“Oh, my hat!”

For the second time, Henry Samuel Quelch half-rose. For the second time, he sat down again. He was strongly disposed to reveal his presence, order Bunter to follow him to his study, and administer the “six” that the fat junior undoubtedly deserved. But Mr. Quelch was a just gentleman; and he felt that he could not take official cognisance of remarks overheard by

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accident. So he sat where he was; but his jaw was growing squarer, his frown grimmer, and there was a dangerous glint in his eyes.

"I mean it!" went on the happily-unconscious Owl of the Remove. "I'm not standing any more of it, you fellows. We break up for Easter in a week or two. Well, my idea is to get off early for Easter. See?"

"And how the thump are you going to wangle that?" exclaimed Wharton. There was a fat chuckle.

"That's all right! I jolly well know!" "Cough it up, then!" said Bob encouragingly. "If there's any way of starting the Easter holidays early, we're on."

"The onfulness is preposterous."

"Go it, Fatty!" The Famous Five of the Remove seemed interested in Billy Bunter's remarks at last.

Perhaps Mr. Quelch was interested, too!

"I shall want one of my pals to help!" said Bunter. "I've picked you out, Wharton."

"Didn't you say one of your pals?"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Come on, you men!" said Johnny Bull.

"I wish you wouldn't keep on interrupting a fellow, Bull! This is the wheeze," said Bunter. "You go down to the post office at Courtfield, Wharton. You ring up Quelch on his phone."

"Oh, my hat! Do I?"

"Yes. Of course, you don't say you're Wharton! You make out you're my father—Mr. Bunter, you know, speaking from Bunter Court."

"Great pip!"

"You tell Quelch that you're ill—practically dying—and that you want me home at once—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the captain of the Remove. "Quelch would be likely to believe that he was rung up by a man who was practically dying."

"Oh! I—I mean—that wouldn't quite do, of course," said Bunter hastily. "You'd better make out that you're the butler! See? Make out you're the butler at Bunter Court, and you've rung up Quelch to tell him that Mr. Bunter is frightfully ill, with influenza, and pneumonia, and—and galloping cancer—may as well pile it on a bit, you know—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Do listen to a chap! Well, old Quelch is a beast—an awful beast—but even a beast like old Quelch is bound to be a bit sympathetic, when he hears that a fellow's father is laid up with plumbago and galloping influenza, and things like that. Pile it on thick, you know. Now, when Quelch gets that phone call, what do you think he will do?"

"Have a fit, very likely."

"Oh, don't be an ass! Of course, he will send for me at once, and give me my journey money, and tell me to catch the first train home. I shall play up, of course—trust me to pull the old jigger's leg. I think I might blub a bit, you know—that would have a good effect. Easy enough to blub, if you rub on a bit of onion ready—"

"Oh crikey!"

"Well, I get off home," said Bunter. "Of course, the pater and mater will be jolly glad to see me—"

"Will they?" ejaculated Bob Cherry, in astonishment.

"Yes, they will!" roared Bunter.

"No accounting for tastes."

"Beast! Of course, they'll be a bit surprised, perhaps, at my coming home a week before break-up. But if I tell

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them I'm given a week's extra holiday for good conduct—"

"For whatter?"

"Good conduct, and hard work, and high character, and all that—"

"Ye gods!"

"That will make it all right. The pater may be a bit rusty; but the mater will stand by me. The mater's fond of me. But that isn't all."

"Oh, isn't that all?" gasped Bob Cherry. "I should have thought that was enough! But let's have the rest! This is too good to miss."

"You see, the pater might be a bit suspicious," explained Bunter. "He's fond of me, and proud of me, of course—"

"Oh!"

"But he might be a bit suspicious, and he might ring up the school. I've thought of that!" said Bunter astutely.

"Well, you ring up my pater, Wharton, and make out you're Quelch—"

"I—I—I make out I'm Quelch?" gurgled the captain of the Remove.

"That's it! You can bark like Quelch on the phone—anybody could put on a bark like old Quelch's. You've only got to imitate a disagreeable dog, and it will sound like Quelch all right. Well, you tell my pater—speaking as Quelch, you know—that it's all right. Mention that you're proud to have such a chap in the Form—"

"Phew!"

"Refer to my good qualities, and all that—"

"But you haven't any!"

"Oh, don't be a fathead! Pile it on a bit thick—it will please the pater. It's a fellow's duty to please his pater, you know. I hope I'm a dutiful son," said Bunter. "Well, that will make it all right at both ends, see? Old Quelch will think my pater's phoned for me to come home because he's ill! My pater will think Quelch has phoned to tell him to expect me at home. Safe as houses! I can tell you, you fellows, I've given this stunt a lot of thought," said Bunter. "I'll bet you fellows would never have thought of anything of the kind!"

"You'd win that bet!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "Can't say I should ever have thought of telling Quelch one stack of lies, and telling my pater another stack! Nobody but you would think of these things, Bunter."

"Well, I've got brains, you know," said Bunter. "Now, the sooner you put that telephone call through, the better, Wharton! If Quelch gets it soon after tea, I shan't have to do any prep this evening. That's rather important."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You'll go at once, won't you, old chap?" asked Bunter anxiously. "I'll pay for the telephone call, of course—next term."

"No, I don't think I'll go at once!" chuckled Wharton. "I hardly think I'll go at all, in fact."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you're going to let me down, Wharton, after all I've done for you, I can only say you're a rank rotter. You'll do it for me, won't you, Bob, old chap?"

"Not quite!" chortled Bob.

"I say, Nugent, old fellow, you'll do it? You're not such a beastly rotter as these fellows—"

"I am, old fat bean!" chuckled Nugent. "Worse!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Come on, you men," said Johnny Bull. "Now Bunter's told his funny story, let's go and punt a footer about till tea."

"Let's!" agreed Harry Wharton,

"I say, you fellows—don't walk away while a fellow's talking to you. Look here, you beasts! I say, old chaps—Yah, rotters!" roared Billy Bunter, as the Famous Five, laughing, departed from the spot.

Apparently Billy Bunter was not going to receive any assistance from the Famous Five in carrying out that remarkable scheme of getting off a week early for the Easter holidays.

"I say, you fellows!" yelled Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beasts!"

Billy Bunter glared after the departing chums of the Remove with a glare that almost cracked his spectacles. Then, with a grunt, he rolled round the big elm to sit down on the bench on the other side of the trunk and debate in his fat mind where he was to obtain the necessary assistance in carrying out that tremendous wheeze.

He was not aware that there was anybody on that bench—yet. But as he rolled round the big elm he became suddenly aware of it.

A face that wore an expression recalling the fabled basilisk glared at William George Bunter with a petrifying glare. Billy Bunter's jaw dropped, and his eyes almost bulged through his spectacles as he beheld Henry Samuel Quelch. He stood rooted, his eyes bulging at his Form master.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "Oh! Oh! Oh lor'!"

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Wrathy!

BUNTER!" Mr. Quelch's voice was not loud, but deep. It was full of expression. Billy Bunter quaked.

He stood blinking in horror at his Form master, his fat knees knocking together. It rushed upon Bunter's fat mind that Mr. Quelch, seated on the bench under the elm, had heard every word that was uttered on the other side of the tree.

He had heard Bunter allude to him as "old Quelch"; he had heard Bunter detail that masterly scheme for getting away from Greyfriars a week early for the Easter holidays. He had heard it all, and his look showed the effect it had produced on him. Bunter's fat brain swam.

"Bunter!"

"Oh! Yes, sir!" gurgled Bunter. It—it wasn't me, sir."

"What? What?"

"I—I didn't, sir!" gasped Bunter.

"I—I never! Oh lor'!"

"Seated here, Bunter, I have unavoidably overheard every word you have uttered!" said Mr. Quelch. "I have heard your disrespectful allusions to your Form master, Bunter! I have heard your unscrupulous, your rascally, your iniquitous scheme for evading lessons."

"Oh crikey! I—I didn't know you were listening, sir!" groaned Bunter.

It was an unfortunate way of putting it. But Billy Bunter was not in a state of mind to be tactful.

"Listening!" hooted Mr. Quelch, crimson with anger. "Bunter! How dare you? I repeat, how dare you?"

"Oh dear! Oh scissors! I—I mean—"

stuttered the hapless Owl of the Remove. "I—I mean, I—I didn't mean—that is—I mean to say— Oh lor'!"

"Since you spoke in my hearing, Bunter, I could not avoid hearing your remarks. I am sorry to say that, having

heard these remarks by accident, I do not feel that I can punish you as you deserve for them."

"Oh, good!" gasped Bunter. This was a relief, at all events.

"In other circumstances, Bunter, I should cane you with the utmost severity. In all my career as a schoolmaster, I have never heard so unscrupulous a scheme propounded by so unscrupulous a boy."

"Oh crumbs!"
"I am glad to note," said Mr. Quelch, "that your Form fellows regarded that scheme with derision—I hope with contempt, I trust, Bunter, that on reflection, you will be ashamed of having allowed such unscrupulous thoughts even to pass through your mind."

"Oh, yes, sir!" gasped Bunter. "I am, sir! Frightfully!"

"I hope you are speaking truthfully, Bunter."

"Certainly, sir! Any fellow in the Remove will tell you how truthful I am. I—I couldn't tell a lie, sir."

Mr. Quelch breathed hard through his nose. His gimlet eyes almost bored into the Owl of the Remove.

Never had Mr. Quelch felt so strongly inclined to give a member of his Form a record licking. But Mr. Quelch was a just man. He had always made it an invariable rule to take no official note of words overheard by chance. That was a good rule, and a just rule; it was, in fact, only playing the game. Mr. Quelch was sorely tempted to break it for once. Much to his credit, be it said, that he resisted the temptation.

"I shall not punish you, Bunter. You deserve the severest punishment; but in the circumstances I do not feel that I can administer it. But I warn you to take care, Bunter. I warn you to be careful."

"Oh, yes, sir! Certainly, sir!" gasped Bunter. "I'll be jolly careful that you don't hear me another time sir."

"What?" roared Mr. Quelch.

"If—if I'd known you were here, sir, I—I wouldn't have said a word," groaned Bunter. "I wouldn't really, sir."

"You utterly stupid boy——"

"Oh, really, sir——"

"I am warning you, Bunter, to be careful in your conduct. I am warning you against attempting to devise any miserable subterfuge for evading lessons."

"Oh, sir! I—I wouldn't!" gasped Bunter. "That—that's the last thing I should think of sir! I—I like lessons."

"You like lessons!" articulated Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, sir, especially with you, sir, because—because you're so nice, sir!" groaned Bunter. "I—I don't think you a beast sir, like the other fellows."

"Bunter!"

"I—I don't, really, sir!" said Bunter eagerly. "I've often told the fellows, sir, that you're not half such a beast as you look, sir. I have really, sir!"

"Upon my word! Bunter, this is

studied impertinence! I had decided not to cane you, Bunter——"

"Yes, sir, thank you, sir."

"But I am now compelled to reconsider my decision."

"Oh lor'!"

"You will follow me to my study, Bunter."

"Ow!"

Mr. Quelch stalked away towards the House. Billy Bunter blinked dismally after him, and followed.

A few minutes later there were sounds of woe from Mr. Quelch's study. Billy Bunter emerged from that apartment with his fat hands tucked under his arms, and wriggled his doleful way down the passage. He wriggled his way to the Remove passage, and Remove

Bunter grunted. Seated in the arm-chair, with his fat little legs resting on another chair, Bunter was comfortable. Bunter liked comfort. He did not like Latin. Prose or verse he did not like it. His only feeling towards Virgil was a desire to punch that great poet's head, had it been practicable.

Besides, Bunter was thinking. With a problem occupying his fat brain, there was, naturally, no room there for Virgil.

"Prep, you know, old fat bean," said Peter. It really was good-natured of Toddy. Prep was much easier without Bunter at the study table—wriggling, or grunting, or asking questions, or spilling blots, or yawning, or chattering, and requiring continual assistance.

"Blow prep!" growled Bunter. "I'm too jolly busy for prep."



"You ring up my pater, Wharton," said Bunter, "and make out you're Quelch. All you've got to do is to imitate a disagreeable dog." The fat junior was not aware that Mr. Quelch himself was sitting the other side of the tree.

fellows in the studies heard his dialect tones as he arrived.

Bunter's vocabulary seemed limited, but it was full of feeling.

"Ow, ow, ow, wow, wow! Yow, ow, ow!"

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Bunter Means Business!

PETER TODD glanced up from prep at a fat figure that sprawled comfortably, if not elegantly, in the study armchair.

Peter was at work, and Tom Dutton was at work. Virgil was propped open against the inkstand, with the section marked that had to be prepared; a dog-eared grammar, and a still more dog-eared dictionary were at hand.

Peter, probably, was no keener on P. Vergilius Maro than Bunter was, but he was less given to "chancing" it with Quelch.

"Hadn't you better wire in, fatty?" asked Peter.

"You look busy!" grinned Peter.

"I'm thinking," said Bunter. "Thinking it out! That beast Quelch is down on me, Toddy."

"All the more reason for putting in some prep, old fat man. If you're called on to construe, in the morning, you're for it. Buck up and get some work done for a change," said Peter encouragingly.

Bunter shook his head. He was feeling, as a matter of fact, that he needed a change. But a change of that kind did not appeal to him.

"Quelch has been down on me all the term," he said gloomily. "He will be worse than ever now, after hearing me call him old Quelch, you know, and hearing me ask Wharton to help me get off early for the Easter holidays. It's always rotten the last week of term, but it's going to be rottenner than ever this time."

"I told you about what Quelch heard me saying in the quad, Toddy?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at. Look here, old chap, do you think he would suspect anything after—after that—if he got a telephone call saying that my father was ill?"

"Oh, my hat! I—I think so!" gasped Toddy. "Yes, I fancy he would be a teeny-weeny bit suspicious. Just a mere trifle."

"Then, it will have to be a telegram," said Bunter.

"Oh, my hat!" said Peter.

"If he gets a telegram from my father he can't make out that it's spooft, can he?" asked Bunter. "Even a suspicious beast like Quelch, you know. Of course, any decent Form master would take a fellow's word. I should simply have to walk in and say my pater was fearfully ill, and he would tell me to cut off home at once. But Quelch doesn't take a man's word, Toddy!"

"Not yours!" chuckled Peter.

"He doesn't even seem to know that it's ungentlemanly to doubt a fellow's word," said Bunter. "The real trouble is, that Quelch is no gentleman, Peter. That makes it difficult for a chap. There's nothing for it but a telegram. But how's a telegram going to be sent?"

"Echo answers, how!" said Peter Todd.

"A fellow can't get away to Surrey to send a wire. Wharton's place is in Surrey and he might phone home and ask the butler to send the wire for me. But would he?" said Bunter dubiously.

"Oh crumbs!" said Peter. "No, I rather fancy he wouldn't, you fat frump! What about prep?"

"Blow prep!" grunted Bunter impatiently. "If I could get a message from

home, like I've thought of, I shouldn't have any prep to do. After all, I think Wharton's bound to do it for me, after all I've done for him, you know. It won't cost him anything to phone—he can use Prout's or Quelch's phone, you know, if he's careful. And I suppose his butler at home is bound to do as he's told."

"Fathead!"

Peter Todd resumed work. Bunter, stretched in the armchair, continued to think out his problem.

Bunter had been keen to get an extra holiday before Easter, and he was keener than ever now. After what Quelch had heard under the elms, it was certain that the Remove master would be more down on the fat junior than ever.

He was down on him at the best of times. He always expected a fellow to work. He took the absurd view—absurd in Bunter's opinion—that fellows came to Greyfriars to learn things. It was just like a blessed schoolmaster to take such a view! It was a view that Bunter was never likely to take!

Billy Bunter, certainly, was not at Greyfriars School to learn things—not if Bunter could help it! And really he had, hitherto, been able to help it to a very extensive extent.

Quelch had been down on him, and would be more down than ever, since he had heard that wonderful wheeze propounded under the elms. He would watch Bunter like a hawk. He would make him work. He would call on him in the Form-room to construe. He would not listen to any excuses for neglected prep, or unpunctuality at classes. He was capable of giving a fellow extra "root"; a thought that made Bunter shudder.

More than ever, therefore, it was necessary for Bunter to get that extra little holiday before the Easter vacation commenced. It had been very desirable before; now it really was a matter of necessity.

Bunter rose from the armchair at last and took his seat at the table. He jolted the table as he sat there, and Tom Dutton spilled blots from his pen, and glared at him. He dipped a pen in the ink and knocked Virgil over from his place at the inkstand, and Peter Todd glared at him.

Glares, however, did not affect Bunter. He drew a sheet of impot paper towards him and began to write.

Toddy set Virgil up again, so that three could see him. But only two looked at the great Mantuan. Bunter was getting busy, but he was not, apparently, getting busy with prep. Prep was as far as ever from the thoughts of the Owl of the Remove.

"I say, Toddy—"

"Wire in, and don't jaw, old bean," said Peter. "Don't you know that a fellow is supposed to do his prep on his own?"

"I'm not doing prep, fathead!" said Bunter peevishly. "Something more important than prep to think of. Do you spell pneumonia with a K or a G, old chap?"

"Eh?" Peter Todd jumped. "What the thump are you up to? There's nothing about pneumonia in Virgil, is there?"

"I tell you, I'm not doing Virgil! Blow Virgil!" snorted Bunter. "I'm making up a telegram from home."

"Oh crumbs!"

"Wharton will have to get his butler at home to send it for me. He simply can't refuse, after all I've done for him. Even that beast Quelch will sympathise a bit, I think, when he hears that a fellow's father's got pneumonia. Even Quelch must have some feelings! Look here, Toddy, do you spell it with a G or a K?"

"I don't think I should spell it with either," chuckled Toddy. "And I advise you not to spell it at all, fatty! Get on with your prep instead."

"Rats! After all, I'm sure it's a K," said Bunter. "I could always spell better than you, Toddy. You're rather ignorant."

And Bunter proceeded. Toddy shrugged his shoulders and got on with prep. But the fat junior was speaking again, soon.

"I say, Toddy, how many J's in dangerous?"

"None at all, you fat ass!"

"Oh, don't be an idiot!" said Bunter peevishly.

With a liberal allowance of blots and smudges, Bunter finished his telegram at last. Somebody, somehow, was to be got to dispatch that telegram from the vicinity of Bunter Villa, in Surrey. That, Bunter considered, was bound to work the oracle.

He rose from the table, giving it a jolt as he rose.

"Look at that, Toddy, old man! Think it's all right?" asked the Owl of the Remove, anxiously.

Peter glanced at the message which was supposed to arrive from Bunter's father. It ran:

"Quelch, Greyfriars School, Kent.

"Danjerusly ill with knewmonia. Send William home at wunce.—
"BUNTER."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Peter.

"Look here, you silly ass, what's the matter with it?" demanded Bunter. "Think Quelch won't take it in? Of



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course he will, when he sees on the form that it's handed in near my home. He will be touched—"

"He jolly well will if he swallows that!" chortled Peter. "Not merely touched—quite potty!"

"I don't mean that, you ass! I mean his heart will be touched! He will think of my poor father sitting up in bed writing that telegram, to fetch his dear son home before it's too late! Even a beast like Quelch must have some feelings, it stands to reason. I can tell you pneumonia is no joke—"

"It is, the way you spell it," chuckled Peter. "Quite funny, in fact."

"Well, if you think it isn't a K, I don't mind making it a G," said Bunter, and he dipped a pen in the ink, and made it a G. "Now I'd better get along to Wharton's study and put it to him."

"You'd better get along with your prep, you howling ass, and chuck that rot into the fire."

"Yah!"

Billy Bunter, with that valuable document in his hand, rolled out of Study No. 7 and along the Remove passage to No. 1. Peter chuckled. He did not think it probable that the captain of the Remove would phone home to Wharton Lodge, instructing Wells, the butler, to dispatch that telegram, signed with another man's name. He was very doubtful whether Wells would do it, if told, but he was quite certain that Wharton would not tell him. All he expected Bunter to receive in Study No. 1 was an outburst of merriment when they saw the telegram.

And Peter's expectations were verified. Two minutes after Bunter had rolled away, the sound of mirth echoed along the Remove passage from Study No. 1.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

A Surprise for Quelch!

MR. QUELCH glanced at his study clock, laid down his pen, and rose from his table. Mr. Quelch had been correcting exercises, and he had still quite a heap to deal with. But he was leaving them unfinished for the present. Other matters were in the Remove master's mind. He glanced round, picked up a cane and slipped it under his arm, and left the study. With a slightly grim expression on his countenance, Henry Samuel Quelch negotiated the stairs, and headed for the Remove passage.

In that passage, prep was the order of the day, or rather of the evening. During prep, fellows were supposed not to leave their studies, though as a matter of fact they very frequently did. In their studies, they were supposed to devote their whole attention to work, and not to read novels, or even the "Holiday Annual"; not to box, or rag, or waste time in any manner or form. The prefect on duty was supposed to walk along the passage once or twice, to see that everything was as it should be.

But about all these rules, as about so many rules, there was often more supposition than actuality. Fellows often did read, often did box or rag; often did leave their studies, and had even been known to play passage football. So every now and then, though rarely, Mr. Quelch would walk along that passage himself during prep—expending a few minutes of his valuable time in the cause of law and order and the acquisition of more or less useful knowledge.

On this especial occasion, Mr. Quelch had Bunter in mind. What he had heard in the quad that afternoon, had rather concentrated his attention on Bunter.

YOU'RE BOUND TO SMILE
at the following amusing joke sent in by Dick Withers, 32, Mid-croft, Ruislip, Middlesex.

He's been awarded
A DANDY POCKET KNIFE
for it!



Old Lady (to chauffeur, who is slow in helping her from car):
"James, you are not so gallant as you were when you were a boy."
Chauffeur: "No, madam, and you are not so buoyant as you were when a gal!"

Let's have a ribtickler from you
BY THE NEXT POST—I've got HEAPS MORE PRIZES
waiting to be won!—Ed.

As a just Form master, he had refrained from caning Bunter for what he had accidentally overheard, though he had caned him for subsequent impertinence. From the fact that he put a cane under his arm before going up to the Remove quarters, it looked as if Mr. Quelch thought that Bunter might need caning again.

Bunter was not only the most obtuse member of the Lower Fourth. He was also the laziest and the most untruthful. With obtuseness, Mr. Quelch felt it his duty to be patient. But he saw no reason for being patient with laziness, slacking, frowning, and Bunter's other striking qualities.

Mr. Quelch was going to look in at Study No. 7, and ascertain just how much attention Bunter was giving to prep. From the "con" Bunter handed out in the Form-room, it seemed probable that Bunter gave very little attention to prep indeed. Certainly a young rascal who was so unscrupulous, so untruthful, as to devise a spoof message from home, in order to get an extra holiday, was only too likely to be careless with prep, when the eye of authority was not upon him.

So the eye of authority was going to fall on Bunter now, very sharply indeed, and if Bunter was not working as he should have been, not digging into P. Virgilius Maro as he should have dug, the cane under Mr. Quelch's arm was coming into action.

Slowly—for Mr. Quelch had reached a period of life when a man has to ascend stairs on his lowest gear—Mr. Quelch went up the Remove staircase. Before he reached the landing, a sound

from the studies ahead reached him, which demonstrated, only too clearly, that matters were not as they should have been, in the studies.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was a roar of laughter!

Mr. Quelch's eyes glittered under his knitted brows. Roars of laughter were utterly out of place during prep. Prep, it was certain, could not have caused them. There was nothing in P. Virgilius Maro to elicit roars of laughter from his victims. Virgil might make a fellow tired, might make him snort, might make him scowl, but never had Virgil been known to make a fellow laugh. Somebody was neglecting prep!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was another roar. Mr. Quelch, advancing across the Remove landing, spotted the study from which proceeded those sounds of merriment. It was the first study in the passage—Study No. 1 in the Remove.

He frowned more portentously. That study belonged to Wharton and Nugent. And Wharton was head boy of the Form. A head boy's duty was to set an example to the others. Head boys, of course, are only human like other boys, still a head boy was a head boy, and should not have been roaring with laughter in prep.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Wharton and Nugent were not only roaring with laughter, they seemed almost in hysterics. They fairly yolled.

Mr. Quelch forgot Bunter and Study No. 7 for the moment. First things came first. Whether Bunter was slacking in Study No. 7 or not, it was obvious that prep was being given the go-by in No. 1. The Remove master swept on to Study No. 1, and stared in at the open door.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Wharton and Nugent.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Quelch started. He did not need to go any farther for Bunter; Bunter was there! He stared into the study, unnoticed for the moment by the occupants. He had a back view of Bunter's ample form. Wharton and Nugent were at the study table, doubled up with merriment.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Wharton.

"You howling ass—ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"You frabjous chump!" gurgled Frank Nugent. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"You shut up, Nugent! Look here, Wharton—"

"BUNTER!"

Mr. Quelch stepped into the study.

Billy Bunter spun round. Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent ceased to laugh. Whatever the joke was, it ceased to appeal to them all of a sudden, as they beheld the icy countenance of their Form master in the doorway. They jumped to their feet.

"Bunter! What are you doing in this study during prep? This is not your study!"

"Oh, nothing, sir!" gasped Bunter.

"I fully expected to find you doing nothing, Bunter, when I came up to the Remove studies," rumbled Mr. Quelch. "But I did not expect to find my head boy doing nothing, Wharton."

"Oh!" gasped Wharton. "Yes, sir! N-no, sir I—I—um!"

Frank Nugent, with wonderful presence of mind, slipped a sheet of blotting-paper over a scrawled paper that lay on the study table. Wharton and Nugent had taken Bunter's telegram as a screaming joke. But it was

only too certain that Mr. Quelch would not take it as a joke, if he saw it. And there it lay, in full view of the gimlet eyes, until Frank covered it with the blotter.

Unfortunately, the gimlet eyes noted the action. They looked more like gimlets than ever.

"Nugent!" mumbled Mr. Quelch.

"Oh! Yes, sir!" gasped Frank.

"What are you concealing?"

"Oh! Oh dear! I—I—only—um—"

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter, in great alarm. "It—it's nothing, sir! Only an exercise, sir—a Latin exercise, sir—that's all! I—I was showing it to these chaps, sir—"

"Indeed! Am I to understand that a Latin exercise was the cause of the outburst of unseemly merriment I heard as I reached this study?"

"Yes, sir! Exactly!" gasped Bunter.

"Give me that paper, Bunter!"

"Oh crikey!"

"Do you hear me, Bunter?"

"Oh dear! It—it—it—it's only—"

"Hand me that paper at once, Bunter!" thundered Mr. Quelch, in a voice that made the fat junior jump almost clear of the floor. And Bunter, quaking, handed him the paper.

What Mr. Quelch expected to see cannot be said; perhaps some caricature of himself, or even of the Head; since he had no doubt that this mysterious paper contained the joke that had set the study in a roar. But what he actually did see was this; evidently the rough draft of a telegram:

"Quelch, Greyfriars School, Kent.
"Dangerously ill with gnewmonia.
Send William home at wunce.—Bunter."

Mr. Quelch gazed at that strange document. He gazed at it fixedly, almost incredulously. Wharton and Nugent exchanged a hopeless look and then gazed at Quelch. Billy Bunter groaned. That telegram, duly sent by the post office from the vicinity of the Bunter home, had been intended to meet Quelch's eye. In its present form, it certainly had not been intended to meet Quelch's eye. That eye glittered at it.

For some moments there was an awful silence in the study. Then Mr. Quelch addressed the Owl of the Remove.

"Bunter! This is your writing!"

"Oh dear!"

"It appears to be the rough draft of a telegram—apparently a telegram that was to be sent to me. What does it mean, Bunter?"

"N-n-nothing, sir!" gasped Bunter. "Only a—a—a joke, sir! I—I never intended to get that telegram sent to you from home, sir. I—I never thought of it, sir! You—you can ask Wharton, sir! He knows I never asked him to phone home to his uncle's butler to send that telegram, sir! D-d-don't you, old chap?"

"Upon my word!" gasped Mr. Quelch.

"You—you speak up for a fellow, Wharton," gasped Bunter. "You tell Mr. Quelch the—the truth! Tell him I never asked you to phone to Wells—"

"Bunter!"

"I—I didn't, sir!" wailed Bunter. "I—I never knew there was a butler at Wharton Lodge, sir! I—I never knew his name was Wells! I—I've never heard the name before. Ask Wharton, sir!"

"Bunter!" articulated Mr. Quelch. "In spite of the fact that your unscrupulous scheme has come to my knowledge; in spite of the fact that I am now thoroughly acquainted with

your duplicity—in spite of this, you are persisting in such a scheme—"

"Oh! No, sir! Not at all, sir! It—it wasn't me, sir!" stuttered Bunter.

"Wharton! I need hardly ask you whether you intended to enter into this unscrupulous, this deceitful scheme—"

"Oh, no, sir!" gasped Wharton. "I—I—the fact is, sir, Bunter can't help being a silly ass—"

"You need not make excuses for Bunter, Wharton! That he is the most obtuse boy at Greyfriars, I am well aware; but I fear that his unscrupulousness, his reckless disregard of veracity, equal his obtuseness. Bunter, bend over that chair!"

"Oh dear!"

Billy Bunter, in the lowest spirits, bent over the chair. The cane under Mr. Quelch's arm slipped down into his hand. It swished in the air and landed on a pair of tight trousers with a terrific swipe.

"Yaroooooh!" roared Bunter.

Whack! Whack! Whack! Whack!

"Whoooooop! Help! Yooooop! Owl! Wow!"

"Silence!" hooted Mr. Quelch, tucking the cane under his arm again. "Go back to your study, Bunter. Wharton and Nugent, you will each take one hundred lines for neglecting your preparation. Bunter, leave this study at once."

"Owl! Wow! Wow!"

Billy Bunter rolled back to Study No. 7. His Form master followed him, glaring into the study after him.

"Bunter! It is clear that you have done very little preparation! I recommend you to make the best possible use of the time that remains! I shall give very particular attention to your construe to-morrow, Bunter! I advise you, Bunter, to take care!"

"Owl! Wow!"

Mr. Quelch whisked away. Bunter collapsed into the armchair. He reposed there for about the millionth part of a second and then leaped to his feet as if he had found the chair red-hot. Bunter, generally, was fond of sitting down, and preferred it greatly to standing. But circumstances, like carpenters, alter cases! For the present, Bunter very much preferred to stand.

"Wire in, fatty, and I'll help you with your prep," said Peter Todd kindly.

Groan!

"Better go it, old bean! Quelch means business."

Groan!

Bunter did not doubt that Quelch meant business. He made an effort to toy with prep. But after that "six" it was really difficult for any fellow to give attention to anything but the resulting pains and aches. Instead of wiring into prep, Bunter groaned, and groaned. And when Toddy and Dutton went down to the Rag after prep, he was still groaning.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Trouble in the Form-room!

HARRY WHARTON & Co. had cheerful looks the following morning. It was Wednesday, a half-holiday; a fine, clear spring day, and the date of the final football match of the season with St. Jim's. Tom Merry & Co. were coming over from St. Jim's that afternoon to wind up the season by beating Greyfriars—as they hoped—or, as the Greyfriars fellows considered, to wind up the season by bagging one more licking

from the Remove. Harry Wharton & Co., therefore, had reasons for wearing cheery smiles that fine morning. But in the Remove there was one gloomy countenance. It was that of William George Bunter.

Bunter was not a footballer and such trifles as a match with St. Jim's passed him by like the idle wind which he regarded not. Talk on the subject of the St. Jim's match only bored Bunter; indeed, he regarded it rather in the light of fiddling while Rome was burning. Bunter was up against it; and he reflected rather bitterly that, while he was up against it, the fellows could think of nothing but Soccer. The least that Harry Wharton & Co. could have done, in Bunter's opinion, was to rally round a fellow who had done so much for them and give their whole attention to a matter that really mattered. Instead of which, they gave all their thoughts to the coming football match and seemed really to forget that there was such a person as William George Bunter in the Greyfriars Remove at all.

Bunter rolled into the Form-room that morning in a state that could only be described as one of fear and trembling.

Quelch, who had been down on him all the term, was more down than ever—owing to his discovery of Bunter's wonderful dodge for getting early Easter holidays. Bunter knew that he was going to have a bad time in Form that morning. He had hardly looked at prep and Quelch was certain to call upon him to construe. A bad "con" meant that Quelch would make out that Bunter had been slacking again and would deal with him accordingly.

It was more important than ever for Bunter to bag that extra early Easter holiday, in the present painful state of affairs. But even Bunter realised, at long last, that that was a chicken that would not fight. After what he had heard in the quad, Quelch was not likely to pay much heed to a telephone call on that subject. After what he had seen in Study No. 1, he was not likely to heed any telegram that reached him signed with the name of Bunter. And so far, at least, Bunter had been unable to devise any other dodge for making Quelch believe that he was badly wanted at home a week before break-up. Had all the fellows put their heads together on the subject, something might have been propounded; but instead of that, the fellows were talking and thinking football, utterly forgetful of Bunter; evidently not caring two straws whether Bunter got an extra holiday or not—indeed, giving that pressing matter any attention at all.

Bunter realised sadly that it was a selfish world.

The gleam in Quelch's eye, as it turned on him in the Form-room, did not reassure Bunter.

He fully expected to be called on for "con" first of all; but it was not so bad as that. Wharton was called on, and Wharton handed out a very good "con"; he had been particularly careful with prep, after Quelch's visit to Study No. 1. Nugent came next and Nugent's "con" showed equal signs of careful preparation. Vernon-Smith followed, and then Redwing, and then Squiff, and then Hazeldene, and then Tom Brown. Bunter began to nourish a hope that Quelch was going to pass him over after all.

But that hope was delusive. Quelch had no intention of passing over the hapless Owl, who was in his black books.

"Bunter!" came the voice of the Remove master, and Bunter groaned.

"Bunter, you will go on from 'incipiam—'"

"Fracti bello fatisque repulsi—"

mumbled Bunter.

"Construe!" barked Mr. Quelch.

"Oh! Yes, sir! I—I'm just going to!" gasped Bunter.

"I am waiting, Bunter!" said the Remove master, in a grinding voice.

"Yes, sir! I—I don't mind, sir—"

"What?"

"I—I mean—"

"Have you prepared this lesson, Bunter?"

"Oh, yes, sir! I—I've been very careful this time, sir! I—I was working frightfully hard at it, sir—Toddy knows—"

"Construe!"

Billy Bunter would have been only

Bunter's con was often weird. But this was the weirdest that even Billy Bunter had ever perpetrated.

"I—I mean—" gasped Bunter. Bunter could not see, himself, what was wrong; but that convulsive movement of Quelch showed that something was amiss somewhere. "I—I mean—Fractured by repulsive fatigue, the Greek doctors—"

"The Greek what?" shrieked Mr. Quelch.

"D-d-doctors!" gasped Bunter. "Ductores Danaum—the Greek doctors—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!"

"I—I didn't mean doctors, sir—n-n-not doctors—ducks!" gasped Bunter.

"The Greek ducks—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

now," groaned Bunter. "The leader, chief, or general was—was fractured repulsively—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You have not prepared this lesson, Bunter! You—"

"Broken in war and repulsed by fate—" Peter Todd ventured to whisper. He was taking a chance, to help the hapless Owl; but it was a dangerous chance, under Quelch's glittering eye.

"Todd!" boomed the Remove master.

"Oh, my hat! I mean, yes, sir!"

"Take a hundred lines for whispering in class."

"Oh! Yes, sir!"

"Bunter! You need not continue—"

"Oh good! I—I mean, thank you, sir!" babbled Bunter.

"You need not continue! It is obvious that you have not prepared this lesson, in spite of my many warnings. You will be detained this afternoon, Bunter, and I shall set you a special exercise on this passage."

"Oh lor!"

"Silence! You will go on, Cherry!"

Bob Cherry was very, very careful when he went on. Mr. Quelch was not

Mr. Quelch plunged at Bunter with outstretched hands. The Owl of the Remove dodged round Vernon-Smith, giving that youth an unexpected shove that sent him bumping into the Remove master!



too glad to construe. Only it happened to be beyond his powers.

Bunter, as a matter of fact, needed to prepare a lesson more than any other fellow in the Remove. The simplest Latin phrase was a mystery to Bunter, until he had worried through it with grammar and dictionary. Classical knowledge was, in Bunter's valuable opinion, all "rot"; and he disliked burdening his powerful intellect with such rot. Probably Bunter would never have learned anything at all, had there not been a cane in the Form-room.

"Fracti bello fatisque repulsi ductores Danaum" evidently meant something; that beast Virgil couldn't have written it without meaning something thereby. But what it meant, or might possibly mean, was unknown to William George Bunter. And under Quelch's glittering eye, no one dared to whisper. Bunter had to say something, so he plunged and chanced it.

"Fractured by a fat, repulsive bell—" began Bunter.

Mr. Quelch jumped.

To judge by the expressive countenance of Mr. Quelch, it was a serious matter. But the Greek ducks took the Remove by storm, and there was a howl of laughter. The suggestion that ancient Troy had been besieged by an army of Greek ducks was too much for the gravity of the Form.

"Upon my word!" gasped Mr. Quelch. "Upon my word! Bunter, such—such abysmal ignorance—"

"Oh dear! I—I mean— Oh crumbs!" Even Bunter realised that Troy could not have been besieged either by Greek doctors or Greek ducks. He gasped hopelessly.

"Bunter! Do you dare to tell me seriously that you do not know that ductor is a leader—"

"Oh! Yes, sir! Quite!" gasped Bunter. He knew now that Mr. Quelch had told him. "Certainly, sir! I—I knew it all the time!"

"A leader, chief, or general!" hooted Mr. Quelch, really as if he were doing crosswords.

"Oh, yes, sir! I—I've got it right

in a mood to be trifled with now. Billy Bunter sat and wiped the perspiration from his fat brow. He had had the worst anticipations that morning; and his anticipations had been realised. The hapless Owl of the Remove felt that life really was not worth living for a fellow whose only real weakness was that he disliked work.

If only he could have bagged that extra Easter holiday! Bunter wondered dismally whether there was a chance yet!

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Beastly for Bunter!

"**K**ICK-OFF at three!" remarked Bob Cherry.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! How are the Greek ducks getting on, old fat bean?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows, I'm detained this afternoon!" said Bunter dismally.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,206.

"Quelch says I'm to go into the Form-room at two. I say, I want my old pals to stand by me, in an emergency like this."

"You want us to stand by you in the Form-room?" asked Wharton. "It would be no end of a pleasure, old fat man, but we happen to be playing football this afternoon."

"I don't mean that, fathead!" said Bunter peevishly. "I mean, I want your help. After all I've done for you, Wharton—"

"Ass! We can't get you off detention, I suppose?"

"That's just what you can do, old chap," said the Owl of the Remove eagerly. "Quelch is a frightful beast; but he never detains a man who's booked to play for school. See?"

"Well, you're not booked to play for school, or anything else—you never play anything but the giddy ox—"

"You can put me in the team—"

"Eh?"

"To play St. Jim's this afternoon—"

"Wha-a-af?"

"One of the fellows can stand out, you know. I dare say Bob wouldn't mind standing out, on an important occasion like this—"

"Oh, holy smoke!" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

"Or you could leave out Toddy. Toddy's no good, really."

"Why, you fat chump—" hooted Peter Todd.

"Or Squiff!" said Bunter. "I'll keep goal instead of Squiff! You know how I keep goal!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I—I'm to play you in a football match, to get you off detention!" gasped the captain of the Remove. "And losing the match to St. Jim's won't matter a little bit, I suppose?"

"That's it, old chap! I suppose you wouldn't like to see a pal stuck in the Form-room all the afternoon, just for the sake of a football match."

"Oh, Christopher Columbus!"

"Besides, we shall win all right," said Bunter briskly. "After all, I'm the best player in the Form. You can't see it, but that's only your ignorance, you know. Take my word for it!"

"Blessed is he that bloweth his own trumpet!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

"The blowfulness of the esteemed trumpet is terrific!" chortled Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh.

"Well, is it a go, Wharton, old chap?" asked Bunter. "Quelch will let me off like a shot, when you tell him that I'm playing for Greyfriars. Go and tell him now, old fellow; it's just on two."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! Look here, Wharton, there's no time to lose, if I'm to get off detention."

"You fat, frabjous, fozzling, footling fathead!" said the captain of the Remove, in measured tones. "You chuckle-headed chump, do you think we're going to throw away the last match of the season, because you're too dashed lazy to do your prep? Roll away before I kick you."

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Bunter isn't much use as a footballer," remarked Bob Cherry. "But as a football, he has his points. Now all kick together—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Stand steady, Bunter! Now—"

"Beast!"

Billy Bunter rolled away. He was very keen to show up, for once, as a

footballer; but he had no desire whatever to figure as a football. He rolled away, leaving the Remove fellows chortling. Billy Bunter's opinion that a football match did not matter, so long as he got off detention, was not likely to be shared by anybody else in the Remove.

The hour of two chimed out from the clock-tower, and Mr. Quelch looked out of the House.

"Bunter!"

The Owl of the Remove rolled up dismally. The St. Jim's match had been his last chance. But the captain of the Remove, with the selfishness to which Bunter was bitterly accustomed, had failed him. There was nothing for it now but detention, unless Bunter's fat wits could save him.

Even Bunter realised that, with Mr. Quelch "wise" to the scheme, it was not much use spinning the yarn of an invalid at home, who was pining for his presence. But Bunter was getting desperate. Detention, and a long Latin task were too awful to contemplate. In sheer desperation the hapless Owl of the Remove resolved to try it on.

"Bunter, it is now time for your detention," said Mr. Quelch. "I have prepared your task. Follow me!"

"If—if you please, sir—"

"Follow me at once, Bunter!"

"My—my mater, sir—I mean my mater—my mater is frightfully ill, sir!"

"What?" roared Mr. Quelch.

"My—my poor mother, sir!" gasped Bunter. "I—I've had a telephone—I mean a telegram—that is to say, a letter, sir, and—and she wants me to g-g-g-go home at once, sir."

The words died on Bunter's tongue. The expression of Mr. Quelch's face as he gazed at him was almost hair-raising.

"Bunter, you—you venture to tell me these incredible falsehoods, when you know that I am aware of your intended trickery!" gasped Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, sir—I—I mean no, sir! The—the fact is, my—my poor mater, sir—" stuttered Bunter.

"Silence! Bunter, if I did not believe that your stupidity was greater than your rascality, I should take you to your headmaster to be flogged!"

"Oh crikey!"

"Another word, and I shall cane you! Follow me!"

Bunter followed Mr. Quelch in. He had feared—he had greatly feared—that it would not work. He had been right—it hadn't worked. Really, only a confirmed optimist could have nourished the faintest hope that it would work.

Bunter rolled disconsolately into the Form-room. He sat at his desk, and Mr. Quelch placed his detention task before him. His gimlet eyes almost bored into Bunter.

"You will now occupy yourself with this task, Bunter. If it is finished by four o'clock, you will be released from detention. If not, you will remain in the Form-room until it is finished."

"Oh lor'!"

"I warn you, Bunter, to lose no time."

Mr. Quelch left the Form-room with that warning. Bunter gave a dismal groan. It was a fine, sunny afternoon—a really beautiful spring afternoon.

Bunter was not a fellow to feel keenly the call of the open air and the wide spaces; but even Bunter felt how awful it was to be shut up in the Form-room that fresh, sunny, spring afternoon.

With a packet of toffee instead of a task, he could have worried through

somehow. But he had a task, and no toffee. He blinked at the task, and shuddered. In class he loathed Latin. On a half-holiday he regarded it with a hatred that amounted to ferocity.

Instead of beginning on the task Bunter sat and groaned for some minutes, and then rolled away from his desk, and stood on a chair to look out of the window. Skinner and Snoop of the Remove loafed along below, and Bunter called to them:

"I say, Skinner, old chap!"

Harold Skinner started, and glanced up. He grinned at the sight of a doleful fat face at the Form-room window.

"I say, you fellows!" said Bunter plaintively. "I say, you know I'm detained! That beast Wharton wouldn't play me this afternoon to get me off!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Skinner and Snoop.

"I say, old fellow, cut across to the tuckshop and get me some toffee!" urged Bunter.

"Right-ho!" said Skinner cheerily, holding up his hand. Skinner was not very good-natured, but even Skinner could feel for a fellow under detention on a half-holiday. "Hand down the tin, and I'll try it on."

"The—the fact is—"

"Buck up, ass! There's a row if a man's seen speaking to a fellow in detention!" said Skinner impatiently.

"I—I left my money in my study!"

"Fathead! Where?" asked Skinner. "I'll cut in—"

"I—I mean I—I'm expecting a postal order—"

"What?" yelled Skinner.

"You—you pay for the toffee, old chap, and I'll square out of my postal order when—when it comes. I'm expecting it by the next post."

"You—you burbling idiot!" growled Skinner, and Snoop chuckled. They walked away together.

"I say, you fellows!" howled Bunter.

Skinner and Snoop disappeared.

"Beasts!" groaned Bunter.

He remained at the window. His detention task lay unheeded on his desk. Looking out into the green and sunny quad was more entertaining than the adventures of the "pious Æneas."

Presently the hapless Owl had a view of the footballers. The St. Jim's team had arrived, and he blinked at Tom Merry and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, and Blake, and Figgins, and the other fellows in the distance. Harry Wharton & Co. were going down to Little Side to play football, regardless of the hapless Owl in the Form-room. Bunter felt bitterly that he wouldn't be surprised if they had forgotten his existence. As a matter of fact, they had.

"Oh dear!" groaned Bunter.

He left the window at last. He gave his task a blink; but he simply could not make up his mind to work. Besides, he was getting hungry. Half-way between dinner and tea Bunter was always hungry. Nearly every fellow in the Remove was out of the House, and but for detention Bunter could certainly have found some forgotten trifle in one of the studies. In fact, he knew that the Bunder had a big box of chocolate creams in Study No. 4 in the Remove.

That beast, Quelch, was very likely busy in his study, or chin-wagging with the other beaks in Common-room. Breaking detention was a serious matter; but, after all, it would not take long to whip round to Smithy's study and bag that box of chocolates. With a couple of pounds of chocolate creams

(Continued on page 12.)

"Half-Time" Gossip!



Why do home teams invariably win? "Old Ref" enlightens you on this subject as he will on any other matter. Bombard him with Soccer queries. The more intricate they are, the better he likes 'em.

A SCOTTISH chum—that is the manner in which he describes himself—draws my attention to what he considers an unfair rule which operates in Cup football. When a Cup-tie is played on the ground of one of the contestants, and the score is level at the end of ninety minutes, there is no extra time.

The match is then replayed on the ground of the other team. If at the end of ninety minutes in the second game the score is again level, an extra half-hour is played. It is about that extra half-hour at the second meeting that my Lanarkshire chum is upset. He can't see the justice of it; claims that there should be no extra time until the third game on neutral ground.

He thinks it unfair that the "home" side in the second game should have the right of an extra half-hour on their own pitch.

I am sorry to disagree with my Scottish chum, and that I must even run the risk of him not calling me his chum when he writes again. It is not my view, however, that there is anything unfair concerning this extra time rule. The authorities of football are as keen as they possibly can be to keep the game as evenly balanced as possible between any two teams.

NOW I think my friend will agree—indeed, he does agree by implication—that when a football team is drawn at home in a Cup-tie it has gained an initial advantage. The luck of the draw is very valuable in many cases. A study of the results of the big Cup-ties of the present season both in England and Scotland will show that in a big majority of the ties the home team came through victorious. Just to give one example.

In the fifth round of the English Cup-ties, six out of the eight sides playing at home won their games.

It being agreed, then, that in the first place the team playing at home has the advantage, it is only right that the side drawn away for the first game should have an advantage at the second meeting. And the authorities consider that they go some little way towards balancing the "luck" account by ordering an extra half-hour to be played at the second meeting. Perhaps my readers will not agree that this extra half-hour rule is right. But I have explained why it was put on the books, and I think the explanation is at least logical.

CONNECTED with this question, and while I am dealing with it, I can also get off my chest a reply to three other readers who have all noticed a fact which I pointed out above: that in the present series of Cup-ties the home teams have won a big proportion of their matches. Why do the home teams win so often? is the gist of the question raised by three different correspondents.

It is not possible, in my view, to give just one answer to such a question. I believe that there are several different reasons which may all have an influence in giving home teams the victories in big games or little games. In the first place pitches and their surroundings are different. At some grounds the spectators are a considerable distance away. At other grounds they are almost near enough to the touch-line to be able to put a hand on a player flying down the wing.

"I feel that my style is cramped," said a Chelsea player to me the other day, "when I go to play on a pitch to which the spectators are quite close."

A second point which helps some home teams to win is that they gain inspiration from the applause of the onlookers. Naturally, the home team players get more applause than the visiting team players. Cheers act as an inspiration to some footballers; the more they are encouraged the better they play.

Most of all, however, I am convinced that the explanation of so many victories by home teams is due to what might be called an attitude of mind on the part of the players. When a side

has to play a big match on their own ground they go into the game confident of their ability to win. The fact that they are playing at home gives them that confidence. And I know of no more valuable asset in football, or any other game, than confidence.

MARK HOOPER, the dapper little outside-left of Sheffield Wednesday, elaborated this point to me the other day in what I think was a most interesting and also most conclusive way. "When a football side has to play a Cup-tie away from home," he said, "they are apt to argue in their own minds on these lines: 'If we can force them to a draw and get a re-play on our own ground we shall beat them all right.'"

You see the subtle difference, don't you? The men who are playing at home think they will win; are confident that they can do so. But the men who are playing away think that they will do well if they don't lose. As the two teams go into the field with these different ideas, it naturally follows that they play a different kind of football.

The side which is playing at home plays to win. The side which is playing away from home adopts its tactics so as not to lose; that is, they play to draw.

This idea of playing not to lose may be entirely subconscious, but I am quite sure that it is there, and is a big factor. The proper way to get through a big football match—Cup-tie or any other game—is to play to win. The side which plays not to lose is asking for trouble, and usually gets it.

WE all know that spectators at football matches get excited from time to time. And this excitement occasionally leads a spectator here and there to do strange things. You will probably remember seeing pictures in the newspapers recently of a spectator at the Crystal Palace—Everton Cup-tie who somehow or other managed to climb over the rails, and while the match was in progress took up his stand under the cross-bar in close company with Coggins, the Everton goalkeeper. Of course, the play was stopped by the referee and the "uninvited twelfth man" was persuaded that he could not be allowed to help Coggins from saving any shot which might be sent in by a Crystal Palace forward.

A puzzled reader of Southampton tells of a strange incident in the excited spectator line which recently occurred in a local match at which he happened to be present. One side was attacking hotly, and the goalkeeper of the other side dashed out from between the posts in an effort to prevent the opposing centre-forward from scoring. The goalkeeper failed to stop the centre-forward, who beat him and sent in a shot which was going straight for the net.

The ball would certainly have gone into the net if an excited spectator had not dashed out of the crowd, run in front of the goal and kicked the ball away.

An awkward situation. What was the referee to do? That is the question which I am called upon to solve. I am informed that the referee in charge of that match stopped the game and gave the attacking side a penalty kick. That referee ought to have a troubled conscience, because for the life of me I do not see how he could justify such an action by the rules of the game. How can you give a penalty against somebody who isn't even playing in the match?

The only thing the referee could do, in my view, is to drop the ball at the spot where the spectator kicked it away from goal. I admit quite frankly that such a decision would be hard lines on the attacking side, but the referee could not give a goal because the ball had not actually crossed the goal-line. That it would have done so if the excited spectator had not kicked it away does not affect the decision. The ball must go over the goal-line before a goal can be counted. "OLD REF."

BILLY BUNTER'S BUNK

(Continued from page 10.)

to comfort him, Bunter felt that he could endure detention. He hesitated—but it is well said that he who hesitates is lost.

He rolled out of the Form-room door. "Bunter!"

"On crumps!" gasped Bunter.

Mr. Quelch was coming up the passage. Billy Bunter backed into the Form-room, and Mr. Quelch followed him in.

"Bunter, you were going out in detention."

"Oh, no, sir!" gasped Bunter. "I—I wasn't going out, sir! I—I—"

"I came to see how you have progressed with your task, Bunter. I find you leaving the Form-room."

"Oh, no, sir! I—I—"

"Silence!"

Mr. Quelch stepped to Bunter's desk. Bunter watched him dismally. He felt sure that Quelch would make a fuss when he found that the detention task had not been touched. He was right.

"Bunter, you have done nothing!"

"Oh, yes, sir!" gasped Bunter. "I—I—I've done a lot, sir."

"You have not written a single word!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"Nunno, sir! I—I was thinking it out!" gasped Bunter. "I—I've done a—a lot of thinking, sir."

"Take up that paper, Bunter!"

Bunter took up the paper.

"Now follow me to my study! As I cannot trust you, Bunter, to work when your master's eye is absent, you shall work under my eye!"

"Oh scissors!"

"Follow me!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

Bunter quaked, and followed.

On Little Side Harry Wharton & Co. and the St. Jim's men played Soccer. Round the field was a cheering crowd of fellows. Occasionally a distant shout penetrated into Mr. Quelch's study through the window, open to-let in the fresh, spring breeze, and reached the fat ears of Billy Bunter. Bunter, in the lowest spirits, sat on one side of Mr. Quelch's table, working at his detention task. On the other side of the table Mr. Quelch sat, busy with a pile of exercises.

There was silence in the study.

Bunter dared not even groan.

At long last Bunter was working! Even Bunter could work with a gimlet eye just across the table, ready to fix on him with a penetrating glare. He worked, and suppressed his groans, and wondered dismally whether the afternoon would ever come to an end.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Bad News!

"THANK goodness!"

Bunter gasped out the words as the study door closed behind Mr. Quelch. It was a rest for the Owl of the Remove.

He needed a rest. For twenty minutes Bunter had worked. Twenty minutes of steady, concentrated work under a gimlet eye wore Bunter out. He had begun to feel that, if an interruption did not come, this would result in a nervous breakdown. And then, like a beam of sunshine in deep gloom, the interruption came. Trotter, the page, looked in with a request to Mr. Quelch to step to the Head's study.

Quelch had looked quite pleased. Probably the Head wanted to consult him

on some knotty point in the classics. Those little chats on a half holiday with his chief were much prized by the Remove master. He was very pleased indeed to step to the Head's study—almost as pleased as Billy Bunter was to see him step.

At the door he paused to give Bunter a grim look, and to warn him that he should expect to find when he returned that the junior had made due progress with his task. Then the door closed on Quelch and his footsteps died away in the distance, and Billy Bunter murmured "Thank goodness!" and breathed freely.

Quelch would be gone for a quarter of an hour at least; possibly half an hour, possibly even longer. For when two old beaks got together and began to jaw, as Bunter would have described it, there was no telling when the gas would run out.

But at least Bunter had a quarter of an hour to rest. It couldn't be less than that if the beaks were going to "jaw." Quelch had said that he would expect to find that Bunter had progressed with his task when he returned, but that was Quelch's look-out. No sooner had the door closed behind the Remove master than William George Bunter ceased work automatically—as if the closing of the door had turned him off at the meter, as it were.

"Thank goodness!" murmured Bunter, stretching his fat limbs at ease. "Thank goodness he's gone! I couldn't have stood it much longer! I—I wonder what he would have thought if he'd known how much I wanted to shy the inkstand across the table at him!"

Bunter sighed at that happy thought. Shying an inkstand at Quelch was one of those attractive ideas that the mind delighted to dwell upon, but which could never be put into practice.

It was a real comfort for Quelch to be gone. Bunter rose from his chair, listened cautiously for a possible sound of returning footsteps, and then rolled to Mr. Quelch's armchair and sat down in it. Lolling in an armchair was ever so much better than sitting up on a hard wooden chair at a table, working. Bunter dared not leave the study; the risk of being caught absent was too great. But he felt that he could venture to take his ease. At the first sound of a footstep in the passage he was ready to leap up and jump back to his place at the table.

He leaned back in luxurious comfort and stretched out his fat little legs to the fire. He hoped that the chief beak would keep up that jaw for a jolly long time. If only Quelch kept away—not that the beast was likely to keep away very long! Still, every minute of laziness was so much to the good; every second of slacking was a clear gain!

Through the open window came a distant roar from the football ground.

"Goal!"

"Bravo, Wharton!"

"Goal! Good man! Goal!"

Billy Bunter heard, but he did not heed. The captain of the Remove, apparently, had scored a goal against St. Jim's. Such a trifle did not suffice to draw Bunter's attention.

Buzzzzzzzzzz!

The sudden raucous hoot of the telephone bell made Bunter jump. He blinked round at the instrument.

The buzz ceased, but in a moment or so it recommenced. It was rather an annoying noise, and it disturbed Bunter's serenity. Quelch, of course, could not hear it from the Head's study, and Bunter wondered whether he would expect a fellow to go and tell him that his telephone bell was ringing.

Probably he would, but Bunter did not see it. He did not want Quelch back in the study. Very much he did not want Quelch back in the study.

Buzzzzzzzz!

"Beast!" grunted Bunter.

He did not see why the exchange should keep on ringing like that in such a persistent way. Why couldn't they chuck it when they received no answer? But they did not chuck it. They rang again, and again, and yet again.

Bunter rolled out of the armchair at last.

He had to put a stop to that frightful row. Besides, someone passing the study might hear it and tell Quelch that his phone was ringing. That would bring Quelch back.

He picked the receiver off the hooks and booted into the mouthpiece.

"Hallo! Hallo!"

"Is that Courtfield 242?"

"Yes!" grunted Bunter.

"Hold on; trunk call!"

Bunter held on. He wondered who was trunk-calling Quelch. As the matter could not be supposed to concern him in the very least, he was naturally curious. After the usual delay and whirring and buzzing, a voice came through, and Billy Bunter fairly jumped. It was a familiar voice!

"Hallo! Is that Mr. Quelch?"

Bunter blinked blankly at the instrument. The fat voice on the telephone was the voice of Mr. Bunter!

It was Mr. Bunter speaking from far-off Bunter Villa, in the county of Surrey! Bunter was too surprised to reply.

"Can you hear me?" came the fat voice. "Is that Courtfield 242? Is that Mr. Quelch—what?"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "Yes—no! I say, it's me!"

"What! Who is speaking?"

"Billy! William speaking! It's me, father!"

"You, William?"

"Yes. Quelch is gone out, and I happened to be in his study; he sent for me to—to tell me he's thinking of making me head of the Form owing to my splendid progress, especially in Latin—"

"William, I must speak to Mr. Quelch! Or you can give him my message. You must come home at once!"

Bunter gasped.

"C-c-come home?"

"Yes. By the next train."

Bunter's little round eyes danced behind his big spectacles.

"This was something like!"

Why he was to go home at once he could not imagine. His father evidently was not ill; and had he been ill, it was improbable that he would have wanted Bunter at home. But, whatever might be the reason, Bunter was ready to go home at once. He was more than ready! This was what he had schemed for; and after his schemes had failed, here it was, falling into his hands like a ripe apple! Bunter beamed.

"Can you hear me, William?"

"Yes, rather!" gasped Bunter. "I say, I'll come at once—rather! I'll tell Quelch the minute he comes in! I say, can I stay at home till the school breaks up for Easter? It—it will save the railway fare back; that's all I am thinking of, of course—"

"William, request Mr. Quelch, in my name, to allow you to leave the school at the earliest possible moment. If you are not able to leave to-day, I shall expect you early to-morrow; but you must come to-day if there is an available train. Your mother is ill."

"Wha-a-at!"

"There is no danger. Do not be alarmed, my boy." There was quite an affectionate note in Mr. Bunter's voice, seldom heard when he was addressing his hopeful son. "It is not a case of danger. But your mother is ill, and she desires to see you at home. I do not wholly understand why; but, as she is ill, her wishes, of course, must be acceded to. You will tell Mr. Quelch so from me."

Bunter stood gazing at the phone. His fat face was no longer beaming. There was quite a strange expression on that fat face.

"Do you hear me, William?" "I—I hear you, father," faltered Bunter. "I—I say, is—is the mater bad? Is—is—is she very ill, dad?"

"She is very weak from an attack of influenza, William. But the doctor assures me that there is no danger—nothing of the kind."

"They—they don't always know!"

had a young brother in the Second Form at Greyfriars, and often never saw him for weeks together. He had a sister at Cliff House School, and if there was anything that could have kept Bunter away from Cliff House it was the fact that Bessie Bunter was there. In holiday time Mr. Bunter was always glad to hear that his son William was spending the vacation with other Greyfriars fellows, and Bunter was always glad so to spend it. And yet—

Bunter was blinking now behind his big spectacles, and his spectacles were damp as he blinked.

In Bunter's fat circumference, under his many layers of fat, there was a heart, and in Bunter's heart at the present moment there was a horrible quake. His mother was ill! The miserable untruth he had told Mr. Quelch only that afternoon was, after all, true!

been with perfect sincerity that Billy Bunter had subscribed himself: "Your loving Sun, William." And now the mater was ill!

"Oh!" gasped Bunter again. The study door opened, and Mr. Quelch entered.

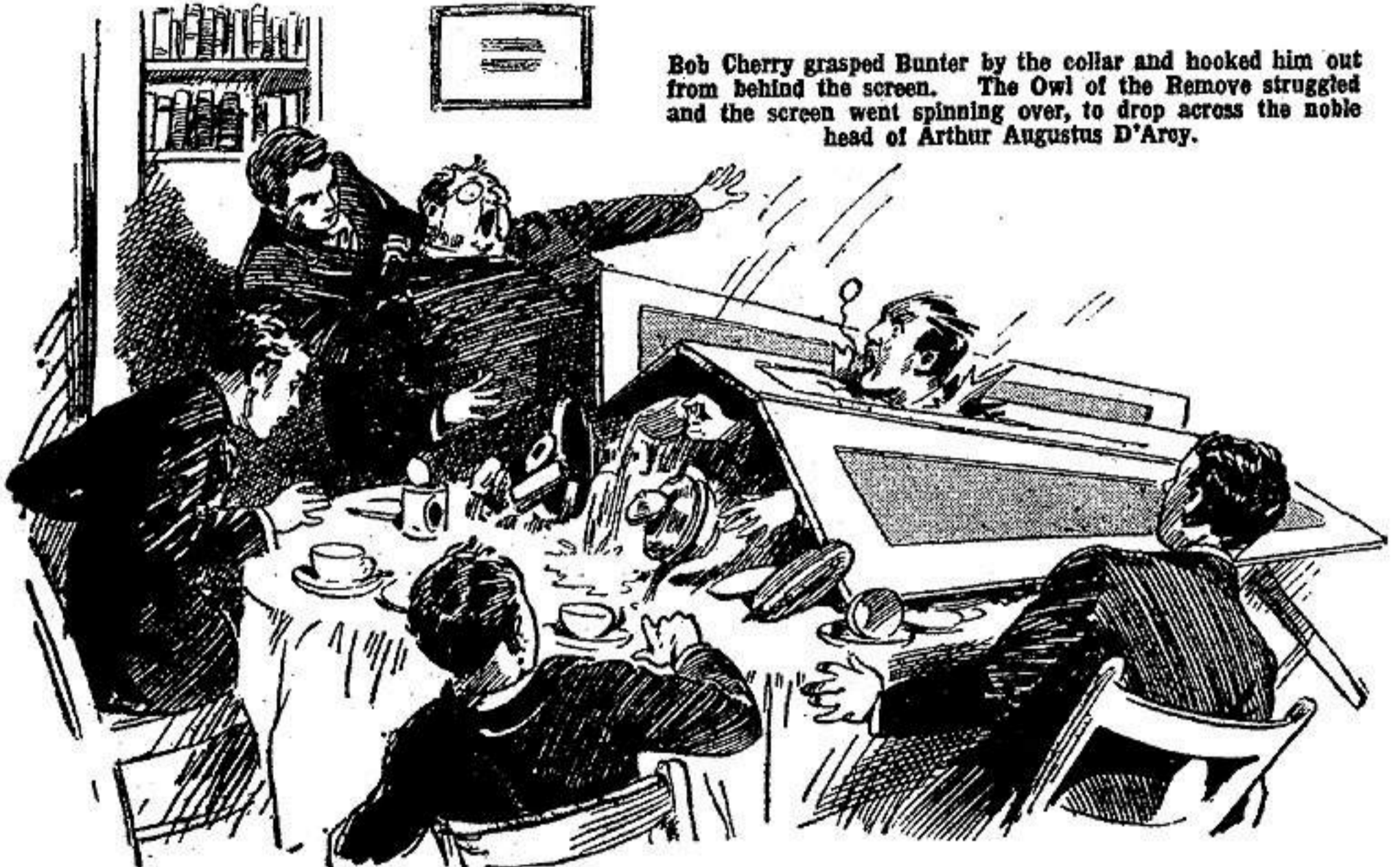
THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Not Believed!

MR. QUELCH looked at Bunter. He frowned portentously. Bunter blinked at him. Detention and detention tasks were forgotten now. Everything was forgotten, except the bad news from home. But Mr. Quelch, rather naturally, was thinking of the detention task, on which Bunter obviously had not been occupied during his absence from the study.

"Bunter, it appears that I cannot

Bob Cherry grasped Bunter by the collar and hooked him out from behind the screen. The Owl of the Remove struggled and the screen went spinning over, to drop across the noble head of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.



gasped Bunter. "I—I say, father, I—I—"

"Will you have another three minutes?"

A feminine voice was audible on the wires.

"No!" rapped out Mr. Bunter. "Certainly not! William, your mother is asking for you and you must therefore come home at once. There is no need for Samuel to come, no need to disturb him with this news. Your mother agrees that Samuel had better not be told. But she desires—"

Whirrrrrr!

Mr. Bunter's voice vanished into space. As he had stated that he did not require another three minutes, he was cut off. Bunter was left holding the receiver in a fat hand, blinking at the telephone. Slowly, slowly he replaced it on the hooks and turned away.

The expression on Bunter's face would have surprised the Remove fellows, had they seen it.

Family affection, so far as anyone had ever observed, was not highly developed in the tribe of Bunter. Bunter

It might have seemed like a judgment on the hapless prevaricator, had he thought of it. But he was not thinking of that. He was not thinking of the fact that he was now booked for the extra holiday for which he had schemed so unscrupulously and so fatuously. Bunter, for once, was thinking of someone other than himself. He was thinking of his mother. The mater was ill, and she wanted him! The poor old mater!

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "Oh!"

If Mr. Bunter was fond of his son, William George, he had never displayed a lot of signs of it. He had never concealed his relief when the holidays were over and term claimed William again. But Mrs. Bunter had always seen that there was a cake packed in William's box. Mrs. Bunter's plump face had never expressed relief at his departure. Never had Billy forgotten to say good-bye to "mums" before he left. Always had Billy looked back and waved a fat hand. His letters home had always contained some request for financial assistance or comestibles; yet it had always

leave you alone even for a quarter of an hour without your neglecting your task! This laziness, this obstinate and impudent idleness—"

"Yes, sir! No, sir! I—I say, sir—" stammered Bunter.

"You need say nothing, Bunter. Sit down this instant and resume your task!"

"But, I say, sir—"

"Silence!"

Mr. Quelch spoke in a formidable voice—a voice that at any other time would have caused Billy Bunter to jump to his detention task as if he loved it. But now it produced no effect on Bunter. It was a changed Bunter who was blinking at Mr. Quelch.

"I—I say, sir, my mater's ill!"

"Wha-a-a-t?"

"The—the mater, sir! My father's phoned to say that the mater's ill, sir, and—and wants me to go home at once!"

"Bunter!"

"C-o-o-an I go now, sir?"

Mr. Quelch fairly gasped.



(Continued from page 13.)

Only the day before he had heard Bunter detailing a scheme for getting off for an early holiday by a spoof telephone call announcing illness at home. Only the evening before he had seen the rough draft of a spoof telegram that was to have been delivered to him if a confederate could have been found. Only that afternoon the fatuous Owl had told him, with obvious untruthfulness, that his mother was ill. Mr. Quelch was not an unduly suspicious gentleman. But the most trustful Form master would hardly have believed Bunter's present statement in the circumstances.

He gazed at Bunter, at a loss for words.

Bunter made a move towards the door. Then the Remove master found his voice.

"Bunter! Stop!"

"Yes, sir! I—I say, sir, I—I want to get off at once. If—if you'll give me the money for my journey, sir—"

"Bunter, is it possible—I repeat, is it barely possible—that you venture to tell me this palpable falsehood over again?"

Bunter started.

"It's—it's true, sir! I mean, it's true this time, sir!"

"You stupid, obtuse, ridiculous boy!" thundered Mr. Quelch. "Your statement is not true! Your statement is false, sir! If any other boy in the Remove told me such falsehoods with such impudent persistence I should cane him severely. I make allowances for your crass stupidity, Bunter. I make allowances for your unexampled denseness. But do not tempt my patience too far, Bunter. Say no more!"

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter, in dismay. "But—but, I say, sir, it—it—it's true!"

"Silence!" roared Mr. Quelch.

"It's true!" wailed Bunter.

"How dare you tell me that a palpable falsehood is true? A miserable falsehood that you have already told me only this very afternoon! Bunter, I begin to fear that you are scarcely in your right senses!"

"But, sir, the pater rang up—"

"Your father did not ring up,

Bunter! If there was a ring on my telephone, why did you not come and acquaint me with it?"

"I—I was afraid you'd come back to the study, sir. I—I mean, I—I thought you'd like me to take the call, sir. I—I mean—"

"Silence! Do not pile falsehood upon falsehood, Bunter! Take your seat and resume your task!"

"But my mater, sir—"

"Upon my word," gasped Mr. Quelch, "this is too much! Another falsehood from you, Bunter, and I will cane you!"

Bunter blinked at him in utter dismay. He realised that Mr. Quelch did not believe a single word of it.

— He realised, too, that that was rather natural in the circumstances. How could Mr. Quelch possibly believe him?

Bunter was in the position of the boy in the old story, who cried "Wolf!" so often when there was no wolf that he was not believed when the wolf really came.

Incessant prevarication had its inevitable result. Bunter, for once, was telling the truth, and the truth was set down as one more of his numberless untruths.

Mr. Quelch pointed to the detention task on the table. There was thunder in his brow.

"Take your seat, Bunter! Take your seat instantly!"

"Oh, sir!" groaned the wretched Owl. "I—I must go, sir! I—I really must, sir! You see, the mater's ill!"

Mr. Quelch set his lips and picked up a cane. Prevarication carried to this length was not to be borne.

"Another word, Bunter, and I shall cane you! Another syllable!"

"I—I don't care!" gasped Bunter. "I— Yarooooooh!" The fat junior broke off with a roar as the cane came down with a whack across his fat shoulders. "Owl! Wow!"

"Now take your seat and resume your task!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"Oh lor'!"

Bunter slumped into his chair at the table. There was evidently no help for it. Mr. Quelch laid down the cane and sat down on the other side of the table to correct exercises. His eyes glinted under his bent brows. He was angry—which was not surprising. He had seldom been more angry. He had heard untruth after untruth from the miserable prevaricator on the other side of the table, and the young rascal had ventured to tell him yet one more—or, rather, the same untruth over again. Such palpable falsehoods were not only heinous in themselves, but were an insult to Mr. Quelch's intelligence!

The boy, apparently, considered him a fool. He must consider him a fool, if he thought that such absurd prevarications could deceive him for a moment. Mr. Quelch did not like being considered a fool. He disliked it very much.

The expression on Mr. Quelch's speaking countenance, at any other time,

would have caused Billy Bunter to dig into Latin as into a golden treasure. It would have made him work as if for his life. But now he hardly heeded it.

His fat thoughts were far away. He had to get home. He had to! Quelch did not believe him, and could not, indeed, be expected to believe him. But it happened to be true, and Bunter had to get home.

"You are not working, Bunter!" came a grinding voice across the table.

Bunter blinked at his Form master. Mr. Quelch's glare was almost terrifying. Bunter tried to work.

He had to get home! He had to get away somehow! If there was nothing else for it, he had to bolt under Quelch's very eyes! But at that desperate thought Bunter's fat heart almost died within his podgy breast. That was a last resource—a very last resource! Moreover, it was extremely uncertain of success. If he bolted, he would be grabbed and recaptured, unless he was very lucky indeed. But he had to get away! That was a settled thing.

Minutes dragged by on leaden wings. Bunter tried to work to lull the suspicions of the Remove master. But he could have whooped with joy when Mr. Quelch, having finished the pile of exercises, rose to his feet.

"Bunter, I shall leave you to your task for a short time. I warn you not to neglect it! If you have made no progress when I return to this study I shall cane you."

"Oh! Yes, sir!" gasped Bunter.

Mr. Quelch left the study.

Bunter threw down his pen and rose to his feet the second the door was closed. He stood panting.

Quelch's footsteps died away down the passage. Bunter still waited. His intention was fixed; he was going. But he did not want to be collared in the passage and brought back. He waited, giving Quelch time to get clear. But he could not afford to wait too long. Quelch might be back any minute.

He opened the study door at last, and blinked out into the passage. Quelch was not in sight. Prout, the master of the Fifth, was visible at a distance, speaking to Capper in the doorway of his study. But Quelch was gone, and only Quelch mattered.

Bunter stepped out of the study. With a thumping heart he scuttled away. Five minutes later Mr. Quelch returned.

And the expression on Mr. Quelch's face when he looked into the empty study and found Bunter gone was really extraordinary.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Doubting Thomases!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

"I—I say—" gasped Bunter.

The football match was over by this time. Harry Wharton & Co.

TOPPING LEATHER POCKET WALLET for SHREWSBURY CHUM!

For the snappy Greyfriars limerick illustrated herewith, J. Evans, of 1, Wrekin View, Belle Vue Gardens, Shrewsbury, has been awarded one of this week's MAGNET pocket wallets.

It's up to you to win one of these handsome prizes!



Harry Wharton, of Greyfriars fame.



At football has made quite a name.

had defeated the visitors by two goals to one, and it was a merry crowd of fellows that Bunter found in the changing-room. Not that Bunter was thinking about football. How the match had gone Bunter did not care two straws. He headed for the changing-room to find Harry Wharton & Co., and he found them there. Bunter had to get home, and he had to get home in a hurry. But there was a lion in the path, so to speak. Bunter was in his usual state of impecuniosity. Obviously, in the peculiar circumstances, it was useless to ask Quelch for his journey money. But railway fares had to be paid.

"I say, you fellows, lend me a pound."
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Oh, really, you fellows—"
 "Finished your detention, Bunter?" asked Harry Wharton, ceasing for a moment to towel a ruddy face, and looking curiously at the Owl of the Remove. Bunter was not, as a rule, a fellow to break detention; such an exploit required nerve. But he certainly looked now as if something was amiss. He was panting with haste and excitement.

"Eh? No! I've no time for that!" gasped Bunter.
 "No time for detention!" howled Bob Cherry. "My hat! You'd better tell Quelch that!"
 "I mean I—I—"
 "You haven't bolted, you fat duffer!" exclaimed Wharton blankly.

"Yes. You see—"
 "You terrific and esteemed fathead!" exclaimed Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh. "Cut back before the absurd Quelch misses you."
 "Don't be an ass! I'm going home—"

"You're going home!" yelled Nugent.
 "Yes; I've got to catch a train—"
 "You—you—you've got to catch a train when you're under detention!" babbled Bob Cherry.

"Yes. My mater's ill!"
 "What!" roared the juniors.
 "The mater, you know—" gasped Bunter.

"You fat, footling, frabjous fibber!" gasped Harry Wharton. "Are you spinning that fathomed yarn to us after telling us all about it in advance?"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, that's the jolly old limit!" said Johnny Bull, staring blankly at Bunter. "It's the outside edge."
 "Cut back, you ass, before you're missed," said Frank Nugent. "Quelch will skin you if he misses you!"

"Lend me a pound—"
 "Fathead!"
 "I've got to get home—"
 "Idiot!"
 "The mater's ill—"
 "Rats!"
 "The pater telephoned—"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a roar of laughter in the changing-room. Really, this seemed too rich! It seemed altogether too rich. After explaining that wonderful scheme

to the Famous Five, Bunter apparently was seeking to work off that very scheme on the Famous Five themselves! It really was the limit.

Billy Bunter blinked at the yelling juniors. Once more he was meeting with the fate of the habitual prevaricator.

"I—I say, you fellows, d-d-don't you believe me?" he gasped.

"Believe you!" gurgled Bob Cherry.

"Oh, my hat!"

"Believe you!" stuttered Wharton.

"Well, not quite!"

"The believfulness is not terrific, my esteemed fibbing Bunter!" chortled Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh.

"I say, you fellows, it's true—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What's the jolly old joke?" asked the Bounder.

"Bunter!" gasped Bob, wiping his eyes. "Dear old Bunter! He told us yesterday about spoofing Quelch with a telephone call, about an invalid at home, and now he's asking us to believe that he's really had a telephone call about an invalid at home."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's true!" shrieked Bunter. "I—I told Quelch—"

"You had the neck to tell Quelch, after he knew all about it beforehand?" howled Bob Cherry.

"Yes, as it was true!"

"True! Great Scott!"

"Quelch didn't believe me!" wailed Bunter.

"Go hon!" gasped Nugent.

"Not really!" roared Bob. "Well, old man, if Quelch believed that, after hearing you make it up in advance, Quelch would believe anything. You'll have to wait till Quelch is in his second childhood, old fat bean, before he will swallow anything as steep as that."

"I say, you fellows, it's true—every word! The pater telephoned!"

"Didn't he send a telegram?" chuckled Bob. "You had a telegram all ready made up last night, you know."

"Nunno; he telephoned!"

"Pile it on, fatty!"

"Isn't it simply weird how Bunter rolls out lies like this and fancies that fellows might believe them?" said Peter Todd.

"The weirdfulness is terrific."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Roll away old barrel! You've done your funny turn! You'd better get back to detention before Quelch gets on your track!"

"The esteemed Quelch will be terrifically infuriated, my fat, footling Bunter! Cut back—"

"I'm going home!" yelled Bunter.

"Fathead!"

"You see, the mater's ill—"

"Chuck it, Bunter!" exclaimed Wharton. "You don't seem to understand it, but that's not a subject for telling lies about. Even you ought to know that."

"But it's true—"

"Chuck it, I tell you!"

"You beast, will you lend me a pound?" shrieked Bunter.

"Ha, ha! Not quite!"

"Toddy, old man, lend me a pound—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Toddy.

"Nugent, old fellow, lend me my railway fare home—"

"You frumptious champ! Lend you your railway fare to cut detention!" exclaimed Nugent. "Go back to the Form-room, fathead!"

"How can I stop for detention when my mater's ill—"

"She isn't!" roared Peter Todd.

"And if you say she is again I'll jolly well swipe you!"

"But I tell you she's fearfully ill— Yaroooooh!" roared Bunter, as Peter kept his word. A folded towel swiped Bunter.

"Now, tell some more lies and have some more," said Peter.

"Wow-ow-ow! Beast!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here comes Quelch!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"You're done for now, you fat ass! Why didn't you cut back while there was time?"

"Oh crikey!"

The angular form and wrathful face of Henry Samuel Quelch appeared in the doorway of the changing-room. Evidently the Remove master had missed his detained pupil and tracked him down. The expression on Quelch's face caused the laughter to die away suddenly. Quelch, at least, was not looking on the matter as a joke.

"Bunter!" boomed Mr. Quelch. "I have found you! Bunter, you have dared—"

Billy Bunter blinked at him in horror. He was run down already! The fellows in the changing-room were all Doubting Thomases; not one of them believed a word that Bunter had uttered. He had not succeeded in raising his railway fare home. Certainly, had they believed him, the Remove men would have "shelled" out willingly enough. But they did not, of course, believe him; they were only astounded at his fatuous cheek in supposing for a moment that they might believe him. And now he was caught!

"You have dared to leave my study, Bunter! You have dared to break detention! I—"

"You—you see, sir," babbled Bunter, "my mater being ill—"

"How dare you repeat such transparent falsehoods, Bunter!" roared Mr. Quelch. "Come with me instantly! I shall cane you with the greatest severity."

Bunter blinked at him; he made no motion to obey. Peter Todd gave him a friendly push towards his Form master.

"Hook it, Bunter, old chap! Don't be a silly ass!" whispered Peter.

"Beast!" gasped Bunter.



He packs a great shot,



And at dribbling he's hot,



For his 'Lart' and his 'sole's' in the game.

"For goodness' sake, Bunter——" said Harry.

"Beast!"

"Bunter! Come here at once!" boomed Mr. Quelch.

"I—I can't——"

"WHAT!"

"You see, my mater's ill——"

"Silence!" roared the Remove master. He plunged at Bunter with outstretched hand, to grasp a fat shoulder.

Billy Bunter dodged wildly. Seldom were Bunter's movements active or swift. But they were both now. He dodged round Vernon-Smith, giving that youth an unexpected shove that sent him spinning towards the Remove master. The Bunder bumped into Mr. Quelch, and that gentleman staggered.

Bunter, with a desperate bound, vanished through the doorway.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Wharton.

"Bunter!" shrieked Peter. "Bunter, you ass——"

"BUNTER!" roared Mr. Quelch.

He leaped to the doorway after Bunter. He had a glimpse of a fat figure vanishing round the nearest corner.

"BUNTER!"

But answer there came none. Bunter was gone!

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

After Bunter!

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's made that remark. He polished his celebrated eyeglass, jammed it into his noble eye, and ejaculated a second time:

"Bai Jove!"

Tom Merry chuckled.

"It's the giddy limit!" he remarked.

"That chap Bunter must be a real corker!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

There was a cheery little party in Study No. 1 in the Remove.

The St. Jim's men were stopping to tea after the match. Certain select members of the St. Jim's eleven were in Study No. 1—D'Arcy and Blako and Tom Merry and Levison of the St. Jim's Fourth, who had once been a Greyfriars man, and who had a distinct recollection of William George Bunter. Levison was not surprised to hear of the weird antics of the Owl of the Remove, but the other St. Jim's men heard of them with wonder.

All Greyfriars and all the visiting footballers knew what was going on in the House—the hunt for Bunter. After his flight from the changing-room Billy Bunter had disappeared.

Quelch, of course, had lost no time. Quelch's wrath was great; it was not loud, but deep. The compression of his lips, the glinting of his gimlet eyes showed how deep it was. The hapless Owl of the Remove was booked for the time of his life when he fell into Quelch's hands again. Perhaps that was one reason why he was taking so much care to keep out of them.

So far he had not been recaptured.

Gosling, the porter, had been warned, and was on guard at the gates. Five or six prefects of the Sixth Form had been called up, and they were searching for Bunter up and down and round about. Plenty of other fellows, looking on the hunt as a screaming joke, were looking for Bunter, too. Mr. Prout, the master of the Fifth, had joined up; two or three other masters helped.

The state of affairs was really unprecedented. A boy had cut detention—

which, of course, had happened before. But the reckless young rascal, run down by his Form master, had dodged him and fled. That had seldom happened before, if at all. Now he was keeping out of sight—seeking, perhaps, to get out of the school. It was really amazing!

Other masters, comparing notes on the subject, agreed that such things as this could never happen in their Forms! Quelch, perfectly well aware of what the other masters were saying to one another, fairly writhed with wrath and chagrin. This defiance on the part of a member of his Form lowered his prestige. It made him look ridiculous. Mr. Quelch yearned to find Bunter. He pined to find him. And when he found him his stoutest cane was going to get so much exercise that it would probably be too worn out for use on any future delinquents.

Wingate of the Sixth had come rooting along the Remove passage looking into the studies for Bunter. He did not seem to be having any luck. He had looked into Study No. 1, where he found a cheery party at tea, and gone on up the Remove passage. And Harry Wharton & Co. explained how matters stood to their astonished visitors. Whereat Tom Merry & Co. chuckled as loud and long as the Greyfriars juniors.

"I wemembah Buntah," remarked Arthur Augustus thoughtfully. "I wemembah him comin' ovah to St. Jim's. He is weally a wathah wemarkable chawactah."

"The biggest idiot ever!" said Bob Cherry.

"The bigfulness of the esteemed idiot is preposterously terrific," declared Hurreo Jamset Ram Singh, a remark that made the St. Jim's men chuckle again.

"But where is he?" asked Levison. "Is the fat ass hiding away somewhere?"

"Must be," said Harry. "Quelch is going to skin him, of course. I can't quite make Bunter out. Even Smithy wouldn't venture to get Quelch's rag out like this! And Bunter——" He whistled.

"He must be a fwightful fibbah!" remarked Arthur Augustus. "I wathah think I wemembah him tellin' some fwightful fibs."

"It's constitutional," explained Bob Cherry. "If Bunter ever tried to tell the truth, I think he might have a fit."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Even feahful fibbahs tell the twuth sometimes, though," said Arthur Augustus thoughtfully. "If the chap's watah was weally ill——"

"Oh, no, it's all gammon!" said Harry. "You see, he made it all up yesterday, and Quelch heard him jawing it over under the elms. After that Quelch wouldn't be likely to swallow it."

"Wathah not!" chuckled Arthur Augustus.

"It was going to be a telephone call first," said Bob. "After Quelch had heard that, Bunter changed it to a telegram. He made up the telegram all ready, and wanted Wharton to phone home and get his uncle's butler to send the telegram as if it came from Bunter's home. And Quelch dropped into the study and saw the telegram in Bunter's fist——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"So now he's changed back to a telephone call!" chuckled Bob. "But what beats me is how even such a born idiot as Bunter could expect for a moment to get away with it."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I hope they'll catch him soon," said Wharton. "The longer he keeps Quelch waiting, the stiffer it will be when he gets it. The fat chump is really begging for it."

"He must be a fwightful ass!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Oh, really, D'Arcy——"

Every fellow in the study jumped and stared round at the sound of that fat familiar voice.

"Great pip!"

"What the thump——"

"Bunter!"

From behind the old screen, which had been pushed out of the way into a corner of the study, a fat face and a pair of large spectacles glimmered. It was William George Bunter!

Up and down and round about Greyfriars he was sought far and wide, but the searchers found him not. The reason was now apparent. The Owl of the Remove was in hiding in Study No. 1.

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

"You—you—you——" stammered Wharton.

"Bai Jove!"

"I say, you fellows, d-d-don't give me away!" panted Bunter. "I say, keep it dark! Are they—are they looking for me?"

"They're hunting you all over the school, you frabjous ass!" roared Bob Cherry. "Wingate's in this passage now, or was a few minutes ago. Go out and give yourself up, you fearful idiot!"

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"It will be worse if you keep Quelch waiting, Bunter," said the captain of the Remove.

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"Have a little sense, old bean," said Levison. "From what I remember of Quelch, his temper doesn't improve with keeping."

"Oh, really, Levison——"

There was a footstep in the passage. It stopped outside the door of Study No. 1.

"K-k-keep it dark, you fellows!" gasped Bunter, and he popped back into the corner behind the screen, a good deal like a tortoise popping back into its shell.

"Oh, my hat!"

The door opened and Wingate of the Sixth looked in, with a frowning brow. The tea-party looked at him a little guiltily. Every fellow there would have advised Bunter to give himself up before matters became worse. But no fellow thought of giving him away.

"I can't find that fat frump," said Wingate. "He was seen on the Remove staircase, from what I hear. I really think the young ass must have gone off his chump. Do you know where he intended to go, Wharton?"

"He—he said he was going home!" gasped Wharton.

"I don't think he can have got out of the school. He's hiding in the studies or the box-rooms, or something of the sort. If you see anything of him, bring him down to Quelch's study."

"Oh!"

"The longer he keeps this up, the more toco he will get when Quelch gets him. I can't understand what the young duffer's at, unless he's gone off his chump."

And the Greyfriars captain, with a grunt, withdrew, and closed the door of Study No. 1. The juniors looked at one another.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"I say, you fellows, is he gone?"

Bunter's big spectacles gleamed round the edge of the screen in the corner.

"He's gone, fathead, and you'd better go, too!" said Harry. "You were seen on the Remove staircase, so they're bound to root you out."

"Oh, really, Wharton! I'm only too jolly anxious to go!" said Bunter. "I say, lend me a pound for my fare home."

"You benighted ass!" howled Frank Nugent. "You're not going home!"

"Oh, really, Nugent! I've got to get off home at once!"

"Bai Jove, Buntah!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy turned his eyeglass on the fat junior in amazement. "Are you weally thinkin' of cuttin' off fwom school without leave fwom your head-mastah?"

"I've got no choice," explained Bunter breathlessly. "You see, my mater's ill—the pater telephoned—"

"Cheese it!" roared Bob Cherry. "Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Is it possible—" began Levison, looking very curiously at Bunter.

"That fat idiot tells so many whoppers that he almost comes to believe them himself," explained Bob. "You remember his funny little ways, Levison, when you were at Greyfriars."

"Yes, I remember," said Levison, laughing.

"I say, you fellows, the pater phoned this afternoon—"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"I can't get home without my fare! I say, Gussy, you're not such a beast as these fellows; will you lend me a quid?"

"Weally, Buntah—"

"My only hat!" exclaimed Bob Cherry in great exasperation. "Is that fat scoundrel trying to squeeze money out of a St. Jim's man to blow at the tuckshop? Why, I'll burst him all over the study!"

"Ow! Keep off, you beast!" howled Bunter, as the indignant Bob strode over to the corner. "Ow! Keep off! I tell you— Yaroooh!"

"Out you come!" said Bob.

He grasped the Owl of the Remove by the collar and hooked him out from behind the screen. Bunter foared and struggled, and the screen went flying. Then there was another roar. The screen, spinning over, dropped across the noble head of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy as he sat at the tea-table.

"Oh! Ow! Oh owikey! Bai Jove! What the mewvy dooco—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gweat Scott! What—" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with his head through a burst screen, stared round him wildly in bewilderment. "What—"

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Wharton.

"Bunter, you born idiot—"

"Yaroooh! Loggo!"

"Bai Jove! What is this wound my neck? What—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bob Cherry grabbed at the screen to drag it off the swell of St. Jim's. Bunter jumped away and panted for breath.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Kick that fat idiot out!" howled Bob.

"Oh, bai Jove! It's a scween!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus. "Weally, you fellows, I wathah thought the woof was fallin' in—"

"I say, you fellows— Oh lor'!"

The study door opened. Two gimlet eyes looked into Study No. 1 in the Remove.

"Wharton, are you here? Bunter cannot be found! He is apparently in one of the Remove studies, probably



Blinking out into the quad from the Head's study window; Bunter sighted Vernon-Smith conversing with Tom Hedwing. Assured that no one else was about, the fat junior clambered out on to the sill and then dropped to earth.

in concealment. He must be found, and—why—what—Bunter!" The gimlet eyes fixed on the hapless Owl of the Remove. "Bunter—you are here—"

Mr. Quelch made a stride. This time Bunter was not going to dodge!

Bunter had no chance of dodging. That was impossible. Quelch was fairly on him. But Bunter was desperate. As Mr. Quelch grasped at him, Bunter, without stopping to think, lowered his head and butted.

Crash!

"Ooooooooh!" came from Quelch.

He sat down, with a heavy bump! Bunter reeled for a moment from the shock. The next moment he flew past the sitting Form master and vanished into the Remove passage.

strange and remarkable sight that now dawned on his startled vision.

From the distant House a fat figure came rushing—or, rather, hurtling. It was Billy Bunter—wildly excited, breathless, hatless, going strong.

Behind Bunter, in the doorway, appeared the angular figure of Quelch, the portly form of Prout, and two or three Sixth Form prefects.

Bunter, long lost to sight, though to memory dear, was in evidence again—bolting out of the House, with pursuit hot behind him.

As he tore panting into the quad, fellows ran up from all directions. Seniors stared, juniors yelled and cheered.

"Go it, Bunter!" yelled Vernon-Smith.

"Put it on, Bunter!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

From one direction Loder of the Sixth came running, from another, Walker of the Sixth, converging to intercept the fleeing Owl. But the speed Bunter was putting on was amazing; he outdistanced them before they could close into his path, and raced on for the gates.

Fare or no fare, cash or no cash, Bunter was hitting for the open spaces now. The chase was too hot for Bunter to linger. He was going home—if he

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THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter's Bolt!

GOSLING stared.

The ancient porter of Greyfriars School could scarcely believe his ancient eyes.

He had been warned to look out for Bunter; to take care that truant did not get out of gates. Gosling was looking out.

That was how he came to see the

had to walk across Kent and half across Surrey, he was going home! That was fixed in Bunter's podgy mind, immutable as the laws of the Medes and Persians.

With or without his railway fare, he was going! And off he went, heading for the gates as if he were on the cinder-path.

All prudential considerations were thrown to the winds now! He had to go, and he was going. Canning, flogging, and even the sack vanished from his mind like trifles light as air! He was going!

With the chase behind him, Bunter had a clear run to the gates. Gosling stood there and stared blankly.

"My eye!" said Gosling in wonder. "Wot I says is this 'ere—my eye! My blinkin' eye!"

He stood ready to tackle as soon as Bunter reached him. Bunter came on like a charging elephant.

Then Coker of the Fifth happened. Coker of the Fifth was strolling under the elms with Potter and Greene. He was telling Potter and Greene how to play football, so they were naturally rather pleased when Bunter drew his attention. Coker stared across at Bunter.

"Why, there's that cheeky young scoundrel!" he exclaimed. "I'll jolly soon stop him!"

"Oh, let him rip!" said Potter. "You're not a prefect, Coker. No business of the Fifth!"

"Don't be an ass, Potter!" "The kid's off his chump, I should think," said Greene, staring. "Anyhow, it's not up to us. Mind your own bizney, old bean."

"Don't be a fathead, Greene!" Coker cut across to intercept Bunter. Coker never had minded his own business yet, and evidently he was not going to begin now.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter. He saw Coker coming across with a rush to cut him off from the gates. He swerved to avoid Coker.

Coker was not to be avoided. He fairly jumped into Bunter's path, and held up his hand as a signal to the fat junior to stop.

Perhaps Coker of the Fifth thought that Bunter would stop naturally, at the behest of so great a man as Horace Coker. Perhaps he thought that, if Bunter did not stop, he would be able to stop him easily enough. Or perhaps Coker did not think at all. This, on the whole, was the most probable; Coker of the Fifth not being much given to thinking. But, whatever Coker may or may not have thought, what happened took Coker quite by surprise.

Bunter did not stop. He did not slacken speed. He rushed on like a runaway traction-engine going downhill. Coker's commanding hand was in the air when Bunter charged into Coker's waistcoat.

It was some charge! Bunter's speed was great, and his weight was greater! It was a terrific charge. It carried all before it!

History tells of many terrific charges. The charge of the Irish Brigade at Fontenoy; the charge of the Highlanders at Killiecrankie; the charge of the Light Brigade at Balaclava, and many more—all terrific in their own way! But there never was a charge that carried all before it so completely as this.

Coker of the Fifth was strawn on the earth. It seemed to Coker that several earthquakes had happened to him all at once. Without an ounce of wind left

in his burly form, Coker sprawled, and over him rolled Billy Bunter.

Only for a moment, however, did Bunter roll. He rested an elbow in Coker's eye and raised himself. He gained his knees, on Coker's waistcoat, and scrambled to his feet—on Coker! Trampling over Coker like a disregarded doormat, Bunter plunged on, leaving Horace Coker for dead.

There was a roar behind Bunter as he charged on, dizzy but determined, for the gates.

"Go it, Bunter!" "Ha, ha, ha!" "Put it on, fatty!" "Stop him! Stop him!"

Half Greyfriars seemed to be rushing after Bunter, whether in pursuit or to see the fun. Bunter flew.

"Stop!" howled Gosling. "Wot I says is this 'ere—you stop!" Bunter rushed on.

It was Gosling's duty—his orders were strict—to stop Bunter. It was his duty to stand up to the charge and stop the fleeing Owl. Gosling was rather a whale on duty, when it was a matter of reporting a fellow for being late, or anything of that kind.

No doubt Gosling intended to do his duty on this occasion. But perhaps the fate of Coker dismayed him. He stood up to the charge until Bunter was close at hand. Then he jumped aside, and contented himself with making a clutch at the fat junior as he passed. His clutch missed, and Bunter charged on.

"Stop him!" shrieked Mr. Quelch. "Hold that boy!" boomed Prout. "Hold him!"

It was too late to stop Bunter. He was through the gateway and racing out into the road. A few moments later the gateway was crammed with masters, prefects, seniors, juniors. Bunter was going up the road to Courtfield on his top gear.

"Stop!" shrieked the Remove master. Bunter flew on.

And then, alas, Billy Bunter met his Waterloo! Ahead of him, on the road, appeared Gwynne of the Sixth, coming along from Courtfield. Gwynne stared at the racing Owl, stared past him at the excited crowd pouring out of the gates, heard the almost frenzied shriek of Mr. Quelch, and collared Bunter by the collar as he swept past.

"Hold on, you young donkey!" said Gwynne. "Oh, my hat!"

His grip was tight on Bunter's collar, but the fat junior was going too fast to stop. He spun round Gwynne of the Sixth with such a momentum that the prefect revolved on his own axis, Bunter revolving round him. They spun round together in the road, like a planet with its attendant moon.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Gwynne. "Oh!"

"Leggo!" shrieked Bunter. "You young ass!"

"I'll hack your shins! Leggo!" "Are you mad?" gasped Gwynne.

"Oh, my hat! Ow, ow, wow!" Bunter frantically backed the prefect's shins, and Gwynne roared with pain.

"Leggo, you beast! Leggo!" "O w, w o w! Whooooo!" roared Gwynne, hopping with anguish. But his grip tightened on Bunter's collar.

Mr. Quelch came panting up. "Thank you, Gwynne. Give me that boy."

"Here he is—ow!" gasped Gwynne. "Bunter!" The Remove master gripped the fat junior. "You—you young rascal! You—you young villain, you shall be flogged—flogged!"

"Let go!" yelled Bunter. "You—you—you—" stuttered Mr. Quelch.

"Let go, you old idiot!" "Wha-a-at? What did you say? What?"

"Let go, you dummy! I'll hack your silly shins if you don't leggo!" yelled Bunter.

"Bless my soul! Wingate—Gwynne—Loder—take this boy back to the House. Take him to the Head's study! Upon my word!"

Bunter, helpless in the grasp of powerful hands, was marched in. The quad was in a roar as he was marched across to the House.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Gone!

"O H dear!" groaned Billy Bunter. The hapless Owl was in the Head's study.

The prefects had marched him there, under Mr. Quelch's glittering eye. The Head was in his own house, at tea, just then; the study was empty when Bunter arrived. He was there for a flogging, and Mr. Quelch hurried away to the Head's house to acquaint Dr. Locke with the amazing, the extraordinary, the unprecedented circumstances. He took the precaution of turning the key in the outside of the lock before he went.

Certainly, any Greyfriars fellow taken to the headmaster's study, and ordered to remain there till the headmaster came, would hardly have thought of scooting. But, in view of Billy Bunter's amazing conduct that afternoon, Mr. Quelch did not trust him.

Really, there was no telling what Bunter might do in his present astounding frame of mind. Mr. Quelch was beginning to entertain serious doubts of Bunter's sanity.

The fat junior had always been obtuse. He had always been dense. But it looked now as if he was passing, or had passed, the dividing line between ordinary fatheadedness and actual pottiness. Otherwise, his extraordinary conduct was difficult to account for.

Left in the Head's study, to wait for the arrival of Dr. Locke, Bunter mopped his perspiring brow and gasped for breath. His recent exertions had told on him.

He leaned on the Head's writing-table panting. He was for it; there was a flogging coming to him. Strange to say, Bunter gave that hardly a thought.

Any fellow in the Remove, if asked, would have said, without hesitation, that all Billy Bunter's concern was concentrated on one person—one single solitary person in the whole wide universe; and the name of that unique person was William George Bunter. And, in ordinary circumstances, any Remove fellow would have been right.

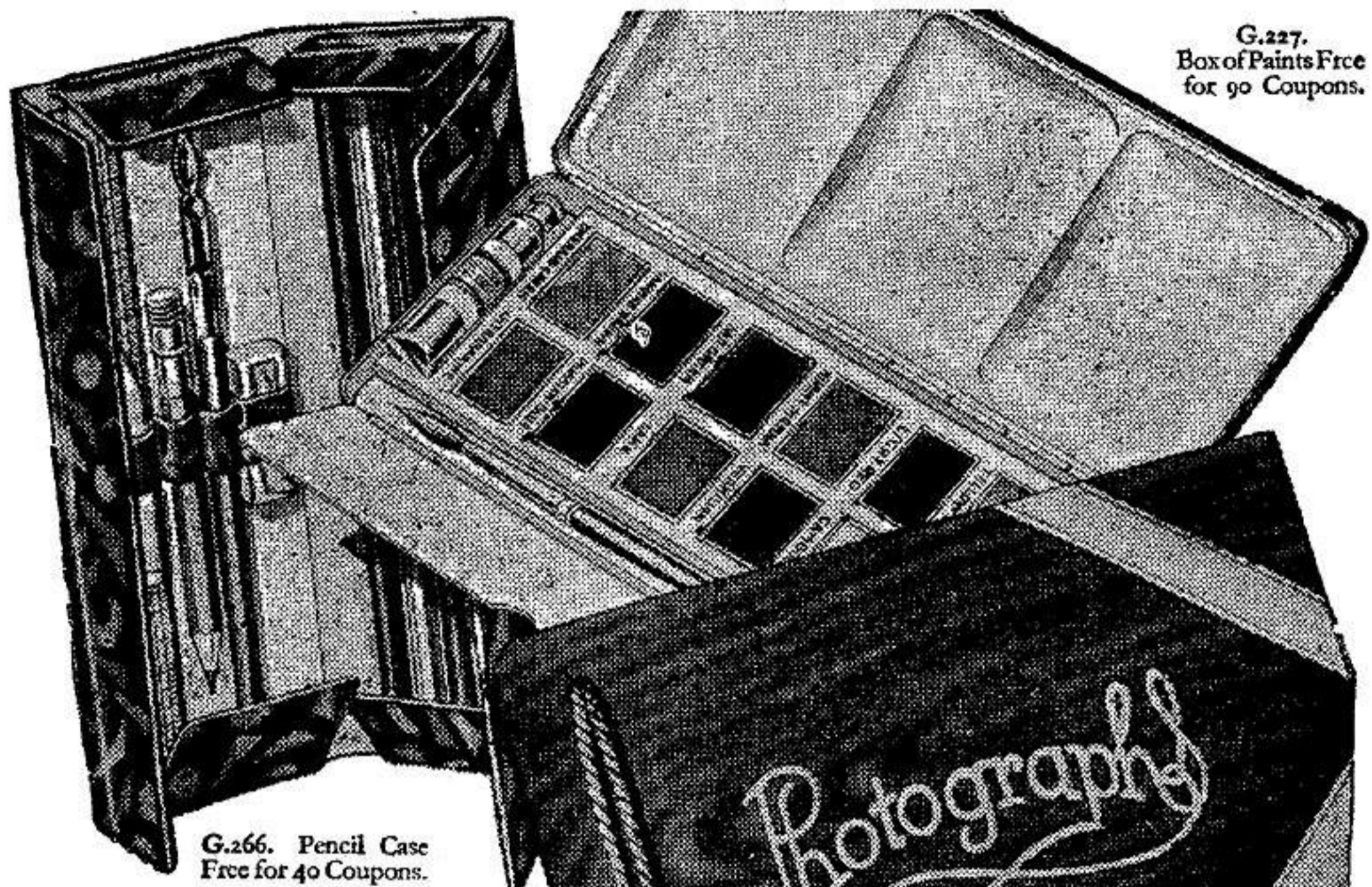
Yet at the present moment Bunter was not thinking of W. G. Bunter at all. Self, for once, had vanished from his thoughts.

"The beasts!" groaned Bunter.

He was wasting time—that was his chief thought! He had to get home! All these beasts refused to believe him—but he had to get home! His mater was ill and wanted him and he had to get home. It was useless to wait till the Head came and appeal to him; the Head was certain to take the Remove master's view; especially when Mr. Quelch reported that he had heard the fatuous Owl planning the whole thing in advance! Perhaps, in those moments, he repented him of the long course of prevarication which had landed him in

(Continued on page 22.)

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BILLY BUNTER'S BUNK!

(Continued from page 20.)

this scrape. But repentance, as usual, came too late.

He had to get home! That was his single thought. And having recovered his breath, Bunter rolled to the door; to make the interesting discovery that it was locked on the outside.

"Beast!" hissed Bunter. "Suspicious beast!"

He rolled across to the window.

The Head's study was on the ground floor; but the window was very high from the ground. At any other time, Bunter would never have dreamed of negotiating that window.

Now he did not hesitate for a moment. He opened a casement and blinked out into the quad.

Nobody was near at hand. At a short distance he sighted the Bounder strolling with Tom Redwing. But he had nothing to fear from Remove men. There were no Sixth Form men to be seen, and that was a relief.

Bunter clambered out of the window. He held on to the sill with a pair of fat hands and dropped.

Bump!

"Yow-ow-ow!"

He dropped, of course, clumsily. He rolled over and howled as he established contact with the hard, unsympathetic earth. But he was on his feet in a moment and running.

"Great pip!" yelled the Bounder, staring round at the sound of Bunter's howl. "There's that fat freak again."

"Bunter!" shouted Redwing.

Bunter cut across the quad. Herbert Vernon-Smith ran to intercept him.

"Bunter, you ass, get back!" he gasped. "You'll be flogged—sacked—if you play the goat like this!"

"I've got to get home!" gasped Bunter.

"You howling ass—"

"My mater's ill—"

"Fathead! Don't you know that that chicken won't fight? Get back."

"Lend me a quid, Smithy—"

"You burbling chump—"

"And—and gimme your cap! I can't get mine," panted Bunter.

"You shrieking idiot—here, give me my cap!" roared the Bounder, in wrath, as Bunter jerked it from his head. He made a clutch at the fat junior, but Bunter was running again, heading for the Cloisters.

The Bounder stared after him blankly.

"Well, my only hat!" he gasped.

"That fat chump is asking for it! And he's got my cap! Why, I'll—I'll—I'll scalp him."

But the Bounder did not pursue, and Billy Bunter vanished into the distant Cloisters. From the Cloisters there was a way of scrambling out over an old wall, well known to the juniors. That, evidently, was Bunter's objective. A dozen fellows sighted him as he went and there was an excited buzz of voices. Bunter vanished, leaving the buzz behind him.

Ten minutes later, a gimlet-eyed Form master, and an astonished headmaster reached the door of the Head's study. Mr. Quelch was calm—dangerously calm. But his eyes glinted and a spot of crimson burned in his cheeks. He turned back the key in the Head's door.

"Dear me! Did you lock the boy in, my dear Quelch?" exclaimed Dr. Locke.

"I thought it best to do so, sir!"

"But surely—surely—Bunter—surely the boy would never have ventured to

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leave my study against your express commands, Quelch."

"I hardly know what that foolish, extraordinary boy might do or not do, sir. Certainly I do not think he would have remained here, had I not locked the door upon him.

"Bless my soul!" said the Head.

"The boy's conduct is—is amazing—almost unbelievable," said Mr. Quelch. "As I have told you, I heard him laying a scheme—an unscrupulous scheme—to gain an extra holiday by a suppositious telephone message from his home—by conveying a false statement that one of his parents was ill and desired his presence. Knowing that I was fully acquainted with his intended trickery, he yet had the audacity, the fatuousness, to pretend that his father had telephoned for him to come home."

"Extraordinary!" said the Head.

"The boy, of course, is utterly stupid and almost incredibly untruthful," said Mr. Quelch. "No doubt he hopes that his miserable falsehoods will be believed—that they, will, indeed, be held as an excuse for his conduct—otherwise I cannot imagine how he has ventured upon actual resistance to authority. But a flogging—"

"No doubt a flogging—" agreed the Head.

"A severe flogging—" said Mr. Quelch, between tight lips.

"A very severe flogging—" said the Head.

Mr. Quelch threw the door open.

"He is here, sir, for you to deal with—"

"I will deal with him," said the Head.

"I will certainly deal with him with the utmost severity. Bunter!"

Dr. Locke looked round the study.

"Bunter! Did you not say that Bunter was here, Mr. Quelch?"

An inarticulate sound came from the Remove master. He stared round the study and stared at the open window. He made a bound to the window.

"He—he—he—" Mr. Quelch stammered. "He—he—he is gone!"

"Gone!" said the Head blankly.

"He—he—he has escaped by the window!"

"By—the window! Bless my soul!"

Mr. Quelch stared into the quad. Bunter was not to be seen; but at a distance, a number of juniors were laughing together. Mr. Quelch could guess why they were laughing.

His teeth came together hard. They fairly clicked. Probably, at that moment, Mr. Quelch would have ground his teeth, had they not been an expensive set. He turned from the window speechless.

"The—the boy must be found—at once—" said the Head.

Mr. Quelch hurried from the study. The boy had to be found—and found at once. That was certain.

But the boy was not found at once. He was not found at all. Billy Bunter had shaken the dust of Greyfriars from his feet; and throughout the length and breadth of that ancient scholastic foundation, they sought him, but they found him not.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Friends in Need!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy wedged his eyeglass into his eye and stared from the brake at the fat figure in the road.

"Bunter!" ejaculated Tom Merry.

"That fat idiot!" said Levison.

"Jolly old Bunter!" chortled Figgins.

"Oh, my hat!"

The St. Jim's men were in their brake heading for Courtfield Junction. They had bidden farewell to Harry Wharton & Co. at the gates of Greyfriars, and the brake rolled away with them along the road over Courtfield Common. Half-way to the town a fat figure came in sight ahead on the road; a fat figure that turned round, at the sound of wheels behind him, and blinked at the homeward-bound footballers through a pair of big spectacles.

Billy Bunter's fat face brightened at the sight of the St. Jim's crowd. In the brake, every face wore a grin.

Tom Merry & Co. had come over to Greyfriars that day for football. They had not expected a free entertainment to be thrown in, as it were. But the Owl of the Remove had provided them with one; and apparently the entertainment was not over yet. For here was the ineffable Bunter, still going strong.

"I say, you fellows!" yelled Bunter, waving his hand to the St. Jim's men, as a signal to stop. "Hold on! Give a fellow a lift!"

"Oh, my hat!"

Tom Merry called to the driver to stop. The brake came to a halt, and Bunter rolled up, panting.

Tom cast a rather uneasy glance back along the road. He had seen two or three Greyfriars seniors wheeling out bicycles, and he wondered whether they were dispatched to look for Bunter, who was known to be out of gates.

"Give a chap a lift!" gasped Bunter.

"I say, you fellows, I've got to get to the station!"

"Weally, Buntah—"

"You're out of bounds, Bunter," said Tom Merry.

"Yes—that's all right—I'm going home—"

"But you haven't got leave."

"Don't jaw, old chap—give me a lift."

"My dear man, we can't help you to break bounds, and bolt away from your school!" exclaimed Tom. "There would be a fearful row."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Better cut back, Bunter," said Levison. "For goodness' sake, stop playing the giddy ox! You've asked for a licking; but you can't get out of it by dodging about like this."

"You silly ass! Who cares for a licking?"

"Well, I fancy you do," said Levison laughing. "If you don't, what is all this fatheaded dodging for?"

"I've got to get home!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Don't you believe me?" yelled Bunter.

"Oh, don't be an ass," said Blake.

"We've heard all that from the chaps at Greyfriars—heard how you were making it all up yesterday—"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"It's true! I tell you, I've got to get home. They'll be after me!" Billy Bunter blinked back along the road.

"Give a man a lift! My mater—"

"Gammon!"

"My—my poor old mater—"

"Chuck it!"

"Better get on," said Levison. "The fat ass is dodging a licking, of course; but it will make it all the worse for him if he hangs it out. He hasn't sense enough to see it, but the sooner he's bagged the better."

"Yaas, wathah!—Have a little sense, Buntah, and go back at once and take your lickin'," said D'Arcy kindly.

Bunter blinked at the grinning St. Jim's juniors. They were not going to help him. Really, it was a large order,



"I say, you fellows," said Bunter, appealing to the St. Jim's men, "give a fellow a lift. I've got to get home; my—my mother's ill." "Spoof!" said Levison. "Go back to Greyfriars and take your licking!"

to expect fellows from another school to help him to run away from his own school, because—as they naturally supposed—he had asked for a licking, and was now trying to dodge it. Bunter blinked at them, and his fat face worked. To the astonishment and alarm of Tom Merry & Co., two fat tears rolled down two fat cheeks.

"Oh crumbs! He's blubbing!" ejaculated Monty Lowther.

"Weally, Buntah—"

"Dash it all, a licking isn't so awful as all that, Bunter," said Tom Merry.

"You'll get over it—"

"You silly idiot!"

"Eh?"

"I—I—I don't care for a licking! They can lick the skin off my back, if they like!" groaned Bunter. "My mater's ill, and I've got to get home. I don't care if I'm licked! I don't care if I'm sacked! I don't care for anything! I tell you my mother—"

Bunter's voice broke. The St. Jim's men stared down at him.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus softly. "Is—is—is it possible that—that it is wight aftah all? Oh cwickey! If it's wight—"

"But it's all a trick," said Tom Merry. "It's all spoof! But—but—" He stared at Bunter. The tears were rolling down the fat cheeks unchecked. "Look here, we'll chance it! Hop in, Bunter!"

Billy Bunter clambered into the St. Jim's brake. The vehicle was rather crowded already; but room was made for Bunter. Many curious glances were turned on the Owl of Greyfriars as the

brake rolled on towards Courtfield. Even yet Tom Merry & Co. could not make up their minds whether Bunter's distress was proof or not. But they were giving him the benefit of the doubt—though very doubtfully. There was a sudden exclamation from Blako.

"They're after him!"

"Bai Jove!"

Behind the brake, at a good distance, two cyclists appeared on the road. Tom Merry & Co. knew them by sight; Wingate and Gwynne, of the Greyfriars Sixth. They had little, or rather no doubt, that the two Greyfriars prefects were scouring the road for the fugitive Owl.

There was a yelp of alarm from Bunter.

"I say, you fellows! You'll stand by a chap! Knock 'em over if they try to get hold of me."

"Weally, Buntah—" gasped Arthur Augustus, and the footballers grinned. They could not quite see themselves knocking over Greyfriars prefects who were in pursuit of a truant Greyfriars junior, under orders from their headmaster.

"Squat down, Bunter!" said Tom Merry hurriedly. "They haven't seen you yet—they won't see you—cover—quick!"

"Yaas, wathah! Dwop out of sight, Buntah! Move, old bean!"

Billy Bunter dropped out of sight. He squatted low, and the crowded St. Jim's fellows in the brake quite concealed him from the general view. He gasped as he squatted.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Pway dwy up, Buntah! If those pwofects heah you speakin'—"

"Oh really, D'Arcy—"

"Quiet, old bean!" said Tom Merry.

"Ow! Give a fellow room to breathe!" gasped Bunter. "I say—"

"Quiet, you fathead!" hissed Blake. "They're here."

"Ow!" Bunter relapsed into silence.

Wingate and Gwynne speedily overtook the brake. Gwynne shot on ahead, but the Greyfriars captain slowed down, and waved a hand to the crowded St. Jim's men looking down at him.

"Seen Bunter?" he shouted.

"Bunter? Who's Bunter?" asked several voices. Bunter, crouched among an ocean of feet, grinned breathlessly.

"A Greyfriars kid—a fat fellow in specs," said Wingate. "The young ass has bolted away from a licking, and we're looking for him. Did you see him on the road, any of you?"

"Oh, Bunter!" said Tom Merry gravely. "I know whom you mean, now! Bunter! A Remove kid—"

"That's it! If you've seen him on the road—"

"Yes, we saw him on the road," answered Tom.

Wingate jammed on his brake. "How far back?"

"Not a quarter of a mile back, when we saw him standing in the road."

"Good! Thanks!"

Wingate spun round on his bicycle and shot back. The St. Jim's men had seen Bunter on the road a quarter of a mile back; and as Wingate had not passed him, he concluded, at once, that Bunter had taken to the open common.

The St. Jim's footballers smiled after him. It had not occurred to Wingate that when they had seen Bunter standing in the road a quarter of a mile back, they had given him a lift in the brake; and certainly they did not feel called upon to tell the Greyfriars captain so.

"I suppose I was rather pulling that chap's leg," said Tom Merry thoughtfully. "Of course, I told him the exact truth—we did see Bunter standing in the road a quarter of a mile back."

"Yaas, wathah!"
"Luckily, he never asked us if we'd given Bunter a lift. You're all right now, Bunter."

"Wight as wain, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus, "and I sincerely twust, Buntah, that you have been tellin' us the twuth. Othahwise—"

"Better keep out of sight, Bunter, till we get to the station," said Tom Merry. "Can't be too careful!"

And Billy Bunter remained in cover, while the brake rolled into Courtfield, and up the High Street to the railway station. There he rolled into the station in the midst of the St. Jim's crowd. Tom Merry & Co., who had their return tickets, were heading for the platform, when Bunter caught the swell of St. Jim's by the arm.

"I—I say, D'Arcy, old chap!"
"Yaas, Buntah!"
"I—I've left all my money at Greyfriars!" gasped Bunter. "I—I left it all in my study!"

"My hat!" said Monty Lowther. "Was there room in one study for all of it, Bunter? Wasn't there an overflow into the passage?"

"Oh, really, Lowther—I—I say, D'Arcy, lend me my fare home! It's only a pound! You don't mind lendin' me a pound, old fellow?"

"Not in the least, Buntah!" said Arthur Augustus. "In the pwsent circe, deah boy, I should be vewy pleased to lend you a pound—"

"Oh, good!" gasped Bunter.
"Or even a largah amount, if you requished it," said Arthur Augustus. "I should not hesitate to lend you

whatevah you requished, Buntah, in the pwsent painful circe!"

"Hand it over, old chap!"
"Only it happens very unfortunately, Buntah, that I have not bwrought any money with me."

"Eh?"
"So it will be quite imposs for me to lend you anythin', deah boy. But I assuah you that if it were poss, I should be delighted!"

"You silly idiot!"

"Bai Jove!"
"I say, you fellows—some of you—"

gasped Bunter.
"All serene!" said Tom Merry, laughin'. "We'll whack out your ticket, Bunter!"

Five minutes later the express was bearing Tom Merry & Co. homeward to St. Jim's, and Billy Bunter homeward to Bunter Villa. As the train roared away Bunter fairly gasped with relief. What Mr. Quelch would think, what the Head would think, what all Greyfriars would think, Bunter did not know. And he did not care.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Home!

"TAXI, sir?"
"Yes!" gasped Bunter.
He plumped into the taxi, gave the address, and whizzed away from the Surrey station.

The long railway journey was over—the longest railway journey, it seemed to Bunter, that he had ever known.

Part of the way he had had the company of the St. Jim's fellows. After they changed trains, he was left to continue his journey alone. But by that time Tom Merry & Co. had become convinced that Bunter was in real distress, and they had been very kind and sympathetic. Their sympathy had taken a practical form, and Bunter had a taxi fare in his pocket.

His fat face was darkly clouded as the taxi bore him away through the thick dusk. Several times he had to

take off his big spectacles and wipe them.

He was hungry; he had had no tea. But he was not even conscious of being hungry. He did not care. That would have astonished the Remove men; but it was a Bunter that they hardly knew who was sitting in the taxicab whizzing away through the darkness to Bunter Villa.

Ever since that telephone message from his father had reached him, Bunter had been a Bunter that no Greyfriars man could have recognised.

He was not thinking of himself at all. For the first time, perhaps, in his fat career Billy Bunter's thoughts were not concentrated on W. G. Bunter.

He might have wondered how he had found the nerve to disregard his Form master, to quit the school without leave, to defy everybody and everything, reckless of the consequences. But he was not even thinking of that. He did not give a thought to the storm he had left behind him at Greyfriars. If he had thought of it he would not have cared—not two hoots! The prospect of a dozen floggings would not have worried Bunter.

Greyfriars was not only left behind him—Greyfriars was forgotten. Greyfriars did not matter. What mattered was—what he was going to find when he got home.

The railway journey had seemed endless. Now the taxi, fast as it whizzed, seemed slow. Bunter did not, as a rule, like a high speed in a car. He was too much concerned for the safety of his fat person. Now he leaned his head from the window and hooted to the chauffeur:

"Faster! Can't you put on speed? For goodness' sake don't crawl!"

The taxi flew.
It dashed up to the gate of Bunter Villa at last, and clattered to a halt. Bunter had the door open before it stopped, and he leaped out before it came to a standstill.

Billy Bunter tore open the gate.
"Five shillings, sir!" said the taxi man, staring at him.

Bunter had forgotten. He gave a snort of impatience, jerked out a ten-shilling note, and pitched it at the taxi man. Without waiting for the change, or giving it a thought, the fat junior sped up the path to the house.

It was his father who opened the door; he had heard the taxi. The portly stockbroker's face was unusually grave.

"William!"
Bunter clutched his arm.

"Mums!" he said huskily.
"I am glad to tell you, William, that your mother is better," said Mr. Bunter. "This afternoon, since I telephoned, she has taken a turn for the better, and the doctor is very pleased—"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.
He tottered against the wall. His mother was better. That hideous dread that had haunted him through the endless railway journey was unfounded. He had feared—he had hardly dared to realise what he had feared. He tottered weakly.

Mr. Bunter looked at him. He had never seen William like this before. He blinked at him.

"Your mother seemed pleased, William, to know that you were coming home," he said. "Possibly that may have helped on the improvement. She is expecting you, William. Have you been anxious?"

Bunter choked.
"Come—come, William! I told you that there was no danger. I told you

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distinctly that the doctor stated that there was no danger."

"They—they don't always know," muttered Bunter.

"I am glad, however, that your headmaster gave you leave to come home without delay," said Mr. Bunter. "Did you have a good journey, William?"

"Eh? No—yes—I forget."

"Probably you are hungry?"

"No—yes." Bunter made for the stairs.

"Really, William—"

Bunter vanished up the staircase. Mr. Bunter stared after him, perplexed.

"William, is there anything the matter with you? What—"

Bunter disappeared.

Bunter was tired—hungry. A mere wreck of a Bunter. But he was not even conscious of it. He was conscious of only one thing—of a familiar plump face, now unfamiliar in its paleness, that brightened as he stood by the bedside.

"Willy!" said the faint voice. The old name of childhood that Bunter had not heard for a very long time.

"Oh, mums!"

Mr. Bunter looked in at the door; then he trod away, quite softly.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Where is Bunter?

"THE awful ass!" said Bob Cherry.

"The frabjous chump!" said Peter Todd.

"The footling freak!" said Vernon-Smith.

"It will be a flogging, at least," said Harry Wharton.

"Or the sack!" said Skinner cheerily. "Judgin' from Quelch's jolly old looks, I should say the sack! Fancy Bunter bunked! Looks as if life's goin' to be really worth livin' in the Remove at last."

Some of the fellows in the Rag laughed; but most of the Removites were serious enough. Billy Bunter, whether he realised it or not, was asking for the "chopper" in the most emphatic way. It was certain that the chopper would come down as soon as Bunter was there to take what was coming to him. At the very least, a Head's flogging would be his reward. It was possible, indeed, that Skinner was right, and that the fat and fatuous Owl would be "bunked." And that was enough to make fellows serious.

"It beats me," said Harry. "I really begin to think that the fat frump must be off his rocker. Even Bunter can't expect that yarn of his to be swallowed. That's rot! But I'm blessed if I don't half begin to believe that there must have been something in it."

"How could there be," asked Johnny Bull, "when we heard the fat fozler making it all up yesterday?"

"Yes, that's a clincher," said Bob. "But for that, I'd almost believe Bunter was telling the truth for once, unlikely as it seems."

"The question is, could he, if he tried?" asked Skinner. "Has anybody ever known him try?"

"Not within the memory of the oldest inhabitant!" said the Bounder, and there was a laugh.

"But look what he's risked!" said Harry, perplexed.

"Oh, he was dodging a licking!" said Skinner. "First of all, he hoped to get away with a heap of lies. Then, having asked for a licking, he didn't want it. Bunter never does want what he's asked for. I dare say he thinks Quelch will cool down if he gives him time."

"Oh, my hat! If he's depending on that—" ejaculated Nugent.

"Well, what else can he be depending on?" said Skinner. "He's cleared off out of the way. He hopes Quelch may be in a better temper when he comes in. Hope springs eternal in the human breast, you know, as some jolly old poet has put it."

"The hopefulness must be terrific!" remarked Hurreo Janset Ram Singh. "The esteemed and absurd Quelch is preposterously infuriated."

"But where is he?" exclaimed Peter Todd. "He hasn't come in for prep! He's cut prep! Can he have gone home, after all?"

"Well, even Bunter wouldn't be such an ass as that," said Skinner, shaking his head. "He knows Quelch never swallowed his jolly old invalid story. If he's gone home he'll be sent back. Besides, how could he get home? Nobody lent him any money. Of course, he could bilk the railway—that's rather in his line!"

"He couldn't stay at home," said Bob. "His people wouldn't take his word that he was given an extra holiday, without being told from the school. His pater would want it officially."

"His pater would jolly well kick if he got an extra holiday!" grinned Skinner. "He can't want Bunter at home! How could he? Public schools were invented to keep fellows out of the way of their paters. I fancy the Head would hear something from all our loving parents if he let men off a week early for Easter!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Besides, if he doesn't come back, Quelch will phone his pater," said the Bounder. "Then old Bunter will jolly soon boot young Bunter back to Greyfriars! He's hanging about somewhere, waiting for Quelch's wrath to cool! My belief is that it will grow hotter and hotter! Bunter will have the time of his life when he rolls in."

"It beats me!" said Harry.

"The beatfulness is terrific!" confessed Hurreo Janset Ram Singh. "I begin to think, my esteemed chums, that there really must be a ludicrous invalid at Bunter's ridiculous home."

"What difference would that make?" asked Skinner. "Think Bunter would care?"

"Fat lot!" said Snoop, with a laugh.

"I've asked his minor, Sammy of the Second," said Skinner. "He's heard nothing about it."

"Well, they mightn't tell a little kid like Sammy," said Bob Cherry. "I say, if there's really something up—"

"Bunter wouldn't care if there was."

"Um!" said Bob doubtfully.

Really, Billy Bunter was not the fellow one would have suspected of feeling deep concern for trouble at home. Certainly he had never shown any sign of bothering about any troubles but his own.

But it was puzzling. Bunter had spun an outrageous yarn to get an extra holiday, and had, of course, not been believed. If it had ended there, there would have been nothing perplexing in the matter. But it had not ended there. Bunter was gone.

"Mind your eye!" whispered Skinner. "Here comes the jolly old Beak! Looks pleasant and chatty, what!"

Mr. Quelch looked in at the doorway of the Rag. It was nearly bed-time now for the Remove. Mr. Quelch's face was calm; but his lips were set and his eyes glinted like steel. He glanced over the crowd in the Rag, and then called to the captain of the Remove.

"Wharton! Bunter has not come in?"

"I think not, sir! I haven't seen him."

"Have you any idea where he may be, Wharton?"

"No, sir!"

"Apparently he is staying out of gates to avoid his just punishment," said Mr. Quelch, compressing his lips more tightly. "His punishment will be very severe—very severe indeed."

"I—I think, sir—"

Wharton hesitated. He was anxious to put in a word, if he could, for the hapless Owl.

"What?" rapped Mr. Quelch.

"I—I think, sir, Bunter's acting in this way looks as if he really had bad news from home—"

"Nonsense!"

"It would be a coincidence, sir, but he might—"

"Nonsense!"

Mr. Quelch left the Rag, his lips in a tighter line than ever. A few minutes later Wingate of the Sixth shepherded the Lower Fourth off to their dormitory. When Wingate turned lights out, one bed in the Remove dormitory remained empty. Bunter had not come in for dorm.

"The howling ass!" said Peter Todd. "Where on earth can he be? What game does the footling fathead think he's playing? This will mean the sack."

"Poor old Bunter!" said Bob.

"Lend me a hanky, somebody," said Skinner. "I'm going to cry!"

"Oh, shut up, Skinner!"

In the talk that ran from bed to bed after lights out Bunter was the sole topic. Where was Bunter? What was Bunter up to? But when the Remove fell asleep the mystery was still unsolved; and when the rising-bell clanged out in the morning Bunter's bed was still empty; and the question still was: Where was Bunter?

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

No Change!

"SOME ass," said Bob Cherry, "said that the age of miracles was past! It isn't."

"Wonders," said Johnny Bull, "will never cease!"

"It's the elephant's hind leg!" declared Fisher T. Fish. "I'm telling you guys that it's the bee's knee and the grasshopper's whiskers!"

"Who'd have thought it?" said the Bounder.

"Nobody!"

"The nobodyfulness is terrific!"

"Good old Bunter!" said Frank Nugent. "What's he been making out that he's an utter worm for all these terms, when he isn't?"

"Beats me hollow!" said Peter Todd.

These remarks, and many more, were made in the Remove that morning. For that morning the Remove knew.

The august countenance of Quelch, which the juniors had expected to see looking like a particularly black thundercloud that morning, was unexpectedly clear. Skinner, after a look at Quelch at prayers, stated that Quelch's chivvy was set fair, like a barometer.

Possibly Mr. Quelch felt that his Form were entitled to know what had become of their Form-fellow, for in the Form-room he told them briefly.

Mr. Quelch had been on the telephone overnight, in communication with Mr. Bunter. As the missing Owl had not returned at a late hour Quelch had no choice but to communicate with his parents. Then, of course, he learned what was what, as it were. Probably Quelch was astonished. There was no

The ISLAND of SLAVES!

BY STANTON HOPE.

THE OPENING CHAPTERS RETOLD.

LIEUTENANT GUY EASTON, SUB-LIEUTENANT DUNN, and CHOTAJEE, a Bengali interpreter, of H.M.S. Falcon, having been ordered to board a suspicious-looking dhow heading a southerly course out of the Red Sea, are cut adrift during a storm and cast ashore on the Island of Khoof. After a series of exciting adventures the trio gather useful information concerning the revival in slave traffic. Eventually reaching Ahkab, on the Arabian coast, the boys call upon the consul and unfold their story. Later, an Arab slave whom they had previously befriended, is found dead in one of the consul's rooms. Chotajee is unjustly saddled with the crime and placed in gaol. Disguised as Arabs, Guy and Tony succeed in rescuing their black chum after which they board a mahalla bound for Aden. The mahalla is attacked by a villainous crew of cut-throats, but Guy proves equal to the occasion and the enemy are made prisoners. After a much needed rest Guy and Tony are aroused to find the Falcon alongside the mahalla. The chums are greeted by Captain Knox who orders them to clean themselves up and report to him later.

(Now read on.)

Guy's Command.

SURROUNDED by the grinning officers of the gunboat, Captain Knox heard the chums' account of all that had occurred since they had been blown away from the Falcon in the swift hurricane.

"Very good!" the skipper said shortly, trying to keep his face straight. "We'll look after these Arabs. Now get below and have a bath and change. Later, Easton, I'll see you in my cabin, as I've some important news for you." Then, with a twinkle at the corners of his eyes, he added: "As it isn't May Day, we don't require any Jack-o'-the-Green in the ship."

There ensued for Guy and Tony the most hectic couple of hours of their lives! Liquid that turned new brass into old and gave the same a realistic coating of verdigris, proved one of the fastest dyes known for the skin. They wallowed in hot baths, used pumice stone, engineer's soap and other normal means without effect, and finally resorted to soogee—a ship's mixture of soap, caustic, and water. Even when they had donned their uniforms they had a curious greenish tinge about their features reminiscent of landlubbers on a first voyage in heavy seas.

Wondering what the "important news" was that the skipper had to impart, Guy hurried away for his interview.

Captain Knox received him in his cabin, and after the door had been shut, turned over a number of signals from the commander-in-chief which were lying on his desk.

"You probably know, Easton," he said, "that we're on a course for Aden. There we're going to hand over Sayyid, Farhud, and the others to the police, and I want you and Dunn to prepare a statement in writing, for I don't want to leave you there to give evidence against them. Do that to-night."

"Very good, sir."

"When we came across the mahallas we were proceeding full speed to an island called Kohut," the captain stated. "The first message from Major Gundath had not been properly coded and we had

to ask him to repeat it. The second time I'm afraid there must have been some mistake in the transmission, for we understood that the trouble had been at Kohut Island and not at Khoof."

A message was brought to the cabin. "By Jove!" the skipper exclaimed. "This puts a different complexion on things, Easton. I had intended to keep Chotajee under close arrest. Now I've received another wireless message from the consul at Ahkab. We'd wired an account of Sayyid's conduct, and he expresses regret for it. He adds that the assassin of the black slave has been discovered."

"By jingo! That's news, sir!"

"He says it was a Bedouin visitor to the port who afterwards ran amok. Two other men were killed in the streets yesterday, and a police-walla shot the Bedouin dead."

"Phew! That lets out Chota, sir," Guy muttered. "It clears Sayyid, too, though I suspected him from the first."

"H'mph!" Captain Knox grunted. "Now, to get back to this other business. It's plain, Easton, that the Admiralty have determined to put down this slave traffic. It's known that two or three cargoes have been delivered within the past four months to one sheikh alone at Bahrein, the centre of the Persian Gulf pearl fisheries."

His grey eyes gleamed like steel.

"This dastardly traffic has got to be suppressed, Easton," he said. "The Admiralty have realised they are up against a mighty big thing—and, well, there are brains among our fellows in London as well as out here among the

"Pocket" Submarines Spring a Surprise on Slave Traders!

Arabs. They are going to try dealing with this slave traffic in a new way."

Now Guy was a-thrill with interest.

"That's jolly good news, sir," he said.

"Our methods of disguising chaps as Arabs and sending 'em round in armed dhows are out of date."

"Quite," the captain said. "And the Admiralty have hit on a scheme that may give the slavers the biggest punch in the ribs they've ever had. You remember, Easton, that before you left the ship, we heard that the Marshal was coming through the Red Sea on her way out to the China station?"

"The submarine depot ship, sir? She's through the Straits by this time, I suppose?"

"She refuelled at Perim two days ago," the captain answered. "And proceeded from there to Bab-el-Mandeb. We have a rendezvous with her; latitude twelve, longitude forty-five, at four o'clock this afternoon."

A burring noise sounded in the cabin, and the tones of the navigating officer on the bridge trickled through one of the voice-pipes.

"Marshal in sight, sir—two points on the starboard beam!"

The captain replied that he would be on the bridge shortly, and rose at his desk.

"We shall be up with the Marshal in half an hour, Easton," he remarked. "You were trained for service in the Boats before you came out East, and you've probably been over her."

"Ay, sir. She's a whale of a boat with thumping great workshops, dozens of stores filled with spare parts, and accommodation for several submarines and their crews."

"So I've heard, though I've not been aboard her," the skipper replied. "Well, she's got on board one of the latest craft of the Royal Navy—a craft specially built for use against the slavers."

Guy began to see light.

"Submarine, sir!"

"Yes, a submarine. It's a small boat built to accommodate a big oil-fuel reserve, and fitted with specially large batteries for use with the motor for underwater work. On her secret trials she did long distances satisfactorily. She's the fastest undersea boat owned by the nation. It's hoped that the Vixen will prove a big factor in sweeping these cut-throats from the seas."

"By Jove, sir!" Guy exclaimed. "What a rattling fine stunt! He's a lucky chap who's got command of her."

"He is," the captain smiled. "You'll be wishing they'd kept you with the Boats—the submarine service—but sending you out here was all part of the game. The officer picked for command of the Vixen is yourself."

Guy drew a deep breath, his eyes gleaming.

"The Vixen will be slung in the water from the Marshal's derricks," the captain said. "And you are to get ready to go aboard. You'll find your officers and crew provided for you."

Again he consulted the signals on his desk.

"Except in one case," he added. "One officer aboard the Marshal who came out for the Vixen, is down with malaria, and the C.-in-C. has ordered me to supply a junior from my own ship—a thundering dashed nuisance! Is there anyone you would particularly like to go?"

"M-my hat! Yes, sir!" Guy whooped. "I'd like to take Tony Dunn!"

"You would want one of my most promising officers, Easton!" the captain chuckled. "However, you shall have him, and I'll send a messenger with a chit giving him his orders. Everything has got to be done secretly and with dispatch, so both of you will be ready to report aboard the Vixen as soon as she's in the water."

The "Hush-hush" Ship!

SUFFERIN' shrimps!" Tony Dunn clawed his fingers into his hair. Spread on the ward-room table in front of him were an array of playing-cards, and it needed all his discipline to refrain from cheating himself at the game which he called "Chinaman's Patience."

He was stuck when there was only one other ace to get out, and then he could play the game straight through to a glorious end.

The snores of the surgeon-commander in the best easy-chair annoyed him, and then the exuberant voice of Guy came booming down the companion ladder followed by its excited owner.

"Tony, ahoy!"

"Oh, buzz!" Tony retorted. "I'm busy, old scout. There's surely some way of getting this beastly thing to work out! What's all the fresh bobbery, anyway?"

"It's this. We've got a stunt on—a new stunt for dealing with these beastly slavers."

"Keel-haul the lot of 'em. If I could only get to that ace, old top, I'd—"

"A new type of submarine is on her way out to us," hooted Guy, "and I'm to have command of her. The Vixen, she's called. I've applied for you to go with me."

That brought Tony out of his chair with a mighty yell, but caused a temporary break in the rhythm of the surgeon-commander's snoring. Then he wildly flung the playing-cards over his head and did a kind of Choctaw war-dance.

"Wa, wa, wa!" howled Tony. "Good old Chief Muckamuck! When's the hunting?"

"We hit the trail to-day, great Laughing Jackass!" chuckled Guy. "Go to your giddy wigwam in the star-board alleyway and get your gear ready—and, one moment! For the love of hokey, put a slab of pumice stone over that figurehead of yours again. You look as green about the gills as a seaweed-grown grampus."

Outside the ward-room Guy, in response to his junior's eager questions, told how the submarine parent ship, Marshal, on her way out to the China station, was conveying the Vixen, which would be dropped into the water ready for service under her own power. Although, like all young officers, they had at times much to say about the conduct of affairs at the Admiralty, they enthusiastically agreed that for once their lordships "had scored a bull."

With men as cunning as the terrible Ras Dhin, the Abyssinian, in the slave trade, the ordinary methods of the naval patrol ships in hunting down vessels containing "black ivory" were out of date. The small, specially built submarine offered wonderful possibilities! In their first enthusiasm, the chums visualised themselves sweeping the seas of the dreadful traffic, and even locating that mysterious master-mind which was behind the trade.

By the time their Genoese servants had got their gear on deck, H.M.S. Marshal was hove-to a cable's length away, and the Falcon was also drifting with the tide. At this secret rendezvous far away from the coast of Arabia, the latest "hush-hush" ship of the Royal Navy was swung out on powerful derricks from under a screen aboard the giant parent ship, and lowered into the water. The crew which had come out for the new submarine piled aboard her. There she lay alongside the Marshal, ready as soon as her young commander got aboard, to proceed under her own power upon the arduous task of hunting down the slavers.

When Guy had taken farewell of his fellow officers, he was accosted by Chotajee, the little Bengali, who saluted in what he believed to be the correct naval manner.

Chotajee wore on his alpaca coat the ornate badge he had embroidered for himself—a badge liberally surrounded by oak leaves and worked with the word "kassab," meaning storekeeper. With

him he had his kit-bag stencilled with his name and "rank" thus:

"Chattajeeebhoy Bottlewalla Chotajee, Kassab. 'Failed B.A.' R.N."

Although he blinked nervously through his round spectacles, he looked much cheerier than when he had returned aboard. That wire from the consul had been a relief, for he had fully expected to be put in the cells later to face the charge of killing the negro in Ahkab.

"Hallo, Chota!" Guy exclaimed. "Why the baggage?"

"Sahib, your respectable servant is humbly ready," the little babu answered gravely.

"Oh? Ready for what?"

"Ready for accompanying exalted sahibs to the esteemed boat that makes diverfulness under sea like sportful porpoise. In huntful search for debased slavers you need gentleman of university education such as self, for interpretations in Arabic. As British poet has said, 'By unitedness we stand, dividedness we fall.'"

"My hat! I hadn't thought about an interpreter," said Guy. "If there isn't one aboard the Vixen, I'll try to wangle with Captain Knox for you to come."

Chotajee beamed all over his small brown face.

There was more than one person aboard the Falcon who could speak Arabic, and as Chotajee's method of keeping the stores left much to be desired, Captain Knox appeared to suffer no pang of pain in parting from him.

"For a start, Easton," he said to the young lieutenant, "you keep your weather eye on the dhows, and we'll look after Ahkab and Khoof. It's no good either you or us interfering with Sheikh Haji unless we can catch him red-handed."

The cutter had been lowered, and Guy, Tony, and Chotajee took final leave of their old shipmates and were rowed across to the submarine moored alongside the big repair ship.

The young commander made a brief inspection of his new charge and then took his place in the conning-tower. The mooring-lines were cast off, the engine-room telegraph changed for the first time since the Vixen's trials, the gas-engine started up, and the submarine glided away on her great mission for the abolition of slavery.

Voyage of the Vixen!

GUY had no orders other than that he was to hunt down slave dhows and adopt any other methods which seemed advisable to end the grim traffic in human beings. He would keep in wireless communication when necessary with Captain Knox, who was senior officer of the ordinary patrol vessels stationed in

the Red Sea, the Arabian Sea, and the Persian Gulf.

The Vixen stood on a course for Tajura on the North African coast. It was a place used for the export of slaves, and Guy planned to submerge off the coast and wait for suspicious dhows.

Tony joined him by the canvas screen of the small bridge. Their blood thrilled to the throb of the gas-engine driving the submarine cleanly through the blue sea. White spray flicked up like two thin ostrich plumes from the knife-like cutwater, and shoals of flying-fish leaped from the track of the speeding vessel, whirring over the waves like great dragonflies.

A hot wind rose out of Africa and quickly whipped up heavy seas. Then it died away with equal suddenness, leaving the ocean surface covered with dust, that in the dying sun, gave it a grim appearance of a sea of blood.

A wireless message was received from the Falcon that she had been hunting a dhow in a latitude south of Khoof, but had lost sight of her in the treacherous sandstorm. The Vixen was to turn back from Tajura and help in the search.

The submarine was put about, and kept a good speed until about nine at night, when a sail was reported on the port beam. From a description received from the Falcon it was the dhow which had been lost by Captain Knox earlier in the evening, and the craft was heading for the direction of the Island of Khoof.

"We'll follow in that fellow's wake, Tony," remarked Guy. "Cap'n Knox wants to catch Sheikh Haji red-handed. That dhow may be going to pay him a call."

"Ay," said Tony. "Maybe Old Whiskers has got another store of guns and stuff to ship."

(Will Guy and Tony succeed in catching the slave-trader red-handed? They stand a rattling good chance in the Vixen, don't they? On no account miss their thrilling adventures next week!)

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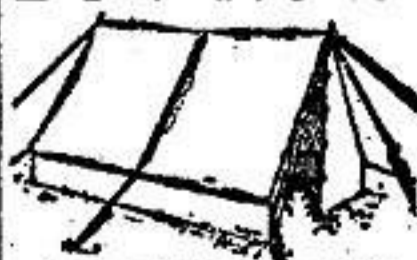
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BILLY BUNTER'S BUNK!

(Continued from page 25.)

Doubt that the Remove were astonished. When they came out in break they could speak of nothing else.

Mr. Quelch could not, of course, blame himself; it had been utterly impossible for him to take Bunter's word. Still, when he learned how matters really stood he was relieved that Bunter had got home, though his getting home had involved him in outrageous rebelliousness. In the peculiar circumstances that rebelliousness was not going to be remembered against Bunter.

"Poor old Bunter," said Wharton. "So his mater was really on the sick-list! I should think that this ought to be a lesson, even to Bunter, about telling lies! If he hadn't been such a frightful fibber—"

"He may stop telling lies after this!" said Bob hopefully.

"We shouldn't know our Bunter if he did!" said Skinner. "But perhaps he may stop telling so many. Might limit himself to a hundred a day."

"Bunter's not a bad old bean!" said Bob.

The Remove agreed that Bunter was not such a bad old bean. There was good in Bunter! Nobody had ever suspected it before, but there was! All the Remove agreed that there was! Of course, a fellow who wasn't fond of his mater would be a frightful worm. But Bunter had always been considered a frightful worm. Yet Bunter, the fat, footling, frabjous Owl, had defied principalities and powers, as it were, for his mater. Remove fellows felt that they would have to revise their opinion of Bunter.

Bunter was absent for many days. Skinner opined that he would contrive to "stick it out" till the Easter holidays. But Bunter came back a day or two before break-up.

During his absence fellows were thinking quite kindly of Bunter. To some extent, no doubt, it was a case of

absence making the heart grow fonder. There was no doubt that Billy Bunter was a much more likeable fellow at a distance. Fellows wondered whether there would be any change in him when he reappeared. After what had happened it seemed probable that even William George Bunter would realise that there was something to be said, at least, for truthfulness. Truth and Bunter had long been strangers; but surely now it was to be hoped that they had struck up at least a nodding acquaintance.

Bunter arrived after class. He reported himself in his Form master's study, and remained there some little time. After which he rolled up to the Remove passage, where the fellows were at tea.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here he is!" boomed Bob Cherry, as a fat face and a large pair of spectacles blinked in at Study No. 1.

"Trot in, Bunter!"

"Glad to see you, old fat bean!"

"The gladfulness is terrific."

Bunter trotted in. He seemed rather surprised by this cordial greeting from the Famous Five.

"Mater all right now?" asked Wharton

"Oh, yes, thanks!" said Bunter.

"Right as rain! I say, that looks a jolly good cake!"

"Sample it, old son."

"Right-ho!" Bunter gobbled cake. "I say, you fellows, this is a good cake! Not like the cakes I've been having at home, of course—"

"Oh!"

"But good," said Bunter. "If you fellows don't want any, I'll finish it!"

"Oh!" gasped Wharton. "Do!"

"Thanks, old chap, I will. I say, that old ass Quelch has been jawing me! I thought he'd cut up rusty about my bolting, but he hasn't! But what do you think he said?" Bunter choked for a moment; the cake was going down rather fast. "Said this ought to be a lesson to me. Said he hope-

that after such a warning I should mend my ways—me, you know!—and cease to prevaricate—his very words!—me! Making out that a fellow's a liar, you know! Me! I'd jolly well have told him what I thought of him, only, of course, you can't tell a beak that! You'd hardly believe it, you fellows, but he was fairly making out that I was untruthful!"

The Famous Five gazed at Bunter.

"He—he—he made out that you were—were untruthful!" babbled Bob Cherry. "My hat! D-d-d-did he?"

"He did!" said Bunter. "Insulting, you know! I came jolly near telling him that he was no gentleman to doubt a fellow's word."

"Only near it!" gasped Wharton.

"Not quite?"

"No, not quite! I let him run on, and treated him with silent contempt," said Bunter. "Still, it's a bit thick, isn't it?"

"Oh crikey!"

"All very well if it had been one of you fellows, of course," said Bunter.

"But me, you know! Any more cake? All right, I can do with this jam-roll, if you fellows don't want any. I say, you fellows, I made it a point to get back before break-up, so that we can arrange about the Easter hols—"

"Eh?"

"I told Quelch I'd got back because I was anxious not to miss classes, if I could help it. I could see he didn't half believe it. I could see it in his face! Frightfully suspicious beast, you know. But there, he's no gentleman, as I said. Now, about Easter, Wharton, old chap— I say, you fellows, don't clear off while a fellow's talking to you—"

But the Famous Five did clear off.

Bunter had not long been back, but already his fascinating society seemed to have palled somehow.

THE END.

(There will be another splendid yarn of Harry Wharton & Co. in next week's MAGNET, entitled: "THE MAN FROM THE STATES!" Order your MAGNET in advance, chums.)

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