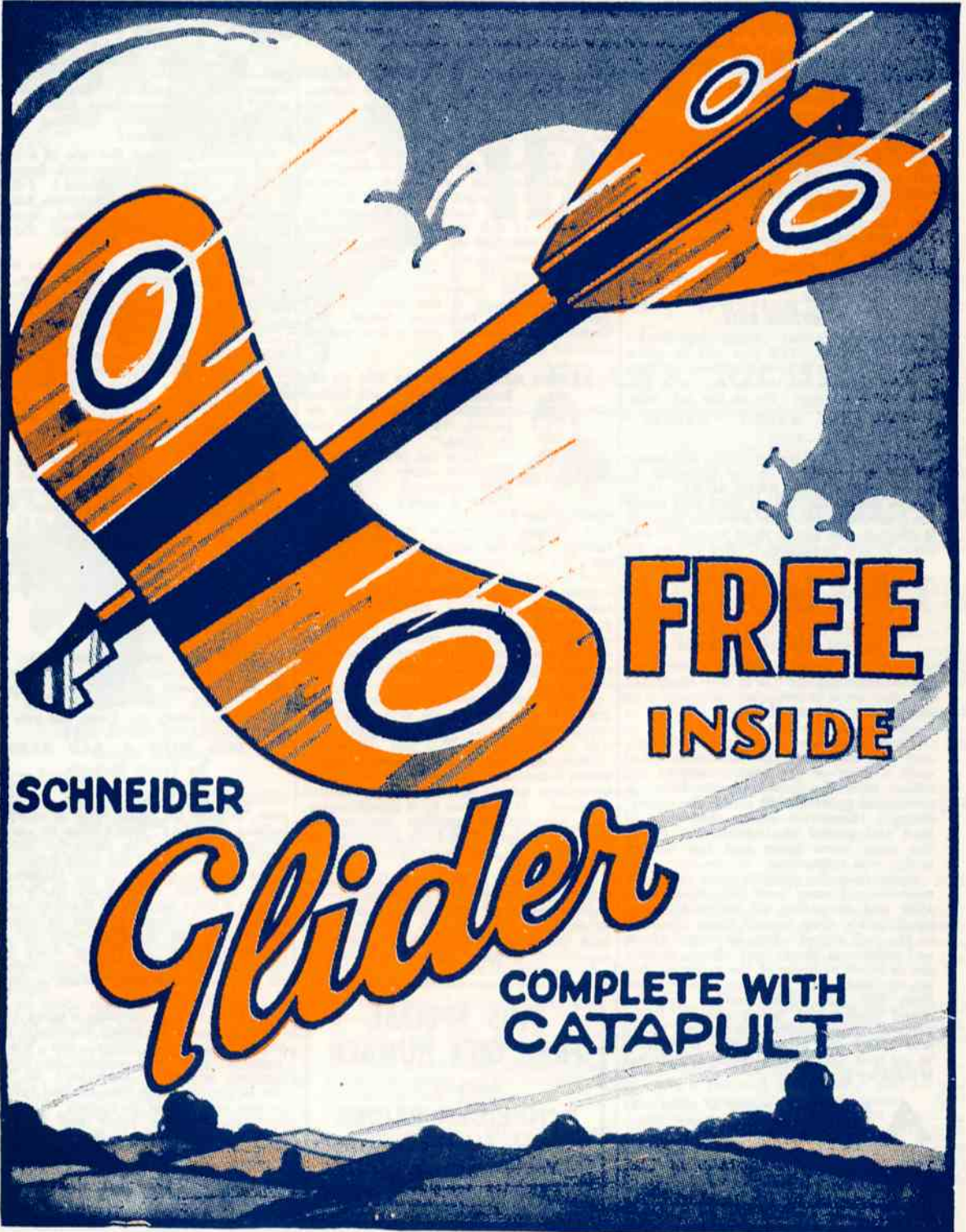


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The **MAGNET** 2^D



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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.

ANOTHER SUPERB FREE GIFT NEXT WEEK!

WELL, boys, you've got IT now—IT being the first surprise free gift. And isn't your Schneider glider a beauty? The next gift on the list is equally as good—a **MAGIC CAMPHOR SHIP**—it will whizz about in a bowl or a bath of water like billy-ho! I wonder how many of you knew that a piece of camphor would propel an object through the water? I don't mind telling you that it was something of a surprise to me when we tested the sample

CAMPHOR SHIP.

to see it race about. With next week's stunning **FREE GIFT** you will be given full directions as to how the Camphor Ship works. Believe me, boys, this is a gift well worth having! Be on the safe side.

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That's the only way to make absolutely certain of getting a tip-top collection of stories and a novel **FREE GIFT**. Once you've done that, tell all your pals about the marvellous value the good old **MAGNET** is offering, and advise them to step in and share in this treat, they'll bless you for it!

I CAME across a fellow the other day who was telling me of what must surely be one of the most amazing islands in the world. It is

AN ISLAND OF PYTHONS

upon which there is no other life save the monster snakes. It is only composed of a few acres of irregular rock, and is in the middle of Lake Chilway, which is in the Nyassaland Protectorate.

Years ago there was a great drought, and the waters of the lake evaporated until a strip of dry land connected the island with the banks of the lake. A number of pythons, out in search of prey, dragged themselves across this strip of land and gained the island, just before the rains came again and the natural bridge was submerged.

Since then the pythons have exercised unchallenged sway over the island, and, after first devouring all the rabbits and small game, they turned their attention to the puff adders which abounded there, and swallowed them, too! Now, as they are as much at home in the water as they are on land, they get their food supplies from the lake. The natives call the island Chidiampiri, which means: "The place of the vanishing puff-adders." And woe betide the human being who dares to set foot upon this amazing island that is ruled by pythons!

A HARWICH reader of mine asks me to settle an argument which he has been having with a chum. He wants to know which is

THE HIGHEST WATERFALL IN THE WORLD?

His chum says he has heard that the Victoria Falls are the highest, but my

reader believes that there is still a higher waterfall—and he is right! The highest known waterfall in the world is in British Guiana, in South America. Known as the Kaieteur Falls, this mass of tumbling water has a drop of 741 feet, which is nearly five times the height of Niagara! To reach the falls one has to make a journey of a fortnight on mule-back from Georgetown, the capital of the colony. The width of this mighty waterfall is as much as 400 feet in the rainy season. "Some" waterfall, eh?

Loosen your waistcoats, chums, and have a good laugh at this joke. Ronald Tarvet, of 79, Stamford Street, Old Trafford, Manchester, gets a fine pocket knife for it!

"Excuse me, sir," said the man on the doorstep, as Mr. Smith, having just left his piano lesson, appeared, "I've come to tune the piano."



"Tune the piano?" said Mr. Smith, somewhat surprised.

"But I didn't

send for you!"

"I know, sir," said the tuner, "but the neighbours did!"



Now, why not have a shot to emulate this chum's example? Don't forget I've got plenty of Sheffield steel penknives, pocket wallets, and grand story-books still to hand out to chums who send along ribtickling jokes or limericks!

A Bridlington reader asks me if I can give him any information regarding

CRUDE OIL SPEED-CARS.

Well, one has already been invented which can attain a speed of 100 miles per hour, and which burns crude oil instead of petrol. It is driven by a Diesel engine, and has neither ignition system nor sparking plugs. The heat generated by compression is enough to explode the oil in the cylinder.

The car that is already in commission will, it is claimed, run 1,600 miles on only one tankful of oil, and its inventor hopes, before long, to produce a car which will beat Sir Malcolm Campbell's land speed record. But, from what I know of Sir

best—or worst! And yet a big-game hunter has no need to "draw the long bow," for the adventures which fall to his lot are sufficiently exciting not to need any exaggeration!

Did you know that the bite of a hyena is so poisonous that a scratch from the teeth of one might prove fatal? I didn't—until he told me! The hyena has the reputation of being a coward, but one that he came across certainly did not behave in a cowardly fashion.

He came upon two hyenas one night, just at dusk. He fired at the first, and it fell as though dead. Then he turned his attention to the other, and had just disposed of it when he discovered that the first was on its feet again. Unshipping his revolver he walked up to the hyena to give it a finishing shot. But, as he fired, the hyena rushed at him. The hunter fired again and again, hitting the beast four times, but still it kept on, determined to come to grips with him.

As he put down his rifle, there was nothing else to do but to fire the two remaining .45 revolver bullets, and then run for life. Still the hyena ran on, but after a while it dropped down dead. It had taken seven shots to kill it!

Hyenas, he tells me, will eat anything—even motor-car tyres! Also, it is no uncommon thing to see a native with half his face missing—the result of an hyena bite while he has been sleeping!

HAVING read through the fine yarns which are in store for you in next week's issue, together with that ripping Free Gift I mentioned early on, I can tell you that

"A DOG WITH A BAD NAME!"

By Frank Richards,

which is the long complete Greyfriars yarn, is just the ideal type of story for holiday reading! Don't miss it, chums! If you happen to be away on holiday, take my advice and ask your local newsagent to keep a copy of the **MAGNET** for you. You see, it is quite likely there will be a large number of **MAGNET** readers staying in the same district as yourself, and they'll all want a copy of their favourite paper. So if you don't make arrangements to have your copy reserved for you, you might find that the newsagent is "sold out."

In that case you'll miss a good thing, for in addition to Frank Richards' yarn, High, Low, and Nippy, the Western "puncher pals, will appear in another exciting adventure calculated to thrill you as you've never been thrilled before—to say nothing of a snappy "Herald" supplement, more jokes and limericks, and, of course, our splendid **FREE GIFT**. Be sure, then, that you order next week's **MAGNET** well in advance.

Cheerio until next week, chums.

YOUR EDITOR.

THIS SPECIAL FREE GIFT NUMBER

contains a

SCHNEIDER GLIDER and CATAPULT.

You've got yours, chum, now tell all your pals.



BILLY BUNTER'S HAT TRICK!

Ripping New Long Complete School
Story of Harry Wharton & Co. at
Greyfriars.

By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER. Caught Napping!

SNORE!
Some of the Remove fellows at Greyfriars School jumped. All of them stared.

Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, gave a sort of convulsive start. Snorrrrrrrrr!
The sound was unmistakable. It was a snore!

It was not merely a snore—not simply a common or garden snore, so to speak. It was a hefty snore; a Gargantuan snore; a snore that was reminiscent of the trumpeting of an elephant in the jungle.

It woke many echoes in the drowsy quiet of the Remove Form-room. It proceeded from Billy Bunter. It was such a snore as the Remove fellows were accustomed to hear in the dormitory o' nights. But in class, in the Form-room, it was an unaccustomed sound.

"Oh crumbs!" murmured Bob Cherry. "The awful chump!" breathed Harry Wharton.

"The chumpfulness is terrific!" murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, the dusky Nabob of Bhanipur.

Snore!
It was a hot summer's afternoon. There were few, if any, of the Lower Fourth Form of Greyfriars who would not gladly have exchanged the stuffy Form-room for the open air. Plenty of the fellows felt drowsy. Mr. Quelch's voice seemed to many of the Form, like the drone of a persistent wasp.

Valuable as was the instruction Mr. Quelch was imparting to his Form, the Removites were not giving him a lot of attention. Only when Mr. Quelch's glimlet eye fixed on some junior did that junior sit up and take notice.

Roman History had never appealed less to the Greyfriars Remove than it did on that drowsy afternoon. But certainly no member of the Form had thought of taking a nap while it was going on.

Bunter, indeed, had not intended to take a nap. He had only intended to listen to Mr. Quelch with his eyes shut.

But once Bunter's eyes were shut, the inevitable happened. When his eyes were shut he slept. And when he slept he snored. His fat chin dropped on his podgy chest; his eyes were shut and his mouth was open, and he snored.

"Upon my word!" ejaculated Mr. Quelch.

That lesson featured Nero, and Mr. Quelch, Suetonius in hand, was handing out stuff that it was worth any fellow's while to hear and remember. But even the thrilling moment when the centurion rooted out the bronze-bearded tyrant in his hiding-place failed to interest Bunter. Bunter snored.

The gimlet eye of Mr. Quelch fastened on him. It seemed almost to bore into Bunter. But the Owl of the Remove snored, regardless.

"Bunter!"

Mr. Quelch's voice was not loud, but deep, and it had a knife-like edge on it. Snore!

Bob Cherry reached his foot under his desk to give the fat junior a timely kick.

There was a sudden howl from Skinner, who sat next to Bunter.

"Yow-ow!"

Bob had delivered the timely kick, but apparently it had reached the wrong address.

Harold Skinner jumped and howled. "Skinner!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch angrily. "What do you mean, Skinner? How dare you utter that ridiculous and unseemly ejaculation?"

"Ow! Somebody kicked me!" gasped Skinner. He glared round at Bob. "You silly owl, wharrer you hucking me for, you fathead?"

"Cherry, did you——"

"I—I meant it for Bunter, sir," stammered Bob. "I—I think he's dropped off, and——"

"Take fifty lines, Cherry!"

"Oh! Yes, sir!"

"Bunter!"

Mr. Quelch's voice was now both loud and deep.

The Remove sat very quiet. Nobody was feeling drowsy now. The glitter in Mr. Quelch's eyes was more than enough to put the whole Form on the qui vive.

Only the happy Bunter slept on.

Bunter could do with a great deal of sleep. In his list of earthly delights, eating came first; but sleeping came second.

There were excuses for Bunter. It was a hot and drowsy day, and he had done unusually well at dinner. And since dinner he had found a pic in Vernon-Smith's study in the Remove. Smithy was under the impression that that pic was in his study cupboard. As a matter of fact, it was in Billy Bunter's.

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The Owl of the Remove was loaded over the Pimsoil line. That, added to the summer heat and the drone of Mr. Quelch's voice, had done it. Bunter was deep in the embrace of Morpheus.

"Bunter!"
It seemed to the Removites that Mr. Quelch's voice, as he barked at Bunter, might have awakened Rip Van Winkle himself, or the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus. But it did not awaken the fat Owl. When it came to sleeping, Rip Van Winkle had nothing on Bunter.

Mr. Quelch did not speak again. He stepped to his desk and picked up a cane therefrom. Cane in hand, he stepped towards the form. Evidently Quelch considered that the time for words had passed, and that the time for action had come. The juniors smiled as he approached the sleeping beauty.

Snore!
Swish!
"Yaroooooh!"
Billy Bunter woke!
His eyes opened, and he blinked dizzily over his big spectacles. That sudden and emphatic swish of the cane had done the trick.

"Ow!" roared Bunter. "Ow! Beast! 'Tain't rising-bell! Beast!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Removites. Bunter, startled out of slumber, had evidently not awakened with his fat wits about him. He had the impression that he was in the dormitory, and that some playful junior had disturbed his slumbers.

"Silence!" hooted Mr. Quelch. "Bunter!"

"Ow! Ow! Oh! Ow!" gasped Bunter. He realised that he was in the Form-room, and that he had fallen asleep during a class. "Oh! Yes, sir! I—I wasn't asleep, sir!"

"What?"
"Not at all, sir!" gasped Bunter, with a wary eye on the cane. "Nothing of the sort, sir! I—I heard all you fellows were saying—I mean, I heard every word you said, sir! I—I listen better with my eyes shut, sir!"

"Upon my word!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. His glare at the Owl of the Remove was like unto that of the basilisk of old. "Bunter, how dare you prevaricate! You were fast asleep! Fast asleep in Form!"

"Oh, no, sir! Not a wink!" stammered Bunter. "I—I was listening all the time, sir! I never lost a single word! I—I wouldn't, sir! I—I hope you take my word, sir!"

"You dare to tell me that you heard all I was saying?" articulated the Remove master.

"Every word, sir!"
"Very well, Bunter. You will repeat my words," said Mr. Quelch in a grinding voice. "You will tell me, Bunter, what it was that the emperor Nero said when the centurion found him at the villa in the suburbs of Rome."

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.
The hapless Owl had not, in point of fact, listened to a word even before he fell asleep. And he had nodded off before Mr. Quelch came to "Hæc est fides." "Whoppers" were Billy Bunter's usual resource in times of difficulty, but they seldom saw him through his troubles. Often the truth would have been more useful had Bunter thought of telling the truth, which he seldom did. Truth and Bunter had long been strangers.

"Well?" hooted Mr. Quelch.
"I—I can tell you, sir. Certainly!"
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stammered Bunter. "When the centurion came to Nero, sir, Nero said—said—said—"

"What?"
"He said, 'Kiss me, Hardy!'" stammered Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked the Remove. Mr. Quelch's face was a study as he received that answer. Without waiting for the Form master to speak, Bunter tried again. He realised that he had got it wrong.

"I—I mean, sir—"

"Well, what do you mean, Bunter?"
"I—I mean," he said, "'Take away that bauble!' sir. And—and he never smiled again!" gasped Bunter.

"He—he said, 'Take away that bauble!' and he—he never smiled again!" repeated Mr. Quelch quite dazedly.

"I—I mean, sir"—again Billy Bunter realised that it was not good enough, and he cudgelled his fat brains for something that was—"I—I mean," he said, "Had I but served Pontius Pilate as I have served Julius Cæsar, he would not have let the cakes burn—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Silence!" roared Mr. Quelch. "The next boy who laughs will be caned."

Instant gravity descended on the Remove.

There was no doubt that Mr. Quelch, their respected Form master, had been somewhat tart that warm afternoon.

Perhaps the hot weather affected him a little. Or perhaps in the hot weather he found the Lower Fourth rather a strain. Pupils like Billy Bunter were really a little tiresome at 80 in the shade.

Certainly, Quelch had been tart—more tartaric than usual. Not only Bunter had incurred his wrath. Skinner had been given fifty lines for a careless answer. Vernon-Smith had been given a hundred for impertinence. Fisher T. Fish had been scarified by an acid tongue for saying "Yep" instead of "Yes"—which was hard lines on Fishy, who naturally talked in his native language. Lord Mauleverer had received an impot for yawning. Even Harry Wharton, head boy of the Form, had been snapped at. Thrice had Bob Cherry been barked at for shuffling his feet; and the fourth time he shuffled them the pointer rapped on his knuckles. Altogether, it was a relief to be dismissed.

Mr. Quelch was still busy in the Form-room. Perhaps he was getting ready that section of Suetonius which was to improve Billy Bunter's knowledge of Imperial Rome. Billy Bunter, in the Form-room passage, wore a worried look. He was still feeling the effect of those two swishes, which Mr. Quelch had laid on, not wisely but too well. And he was dreading the additional task which his Form master was getting ready for him.

Work had never appealed to Bunter. For work, in any shape or form, he felt a strange antipathy. Extra work seemed to Bunter insult added to injury. Neither was he desirous of improving his knowledge of Imperial Rome.

Mr. Quelch's view was that fellows were at Greyfriars to learn things. This view was not shared by all his Form; least of all by William George Bunter. Learning things had no attraction whatever for the Owl of the Remove.

"Yards and yards of it!" said Bunter, almost tearfully. "Suetonius, you know—that awful rot! Yards of it—and in this weather! I say, you fellows, which of you is going to write it out for me?"

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

"Echo answers which!" chuckled Johnny Bull.

And Hurree Jamset Ram Singh remarked that the whichfulness was terrific!

The juniors sympathised with Bunter. Two swishes from Quelch were not a light matter; and Suetonius was serious enough. But their sympathy did not seem likely to take the practical form of writing out the impot for Bunter. There was a limit.

"I say, Harry, old fellow—" urged Bunter.

Harry Wharton laughed.

"I'm going on the river," he explained.

"Bob, old chap—"
"Going on the river, old bean!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Franky, old pal—"
"Going on the river!" chuckled Nugent.

"What about you, Johnny?"

FREE GIFT No. 2. Make Sure You Get It!

NOVEL CAMPHOR SHIP

Presented with Next Week's MAGNET.

"Bunter! You will step out before the class!"

"Wha-a-at for, sir?"

"I am going to cane you, Bunter!"

"Oh, lor!"

Billy Bunter rolled reluctantly out of his place. Still more reluctantly he bent over at his Form master's command.

Swish!

"Yow-ow-ow!"

Swish!

"Whoooooooop!"

"Cease those ridiculous noises, Bunter, and go back to your place! And if you do not give me your attention—"

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!"

"You are the idest and most obtuse boy in my Form, Bunter! I shall give you a section of Suetonius to write out fifty times after class. Now give me your attention."

After which William George Bunter gave his Form master plenty of attention. In fact, he hung upon Mr. Quelch's words as if they were pearls of wisdom falling from his lips. The afternoon was still hot; the Form-room was still stuffy; and Mr. Quelch's voice still resembled the drone of a persistent wasp. But no sound even distantly resembling a snore was heard again in the Remove Form-room.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Skinner Asks For It!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

"Poor old Bunter!"

"I say, it's awful!" said

Bunter pathetically.
The Remove had been dismissed at last; which was a great relief.

"Nothing about me," answered Johnny Bull.

"I say, Inky—"

"My esteemed and idiotic Bunter, the answer is in the absurd negative."

"Skinner—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Skinner.

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at!" growled Bunter. "What are you cackling at, you silly ass?"

"Your little joke, old fat bean," said Skinner.

"Smithy—"

"Cut it out, fathead!" said Vernon-Smith. "I've got a hundred lines of my own! Bother old Quelch."

"Well, you cheeked him!" grinned Bob.

"The man's got no sense of humour!" grunted the Bounder.

Smithy had ventured to be funny in class. Nero's pernicious custom of smearing tar on his victims and burning them as human torches, had been described by Smithy as "making light of grave subjects." Which was not bad as a pun but decidedly out of place in a Form-room—especially on a hot afternoon!

"Well, I think you fellows might stand by a fellow!" said Billy Bunter disconsolately. "Look here, Wharton, if you'll stop in and write my impot, I'll go on the river with the other fellows

The wretched Skinner spun round. His eyes almost started from his head at the sight of Mr. Quelch.

Evidently the Remove master had heard every word.

"Oh!" gasped Skinner.

"Skinner! How dare you!" articulated Mr. Quelch. "I repeat, how dare you? Is that the way you speak of your Form master, Skinner?"

"Oh crikey!" groaned Skinner.

"Skinner, you will follow me to my study!"

"Oh crumbs!"

Skinner followed Mr. Quelch to his study in the lowest of spirits.

From that study a minute later, sounds of woe were heard.

When Skinner emerged, he seemed to be trying to fold himself up like a pocket-knife.

"Had it bad?" asked Snoop sympathetically.

Hythe, who was shaved with a scythe, he did nothing but wriggle and writhe. It was like Billy Bunter, of course, to rush in where angels might have feared to tread.

"I say, Skinner, old chap—"

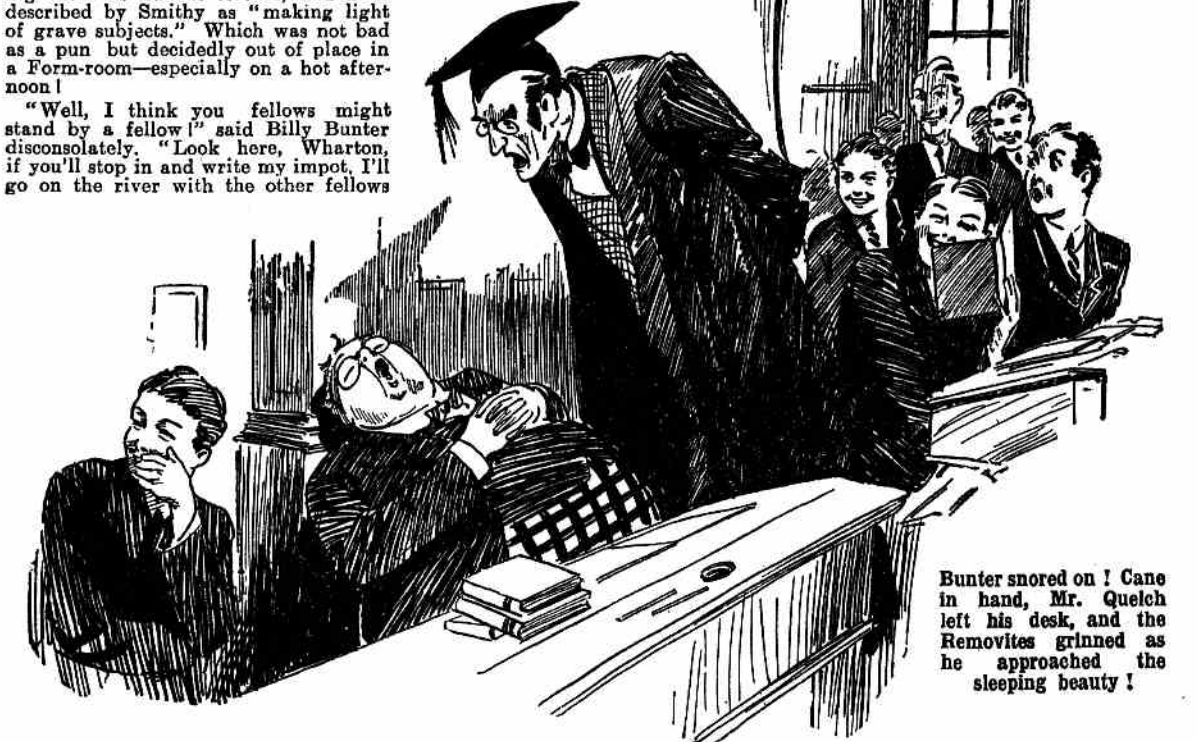
Bunter rolled up to the suffering Skinner and blinked at him through his big spectacles. "I say—"

"Wow!"

"Does it hurt, old fellow?"

"Idiot! Wow!"

"Well, as you're not going out, old chap, what about doing my impot?"



Bunter snored on! Cane in hand, Mr. Quelch left his desk, and the Removites grinned as he approached the sleeping beauty!

instead of you. You'll be doing them a favour as well as me. See!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm fed-up with Quelch!" grunted Skinner. "I've got fifty blessed lines to write, just because it's a hot day and Quelch is ratty! I can tell you I'm sick of Quelch."

"Shurrup, you ass!" murmured Bob Cherry hastily.

Mr. Quelch had stepped out of the Form-room doorway.

But Skinner, unfortunately, had his back in that direction, and did not see his Form master in the offing.

"Shan't!" he snapped. "You fellows can kowtow to Quelch as much as you like, and thank him kindly when he gives you lines for nothing! I shall jolly well say what I think! And I jolly well think that Quelch is a bad-tempered old blighter, and I jolly well wish the Head would sack him!"

The horror in the faces of the juniors made Harold Skinner pause, realising that something was up.

He knew the next moment what was up.

"Skinner!"

Skinner groaned dismally. It was only too clear that he had had it bad.

"Well, you asked for it, old chap!" remarked Stott.

Groan!

Skinner, no doubt, had asked for it; but, like so many persons in this weary world, he hated getting that for which he had asked.

"Come on the river with us, old bean," said Harry Wharton. Which was really very kind of the captain of the Regatta, for he did not like Skinner.

Groan!

"Not coming?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Ow! No! Wow!"

The Famous Five went on their way to the sunny river. Snoop and Stott, who were Skinner's chums, gave him sympathetic looks. Still, they did not want to hang about hearing him groan.

"Well, coming out?" asked Snoop.

"Wow! No."

"Well, we're going," said Stott.

"Go—and be blowed! Wow!"

Snoop and Stott went. Skinner at the present moment was not pleasant company. Like the young man of

asked Bunter. "You see, I want to get out. As you're not going—"

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"You might listen to a chap, Skinner—"

"Wow!"

"Don't be selfish, you know. As you're staying in you might as well do my impot for me, and— Whoop! Leggo! Yaroooooh! Wharrer you kicking me for, you beast? Yoooooop!"

Skinner did not explain what he was kicking Bunter for. He put all his energy into the kicking.

A sudden grip on Bunter's collar spun him round, and Skinner's boot landed on a pair of tight trousers. It landed again, and yet again.

Bunter roared.

"Ow! Wow! Leave off, you beast! Oh, my hat! Look here, have you gone mad? Yaroooooop!"

Bunter fled.

Skinner got in one more as he went, and the fat junior let out a terrific yell as he vanished.

After which Skinner felt a little better.

Bunter, on the other hand, did not. But in an imperfect universe it was impossible for everyone to be satisfied.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

A Wash for Mr. Walker!

"**E**LP a cove, sir!" "Hallo, hallo, hallo!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. The Famous Five of the Remove were enjoying life.

It was still hot. The blaze of the summer sun reminded Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh of the sunshine of his native land, and the dusky nabob fairly basked in it. Even Inky admitted that it was warm, and the other fellows considered that it was too warm. But there was a little—though a very little—coolness to be found on the river, and the shade of the big trees by the bank of the Sark was grateful and comforting.

The chums of the Remove had pulled a couple of miles up the river and landed on the towpath by the woods of Popper Court. The boat was tied up to the willows under the bank. The five juniors were seated under the trees, back from the river. They had brought a bag of jam-tarts and half a dozen bottles of ginger-pop. And, hot as it was, it was very pleasant and agreeable, especially as a change after Quelch in the Form-room. The cheery five demolished jam-tarts, quenched their thirst with ginger-beer, and were happy.

The rippling, shining river, the wooded banks, the blue sky dotted with fleecy clouds were pleasant to look upon. There was no blot upon the landscape until a tattered figure came shambling up the towpath and halted at the sight of the Greyfriars juniors.

The man was a tramp, and he looked tired. He looked, indeed, as if he had been born tired.

His garments were tattered; his shaggy head was protected from the sun-blaze by what had once been a straw hat of the "boater" variety, now worn and discoloured and almost shapeless. Also it was too small for the tired gentleman, and he seemed to have some difficulty in keeping it on. Probably it had been made for some other gentleman in the dim long ago, and its present wearer had annexed it from some rubbish-heap. It looked as if it would have disgraced any self-respecting rubbish-heap.

As the weary walker halted and blinked at the schoolboys with fishy eyes, an aroma of stale tobacco and rum poisoned the air. The traveller evidently had no money to expend on soap and water, or even on a shave, but he seemed to be a sturdy supporter of the drink traffic.

He touched his battered hat. "Elp a cove, sir!" he said. "I'm looking for work, sir."

"You'd better be a bit careful how you look for work," said Bob Cherry, shaking his head seriously.

"Eh?" "You might find some, you know," explained Bob.

The juniors grinned. If the battered and tattered gentleman was looking for work, it was obviously in the hope of not finding any.

"A few coppers would 'elp a bloke, sir. I ain't had a drink—I mean I ain't had a bite of food this blessed day. Name of Walker," went on the tattered one confidentially. "Honest Walker was what I was called, sir; me being that honest you could trust me with anything."

"I'd trust you with a cake of soap,"

assented Bob; "I'm sure you'd hand it back untouched."

"You'll 'ave your little joke, sir!" said Mr. Walker. "What about 'arf-a-crown?"

"The half-a-crownfulness will not be terrific, my esteemed Walker," said Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh.

Mr. Walker gave a start. Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh's English often had the effect of surprising strangers.

"Blow me pink!" said Mr. Walker. "Would you mind saying that agin, sir? I don't quite ketch on."

"The half-a-crownfulness will not be terrific. But you are welcome to an esteemed and ridiculous shilling," said the nabob.

"A bob's a bob," said Mr. Walker philosophically.

Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh slipped a dusky hand into his pocket. It came out with many silver pieces in it, and from these the nabob selected a shilling, which he tossed to the frowsy gentleman.

Mr. Walker caught it, and at the same time his eyes glimmered at the money in the nabob's hand.

There was a knobby stick under Mr. Walker's arm. He slipped it into his hand, at the same time glancing up and down the towpath with a cautious eye. There was no one in sight; the spot was a solitary one. Honest Walker came a step nearer to the juniors, and a bullying expression came over his unwashed, unshaven face.

Harry Wharton & Co. eyed him curiously. They could read easily the thought that was passing through Mr. Walker's mind.

In that lonely spot, and with a stick in his hand, and only schoolboys to deal with, Mr. Walker evidently considered that he was on a good thing. His bullying look was not to be mistaken.

But the juniors were not alarmed. Mr. Walker was not yet acquainted with the Famous Five of Greyfriars.

"You're going to make it a quid!" said Mr. Walker. "I'll take it kindly if you'll make it a quid."

"Rats!" said Bob Cherry cheerfully. "The ratfulness is terrific."

Mr. Walker's look became more threatening. He twirled the stick in his unwashed hand in a very suggestive way.

"I don't want to 'urt you," he said. "That's all right!" said Bob reassuringly. "You couldn't hurt us if you tried, old bean. Give it a miss."

"I dessay you're good for a quid among the lot of you," said Mr. Walker. "Now, 'and it out—and sharp! I ain't waiting."

The Famous Five rose to their feet. Honest Walker grinned, in the evident expectation of seeing them go through their pockets to make up the sum he demanded.

That, however, was not the intention of the Famous Five. They were not, as Mr. Walker supposed, scared by his threatening looks and his stick. They had no intention whatever of being robbed by a frowsy tramp.

"You want us to hand it out, old bean!" asked Bob politely.

"Yes," said Mr. Walker, "and sharp!"

Bob grinned at his comrades. "It's up to us to hand out something if the gentleman insists on it," he remarked. "Pile in!"

Mr. Walker had time for one swipe with his stick as the Famous Five jumped at him. Johnny Bull caught that swipe with his arm, and gave a roar. The next moment Mr. Walker was rolling on the towpath, and the stick

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was flying through the air to the middle of the Sark.

"Oh! Ow! Blow me pink!" gasped Mr. Walker.

He struggled wildly.

But he struggled in vain. Five pairs of hands were on him, and Honest Walker was held as in a vice.

Many a time, with black looks and a threatening stick, Mr. Walker had raised small sums from wayfarers. But on this occasion Mr. Walker found that he had woke up the wrong passenger.

"Heave ahead, my hearties!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

And Mr. Walker, struggling and spluttering, went rolling down the bank towards the river.

"Oh, leggo!" roared Mr. Walker. "Oh, my eye! Blow me pink and blue! Don't you shove me near that blooming water! 'Elp!"

"We're handing it out!" explained Bob Cherry. "What you need most, old bean, is a wash, and that's what we're handing out!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"'Elp!" yelled Mr. Walker wildly.

The approach to the water seemed to fill him with the direst alarm. It was years and years since Mr. Walker had had a wash, and he evidently hated the prospect.

But there was no help for Mr. Walker. A wash was what he needed, if not what he wanted, and that was what the juniors were handing out. He rolled through the grass into the shallow water under the bank.

Splash!

"Oooooooh!" Mr. Walker sprawled in a foot of water. He sprawled and gasped and spluttered. His ancient hat floated away on the current. He sat up in the water and gurgled spasmodically.

"Oooooooh! Grooooooh! Oh, my eye! Oooooooh!"

"Sorry we haven't any soap!" said Bob. "But there's lots of water——"

"Oooooooh!"

"Stay in as long as you like! You're making the river rather dirty, but it will wash away."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Grrrrrrrooooooggh!" gurgled Mr. Walker.

He did not stay in long. He made a wild scramble for the bank, and dragged himself out. He stood streaming and dripping with water, and gasping for breath. And the words that came from him in a torrent were quite unfit for youthful ears.

"Chuck the brute in again!" said Johnny Bull.

"The chuckfulness is the proper caper."

"Go it!"

Whereupon Mr. Walker's fiery eloquence suddenly ceased, and he turned and raced along the towpath. Puffing and blowing, he vanished down the river. His hatless head disappeared beyond the willows.

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"Fancy that innocent bird thinking he could scare this Co.!" he remarked. "He will know better next time."

And the chums of the Remove returned to jam-tarts and ginger-pop, dismissing Mr. Walker from their minds. In the middle of the stream Mr. Walker's ancient "boater" twirled on the current, and finally sank. Mr. Walker had lost his hat, which was no great loss. But owing to a strange chain of circumstances yet to be unfolded Mr. Walker was destined to be provided with a new hat by the time the chums of the Remove saw him again.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Has a Brainwave!

MR. QUELCH rose from the table in his study, with a sigh of relief. He had been correcting papers for his Form, and now the last paper lay corrected on the top of a neat little pile.

Mr. Quelch was now free, for a little while, from his multifarious duties.

It was a little cooler, and Mr. Quelch was going out for a walk, so the Remove master was feeling in a rather more benignant frame of mind.

From a hat-box Mr. Quelch took a handsome silk-hat. He was going to the vicarage, and on such occasions Mr. Quelch sported his topper.

Likewise, he was going to call at a shop as he passed through Friardale and pay a little account.

For this reason, Mr. Quelch took out his notecase and examined the contents,

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to ascertain that he was sufficiently provided with the wherewithal, Mr. Quelch being a very careful and methodical gentleman.

In the notecase were two pound notes and a ten-shilling note. This, to a swift arithmetician like Mr. Quelch, was obviously not enough to pay an account of three pounds ten shillings and sixpence.

Mr. Quelch unlocked the money-drawer in his desk, and from the interior extracted a banknote for five pounds.

He laid this on his desk, while he carefully relocked the money-drawer and replaced the key-ring in his pocket. In all such matters Henry Samuel Quelch was carefulness itself.

At this point there came an interruption. There was a knock at the study door, and it opened immediately. Mr. Prout stepped in.

Mr. Quelch suppressed a sigh. Prout, the master of the Fifth, had the chatty expression on his plump face that his colleague knew and dreaded. Prout had dropped in for a chat.

"My dear Quelch! You are not busy!" said Mr. Prout.

"I was about——" began Quelch. But he had no time to mention that he was about to go out.

"I see you are not!" said Prout, in his genial, chatty way.

"The fact is——" said Quelch.

"A warm day," said Prout, sinking into Mr. Quelch's armchair. "A very warm day, Quelch! I hardly remember so warm a day as this since I was in the Rockies in—now, what year was it?"

Quelch breathed rather hard.

"Nineteen five, was it?" said Prout reminiscently. "Or was it nineteen four? One's memory is not so good as it was, Quelch. Not so good as in the days when Plancus was Consul, what? Ha, h'm!"

"Oh, quite!" said Mr. Quelch. "But the fact is——"

"After all, the precise year is immaterial," said Prout. "But well I remember that day—the day I shot my first grizzly."

Looking at Mr. Prout, no one would have suspected that he had been a great hunter of big game in the dear dead days beyond recall. But anyone who knew Prout could not fail to be aware of it, for Prout told his hunting stories over and over again, and all Common-room knew them by heart.

Mr. Quelch looked restive.

By cutting out that call in the village he would have time to listen to Prout before he had to start for the vicarage. But he did not want to listen to Prout. Nobody ever wanted to listen to Prout. Very much indeed Mr. Quelch did not want to listen to Prout.

But it was not easy to stop Prout when his chin was once in action. Mr. Prout had time to spare, and he enjoyed a chat. It never occurred to Prout that he had the enjoyment all to himself.

Quite unobservant of Mr. Quelch's restlessness, Prout rolled on with it. Mr. Quelch, with a sigh, resigned himself to his fate.

But again came an interruption, and this time it was a great relief. Trotter, the House page, tapped, and put in his head.

"What is it, Trotter?" asked Mr. Quelch.

Trotter gave the welcome information that the Head desired to speak to Mr. Quelch if he had a few minutes to spare.

"You will excuse me, Prout!" said the Remove master; and he left the study immediately after Trotter.

Prout was left with his grizzly half-killed, as it were.

He rose from Mr. Quelch's armchair with rather an effort; Prout had a good deal of weight to lift. He rolled along to Mr. Capper's study to resume his chat, with the master of the Fourth as the happy victim. Mild Mr. Capper had to listen to the slaying of Prout's grizzly on that warm day in the Rockies in nineteen four or five from the beginning to the bitter end. Before the end was reached Mr. Capper was almost wishing that the circumstances had been reversed, and that the grizzly had slain Prout.

Mr. Quelch's study was left untenanted.

It had been untenanted for exactly three minutes when the half-hour after five chimed out from the clock-tower, and as the chime died away a fat figure arrived at the study door.

Billy Bunter blinked in.

Bunter had been commanded to bring THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,226.

his imposition to his Form master at half-past five.

He had not brought it. What he had brought was an excuse for not having brought it.

Nobody had been willing to write out that impot for Bunter. The selfishness to which Bunter was sadly accustomed seemed more in evidence than ever on that hot summer day. As for writing it himself, that was practically impossible. Laziness stood like a lion in the path.

Bunter, therefore, had arrived to explain to Mr. Quelch that after he had written the impot that he hadn't written, his study-mate, Peter Todd, had carelessly and inadvertently used it to light the fire in the study, to boil the kettle for tea.

Bunter hoped that this would satisfy Mr. Quelch.

At the worst, he considered, Quelch could only tell him to write it out again; and as it hadn't been written out at all, that would be all right.

He would gain time. And there was a remote possibility that Quelch might forget to ask for it next day.

On the other hand, Mr. Quelch might not believe Bunter's statement. More than once he had doubted Bunter's word, much to Bunter's indignation.

However, as the fat Owl hadn't done the task, he had to say something, and he had come to his Form master's study to say it. But he was in rather a state of trepidation when he arrived.

"If you please, sir—" began Bunter, as he rolled in.

Then he observed that the study was empty.

He grunted.

The beast had told him to come at half-past five. It was half-past five and he had come. And the beast wasn't there!

That would not have mattered had Bunter brought his task with him. He could have left it on the table and departed.

But he had brought an excuse, instead of an impot; and obviously he could not leave the excuse on the table.

He decided to wait for Quelch. Apparently Quelch was going out, as his hat lay on the table, ready. But he couldn't have gone yet, as his hat was there. He had to come back for that.

Bunter hoped that he would not be long. He was anxious to get the ordeal over. The more he reflected on the story he had made up for Quelch the thinner it seemed, and he almost—though not quite—wished that he had exerted himself to the extent of writing out the imposition. It was brutal of the beast to keep a fellow on tenterhooks, like this.

Waiting for Mr. Quelch, Billy Bunter looked inquisitively at the master's desk. Bunter was as inquisitive as a monkey. He wondered, too, whether a fellow could venture to mix up some of the papers, or pour the contents of the gum bottle into the inkwell, just as a retaliation for those two swishes in the Form-room. It would not do, of course, if Quelch found him in the study. On the other hand, he could easily slip out of the study before Quelch came, and pretend that he had never been there. Veracity had never troubled Bunter.

He yearned to make Quelch sit up. Quelch had made Bunter sit up, and one good turn deserved another.

"Oh crikey!" ejaculated Bunter. He stared at the banknote lying on the desk.

Careful gentleman as he was, methodical to the finger-tips, Mr. Quelch had left the five-pound note lying on the desk, beside his notecase. It was

Prout's fault, for interrupting him; but there it was!

Bunter grinned.

This was his chance!

Quelch was well known to be close with money. If anything could make him sit up, missing money would do it.

Bunter, probably, was the only fellow at Greyfriars obtuse enough to play tricks with money. But Bunter was obtuse enough for that, or anything else. His fat brain moved in mysterious ways its wonders to perform.

He picked up the banknote and blinked round the study. His big idea was to hide it. Quelch would be in a frightful bate by the time he found it. The frightfuler the bate Quelch was in the better Bunter would be pleased. A beast who had swished Bunter and given him an impot on a hot day deserved boiling in oil. Boiling in oil was impracticable; but at least the Owl of the Remove could give Quelch a hunt for his banknote.

He chuckled as he blinked at the silk-hat on the table.

"He, he, he!"

He picked up the hat. In a few seconds the banknote was slipped under the inside lining.

It would be a long time before Quelch found it there!

Bunter chortled.

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Then he rolled to the door. Having played that masterly jape on Mr. Quelch, it was obvious, even to Bunter's limited intellect, that he had better not be found in the study.

He put his head out of the doorway and blinked to and fro. The passage was deserted.

Bunter rolled out of the study. He realised that there was no time to waste. Quelch might appear in the ofing at any moment. As soon as he was in the passage he ran.

He reached the corner from one direction just as Mr. Hacker, the master of the Shell, coming along to his study, reached it from the other direction.

Mr. Hacker came round the corner at a sedate and leisurely pace, as befitted a Form master of Greyfriars. Bunter, on the other hand, went round it like a charging walrus.

Crash!

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

"Goodness gracious!" exclaimed Mr. Hacker.

Bunter staggered from the shock. Mr. Hacker almost sat down. Bunter's charge had plenty of weight behind it.

"You—you—you—" gasped Mr. Hacker.

"Oh crumbs! Ow!" roared Bunter, as the master of the Shell gripped a fat ear between a finger and thumb that felt like a pair of pincers.

"You clumsy young rascal!" exclaimed Mr. Hacker.

"Yaroooh!"

Bunter tore his ear away and fled. Mr. Hacker, with a snort, went on to Masters' Passage, gasping as he went. He went into his study and slammed the door.

Five minutes later Mr. Quelch came hurriedly along the passage and entered his study. He picked up his silk-hat and hurried out again. He had barely time, after so many delays, to arrive at the vicarage in time to keep his appointment with Mr. Lambe, and no time at all to make his intended call in the village. In the circumstances Mr. Quelch failed to remember the notecase and banknote he had left on his desk; and as he walked to the vicarage he certainly never dreamed that he was carrying the banknote with him in the lining of his hat!

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Something Serious!

"MIND your step!" said the Bounder.

"What's up?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Quelch's on the jolly old warpath!"

"But what's the row?" asked Bob Cherry.

Smithy shrugged his shoulders. "Goodness knows! But something's up. I passed Quelch a minute ago and he looked like a thundercloud. He's got it in for somebody."

"It's the weather," said Bob. "The heat affects these old gents. Luckily, we're done with Quelch till to-morrow, except for roll-call. And he can't very well rag a man at call-over."

"He's got it in for somebody!" said Vernon-Smith. "I've never seen him look quite so ratty before. You men been up to anything?"

"Not guilty!" said Nugent, with a laugh.

"He's been ratty all day!" growled Skinner. "I'm jolly well fed-up with Quelch, I can tell you."

"Better not let him hear you say so again!" chuckled Bob.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's up with Quelch, Bunter?"

"Eh? How should I know?"

"Well, you generally know everything," said Bob. "Mean to say you haven't been listening at any keyholes to-day?"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"You men seen Quelch?" Peter Todd joined the group. "I say, something's up with Quelch. He looks as if he's going to bite!"

"He was all right when he came in," said the Bounder. "I saw him come in, and he looked quite tame. But when he came out of his study afterwards he looked as black as thunder."

"Somebody been japing his study while he was out, perhaps," suggested Johnny Bull.

"He, ho, he!"

That fat cachinnation caused all eyes to turn on Bunter.

"My hat! You silly owl, have you been japing Quelch?" exclaimed the captain of the Remove.

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"What have you been up to, Bunter?" demanded Bob.

"Nothing, old chap. I don't know anything about it. I haven't been to Quelch's study at all," explained Bunter. "I never went there to tell him why I hadn't done my impot. Besides, he wasn't there, and I came away again."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! I say, you fellows, don't you get making out that I've been to Quelch's study!" exclaimed Bunter anxiously. "Don't you get me into a row, you know."

"You benighted idiot!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "What have you been up to in Quelch's study?"

"Nothing, old chap. I haven't been near his study. The fact is, I went out immediately after class!" said Bunter. "I've walked miles and miles across Courtfield Common. You know what a demon I am for walking."

"But you said Quelch wasn't there, and you came away again!" shrieked Bob Cherry.

"Yes, that's right, old chap; he wasn't there," said Bunter. "I fancy he was called away suddenly, or something."

"And you haven't been to the study?"

"Oh, no! I've been down to Friardale."

"You—you—" gasped Bob. "How do you know that Quelch wasn't in the study if you didn't go to the study?"

Billy Bunter started.

"Eh? Oh I—I don't know! I don't know anything about it! You see, immediately after class I went for a ride on the motor-bus to Redclyffe. I've only just got back. So—so I can't have been near his study, can I?"

The juniors gazed at the fat and fatuous Owl.

"Why did they send him to Greyfriars if there was a vacancy in any home for idiots?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"So it was Bunter!" said the Bouncer, with a chuckle. "Fancy Bunter having the nerve to jape Quelch on a hot day, too! What did you do, Bunter?"

"Nothing," howled Bunter. "Don't you start making out that I've done anything, Smithy! I call it mean."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I've been writing a letter home," said Bunter warmly. "I've been at it ever since class. I haven't left my study for a single moment till I came down just now for call-over. So—"

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Bob. "If Quelch asks you, are you going to tell him that you were in your study writing a letter home, walking across Courtfield Common, going down to Friardale, and taking a ride on the Redclyffe motor-bus, all at the same time? Some alibi!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"An alibi can be overdone!" chuckled the Bouncer.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! There's the jolly old bell!" said Bob Cherry; and the juniors joined the crowd going into Hall for call-over.

It was Mr. Quelch's duty to take call-over that evening; and the Removites found their Form master in Hall. The news had spread that something had happened to get Quelch's rag out, as the juniors rather irreverently expressed it; and most of the

Form regarded him with some curiosity.

Mr. Quelch was very calm and very quiet, as he called the roll; but it was easy for the fellows to see that his "rag" was, indeed, out!

There was a glinting of the gimlet eyes, a compression of the lips, and an edge to Mr. Quelch's voice, which betrayed the fact that he was suppressing his emotions.

Something, evidently, had happened—something rather out of the common. Mr. Quelch had been cross in the Form-room that day; but this was not merely a case of cross temper.

It was serious; and the Removites

and a banknote for five pounds lying on my desk."

The Remove hardly breathed.

"During my absence," went on Mr. Quelch, his voice growing deeper, "someone entered my study and removed the banknote."

"Oh!"

It was a gasp from all the Remove. "The notecase," said Mr. Quelch, "was still where I had left it. Its contents were untouched, but the banknote had been removed."

"Great pip!" murmured Bob Cherry. "The great pipfulness is terrific."

"I have made a careful—indeed, meticulous—search of my study," continued Mr. Quelch. "I have ascertained beyond doubt that the banknote is not there. It was removed during my absence. I have made inquiries, and ascertained that none of the servants visited my study. Some Greyfriars boy entered the room and abstracted the banknote. No boy other than a member of the Remove can have done so. The matter rests with my Form."

The juniors thrilled.

They had guessed that the matter was serious; but they had not guessed how awfully serious it was.

It could not very well have been more serious! A



A wash was what Mr. Walker needed most, and the Famous Five promptly saw that he got it. Splash! "Ooooooh!" The tramp rolled through the grass into the shallows under the bank.

wondered what it was. Fellows in other Forms noticed that something was "up" with Quelch; but they did not worry about it. It was for the Remove to worry.

There was something like consternation in the Remove when they received an order to remain in Hall after roll was called and the rest of the school dismissed.

Evidently the thing was serious, whatever it was; and apparently it concerned the whole of the Form.

There were fellows in the Remove who had sins of commission or omission on their youthful consciences; and they looked at the grave, grim face of their Form master very uneasily indeed.

"My boys," said Mr. Quelch—and his voice was very deep—"I am compelled to allude to a matter of a very serious and very disagreeable nature."

The juniors wondered breathlessly what was coming next.

"I was, absent from the House for an hour this afternoon!" resumed Mr. Quelch. "Owing to an interruption just before I went out, I left my notecase

banknote had been taken from the Form master's study. That implied theft—and theft meant expulsion for the thief, when discovered.

"Some boy here present," said Mr. Quelch, his gimlet eye glittering over his Form, "entered my study during my absence and took the banknote. I call upon that boy to stand forward."

Not a man in the Remove stirred.

"No takers!" murmured the Bouncer. There was a long pause.

Probably Mr. Quelch did not expect the culprit to step forward and own up. It would have been expecting rather a lot.

If he did expect it, however, he was disappointed. There were, as the Bouncer put it, no takers!

Mr. Quelch broke the breathless silence.

"I should be glad to settle the matter at once, with as little publicity and scandal as possible. If, however, the boy concerned does not immediately step forward, the matter passes out of my hands into those of Dr. Locke. I give him one more opportunity."

Harry Wharton & Co. glanced involuntarily at Bunter.

Bunter, they could not doubt, had been in Quelch's study while the Form master was gone out.

Certainly, they would not have suspected Bunter of stealing a banknote!

Had Mr. Quelch left a cake or a jam-tart on his table, during his absence, nobody would have doubted that Bunter had bagged it. But money was quite a different thing.

In matters of tuck, Billy Bunter had no sense whatever of the distinction between "moum" and "tuum." But even Bunter had brains enough to know that taking money was stealing.

Still, it was clear to the chums of the Remove that Bunter had been on the spot! They looked at Bunter.

To their astonishment, the Owl of the Remove gave them a fat wink! To their utter amazement, Bunter seemed entertained, amused, almost hilarious.

Bunter was the only fellow in the Remove who saw anything amusing in the state of affairs! But evidently Bunter did!

There was another long silence. Again Mr. Quelch was disappointed if he had any expectation that the delinquent would step out and ask for the "chopper."

"Very well," said Mr. Quelch, at last, compressing his lips, "I shall report the matter to the headmaster, and inquiry will follow. You are dismissed."

And the Remove, in a state of breathless excitement, streamed out of Hall.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

A Shock for Bunter!

THIEF in the Remove.

It was impossible — incredible!

It was not to be thought of for a moment!

Only, unfortunately, it had to be thought of!

The excited Removites gathered in the Rag to discuss the matter. Billy Bunter rolled away to his study. He did not need to discuss the matter; he knew all there was to be known. But the rest of the Lower Fourth were in a ferment.

"Quelch's an ass!" declared Bolsover major. "Making out there's a thief in the Form. The man's a fool!"

"I guess banknotes can't walk away!" said Fisher T. Fish, shaking his head.

"Quelch has lost it, of course!" said Squiff.

"Dropped it somewhere!" said Hazeldene.

"Quelch isn't the man to do that!" said Harry Wharton quietly. "He's awfully careful with money."

"Jolly careful—to leave a banknote lying on his desk!" snorted Bolsover major. "Careless ass, if you ask me."

"Well, yes; still, he's not the man to drop banknotes about," said the captain of the Remove. "But—I can't believe there's a thief in the Remove! That's too awfully thick!"

"The thickfulness is preposterously terrific!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, with a shake of his dusky head.

"But what's become of the jolly old banknote?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Goodness knows!"

"Somebody's pinched it," said Skinner, "and I fancy Bunter could tell us who it was."

"Bunter!" exclaimed a dozen voices.

"Rot!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Rubbish!" snorted Bob Cherry.

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Skinner shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, we jolly well know that Bunter went to Quelch's study while he was out! He says he didn't—which is proof that he did."

"Something in that!" grinned Snoop.

"Bunter wouldn't steal!" said Harry Wharton. "That's bosh!"

"No fellow's tuck is safe from him," sneered Skinner.

"That's different," said the captain of the Remove sharply. "Bunter's a fat idiot; but he's not a thief!"

"Well, who had the banknote?" demanded Skinner.

But that was a question to which no man in the Remove could find an answer.

Harry Wharton & Co. went up to the Remove passage, leaving the Rag in a buzz of excited discussion and surmise.

The Famous Five were feeling worried.

Unless Mr. Quelch was mistaken in the matter—which seemed incredible—a theft had been committed in his study. And there was little doubt that Bunter had been there. They could not suspect Bunter of theft; but, on the other hand, there was no fellow in the Remove who could be suspected of such a mean crime. And it was certain that Bunter's ideas on the subject of property were very dubious. In matters of tuck, at least, he was a Bolshevik.

"It can't have been Bunter, you men," said Harry Wharton. "But—but, if you come to that, it can't have been anybody—and it was somebody, I suppose! I—I think we'd better speak to Bunter."

"Just thinking the same!" agreed Bob.

"The samfulness is terrific!"

The Famous Five walked along to Study No. 7. They found William George Bunter there.

He greeted them with a fat and cheery grin.

Bunter, evidently, was the only fellow in the Form who was not worried and dismayed by the awful state of affairs. Still, that could hardly point to guilt. The guilty party might have been expected to feel the most worried and troubled of all.

"I say, you fellows," chortled Bunter, "old Quelch is in a frightful bate, isn't he? He, he, he!"

"It's a serious matter, Bunter," said Harry.

"He, he, he! Awfully serious for old Quelch!" grinned Bunter. "Let him hunt for his banknote! He, he, he! Serve him right for licking a fellow in class!"

The juniors exchanged glances.

"What do you know about it, Bunter?" asked Whartonn quietly. It was only too clear that the fat Owl knew something, though the juniors could not make out what it was.

"Oh, nothing!" said Bunter airily.

"Nothing at all! No good asking me about it, when I don't know anything! He, he, he!"

"You went to Quelch's study while he was out," said Harry. "For goodness' sake, Bunter, if you've done a silly, fat-headed thing, own up at once. Quelch knows what a fool you are, and he may go easy—"

"Catch me!" said Bunter derisively.

"Why, it would mean six, at least!"

"Six?" repeated Wharton. "You crass ass, it means the sack!"

Bunter blinked at him through his big spectacles. This, apparently, was a new and startling idea to the fatuous Owl of the Remove.

"The sack?" he repeated.

"Yes, you benighted chump!"

"Oh, don't be a goat, you know!" said Bunter. "Quelch is a beast, but he wouldn't ask the Head to sack a man for a jape."

"A—a—a jape?" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

"You've been japing Quelch!" yelled Johnny Bull. "Japing with a man's banknote?"

"Is even Bunter idiot enough for that?" exclaimed Nugent, aghast.

"Bunter is esteemed idiot enough for anything!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "His idiotfulness is terrific!"

"Oh, really, you fellows—"

"For goodness' sake, Bunter, what have you been up to?" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "Can't you see that the matter's serious?"

"He, he, he!"

Apparently Bunter couldn't.

"Quelch has gone to the Head about it!" roared Johnny Bull.

"He, he, he!" cachinnated Bunter.

"Let him go! He, he, he! They can jolly well hunt for the banknote together! I wish 'em joy of it! He, he, he!"

And the fatuous Owl fairly doubled up with mirth.

The Famous Five gazed at him blankly.

"You howling chump!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Can't you understand? It's the sack! You'll be turfed out of Greyfriars if you've bagged that banknote!"

"Rats! He, he, he!"

"Do you think they'll let a thief stay in the school?" howled Johnny Bull.

Billy Bunter gave a jump.

"A—a—a what?" he yelped.

"A thief, you fat dummy! Haven't you brains enough to know that a fellow who steals is a thief?"

Bunter ceased to chortle.

He blinked at the juniors, with his little round eyes wide open behind his big round spectacles.

For the first time a dim understanding of the seriousness of the matter dawned on Bunter's fat brain.

His jaw dropped.

"Wha-a-at?" stuttered Bunter. "You beast! Wharrer you mean? Mean to say that old Quelch thinks that the banknote is pinched?"

"Oh crumbs!" said Bob. "Didn't you hear what he said in Hall? What do you think he thinks?"

Billy Bunter gazed at the juniors in growing horror. Obviously he had not understood what Mr. Quelch had said in Hall. This was his first intimation that the Remove master believed the banknote to have been stolen.

"Oh crickey!" gurgled Bunter. "You—you—you think he thinks that the banknote was pinched?"

"Of course he does, you fathead! What the dickens else can he think, when it's missing?" exclaimed Bob.

"Oh lor!"

Bunter collapsed into the armchair.

All his merriment had vanished now. He blinked at the Removites in terror.

"Pip-pip-pinched!" he gasped. "Oh lor! Oh crumbs! Oh crickey! Why, that means the sack! Oh, holy smoke! B-b-but it wasn't pinched!"

"You awful idiot!" said Wharton.

"You've played a silly trick with Quelch's banknote! Is that it? Thank goodness it's no worse! Have you hidden it somewhere?"

"Oh dear!" moaned Bunter.

"Take it back at once!"

"Oh crickey!"

"Quelch may believe you—he knows what a howling ass you are—"

"Oh jiminy!"

"Look here, Bunter—"

"Pinched!" gasped Bunter. "N-now I come to think of it, Quelch might think it was pinched! Oh dear! Sacked! Oh lor! Bunked! Oh crikey! I—I say, you fellows, I—I don't know anything about it!"

"What?" roared Bob Cherry. "Nothing at all!" gasped Bunter. "Not a thing! I—I never went to Quelch's study! I never saw the banknote on his desk! I never touched it! I never knew he had a banknote! I—I don't believe he ever had one, really! He—he dreamed it!"

"Oh, my hat!" "There was no banknote in the study!" gasped Bunter. "I'm prepared to swear that there was no banknote on the desk when I was in the study! And I never was in the study at all! Never went anywhere near it!"

"Take it back to Quelch before it's too late, you a wful idiot!" gasped Nugent.

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

"Can't you see it's your last chance?" roared Bob.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Where is it?" demanded Wharton.

"How should I know where it is, when I haven't touched it?" gasped Bunter. "How was I to know that the old ass would think it was pinched? Oh dear! I call it beastly suspicious! Of course, I know nothing whatever about it. I hope you fellows can take my word."

"Take your word!" repeated Wharton dazedly.

"Yes, rather!" said Bunter warmly. "I expect my pals to take my word. It's a bit rotten, I think, to doubt a fellow's word. Ungentlemanly."

"Oh, jumping Moses!" gasped Bob Cherry. He felt that William George Bunter was really too much for him.

Peter Todd came into the study. He glanced inquiringly at the serious faces of the Famous Five.

"What's up?" he asked. "I say, Peter, you stand by a chap!" exclaimed Bunter, before the chums of the Remove could speak. "I say, Peter, they're trying to make out that I know something about Quelch's banknote, making out that I went to his study and pinched it. You know I wouldn't, don't you, Toddy, old chap?"

"What the thump—" said Toddy. "The howling ass has been japing with Quelch's fiver," explained Wharton.

"Playing an idiotic trick on Quelch." "Great Scott!"

"I haven't!" yelled Bunter. "I keep on telling you that I don't know anything about it! They're doubting my word, Peter."

"You don't say so!" ejaculated Peter Todd.

"I do, old chap. Actually doubting a fellow's word!" said Bunter. "Low, I call it! Ungentlemanly! Turn them out of the study, Toddy! Butting into a man's study, and doubting his word—"

"You howling idiot!" shrieked Bob. "Take the banknote back to Quelch before he starts the Head on the job."

"Beast!" "It's your last chance, Bunter!" said Wharton.

"Rotter!" "Can't you see?" exclaimed Nugent. "Yah!"

Harry Wharton & Co. left the study. Evidently it was useless to argue with William George Bunter. Now that he knew that the banknote was supposed to have been stolen, the fatuous Owl was scared out of his fat wits. His one idea

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Skinner Hits Back!

"SAFE as houses!" said Skinner. "Um!" said Snoop. Harold Skinner seemed confident.

Sidney James Snoop, on the other hand, was dubious.

It was the following day, Wednesday—a half-holiday at Greyfriars School. It was a glorious afternoon, and most of the Greyfriars fellows found life worth living.

True, there was a worry on many minds in the Remove. The missing banknote was still missing. Nothing had been discovered so far, and until a discovery was made, the whole Form felt that they were under a cloud.

Mr. Quelch, extremely worried and

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was to take refuge, as usual, in a series of tremendous "whoppers." The fat Owl snorted indignantly as they went.

"Can't take a fellow's word—after all I've done for them, too!" he ejaculated. "Fancy that, Toddy!"

Peter Todd looked at him. "What do you know about Quelch's banknote, Bunter?" he asked.

"Nothing, old chap!"

"If you do—"

"I don't!"

"Before it's too late—"

"I've had that from those beasts!" snorted Bunter indignantly. "I tell you I never saw the banknote! It wasn't on Quelch's desk. And I never went near the study. He dropped it somewhere out of doors, of course. And I jolly well don't believe there ever was a banknote at all. And that's all about it, Toddy!"

And with that, Bunter rolled out of Study No. 7, leaving Toddy staring.

irritated by what had happened, had been far from pleasant in the Form-room that morning.

Lines had fallen as thick as leaves in Vallombrosa of old, and there had been canings not a few.

The Remove realised that the mysterious theft in his study had deeply disturbed their Form master, and that until the matter was elucidated and done with, Quelch was likely to be like a bear with a sore head.

Which was not agreeable for the Remove. Still, when class was over, the fellows mostly dismissed the matter from their minds, in the happy way of schoolboys, satisfied with the present, and leaving the future to take care of itself.

Harry Wharton & Co., and the Remove cricketers, were on Little Side, playing a Form match with the Shell. Other fellows were watching the game; others pursuing their own various avocations. Skinner and Snoop were in THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,226.

the window-seat on the Remove landing, conversing in low tones.

"I tell you it's safe as houses," repeated Skinner. "Quelch has gone out with Prout. They'll be hours."

"Um!" said Snoop again.

Skinner rubbed his hands.

"I've been licked this morning, and licked yesterday," he said. "So have you, Snoopy! Quelch is taking it out of us because somebody's pinched his blessed fiver."

"Well, our con was pretty rotten," said Snoop.

"Oh, don't jaw! Look here, are you game?" demanded Skinner. "I'm not asking you to come into the room. You keep watch outside."

"Somebody might come up—"

"Oh, rot! Besides, if you hear anybody on the stairs, whistle and bunk."

"Oh, all right," said Snoop, making up his mind at last.

"Come on, then," said Skinner briskly.

He slipped from the window-seat and led the way. On that bright and sunny half-holiday, the House was almost deserted. The coast seemed absolutely clear, as the two young rascals scuttled along a passage that gave them access to the masters' quarters.

Mr. Quelch's room was over his study, and that it was vacant was certain, as the Remove master had been seen to walk out with Mr. Prout.

Skinner opened the door cautiously and peered in.

"Whistle if you hear anybody!" he whispered; and Snoop nodded.

"Buck up, though!" he muttered un-

easily.

And Skinner slipped into the room.

He glanced round quickly. He did not need Snoop's injunction to buck up. Clear as the coast seemed, Skinner was well aware that he was in dangerous quarters, and he was in a hurry to get through.

He was looking for Mr. Quelch's hat-box, and his eyes fell on it immediately. He whipped off the lid.

Inside the box reposed the handsome silk topper which Mr. Quelch had sported the previous day on his visit to the vicarage.

Skinner jerked it out.

Into the empty box he dropped a card, on which was printed, in large capital letters, the single word, "Rats."

That impertinent message was to greet Mr. Quelch's startled eyes the next time he wanted his topper. The topper itself would not be available.

Skinner closed the hat-box, and slipped the topper into a paper bag he drew from his pocket and unfolded.

Then he hurried out of the room, closed the door, and rejoined Snoop.

"All serene!" breathed Snoop. "But buck up!"

"Come on!"

The two young rascals scudded away.

The whole thing had occupied only a few minutes. Skinner was grinning, but Snoop was breathless and uneasy when they reached the Remove landing again with their prize.

"What are you going to do with it?" asked Snoop.

"Take it out and chuck it away," answered Skinner coolly.

"I say, Quelch gives thirty-five bob for his toppers, I've heard."

"All the better. He wouldn't be so jolly handy with the cane if he knew that canings might cost him thirty-five bob a time."

Snoop chuckled.

"But you'll be spotted," he said. "Fellows are bound to notice a thing like that under your arm."

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"I'm going to make it smaller," explained Skinner.

He proceeded to make the topper smaller by a simple process. He placed it on the floor and jumped on it.

There was a horrid crunch.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Snoop. "Ha, ha, ha! I say, that tile wouldn't be much use to Quelch now, even if he got it back."

Crunch, crunch, crunch!

Harold Skinner stamped cheerfully on the hat. By the time he had finished it was more like a concertina than a hat.

He picked it up, slipped it into the paper bag again, and chuckled. In its present shape the topper could easily be slipped out of sight under his jacket. A silk-hat in its natural form is rather a bulky article to conceal; but well trodden on, it does not take up much room.

"Come on!" said Skinner cheerily.

Skinner and Snoop went down, and strolled out of the House. They walked to the gates and sauntered out. Skinner was in great spirits; though his comrade had a lingering uneasiness.

"Quelch will be frightfully wild!" remarked Snoop.

"That's what I want," said Skinner.

"He may go for his hat in a hurry to go somewhere—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Skinner.

"Well, better get rid of it."

"There's a rubbish-heap near Friar-dale—I'll chuck it there."

And having arrived at the rubbish-heap near the village, Skinner, after a cautious glance round, took the crushed topper from the paper bag, gave it a hefty kick, and sent it hurling through the air to land among a collection of old tin cans and broken bottles and other disused articles.

After which the young rascals walked back to Greyfriars—Snoop still a little uneasy, but Skinner grinning cheerfully.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

The Pinchers!

"LOOK out!" exclaimed Temple of the Fourth.

Cecil Reginald Temple seemed quite alarmed.

Dabney and Fry stared for a moment, then they grinned.

The three heroes of the Fourth were lounging in the doorway of the school shop. From the direction of the cricket-field, five juniors in flannels came along, in search of the refreshing ginger-pop.

Harry Wharton & Co. glanced at the Fourth-formers. They could not help hearing Temple's alarmed exclamation, and it drew their attention to the three.

They glanced—then they stared! Cecil Reginald Temple was going through an elaborate motion of buttoning his pockets. Dabney and Fry followed his example.

For a moment the chums of the Remove did not understand. They simply stared. But Cecil Reginald Temple did not mean to leave any room for misunderstanding.

"Careful, you men!" he said. "Be-ware of pickpockets, you know."

"Oh, rather!" chuckled Dabney.

"What with banknotes and things missing, a man can't be too careful," Temple elaborated.

Then the Famous Five understood.

Evidently the heroes of the Fourth had heard of the banknote that was

missing from the Remove master's study. Equally evidently they were going to make the most of it.

Not that Temple & Co., of course, supposed that the Famous Five knew anything of a missing banknote. But it was a chance to score one over the Remove, and Temple & Co. were going to rub it in.

"Why, you silly, fatheaded, footling chumps!" exclaimed Johnny Bull in great wrath.

"Hallo! What's the matter with you?" asked Temple affably. "Can't a man take care not to have his pockets picked?"

"Are you calling us pickpockets?" bawled Johnny Bull.

"Not in the least, dear boy! I haven't the faintest idea which man in the Remove does the pinchin'," answered Temple blandly.

"Is that your idea of a joke?" asked Harry Wharton quietly.

"I'm not jokin'. I understand that you've got pinchers in the Remove—fellows who pinch banknotes and things when a man's not lookin'. Isn't it the case?" asked Temple blandly.

Harry Wharton did not answer that question.

He made a sign to his chums, and the Famous Five made a rush.

Up to that moment Temple & Co. had been smiling cheerily. They felt that they had the advantage.

But when the affair proceeded from words to actions, the advantage undoubtedly lay with the Removes.

Temple, Dabney and Fry were grasped, and yanked out of the doorway of the tuckshop, and rolled on the hard, unsympathetic earth.

"Oh gad!" yelled Temple.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Fry.

"Oh! Owl! Wow!" roared Dabney.

"Give them jip!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Give them beans! Give them toco!"

"The tocofulness is terrific!" chuckled the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh! Owl! Wow!" spluttered the hapless Temple, as he rolled and howled wildly. "Owl! Wow! Leggo! Chuck it! I was only jokin'—yarooocoh!"

"Well, we're only joking, too!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "We're terrific jokers, when we get going."

"Yow-owl! Leggo!"

"It's your idea of a joke to call a man a pickpocket! My idea of a joke is to bang his head on the ground—like that—"

"Yarooocoh!"

"And like that—"

"Whooooooop!"

"And to jam his cap down the back of his neck, like that—"

"Ooooooogh!"

"And to pull his nose—like that—"

"Groooooogh!"

"The dear man doesn't seem to be enjoying the joke now!" remarked Bob. "Losing your sense of humour, Temple, old top?"

"The jokefulness is terrific," chortled Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh, as he rubbed Edward Fry's features in the earth.

An agonised wail came from Fry of the Fourth.

Dabney, with his head banging against the trunk of an elm, yelled with anguish.

"There, I think that will do!" said Harry Wharton. "Temple can't help being a funny ass; but I'm sure he doesn't feel so funny now. Do you, Temple?"

"Yow-ow-owl! Wooooogh!"



"All kick together!" said the captain of the Remove.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Dusty and dishevelled, Temple & Co. fled frantically from lunging feet. Undoubtedly Cecil Reginald Temple wished that he had not been quite so funny.

The Famous Five walked into the tuckshop.

Several fellows were there, dealing with ginger-pop and ices. Among them was Horace Coker, of the Fifth Form, with Potter and Greene.

Some of the fellows were laughing, entertained by the scene in the doorway. Coker of the Fifth was frowning.

"Look here, you young sweeps, this is all very well!" said Coker, with a stern eye on the Famous Five.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's biting you, Horace?" asked Bob Cherry.

"I don't want any cheek from you, Cherry!" roared Coker.

"Well, I don't want any from you, old bean," said Bob mildly.

Coker wagged an admonitory forefinger at the Famous Five. Potter and Greene of the Fifth, exchanged a glance. Coker had been standing ices; and Potter and Greene had been standing Coker. But the ices were finished; and if Coker, as usual, was hunting for a row with a mob of fags, Potter and Greene had business elsewhere. They strolled to the door.

"From what I hear," said Coker, "there's stealing going on in your Form, Wharton. I understand that a banknote has been pinched."

"Gammon!" said Bob Cherry.

"Isn't it the case?" demanded Coker, staring at him.

"I mean it's gammon that you understand," explained Bob. "You don't understand anything, old bean. You haven't anything to do it with."

"The understandfulness of the esteemed and idiotic Coker is not terrific," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, shaking his head.

"You cheeky young sweeps!" gasped Coker.

"Look here, I can jolly well tell you that this sort of thing won't do. One of you young scoundrels in the Remove has been pinching. It's high time that the young scoundrel was found out and bunked. I don't know which of you it was—"

"You cheeky idiot!" exclaimed Johnny Bull.

"Shut up, Bull! Some fellow in the Remove is a pincher, and it may be one of you five, for all I know!" said

Coker. "I can jolly well tell you that pinchers are not wanted at Greyfriars!"

"You howling ass—"

"Shut up, Cherry! If you're the pincher—"

"I—I—I—" stuttered Bob.

"Well, it's one of you, and as likely to be you as

be surprised at my pinching! Here goes!"

And he pinched.

There was an agonised gurgle from Horace Coker. A yell of laughter came from the other fellows in the tuckshop.

The hapless Horace made a desperate effort to tear himself loose. His nose felt as if it were enclosed in a steel vice. When it came to pinching noses, at least, there was no doubt that Bob Cherry was a hefty pincher!

Coker's effort was in vain. Wharton held his right arm, Nugent his left, Hurree Jamset Ram Singh and Johnny Bull had a leg each. Coker of the Fifth was helpless in the hands of the Amalekites.

The grip on his nose was compressed, and Coker gurgled horribly.



There were three distinct stages in the mystery of Mr. Quelch's missing topper, and Harold Skinner was concerned in each. Our artist's pen portrays the three links in the mystery.



any other of the young scoundrels," said Coker, "and I can jolly well tell you—"

"Pincher!" gasped Bob. "My hat! I'll jolly well show you whether I'm a pincher! Back up, you men!"

The Famous Five hurled themselves on Coker of the Fifth. Temple & Co. of the Fourth had asked for it, and received that for which they had asked. Now Coker was asking for it; and the chums of the Remove were not the fellows to say him nay.

"Here, chuck that!" bawled Coker. "You young rascals—yaroooh—you young sweeps—whoop—oh, my hat!"

Bump! Horace Coker descended on the floor of the tuckshop with a mighty concussion.

"Yow-ow! Oh crumbs! Here, Potter, Greene—help—" spluttered Coker, as he struggled frantically in the clutch of five pairs of hands.

But Potter and Greene were gone. It was Coker's way to put his head into a hornet's-nest, and when Coker did so he was welcome to all the hornets he woke up, so far as Potter and Greene were concerned. Potter and Greene were strolling equably across the quad, and if they heard the roar of Horace Coker, they passed it by like the idle wind which they regarded not.

Coker, sprawling on the tuckshop floor, struggled. But an arm and a leg had been captured by four juniors, and Coker was held fast. Bob Cherry, left at liberty while his comrades held the spluttering Coker, fastened a finger and thumb on Coker's prominent nose.

"Pinchers pinch!" explained Bob. "If I'm a pincher, old bean, you can't

"Groooooooooooooogh!"

"Go ahead, you men," said Bob; "Coker says we're pinchers! Coker knows! Well, it's the business of pinchers to pinch."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Put some more life into it, Bull," said Bob cheerily. "We don't often get a chance like this. And you other fellows, too!"

"Yooooooooooooooooogh!" howled Coker, as the Famous Five pinched—each of them getting a finger-and-thumbful of Coker for the purpose.

"The pinchfulness is terrific," chortled Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow! Wow! Leggo!" yelled Coker. "Oh crikey! Oh gad! Oh crumbs! Leggo, you little beasts! Ow! Leave off pinching me! Yaroo'oooooooooh!"

"My dear man, you must expect pinchers to pinch—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yow-ow-ow! Help!" yelled Coker. The hapless Fifth-Former felt as if lumps were being taken out of him. The Famous Five were pinching in deadly earnest. "Ow! Yow! Stoppit! Oh crikey! Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker made a terrific effort and wrenched himself loose at last. He scrambled to his feet.

"Collar him!" yelled Bob.

Coker dodged to the doorway. It was frightfully undignified for a Fifth Form man to flee from juniors, mere fags of the Lower Fourth. But Coker forgot his dignity. He fled.

(Continued on page 16.)



(Continued from
page 13.)

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Beastly for Bunter!

"YOU fat villain——"
"Oh, really, Cherry——"
"You pernicious porpoise——"
"Oh, really, Wharton——"
"You benighted bandersnatch——"
"Oh, really, Nugent——"

"Ware beaks!" murmured Johnny Bull; and the fellows who were addressing Billy Bunter at the door of the Remove Form room became silent.

It was morning, and the Remove were ready for their Form master; but Mr. Quelch did not seem quite ready for his Form. For once, Quelch was a few minutes late.

The Remove fellows had been filling in the time by telling William George Bunter what they thought of him.

Many fellows in the Form knew, or at least felt sure, that Bunter was aware of what had become of the missing banknote.

Harry Wharton & Co. believed that he had played an obtuse trick with it. Other fellows took less good-natured views.

Skinner had no doubt that Bunter had pinched it; Fisher T. Fish guessed that it was a cinch that the fat guy had corralled it for keeps.

Anyhow, there was little doubt that Bunter could have elucidated the mystery had he liked.

The shadow of suspicion rested on the Remove. Temple, Dabney & Co. of the Fourth, and Coker of the Fifth, were not the only fellows who were chipping the Remove about it.

That very morning Hobson of the Shell had been funny on the subject; though it was true that Hobby was no longer feeling funny; he was feeling his nose to make sure that it was still there. It felt as if it wasn't, since Bob Cherry had punched it.

Plenty of other fellows chipped the Remove; and it was really impossible to serve all the noses at Greyfriars as Hobby's had been served.

But it was useless to slang Bunter. Since he had learned that the banknote was supposed to have been stolen, Bunter had been too frightened to speak.

His one idea was to deny all knowledge of the matter; and to that he stuck like a limpet to a rock.

Indeed, after a lapse of time, Bunter had reason for fright. Mr. Quelch might have believed that Bunter had hidden the banknote for a practical joke on him. But he might have believed that Bunter had pinched it, and lost his nerve afterwards.

In either case, the result would have been painful for Bunter. It was a licking for japing Quelch. It was the sack

for pinching. Neither prospect had any real appeal for Bunter.

Half a dozen of the Remove were going strong at the door of the Form-room, when Mr. Quelch appeared in sight, rustling up the passage.

They ceased to slang Bunter at once. Nobody really believed that Bunter was a thief, though all believed that he was an obtuse and exasperating ass. Not even Skinner or Fishy thought of giving him away to the powers.

So there was silence as Mr. Quelch arrived on the spot and opened the Form-room door for his Form.

Some of the fellows noticed that he gave the Owl of the Remove a grim, sharp look. They wondered whether Quelch had a special eye on Bunter.

It was well-known in the Lower Fourth that Quelch was a downy bird, and that fellows did not expect him to be permanently baffled by the mystery of the missing fiver.

"Quelch's up to something, you men!" whispered the Bounder, as the juniors took their places. "I know that shine in his jolly old eye."

"Looks as if he's going to bite!" agreed Bob.

"Silence!"
There was deep silence in the Form as Mr. Quelch rapped out the word. All eyes fixed on him.

Billy Bunter blinked at him with great uneasiness through his big spectacles. So far as the fatuous Owl could see, there was no evidence to connect him with the mysterious happening in Quelch's study on Tuesday. But he could not help feeling uneasy under Quelch's gimlet eye.

"Bunter!"
Mr. Quelch rapped out the name like a bullet.

"Oh lor'!" gasped Bunter.
"Bunter! Stand out before the Form."

"Quelch's got him!" breathed Smithy; and some of the fellows nodded. They guessed now that Henry Samuel Quelch was on the trail.

Billy Bunter dragged his fat person unwillingly out before the Form. He blinked in dismal apprehension at the stern face of his Form master.

"If—if you please, sir, it—it wasn't me!" stammered Bunter.

"What? What was not you, Bunter?"

"Nothing, sir! I mean, anything!"

"Bunter! Calm yourself, and give me an explicit answer," said Mr. Quelch. "Were you in my study during my absence on Tuesday afternoon?"

"Oh, no, sir!"
"Where were you on Tuesday after class?"

Bunter made a mental effort. He did not think, of course, of telling the truth. That was always a very final resource with William George Bunter.

A whopper was indicated. Bunter was not short of whoppers; but the fact was, he was spoilt for choice, as it were; having so many untruths to choose from. He had prepared several in case of need; but in the hour of need they were rather confused and mixed in his fat mind.

"I—I was in my study, sir!" he gasped.

"What were you doing in your study, Bunter?"

"I—I was talking to Toddy, sir."

"Will Todd bear out your statement, Bunter?"

"Oh lor'!" gasped Bunter. He realised that Toddy could not be relied upon to that extent. Toddy, for reasons

unknown to Bunter and incomprehensible to him, did not deal in whoppers. "Yes, sir—I mean, no, sir! Now I come to think of it, sir, I—I wasn't in my study! I—I went for a walk down to Friardale, sir."

"You had better be careful of your statements, Bunter."

"Oh, yes, sir! I—I'm always careful, sir!" groaned Bunter. "I—I'm rather particular about telling the exact truth, sir."

"I instructed you, Bunter, to take your imposition to my study at half-past five that day," said Mr. Quelch. "You did not do this; your imposition, indeed, has not yet been handed to me. But did you go to my study?"

"Oh, no, sir!"
"Did you go to Masters' Passage at all?"

"Nowhere near it, sir! The—the minute classes were over I—I started for Courtfield——"

"For Courtfield?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "You have stated that you went to Friardale, which is in the opposite direction."

"I—I—I mean——"

"Well, what do you mean, Bunter?"
"I—I mean, I—I went to Courtfield by way of Friardale, sir! It was—was rather a long walk round, but—but I'm rather a demon for walking, sir."

"Bunter, reflect before you answer me. I ask you, once more, whether you went to Masters' Studies after class on Tuesday?"

"Never, sir!" gasped Bunter.
"Then how did it happen," asked Mr. Quelch, in a grinding voice, "that Mr. Hacker met you rushing away from that passage, between half-past five and six o'clock on that afternoon?"

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.
The hapless Owl had completely forgotten that collision with the master of the Shell.

Bunter belonged to the class of persons who proverbially should have a good memory. But his memory was a very bad one. He could not even remember the untruths he told; though, as a matter of fact, a prodigious memory would have been required for such a feat as that.

"I have been making very extensive inquiries," said Mr. Quelch, "and Mr. Hacker, having remembered the circumstance, acquainted me with it this morning, Bunter."

The Remove understood now why Mr. Quelch had been late for class. Evidently the master of the Shell had stopped him on his way with that valuable piece of information.

"Mr. Hacker is certain," went on the Remove master, "that the incident occurred soon after half-past five on Tuesday afternoon. You were running from the direction of my study, and you collided with Mr. Hacker."

"I—I didn't, sir!"

"What?" roared Mr. Quelch.
"I—I—I mean, I—I never meant to run into him, sir!" gasped Bunter. "It was an accident, sir! I never saw him coming round the corner, sir! That's how it was!"

"Then you admit that you were there?"

"Oh, no, sir! I—I wasn't there!"
"What? You have just stated that you did not see Mr. Hacker coming round the corner——"

"No, sir! Not—not being there, I—I couldn't, could I, sir?" gasped Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Silence!" hooted Mr. Quelch, in a formidable voice. "This obtuse boy's prevarications are no subject for merriment. Bunter, Mr. Hacker assures me that his remembrance of the incident is

perfectly clear; and there is, consequently, no doubt whatever that you were in Masters' Passage at that time."

"Oh crikey!"
"What were you doing there, Bunter?"

"I—I went there to—to—to—I mean, I—I was just taking a—a stroll, sir!" groaned Bunter. "I never went to your study, sir! I wasn't going to tell you that Toddy had used my impot to light the study fire, sir! I—I never thought of such a thing!"

"Bunter! You went to my study to make some excuse for not handing in your imposition at the time you were instructed to do so."

Bunter blinked at him in dismay. He could not guess how Quelch knew this! It seemed like magic to Bunter.

"As you have denied having entered my study, and as you can have had only one reason for uttering falsehoods on the subject, I regard the matter as clear!" barked Mr. Quelch. "You were in the study when the banknote disappeared, and you have lied! Bunter, what did you do with the banknote?"

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

"Rats!"

BILLY BUNTER quaked. The Remove looked on breathlessly.

Matters were coming to a climax now.

That Bunter had been in the study when the banknote vanished had been known or suspected by all the Remove.

It was known now to the Remove master, beyond the shadow of a doubt.

Bunter was "for it."
The fat Owl realised dismally that he was "for it." Only the truth could save him now—if it could save him! The truth was a last, a desperate resource with William George Bunter. He disliked trusting himself to such an unaccustomed resource. But there was no help for it now; and there was a horrid doubt as to whether even the truth would be believed.

A pin might have been heard to drop in the Form-room for a few moments. Then Mr. Quelch spoke again:

"Answer my question, Bunter! What have you to say?"

"Oh crikey!"
"It is established that you were in my study when the banknote, which I left lying on my desk, disappeared. It follows that you were responsible for its disappearance. Speak!"

"Ow!"
"You removed the banknote, Bunter!"

"Oh dear!"
"If you have anything to say before I take you to your headmaster, to receive a sentence of expulsion from the school—"

"Yaroooh!"
"For the last time, Bunter—"
"I never pinched it!" howled Bunter, in dire terror. "I—I ain't a thief, sir! I told Wharton I never pinched it, sir! It was a jig-jig-jig—"

"It was what?"
"A jig-jig-joke, sir!" stuttered Bunter.

"A joke?" repeated Mr. Quelch.
"Oh dear! Yes, sir! I—I hid it, sir, just—just for a joke, sir!" groaned Bunter. "I—I thought it—it might amuse you, sir!"
"You—you—you thought it might amuse me!" gurgled Mr. Quelch.
"Yes, sir! I—I thought it—it might make you laugh, sir!"
"Bless my soul!"
"Ha, ha, ha!" came from the Remove.

Whether Bunter had hoped to amuse Mr. Quelch and make him laugh, or not, there was no doubt that he amused the Remove and made them laugh. They yelled.

"Silence!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "Bunter, is it possible that you are so stupid, so dense, so inexpressibly obtuse as to play foolish practical jokes with money?"

"Oh, yes, sir!" gasped Bunter. He did not mind being considered stupid, dense, and inexpressibly obtuse, so long as he was not sacked. "Oh, quite, sir!"

"I should be glad to believe your statement, Bunter," said Mr. Quelch. "I should, of course, punish you with the greatest severity for daring to play a practical joke on your Form master—"

"Oh crumbs!"
"But such an offence, serious as it is, is light in comparison with a theft. I shall give you every opportunity to prove your statement. You state that you removed the banknote for the purpose of a practical joke."
"Oh dear! Yes, sir!" groaned Bunter.

(Continued on next page.)

"Fine Score that!"

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"Then it is still in your possession. If you have made no attempt to change it I may be disposed to give some credit to your statement, incredible as it seems, that any boy in possession of his senses could be so stupid! Where is the banknote, Bunter?"

"I—I hid it, sir."
"Is it still in the hiding-place where you placed it?"

"I—I suppose so, sir."
"You have not removed it since?"

"Oh, no, sir!"
"No one else, I presume, could have found it, by chance—?"

"Only—only you, sir."
"I!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "What do you mean, Bunter? Where did you conceal the banknote?"

"In your hat, sir."
"In—in my hat!" gasped Mr. Quelch.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Silence! Bunter, I warn you not to prevaricate! Do you seriously state that you concealed the banknote in a hat belonging to me?"

"Oh dear! Yes, sir!"
"I have several hats," said Mr. Quelch. "In which hat?"

"In your topper, sir."
"Do you mean my silk-hat, Bunter?"

"Yes, sir. Your best goffer, sir."
"My what?" articulated Mr. Quelch.

"I mean your Sunday tile, sir!"
gasped Bunter. "Your topper, sir—the one you wear when you get yourself up!"

"Bunter! These extraordinary expressions!" gasped Mr. Quelch. "Make yourself clear, Bunter! You went to my room—"

"Oh, no, sir! Your goffer—I mean, your tile—that is, your topper, sir, was on the table in the study—"

"I remember now that I had placed it there," said Mr. Quelch, with a nod. "And you state that you were foolish enough, obtuse enough, ridiculous enough, to place a banknote inside a hat?"

"Oh dear! Yes, sir!"
"If your statement is correct, Bunter, it is very remarkable that the banknote did not fall out when I placed the hat on my head."

"I stuck it under the lining, sir."
"Oh! In that case the banknote is doubtless still there," said Mr. Quelch. "An examination of the hat will prove the truth or falsity of your statement, Bunter."

Two fellows in the Remove exchanged a startled glance.

Skinner whistled softly, and Sidney James Snoop caught his breath.

Since his visit to the vicarage, on Tuesday, Mr. Quelch had had no occasion to sport the topper. He was quite unaware that anything had happened to it, not having opened the hatbox.

Skinner and Snoop were aware that something had happened to it. In a crushed, concertina-like form they had left it reposing on the rubbish-heap near the village of Friardale.

"Wharton!" rapped out Mr. Quelch. "Yes, sir!"

"Kindly go to my room and fetch the hatbox which you will find standing in the wardrobe."

"Certainly, sir!"
Harry Wharton left the Form-room.

The Remove waited breathlessly. Mr. Quelch's gimlet eyes fixed with a penetrating stare on Bunter.

Truth dwelt not in the Owl of the Remove. What did not dwell in him could not reasonably be expected to proceed from him. Moreover, it was

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difficult for Mr. Quelch to believe that any fellow, even Bunter, could be quite fool enough to play practical jokes with banknotes.

As the hat was now about to be brought into evidence, Bunter's statement was soon to be put to the test. Mr. Quelch hoped that it was true. He really yearned to believe that he had only to deal with a fool, and not with a rascal. He almost shuddered at the thought of proving that there was a thief in his Form. Gladly—very gladly—would he have welcomed proof that the whole thing had only been a fatuous, practical joke, though his gladness would not have prevented him from handing out to Bunter what he deserved for such a prank.

But he could not help having his doubts. He searched Bunter's fat face with his penetrating eyes. But, so far as he could see, Bunter was not worried at the prospect of the hat appearing on the scene. Apparently he expected the arrival of the topper to clear him from the terrible charge of theft.

Mr. Quelch felt relieved as he noted it. He could almost have forgiven Bunter for his fatuous folly and disrespect if it proved, after all, that no theft had taken place.

The Remove waited on tenterhooks. Few of the fellows doubted Bunter's statement. Even an ass like Bunter

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Benefit of the Doubt!

MR. QUELCH stared at the card in silence.

He seemed bereft of the power of speech.

The Removees gazed at it and at him. The pause was brief, but it seemed to the juniors ages long. It was fraught with horror.

Mr. Quelch found his voice at last. "Bless my soul!" he said faintly.

"Oh, my only hat!" breathed Bob Cherry. "Some fellows do ask for it, don't they? That awful idiot!"

"The frightful ass!" muttered Wharton.

"The terrific chump!"
Mr. Quelch's eyes turned on Bunter. There was a deadly gleam in them.

"Bunter, you did this!"
Bunter jumped.

"I, sir? Oh, sir! No, sir! I—I've never seen that before, sir!" he gasped, in terror. "I—I didn't, sir! I wasn't—I—I never—"

"The hat," said Mr. Quelch, "has been removed from this box! This impertinent card has been left in its place. Of its disrespect, its insolence, I will not speak now." Mr. Quelch laid the card on his desk. "The hat is gone! Bunter, what have you done with the hat that was kept in this box?"

"I—I—I never—"
babbled the Owl of the Remove.

"You stated that the missing banknote was concealed in the hat. On investigation it proves that the hat is missing. Wretched boy, have you abstracted the hat in the hope that your ridiculous story cannot, in consequence, be disproved?"

Bunter's fat knees knocked together. His little round eyes almost bulged through his spectacles.

The absence of the topper had taken the wretched Owl utterly by surprise. He had resigned himself to the prospect of a licking for a practical joke on his Form master. He had relied on the production of the hat to prove that it had been nothing worse. And now the hat was gone!

Mr. Quelch's gimlet eyes seemed to bore into him.

Bunter, after a series of incredible whoppers, had told the truth. But it looked as if the truth, in this case, was only one more whopper.

Only the discovery of the banknote in the hat could have substantiated Bunter's statement and cleared him. And the hat was gone!

The hapless Owl gave a dismal groan. "Bunter, tell me the truth!" rumbled Mr. Quelch. "You have abstracted the hat from this box and made away with it, hoping that I should believe your statement that the banknote was concealed in it!"

"Owl! Oh, no, sir! Oh crikey!" wailed Bunter. "I never knew the hat wasn't there, sir! I never knew—"

"Do you deny having abstracted the hat?"

"Owl! Yes, sir! Certainly!"
"Do you adhere to your statement that you concealed the banknote under the lining of the hat?"

"Oh dear! Yes!" groaned Bunter. "It—it's the truth, sir! I—I hope you can take my word, sir!"

"You imagine, Bunter, that I can take your word after you have told me a series of falsehoods?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

The wretched Owl groaned. Lying

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would hardly make a statement that could so soon and so easily be put to the test unless it was true.

Harry Wharton came back into the Form-room in a very few minutes. He had lost no time. The hatbox was in his hand.

He laid it on the Form master's desk. "Thank you, Wharton!"

The captain of the Remove went back to his place.

Mr. Quelch stretched his hand to the hatbox. The Remove watched him—two of them, Skinner and Snoop, with quite a fascinated gaze.

The Form master lifted the lid. Skinner suppressed a grin. Snoop suppressed a gasp.

Mr. Quelch stared into the hatbox. "What—what? No hat appears to be here!" he exclaimed. "Someone has removed the hat from this box! Why, what—what—what—"

Mr. Quelch broke off, stuttering. From the empty hatbox he drew a card. He held it up. He stared at it. All the Remove stared at it. There was a general gasp.

Every eye in the Form-room read that word that was inscribed in large capital letters on the card from the hatbox. It was a single word—an expressive word—a word in quite common use in the Remove:

"RATS!"

Mr. Quelch's face turned a deep crimson in colour. He was spellbound. He had been insulted—there was no other word for it—insulted by a member of his own Form.

had never proved really useful to Bunter in his career as an Ananias. Now it had landed him in a fearful scrape. Even Bunter realised that only a Form master of a particularly trusting nature could have taken his word in the circumstances.

"Bunter! Where is the banknote you removed from my study?"

"In—in your hat, sir."

"Where is the hat, Bunter?"

"I—I don't know, sir."

Mr. Quelch compressed his lips hard.

"You are wasting my time, Bunter, and endeavouring, by an accumulation of falsehoods, to cover up your guilt. I will listen to nothing further from you. I can only conclude—"

"If you please, sir—" Harry Wharton rose in his place.

"May I speak, sir?"

Mr. Quelch glanced round at him.

"You may speak if you know anything about this matter, Wharton—not otherwise!" he rapped. His manner was not encouraging.

"I think I ought to say, sir, that I believe Bunter is telling the truth about having the banknote," said Harry steadily.

"I don't know what's become of the hat, sir—but the banknote—"

"Were you a party to the trick Bunter played in my study?"

"Oh, my hat! I—I mean, oh, no!" gasped Wharton. "But—but Bunter's a born idiot—"

"What?"

"I—I mean, everybody in the Remove knows what a silly idiot he is!" said Wharton desperately. "He hasn't any sense, sir—not as much sense as a bunny rabbit! Most of us knew that he had been playing some trick in your study, sir—I jolly well knew on Tuesday that he had—"

"Same here, sir!" said Bob Cherry.

"The knowfulness was terrific, honoured sahib!" exclaimed the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"All our esteemed and absurd selves shared the general knowfulness."

"We all knew, sir," said Frank Nugent.

"Bunter as good as said so, sir!" said Johnny Bull. "The silly idiot thought it funny, sir!"

The Famous Five spoke up as one man. That Bunter had played an idiotic trick, for which he deserved a sound licking, they were aware; but they were sure that he had not stolen the banknote. And they felt it their duty to testify the same.

Mr. Quelch was evidently impressed. "Wharton, if you are sure of what you say—"

"Perfectly certain, sir," said the captain of the Remove. "Bunter played a fool trick, and we all guessed it; but it was nothing worse. I'm absolutely certain that he never touched the banknote meaning to keep it."

Mr. Quelch pursed his lips.

He had faith in the judgment, and in the character, of his head boy. Also, he was very anxious indeed for the mysterious affair to turn out something less serious than a theft.

"I am bound to take note of what you say, Wharton," he said at last. "I shall not take Bunter to the headmaster at present; I shall not adjudge him guilty of theft and deserving of expulsion. The matter will remain in abeyance for a time, while a search is made for the hat. If Bunter has not removed it, to give colour to his story, someone else has done so, and it may be found."

found. The hapless Owl realised that his chance was slim; and from the bottom of his fat heart he repented of his fatuous folly. But repentance, as is usually the case, came too late.

Morning lessons were like a nightmare to Billy Bunter. When he rolled out in break his fat face was clouded, his fat brow wrinkled.

But for once Billy Bunter did not loaf and lounge through break. He was busy—very busy! Up and down and round about the school went Bunter, asking every fellow he met if he knew anything of a missing topper! A top-hat, after all, was an article big enough to be seen—and it must be somewhere!



While his comrades held the spluttering Coker, Bob Cherry fastened a finger and thumb on the Fifth-Former's prominent nose. "Yaroooooh!" "Pinchers pinch!" said the humorous Removeite. "So here goes!"

He turned to the trembling Owl again.

"Bunter! For the present the matter will stand over, while further inquiry is made. You rest under the suspicion of theft, and unless your innocence can be proved, you will be expelled from Greyfriars. But for the present you are given the benefit of the doubt—such doubt as there may be. Go to your place."

Billy Bunter groaned and limped back to his place.

First lesson began in the Remove-room—very late! The whole matter was shelved for the present.

Obviously, that could not last long. Unless the missing hat was found, with the banknote tucked away behind the lining, Bunter was "for it." His word was worth nothing—only proof of his statement could clear him, and proof could only be found if the hat was

Bunter was feverishly anxious to find that hat.

But nobody seemed to have seen a top-hat anywhere! Bunter could get no news of the missing "tile." Mr. Quelch's best hat seemed to have vanished into space as mysteriously as Mr. Quelch's banknote.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Gone!

"SKINNER, old man—" breathed Snoop.

"Don't be an ass!" Snoop looked at him.

"We've got to do something!" he muttered.

"We've got to keep our mouths shut," answered Skinner calmly. "You saw what Quelch looked like, when he got THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—NO. 1,226.

that card out of his hatbox. What do you think would happen to the fellows who larked with his jolly old topper if he found them out?"

"A Head's flogging, I suppose," said Snoop, licking his dry lips. "But—we can't leave it where it is, Skinner. Bunter says—"

"Do you believe a word he says?" Snoop stared.

"Then—you don't?" he ejaculated. "Not a giddy syllable! Doesn't he always tell the first lie that comes into his head when he's in a scrape?"

"Well, yes; but—"
"He never put that banknote into Quelch's hat! Rot!" said Skinner. "He bagged it, of course."

"I don't believe he bagged it!" muttered Snoop. "He's a potty ass, but he's not a thief! Look here, Skinner, I don't believe you really believe that Bunter stole the fiver!"

Skinner shrugged his shoulders. "Well, he shouldn't have monkeyed with it," he said. "A fellow who monkeyes with money, must naturally expect to be suspected of pinching it. Anyway, we don't come in. Suppose we owned up about the hat and bagged a Head's flogging, what good would that do Bunter?"

"We've got to find the hat. If the banknote's tucked in it, as Bunter says—"

"How can we find the hat, ass? We chucked it away on a rubbish heap."

"It—it may be still there! Nobody's likely to have picked it up, after what you did to it."

"I suppose it's possible," admitted Skinner. "Tramps go rooting over that rubbish-heap often enough, looking for odds-and-ends, but I suppose a tramp wouldn't want a smashed topper. But suppose it's there—"

"Well, we can find it—"
"And take it back to Quelch?"
"Yes, of course."

"And how are you going to account for knowing that it was there?" sneered Skinner. "Bunter's going up and down the school, asking for it; but that rubbish-heap at the village isn't exactly the place one would look in for a hat that's missing from Greyfriars. What are you going to tell Quelch if you find it?"

"I—I don't care! I'll make up something!" said Snoop desperately. "We—we can say we saw it lying there, and— and recognised it as Quelch's tile, or something. We can't leave Bunter to it, if he's telling the truth."

"He isn't," said Skinner.
"Well, I believe he is; it's just the potty thing that fat idiot would do. Look here, we can sneak out in break and cut down to the village—"

"You can if you like," said Skinner. "I'm not asking for a whopping!"

Snoop set his lips.
"You'll come, too, and help," he said, "and if you jolly well don't, I'll jolly well go to Wharton, now, and tell him how the matter stands, and ask him to come and help find the hat."

"You silly ass!" said Skinner, breathing hard. "You know we've got to keep it dark. The fiver's not in the hat—Bunter was lying, as usual. Still, I'll come and help you look for it, if you like."

"You'd better!" grunted Snoop. In break, the fellows were not supposed to go out of gates. But it was not difficult to slip out quietly by way of the old Cloisters; and Skinner and Snoop were soon outside the walls and going down Friardale Lane at a run.

There was no time to lose if they were to be back for third school. They kept on the run till the village came in sight.

"Here we are!" grunted Skinner ungraciously. "Ten to one the thing isn't here now. But here we are, you dummy!"

They passed through a gap in a hedge, into the patch of waste ground that was adorned by the rubbish-heap. That heap had accumulated for years; and it was like Sam Weller's knowledge of London—extensive and peculiar. Every kind and variety of refuse was stacked there, from old kettles and disused pots and pans to decaying cabbage-stumps and potato-peelings and peach-shucks.

The removal of refuse was not one of the local industries. As in so many English villages, rubbish was disposed of precisely as in the days of the Druids. No doubt, in distant future ages, antiquarians would learn a lot of the habits of the twentieth century from the Friardale rubbish-heap, just as scientists of the present day learn much—and imagine more—from the rubbish-heaps of past generations.

Such scientific investigators of the distant future, might learn a lot about the kettles and pots and pans used in Friardale, about their jugs and their bottles and jars. But they were likely to learn nothing about the headgear worn at the neighbouring school by members of the staff. For the crushed topper had disappeared.

Skinner and Snoop scrambled over the sprawling heaps of refuse, kicking pots and kettles out of the way, disturbing cabbage-stumps and potato-peelings that smelt very unpleasantly in the hot sun—disinterring beer bottles and cracked jugs and ancient boots and shoes. But there was no sign to be seen of the battered topper that Skinner had thrown there the previous afternoon.

Minute followed minute—and time was precious. Skinner's temper was growing more and more savage; Snoop was excited and worried.

"Well, it's not here!" snarled Skinner at last.

"But where can it be?" gasped Snoop. "It wasn't worth anybody's while to bag it."

"I know that!"
"Well, then, it must be about somewhere—"

"You can see that it isn't!" snarled Skinner. "Some tramp may have bagged it—might have punched it into shape, to sell for a copper or two. Anyhow, it's gone. Some kid may have picked it up. It's not here."

Snoop stared miserably over the rubbish-heap.

Ancient deposits on that heap were covered, and hidden, by new deposits. But that could scarcely have happened to an article dropped there only the day before.

"The hat was gone!"

Tramps and vagrants often rooted over the rubbish, in search of discarded articles that still had some use in them, or of beer bottles that could be sold for a trifle. Some such vagrant, no doubt, had seen the crushed topper and annexed it; though if he had taken it to wear he must certainly have been very badly in need of a hat!

Anyhow, it was gone!
Skinner looked at his watch and gave an angry snort.

"Let's get back! It's gone, you moon-struck ass! We've barely time to get in for third school; and if we're late, and Quelch asks you where you've been, are you going to tell him?"

Snoop nodded.
"Let's go," he agreed. "We—we've done all we can. After all, Bunter may have been telling lies. Let's get back."

They scrambled into the lane again

and started for Greyfriars at a run. They reached the school breathless, and were barely in time to join the Remove going to the Form-room for third school.

In third school that morning Billy Bunter had a dismal countenance. But he was probably not feeling more worried than Snoop.

Skinner had plenty of fortitude, in the matter of bearing the troubles of others. He was chiefly concerned for his own skin, and his view was that if Bunter really had been such an idiot as he claimed, he could jolly well take the consequences. Snoop had less indifference and less nerve, and he wished from the bottom of his heart that Quelch's topper had never been meddled with.

Still, it did not seem useful, even to the wretched Bunter, for a confession to be made. The hat was gone, and a licking for Skinner and Snoop would not bring it back. Only the finding of the hat, with a banknote hidden in it, could clear Bunter; and the hat was not to be found.

Skinner took the view—he was determined to take the view—that Bunter had been lying, as usual, and that the missing fiver was not in the hat at all. Snoop could not take that view, or persuade himself that he did.

But the hat was gone—possibly adorning the frowzy head of some tramp. There was nothing to be done, and Snoop kept his own counsel.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Hatless!

"I SAY, you fellows!"
"Cut off!" snapped Coker of the Fifth.

"But, I say, have you seen a hat?"

Coker frowned, and Potter and Greene grinned.

It was after dinner, and after dinner—especially on a hot day—it was the happy custom of William George Bunter to seek a quiet spot and rest his weary, fat limbs in luxurious idleness.

Bunter was departing from his happy custom now.

He was busy.
He was not merely busy, he was tireless, and seemed bursting with energy. Up and down and round about, Billy Bunter was seeking a missing hat.

On the discovery of that hat his fate depended.

If that hat was found, with the banknote tucked under the inner lining, Bunter was saved. If the hat remained missing, Bunter himself was going to be missing—shortly.

Never had Bunter yearned for the sight of a cake, a pie, a pudding, as he yearned for a sight of that hat.

The beginning and the end of his fat thought concentrated on the top-hat of Henry Samuel Quelch, his respected Form master.

Somebody, it was clear, had bagged that hat from Quelch's room, leaving a disrespectful message in its place, for a lark! There was no other explanation of its disappearance.

Bunter strongly disapproved of such larks! He wondered how any fellow could be idiot enough to play practical jokes on his Form master!

He had asked every fellow in the Remove, not once but many times; but no fellow admitted knowing anything about the vanished hat.

He asked every man at Greyfriars, from the Sixth to the Second, whether he had seen a top-hat lying about anywhere.

Nobody had seen a top-hat lying about anywhere.

"I say, you fellows," said Bunter, almost tearfully, blinking at Coker & Co. through his big spectacles, "I say, if you've seen a hat—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Potter and Greene.

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! I say, I'm going to be bunked if I can't find that blessed hat!" groaned Bunter.

"And a jolly good thing, too," said Horace Coker. "Do you think we want pinchers at Greyfriars, you fat freak?"

"Why, you beast—"

"Think anybody believes a word of it?" snorted Coker. "If you want that hat you'd better go and look where you hid it."

"Those who hide can find, you know," grinned Potter.

"Why not think of a better yarn?" asked Greene. "From what I hear you're the biggest liar in the Remove. Well, you ought to be able to think of a better one than that."

"It's the limit," said Coker. "Pinching banknotes, and pinching a man's hat! He'll be pinching a fellow's socks next! Kick him!"

"Yarooooh!"

Billy Bunter departed hastily. He was in the gloomiest of spirits. Not only did no one afford him any information with regard to the vanished tile, but hardly anybody believed that he was really looking for it. The inevitable fate of all liars had come home to Bunter. When he told the truth he found no believers.

His desire to find that hat was deep and earnest, and almost frantic. But it did not convince other fellows.

He had pinched the banknote; he had pretended that he had hidden it in the hat for a joke, having taken care that the hat should be missing when investigation was made. That was how most of the fellows looked at it; and really, it was difficult to see how else they could have looked at it.

So Bunter's frantic search for the hat met with more laughter than sympathy or assistance.

Harry Wharton & Co., and some other Remove fellows, comforted Bunter by their belief in his almost incredible story, and helped to hunt for the hat. But that did not comfort Bunter very much, as the hat was not to be found.

Bunter was tireless in the search. He seemed to have forgotten that he was fat and lazy and slack. Even Fisher T. Fish, who prided himself on being a live wire, was not so bursting with push and go and vim and pep as Bunter was that warm August afternoon.

In all likely and unlikely places Bunter hunted for that hat. He asked juniors and fags, Fifth Form men, and even Sixth Form prefects, whether they had seen a hat about. His search for the hat was soon a standing joke. When he was seen coming fellows would call out to him encouragingly.

"Look in the Head's study, Bunter."

"Ask Quelch whether he's popped it and lost the ticket?"

Bunter could not help feeling that this was frightfully heartless. The fellows did not even seem to realise that if the hat was not found they were going to lose Bunter. Perhaps they did not care if they did lose Bunter!

The Owl of the Remove was tired in class that afternoon. His uncommon exertions had told on him. He was too tired to give much attention to Mr. Quelch. Besides, he was not thinking of Latin prose but of missing top-hats!

Fortunately, Mr. Quelch passed him over. He hardly seemed to notice that Bunter was in the class at all.

That was agreeable, in its way. Bunter hated work, and he hated learning anything, and he would have liked Quelch to keep this up permanently. But he realised, with a shudder, the true cause of Quelch's indifference. Quelch looked on him already as no longer a member of the Form. Quelch had

taken it as a settled thing that Bunter was to go!

That was awful!

After class Bunter rolled out of the Form-room and resumed a dismal and despairing search for a missing top-hat.

There was hardly a corner of Greyfriars in which Bunter had not rooted after that hat by this time. He had been kicked out of innumerable studies into which he had penetrated in search of the hat. He had blinked and sneezed under many chimneys, into which he had desperately stared. He had emerged from coal-cellars looking like a sweep. He had gathered dust and spiders in box-rooms and disused garrets. And it was all in vain!

He rolled into Study No. 7 at tea-time, crimson and breathless and dismal and desperate. Peter Todd eyed him curiously, and made no objection when Bunter bagged the whole of the cake that Toddy had provided for tea. This looked as if even Peter did not expect his fat study-mate to share Study No. 7 much longer.

"I say, Toddy, old chap!" said Bunter, with his mouth full of cake. "I say, old man, I can't find that beastly hat."

"Where did you put it?" asked Toddy.

"Oh, you beast!" groaned Bunter. "Do you really think I know where that putrid hat is, Toddy?"

"Blessed if I know," said Toddy candidly. "Can't possibly believe a word you say you see. As you say you don't know anything about the jolly old tile, it looks as if you do."

"Beast!"

"Anyhow, it's a jolly queer coincidence that the hat happens to be missing," said Toddy.

"Some beast has been larking with it, Toddy!" groaned Bunter. "Lots of fellows would do it to get back on Quelch for his rotten temper. Fancy a beast playing a trick like that and not owning up, you know!"

"As bad as larking with a bank-note!" agreed Toddy.

"Oh, really, Toddy!" Bunter blinked round the table. "Any more cake, old chap?"

"You've had the lot! There's some biscuits," said Toddy kindly. "Wire into them. I dare say it's the last time you'll feed here."

"Oh, you awful beast!" groaned Bunter. However, he wired into the biscuits. If it was his last feed in Study No. 7 it was as well to make the most of it. "I say, Toddy, you're my pal, you know, and I want you to help me out. I've done a lot for you, Toddy, old chap, haven't I?"

"Not that I remember."

"Well, I've put up with you in the study," said Bunter. "I'd have asked you to Bunter Court for the hols, if you'd been a bit better class, but, of course, there's a limit. Still, you can't deny that I've been pally with you here, and never been down on you because your father's a measly solicitor, and I've never really thought that you looked a frightful freak, Toddy! I may have said so, but it was only my fun—just innocent fun, Toddy."

Peter Todd looked fixedly at Bunter. His hand strayed in the direction of a cricket stump. But he withdrew it.

"After all I've done for you, old chap, you're bound to stand by me," said Bunter. "Look here, Toddy, some beast has bagged Quelch's topper and put it somewhere for a jape on Quelch. Look here, I want you to own up—"

Peter Todd jumped.

WIN A POCCKET WALLET like Sam Taylor, of 5, Langley Avenue, Bierley, Bradford, Yorks, who submitted the following Greyfriars limerick, illustrated by our artist.



Cecil Pon, was out for a "lark."



Young Bunter, he chose for his "mark."



But Wharton got wise,



And, to Pon's great surprise,



He found himself "ducked" in the Sark!

You'd just like one of these LEATHER WALLETs. Why not set to work and WIN ONE NOW?

"Eh? What? Own up to what?" "Bagging Quelch's topper," explained Bunter. "You go to him and own up in a frank and manly way, you know."

"But I never touched his topper!" yelled Peter.

"For goodness' sake, Toddy, keep to the point," said Bunter peevishly. "You go and own up to Quelch. Tell him you bagged the topper, and—and burned it, and—and mention that you noticed the banknote in it at the time. See?"

"Oh crumbs!" said Peter.

"Quelch will take your word," said Bunter. "If he wants you to make the fiver good I'll find the money. I'm expecting a postal order—"

"Ye gods!" said Peter.

"Leave that to me," said Bunter hopefully. "The chief thing now is to convince Quelch that the banknote really was in the hat. It's pretty awful, Toddy, but he doesn't take my word! He doesn't trust me, Toddy."

"D-d-doesn't he?" moaned Peter Todd. "Now, I wonder why Quelch doesn't trust you, Bunter? You're so trustworthy! So truthful!"

"Yes, old chap, but Quelch doesn't see it," said Bunter sorrowfully. "You needn't mind telling Quelch a crammer or two, old chap."

"Oh, needn't I?" said Peter.

"No, old fellow! After all, you're not so particular about such things as I am," said Bunter.

"Oh, fan me!" murmured Peter.

"Well, will you do it?" asked Bunter hopefully. "Quelch will take your word, Peter. Swear that the banknote was in the topper when you burned it. He's bound to be satisfied with that. I—I—I say, Toddy, what are you going to do with that stump, old chap?"

"Guess!" said Peter.

It did not take Bunter long to guess! Peter got in two licks with the stump before the fat Owl got out of the study.

"Beast!" yelled Bunter, from the passage.

After which, the Owl of the Remove resumed the weary search for the topper-hat! He realised bitterly that he had nothing to expect from Peter Todd—after all he had done for him! Nothing at all, except a lick from a cricket stump!

Greyfriars echoed once more to the weary footsteps of Billy Bunter searching for a hat, and to the question which every fellow in the school had now heard at least five or six times:

"I say, you fellows, have you seen a hat?"

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Whose Hat?

"SPARE a copper, sir!"

"Great pip!"

Harry Wharton & Co. stared. They were taking a stroll in the leafy lanes after class when that familiar voice greeted their ears.

At a corner where a lane leading to Redclyffe turned off Friardale Lane there was a patch of grass and a signpost.

At the foot of the post, leaning back against it for support, was a tattered, frowsy, unwashed, unshaven gentleman.

The chums of the Remove had seen that gentleman before.

It was Mr. Walker, alias Honest Walker, the tramp who had desired to relieve them of their spare cash on the towpath by the Sark a few days ago.

Mr. Walker was as tattered, as unwashed, as frowsy as ever; but there was one change in Mr. Walker.

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His ancient boater, as the juniors remembered, had floated away in the river and sunk, and the walking gentleman had been hatless when he disappeared over the horizon.

Now he was hatted once more!

He had found a hat, and, judging by its looks, he had found it as he had found his previous headgear—on a rubbish-heap.

It was dented, damaged, and dismal. Still, it was rather a striking hat to be worn by a gentleman in Mr. Walker's circumstances, for it was a silk-hat.

Silk-hatted tramps were rare; indeed, the chums of Greyfriars had never seen one before. Still, they did not suppose that it was swank that led Mr. Walker to sport a topper. Obviously, he had picked up that hat, and equally obviously it was worth nobody else's while to pick it up. Once, and perhaps not long ago, it had been a handsome hat. But it had been stamped on, crushed almost out of all semblance to a hat since then.

Mr. Walker, apparently, had punched it out to resemble a hat again. It was recognisable as a hat—even as a silk hat. But cavities yawned in it—dents and gashes and rents. It did not look at all swanky. It looked horrid. Still, it was a hat, and it shaded the frowsy head of Mr. Walker from the blaze of the sun, and in the absence of any other hat it had doubtless come to Mr. Walker as a boon and a blessing.

Mr. Walker, resting his weary limbs against the signpost, had been half-asleep. Perhaps looking for work had tired him. His search for work had been unsuccessful; or rather, from Mr. Walker's point of view, successful; he had not found any.

As the schoolboys came sauntering by, Mr. Walker, tired as he was, found energy enough to sit upright and touch the battered topper with a dirty hand in respectful salute, while he requested them to spare a copper.

Apparently he did not recognise them for the moment as the cheery party he had met by the river, and who had given him a much-needed but wholly undesired wash.

"Spare a copper, gents!" said Mr. Walker. "A few coppers, to 'elp a bloke on his way, sir! I'm looking for work, sir—"

"Not looking for a wash?" asked Bob Cherry genially.

Mr. Walker gave a violent start.

His beady eyes fixed quickly on the juniors; and now he knew them.

"You!" he ejaculated.

"Little us!" smiled Bob.

Mr. Walker jerked himself from his sitting posture. He backed round the signpost, eyeing the Famous Five warily.

His impression, when he had first seen that cheery Co., was that he could handle those schoolboys quite easily. That impression had been corrected. Mr. Walker no longer believed that he could handle the Famous Five.

What he was worrying about was that they might handle him. He was aware that there were harsh, unfeeling laws in existence on the subject of extorting money by threats, and Mr. Walker hated the idea of being handed over to a policeman.

He had seen the inside of many prisons, but he did not like any of them. In-prison, a bloke had to wash. There were other disadvantages, such as the absence of strong spirits. Altogether, Mr. Walker disliked what he called "chokey." He preferred to roam the open spaces looking for work. Work, after all, was scarce; and he was in no great danger of landing a job.

"'Ere, you keep off!" said Mr. Walker. "Don't you get laying 'ands on a bloke! I ain't never seed you afore."

"Wouldn't touch you with a barge-pole, old bean," said Johnny Bull. "You're not nice to touch, you know."

"The nicefulness is not terrific, my esteemed dishonest Walker," said Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh.

"Come on," said Nugent. "We're not washing that chap again."

Harry Wharton was looking very curiously at Mr. Walker.

"Hold on a minute!" he said.

The Co. held on. The captain of the Remove stepped a little nearer to Mr. Walker, and that honest gentleman stepped back promptly.

"Ands off!" he snapped.

"What the thump—" asked Bob Cherry, puzzled.

"I'd like to know where the man got that hat," said Harry.

"What the merry thump does it matter?" exclaimed Bob in astonishment. "Looks as if he found it in a ditch."

"Wot you getting at?" demanded Mr. Walker indignantly. "You think I've pinched this 'ere 'at? Why, blow me pink, if I'd pinched a 'at, do you think I'd pinch a blooming tile like this 'ere? I wouldn't be found dead in it if I could pinch a 'at. A bloke don't get a chance to pinch a 'at, s'help me!"

The juniors grinned. They had no doubt that after Mr. Walker had lost his "boater" he had sorted over all the neighbouring rubbish heaps in search of a hat. Probably he had been annoyed at finding only a discarded and dismantled topper. Obviously, he would have preferred anything else in the shape of a hat. But it was a case of any port in a storm.

But Wharton was interested in the hat. Battered and bruised and beaten as it was, he could see that it was not really an old hat. It looked like a good hat that had received very hard usage.

It was uncommon, to say the least, to find a tramp in a silk-hat. And a silk-hat was missing from Greyfriars School, half a mile away! The captain of the Remove was going through the simple process of putting two and two together.

"Look here, what—" began Johnny Bull impatiently.

"Where did you get that hat, my man?" asked Harry Wharton quietly.

"Found it!" snorted Mr. Walker.

"Think I give three blooming guineas for it at Lincoln and Bennetts?"

"Well, let me look at it," said Wharton. He made a step nearer to Mr. Walker, and Mr. Walker made a simultaneous step backward.

Mr. Walker was what he would have called a "fly cove," and he was not going to get within reach. He was too "fly" to let this young cove collar him on pretence of looking at the hat.

"Oh crumbs!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, suddenly understanding. "You think—"

"Quelch's topper is missing," said Harry. "Toppers are much alike, but that looks like Quelch's topper, only it's been damaged."

"Dash it all, that frowsy boulder can't have pinched anything from the school," said Johnny Bull. "He couldn't—"

"Whoever bagged Quelch's hat may have chucked it outside the school," said Harry. "In fact, it's pretty certain that he did, or Bunter would have found it by now. He's rooted all over Greyfriars."

"That's so," agreed Bob. "Great pip! Talk about Sherlock Holmes!

Here we're elucidating the Mystery of the Missing Topper!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Wharton moved towards the tramp again. Mr. Walker retreated warily. Harry's comrades followed him up now, and Mr. Walker was very wary indeed. He was not going to be collared and handed over to a policeman—not if he knew it!



Mr. Quelch drew a card from the hatbox and fairly gasped as he read the inscription thereon!

"Look here, my man," said Harry. "We're not going to touch you—" "I'm goin' to see that you don't!" agreed Mr. Walker.

"I want to look at that hat. If it's the one that's been missed by a master at our school it will have initials in it," said Harry. "I shall know it at once." "Look at my eye!" said Mr. Walker. "Eh?"

"See any green in it?" inquired Mr. Walker.

"You silly ass!"

"Looks like a schoolmaster's 'at, don't it?" said Mr. Walker derisively. "It was that squashed and squelched when I picked it off the rubbish-heap yesterday, you'd have taken it for a concertina. Blow me pink, if I couldn't 'ave played a tune on it! 'Arf an hour, I was, knocking it out and makin' it look something like a 'at agin'!"

"Somebody bagged our Form master's hat and chucked it away," explained Wharton. "We want to get it back."

"Well, for a well-dressed young bloke, you're a pretty good liar, ain't you?" said Mr. Walker. "Mean to say your schoolmaster would want this 'at back? Look at it!"

It was not surprising, perhaps, that Mr. Walker was sceptical. Looking at the hat, nobody would have supposed that its previous owner could possibly want it back. Even Mr. Walker was not proud of it.

Wharton could not explain that he suspected that a banknote for five pounds was hidden under the lining inside the hat. That explanation would not have caused Mr. Walker to hand over the hat for examination. It would have caused him to start for the next county at top speed, hat and all.

Wharton moved a little nearer. Carefully and cautiously Mr. Walker backed away. He was a wary bird, was Honest Walker. His way of life had taught him caution; and his original nature had never been trustful.

"Look here—" exclaimed Wharton impatiently, "we're not going to bag you and run you in, you silly owl!"

"Not if I knows it you ain't. Not by a 'ole 'eap!" said Mr. Walker.

"I want that hat. I'll give it back to you when I've looked at it if it isn't the hat I want. And if it is I'll give you half-a-crown for it. You can get a better one at the price. Now— Stop him!"

Mr. Walker, after one more backward stride, had suddenly turned and taken to his heels.

He was not, as a rule, an energetic gentleman. But he could run! He could put on speed when he ran. He had had some practice in this line, for on many occasions police-constables had desired the company of Mr. Walker, and he had always been coy and shy about it. On such occasions Mr. Walker had shown a retiring nature—retiring as fast as his legs could carry him.

Now he put up quite a creditable speed.

"After him!" gasped Wharton.

"Tally-ho!" roared Bob Cherry.

After the retiring Mr. Walker rushed the Famous Five.

Honest Walker glanced back, panting. He was tearing up the lane, towards Greyfriars School, as fast as his legs could go. After him tore the five Removites. One glance back was enough for Mr. Walker. He jammed the battered hat more firmly on his head and raced.

Not for an instant did Mr. Walker believe that the schoolboys only wanted to examine the hat. That was altogether too thin for a fly cove like Mr. Walker. They wanted to collar him and hand him over to the police, as he richly deserved; that was Mr. Walker's belief. And Mr. Walker flew.

"Put it on!" gasped Wharton. Mr. Walker flew, and the Famous Five flew. But they did not gain an inch. Mr. Walker was desperate, and his tattered boots seemed hardly to touch the ground as he raced on. Pursued and pursuers swept up Friar-dale Lane towards the school, both going strong.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

At Last!

"BEAST!" roared Billy Bunter. Mr. Quelch frowned.

The Remove master was walking down to the gates when the dulcet tones of William George Bunter fell on his ears.

Mr. Quelch was going down to Friar-dale, to pay that little account in the village, which he had had to postpone on Tuesday, owing to the chattiness of Mr. Prout.

He was not in a good temper. The missing fiver was still missing—and five pounds was not a small sum. Worse than the loss of the money, however, was the horrid feeling that there was a thief in his Form.

Bunter had been given the benefit of the doubt so far. But this could not last.

Mr. Quelch felt that he had to be

driven to the conclusion that Bunter had taken that banknote and kept it. He longed to find some other solution, but no other solution was to be found.

Now, as he progressed towards the gates, he came on Billy Bunter, the centre of a circle of fellows—not an admiring circle. Temple, Dabney & Co. of the Fourth were entertaining themselves.

"Beast!" Bunter was roaring, his very spectacles gleaming with wrath. "I never pinched the fiver, Temple, you rotter! I hid it in Quelch's hat, and some beast has pinched Quelch's hat—"

"Boys!" The deep voice of Mr. Quelch interrupted the proceedings.

"Oh, my hat! 'Ware beaks!" gasped Temple. And the heroes of the Fourth faded out of the picture with startling suddenness.

Billy Bunter blinked dolorously at his Form master. The wretched Owl was in the depths of woe.

"I say, sir, I—I can't find that hat, sir!" groaned Bunter. "I—I—I suppose you don't know where it is, sir?"

"I!" ejaculated Mr. Quelch. "I—I suppose you haven't popped it, sir, and—forgotten?" said Bunter hopefully.

Mr. Quelch gazed at him. His gaze was terrifying, and it caused the fat junior to fade away.

The Remove master walked on to the gates. Bunter, in the lowest of spirits, resumed the weary quest of the missing hat.

Mr. Quelch walked out with a thoughtful, frowning brow. This state of affairs could not continue. The banknote had been taken by Bunter, and his absurd explanation could not be accepted. That was the thought in Mr. Quelch's mind as he walked down the lane towards Friardale.

But Bunter and banknotes were driven suddenly from Mr. Quelch's mind as a startling scene burst on his gaze half-way along the lane to the village.

Up the lane came a running figure—a remarkable figure—a tattered vagrant, whose head was adorned by a battered silk-hat!

Whooping on his track came five members of Mr. Quelch's Form.

The Remove master stopped and stared blankly.

The fleeing Mr. Walker sighted him, but came on regardless. Naturally, he did not know that Mr. Quelch was the original owner of the hat that now adorned Mr. Walker's own frowsy head—he did not know anything about Mr. Quelch. He came tearing on, intending to pass him.

But as the Famous Five sighted their Form master they shouted:

"Stop him!"

Mr. Quelch stared. He could only conclude that the running man had pilfered something, and that the school-boys were in chase of a thief. There was no doubt that Mr. Walker looked the part.

If it was a case of "Stop thief!" Mr. Quelch was prepared to do his duty as a law-abiding citizen.

He stepped into the middle of the lane and held up his hand.

"Stop!" he commanded.

Before Mr. Quelch could realise it, Mr. Walker was on him, and as the Remove master blocked the way resolutely Mr. Walker met him in full career.

Henry Samuel Quelch went spinning from the shock. He sat down in Friardale Lane with a bump that almost shook the county of Kent.

"Ooocoooh!" gasped Mr. Quelch.

Honest Walker staggered.

"Ow! Blow me pink!" he gasped.

"Blow me pink and blue!"

The chums of the Remove fairly jumped on Mr. Walker. Harry Wharton grabbed the hat from his hand. The Co. sprawled over him.

"Ow! Wow! Yooowoop!" spluttered Mr. Walker. "Let a cove alone! Gerroff! I ain't done nothing! Blow me pink!"

"I've got it!" gasped Wharton.

Mr. Walker struggled to his feet. Quite contrary to Mr. Walker's belief, it was the hat the juniors wanted, not the wearer thereof. Mr. Walker found himself released, and he immediately started for the horizon—without the hat!

The juniors surrounded Mr. Quelch; they grasped him, they helped him to his feet.

"Wharton! What does this mean? What—what—what—" Mr. Quelch gasped. "Why were you pursuing that—that man? I concluded that he must have stolen something, but—but—"

"It's the hat, sir!"

"You have taken the man's hat! What do you mean by taking the man's hat, Wharton? What has the man done?"

"It is your esteemed and venerable hat, sir," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"My hat!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. It sounded as if the sedate Form master was uttering a schoolboy-like ejaculation. "My hat!"

"Yours, sir!" said Wharton breathlessly. He had ascertained the fact now. Inside the hat, on the leather lining, were the initials "H. S. Q." Obviously it was the top-hat that was missing from Greyfriars.

"Are you out of your senses, Wharton? My hat is on my head!" shrieked Mr. Quelch.

"The other hat, sir—the one that was lost. The missing tile, sir! I mean the missing topper, the—the missing hat—"

"Oh!" said Mr. Quelch.

He understood.

"You think, Wharton, that that is the hat that was taken from my room?"

"I'm sure now, sir! Look at it! That tramp picked it up on a rubbish-heap. Somebody must have chucked it there—I mean thrown it there! We only wanted to see if it was yours, sir, but the silly ass didn't understand—"

"Give me the hat!"

The captain of the Remove handed the battered topper to his Form master.

Mr. Quelch glanced into the interior.

"It is undoubtedly my hat," he said.

"Whatever disrespectful young rascal removed it from the hatbox in my room must have thrown it away! It has been recklessly damaged! It is now valueless, but—"

"But the banknote, sir—" gasped Bob. "Bunter says—"

"The esteemed banknote, sir—"

Mr. Quelch turned down the leather lining inside the top-hat. The Famous Five watched him breathlessly.

A crisp and rustling slip of engraved paper was revealed.

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Quelch.

"The fiver!" yelled Bob.

"The jolly old fiver!" gasped Johnny Bull. "Bunter was telling the truth! Fancy Bunter telling the truth!"

With a finger and thumb, Mr. Quelch drew the missing fiver from the missing hat! He glanced at the number, though really it was unnecessary, for there could be no doubt that the fiver was the missing fiver. He nodded.

It was fortunate for Mr. Walker that he was already over the horizon. Had he been present and learned that he had, all unknowing, carried a five-pound note on his frowsy head, it might have broken Mr. Walker's heart. The amount of liquid refreshment represented by that slip of crisp paper was enormous; and Mr. Walker might never have recovered from his grief had he learned what he had missed.

"That's the banknote, sir?" asked Wharton.

"That is the banknote, Wharton."

"Oh, good!"

"Wharton, you have acted with very great intelligence and judgment," said Mr. Quelch graciously. "I have had a shock, a painful shock; but I am glad, very glad, of what has happened. This is the missing banknote; and it is proved now that Bunter was guilty of nothing but an obtuse practical joke. You may tell him, Wharton, that he is now cleared of suspicion of theft—and tell him also to come to my study at six o'clock."

"Yes, sir."

Mr. Quelch put the banknote in his notecase. The hat he dropped over the hedge. The missing banknote was recovered; but the missing hat was to remain missing. It really was not worth reclaiming. Mr. Walker was welcome to it, if his wandering footsteps ever brought him in that direction again. Mr. Quelch, with a gracious nod to the juniors, walked on to the village. And the Famous Five, with glad news for Bunter, hurried to the school.

Billy Bunter was glad to hear the news.

So were the rest of the Remove. Even Skinner and Snoop were glad, their consciences though tough, had been worrying them a little.

There was, in fact, gladness all round; and, as Hurree Jamset Ram Singh remarked, the gladfulness was terrific.

The chums of the Remove expected Bunter's gladness to be a little dashed by the command to present himself in his Form master's study at six o'clock. But the fat Owl seemed quite bucked.

"Quelch is going to apologise, of course!" he remarked. "I dare say he feels pretty sick at having doubted a fellow's word, now! Well, if he apologises and puts it decently, I'll be civil."

So Bunter was quite cheery when he called on Mr. Quelch.

His cheeriness soon departed. Mr. Quelch was not in an apologetic mood.

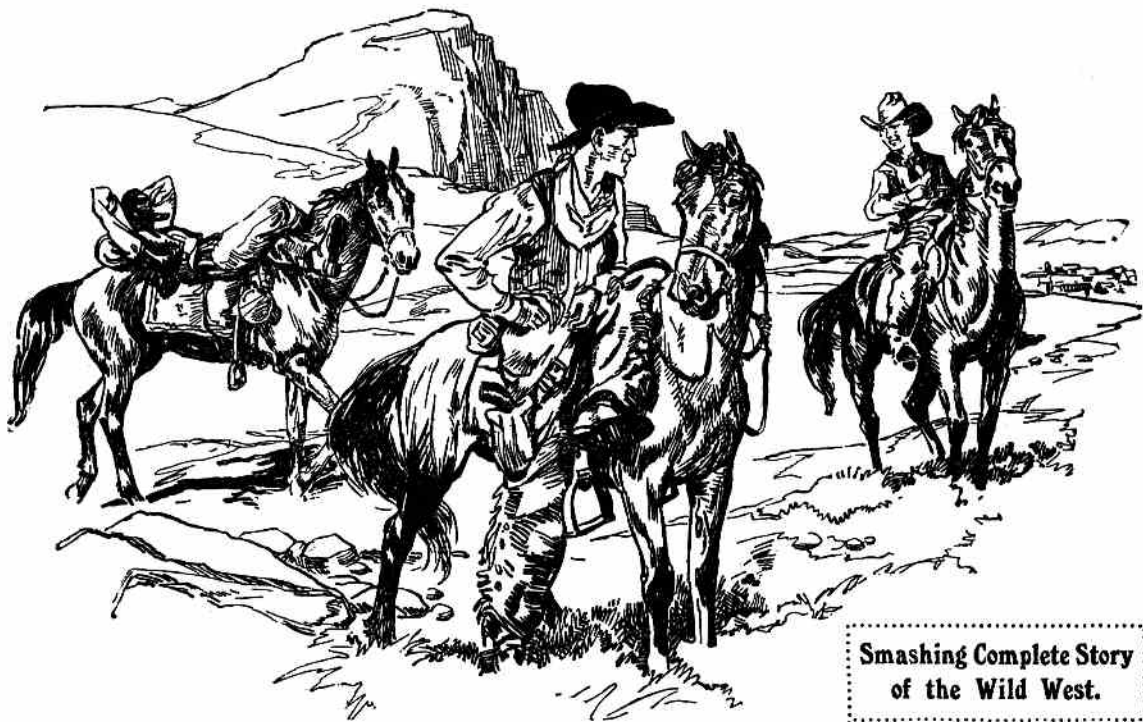
He explained to Bunter, at considerable length, that he had run great risk from his habits of untruthfulness, and from his lack of respect in playing tricks on his Form master. He warned Bunter that he must amend those bad habits. And in order to impress this on Bunter's fat mind, Mr. Quelch introduced his cane into the scene—and the roars that echoed from the study might have excited the envy of the celebrated Bull of Bashan.

When Billy Bunter crawled away from the study he looked as if he found life a weary burden. And it was likely to be a long, long time before Bunter japed again—especially Mr. Quelch. Bunter was fed up with japing.

THE END.

(Look out for next week's FREE GIFT NUMBER of the MAGNET and another topping yarn of Harry Wharton & Co. entitled: "A DOG WITH A BAD NAME!" An early order will avoid disappointment!)

LAW of the WEST!



Smashing Complete Story
of the Wild West.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

A Curious Combination!

"HIGH" JINKS drew in his bridle rein and brought his bronco to a standstill. He cocked one long leg around the horn of his saddle, rested the other foot on the ground and proceeded to roll himself a cigarette with one hand whilst he scratched his long beak of a nose with the other.

It is not everybody who can sit in a saddle with one foot on the ground, but High was six foot eight and a half, and his legs were long for his height.

With his long, lantern-jawed face, beaky nose, ears that stuck out like cabbage leaves on either side, bottle shoulders, and lanky frame, he did not look much. But there were several who knew that those hands, with the long, bony knuckles, were swift as lightning on the draw, and that the sunken, watery-looking grey eyes were keen of sight as a hawk's.

Just now they were squinting down into the valley from the top of a ridge in the Rockies of Southern Colorado, sizing up the dusty little cowtown below with a somewhat disgusted expression.

Suddenly from behind High there came a shrill whistling, and out from amongst the rocks jogged a dejected-looking pinto pony, on the back of which was perched a small and dapper-looking youngster, who peered around him with eyes as bright as a bird's. His rosy cheeks and curly, fair hair were deceptive, and not only made Nippy Nolan look years younger than he was, but gave people the impression that he was "soft." But they soon found out that the diminutive frame held a heart like a bullock's, that the thin, pipe-

stem arms were capable of a punch like Jimmy Wilde's, and that Nippy was always ready and willing to mix it with anybody.

As he approached through the purple haze he changed his shrill whistle and burst into song, throwing his head back and opening his mouth to it's widest extent, and bellying forth the ditty.

"Me-e and my shadder
Str-r-rollin' dahn th' havenoo—"

"Cut it out for any sake," implored High. "We don't wanter wake up th' citizens o' this yer peaceful burg afore their time. Look at it, Nippy; this is th' burg whar they told us we sh'ud find plenty o' work an' excitement. That th' gutters was due to run red wi' gore 'most any time, an' thet three husky cow wallopers c'ud find a job wi' eether

There wasn't a job for one going when the three 'puncher pals struck the Leaning L Ranch; but they'd got jobs for three well inside twenty-four hours!

six-gun or lariat. Chee, it looks as plumb peaceable an' unpromisin' as my gran'maw's back yard!"

"It do look a dead an' alive 'ole, an' that's a fao'!" proclaimed Nippy. "An' to think as we chucked up a steady job in Arizona to come dahn 'ere to take an' 'and in this rustler shindy we 'eard abaht!"

"Whar's Low?" demanded High.

"Comin' along," said Nippy, jerking his thumb over his shoulder. "'E's 'avin' wot 'o calls 'is si-ester. Never saw sich a feller for 'is bo-peep in my nateral. 'E'd go to bye-bye on th' draw an' ask th' 'angman not to call 'im too early."

A very pretty little buckskin mare,

sleek and well cared-for, ambled out from amongst the chaparral. At first sight it looked as if she had a peculiarly shaped head, with two sets of ears, until it became apparent that the second set were her rider's bootsoles. He was lying well back, with his legs crossed on the mare's neck and his head comfortably resting on his rolled-up blankets behind the cantle of his saddle—fast asleep.

"Look at 'im!" exclaimed the disgusted Nippy. "'Ere, wake up, Sleep-in' Beauty—we're there!"

With a snort, Low opened his eyes and sat up, polished his horn-rimmed specs with his silk neckerchief, took a whisk brush from under his saddle, and with a beaming smile at his pals, carefully dusted his boots and breeches.

"Thinks he's goin' to meet young lydies," murmured Nippy. "Dressin' yerself hup a bit, aincher, Romeo?"

"First impressions, me lad!" smiled Low. "We seek employment, do we not? Then it behoves us to look our best. Even a cow attendant may look neat in his person—with care."

"Orlright, Perfessor! 'Ave yer chaps pressed an' yer 'air shingled if yer wanter. Cast yer heye dahn at th' city o' Big Chance, will yer? Huh, Big Chance! If they called it Fat Chance it 'ud fit better. Sleepiest lookin' dump I've ever seen!"

"What d'ye think of it, Doc?" asked High anxiously.

They both waited for their pal's verdict, for, by mutual consent, it was always reckoned that Doc Low was the brains of the trio. He was a bit of a mystery, even to his two side-kicks. It was evident that he had had a much better education than the ordinary

cowpuncher, and admitted having been a qualified chemist. They knew that he was, amongst other things, an expert at conjuring, a dabster at card tricks, and woe betide the card sharp who tried to "trim" Low!

Yet, in a rough-and-tumble, "free for all," the stocky, dapper cowboy was a host in himself—and always came up smiling.

They were a curious combination—High, Low, and Nippy—having left a considerable reputation behind them in Arizona, known as a likeable, shiftless, happy-go-lucky, hard-boiled bunch; but tophand cowpunchers when necessity forced them to work. If you offended one, you offended the three.

They were inseparable, and shared fortune and misfortune literally. If Low make a good "killing" at poker, the other two received equal thirds. Nippy would sometimes attend the races as a jock, and if his mount won, the three shared equally.

Now they were "broke," and looking for work. They had left Arizona in somewhat of a hurry, owing to a little disagreement with the sheriff of the county. On their way across the border they had been told that trouble was warming up in the Powder River Basin district, owing to the activities of the cattle rustlers, that good cowhands who were also not scared of a scrap could be sure of good wages and plenty of excitement.

Hence their disappointment at the appearance of the peaceful-looking little township of Big Chance.

"It sure don't look none too promising, buddies; but yuh can't allus tell. Don't git worried, gents! Mebbe we may be able to skeer up somethin' in th' shape of a fust-class murder for yuh 'fore long. Meantime we'll camp right hyar an' have our eats, then we'll git right down inter this yer gay city an' see what's who. They may be kinder late in startin' up things in these parts!" smiled Low.

At times the Doc would speak in the most correct English, at others he would revert into broadest Western dialect, and when necessary he could slang any puncher to a standstill.

Later, his words about a first-class murder were to be remembered as almost a prophecy, for they were to ride smack into one.

Big Chance was not so near as it had looked from the ridge, for they had to ride through many a zigzag gulch before they got down to the main trail and the little town, which was the centre of business in the cattle country.

By the time they had rested, fed themselves and their horses, negotiated the winding trail, and arrived on Main Street, Big Chance was humming with wagons and horsemen, whilst the hitching-post in front of the store and post office was crowded with tethered broncs.

"Th' 'Leanin' L,' Colonel Lou Luttrell being boss, is th' tip-top ranch hyarabouts," they were told by a bartender, "but I doubts whether he kin take on three of yer. He's been takin' on a hull lot of noo help seein' as he's swore to git square wi' th' fellers who've been rustlin' his stock. Guess he's full up."

"H'm, thar is allus room for first-class hands on any outfit, an' me an' my buddies are somethin' extry!" said Low, polishing up his specs. "We air out'n th' ordinary, an' if th' colonel once sees us he'll discharge some of his

superfluous cow waddies in our favour!"

"Haw, haw! Swell chanct yer've got!" grinned the barman. "Col. Lou's job is too much of a good 'un for ary waddy to give up. Forty a month and found, an' th' ranch cook is thet good thet most o' th' boys is in danger o' overfeedin'. Thet's th' 'Leanin' L.'!"

"Lead me to it—it's our 'andwritin'!" murmured Nippy.

There was a thunder of hoofs, and amid a cloud of dust a dozen horsemen pounded down the street.

"Thet's th' cunnel an' some o' his waddies now," said the bartender. "Best go an' ax for yerselves."

"Three? C'udn't do wi' haff o' one!" snapped the boss. "Full up!"

"Thet's tore it!" groaned High. "We're sunk!"

"Not yet!" said Low confidently. "We've been up against this before. Listen!"

A few whispered words, and they sauntered back to where the little bunch of Leanin' L punchers draped themselves against the railings outside the saloon. High picked up a round pebble, threw it high in the air, whipped out his six-gun, shot—and missed the pebble!

Low gave a guffaw, flicked up his own pebble, and also missed. There was a laugh from the punchers, whom the shooting had attracted, and Low scowled.

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"Yuh mebbe a fust-class gunslinger, High, but I'm middlin' fair myself," he grumbled loudly. "I'm flat broke at the time, but I gotta ra'al good hoss, an' so've yuh. I'll bet mine ag'in yours—flip, draw, an' shoot—thet yuh can't beat me in six shots?"

"Thet's a bet!" grinned High. "Flip 'em up, cowboy!"

Low shot six times, hitting his pebble but once. High hit three out of six and took the horse.

"Waal, yuh won, but my gun ain't shootin' right!" Low shrugged. "Guess yuh fancies yerself some at thet, but I've seen gunslingers as 'ud shoot rings round yuh—"

"One right hyar!" sang out a puncher. "Tim, step out an' show this guy somethin'!"

Tim, a hardbitten-looking cowboy, with two six-guns slung low at his thighs, shook his head.

"It 'ud be a shame to take th' money!" he sneered.

High's face flushed, and he stuttered:

"Say, if yuh feel like thet about it I'll shoot yuh for whatcher like. I'm shy o' dough, but thar's th' hoss I've jest won. He's a jim-dandy. Bein' broke I need a job o' work. I'll bet thet hoss ag'inst yer job thet I beat yuh level shootin', six shots?"

Tim glanced at the beautiful little buckskin mare and fell.

"Yuh've said a mouthful, stranger. We'll take turns and draw, flip an' shoot 'til one misses. Git muh? But we'll flip dimes not pebbles, huh?"

"Suits me, yuh supply th' dimes. Told yuh I was broke!" grinned High.

The men surged round, even the boss taking an interest in such an unusual bet—a job against a horse!

Ping, ping, ping, ping!

The glittering coins rang as the bullets struck them, until on his sixth attempt Tim missed. High hit seven without a miss.

"Yuh slabsided shootin' fool!" groaned Tim. "Yuh're sure some gunslinger, an' I'm out'n a job. Gimme my time, please, cunnel. This galoot's sure won my job off muh!"

"On second thoughts I won't take his job. I'll hand it over to this pickle-faced guy I won th' hoss off!" cried High. "A cowboy wi'out either a hoss or a job is on a hard case—"

"Hyar, thet won't do!" yelled a big red-faced hoss-ranger. "Thet warn't th' deal! Yuh won th' job, not—"

This was Nippy's cue.

"An' 'oo asked you to 'orn in, Sunrise?" he queried. "Th' long 'un won th' job, an' kin do as 'e likes wiv it, cawn't 'e? Why, for 'arf a dollar I'd knock you loose from your job, an' tike it meself, big as yer are, yer skinny orstrich!"

There was a shout of laughter from the crowd, and the red-faced wrangler went purple.

"If yer c'ud slap me once yer kin have th' job, I'd be thet ashamed!" he growled. "Go 'way, yer sawed off leetle runt, or I'll put ye acrost my knee an' warm yer pants!"

The crowd hardly saw, so quickly did Nippy move; but next second the wrangler was holding his cheek, which showed signs of having come up against Nippy's bunched knuckles.

"Slapped!" crowed the true-bred Cockney. "Now, what abaht yer job? But I'll give yer a chanct. Strip orf yer coat and I'll fight yer for yer job ag'in my 'oss. 'E don't look much, but 'e's a wonder to do!"

"Yer on!" howled the man, who was infuriated at the laughter of the other boys.

It looked like David and Goliath, with any odds on Goliath. But Nippy wasted no time. The big man rushed at him with whirling arms, but the ex-feather-weight champ danced under the blows and slammed in one buster after another until the big fellow was winded. It was farcical, and at the same time almost magical, and the crowd yelped with delight at Nippy's artistic work, whilst the wrangler became more and more flustered as his heavy blows met only air.

Biff! A short arm blow to the solar plexus brought his head forward, almost collapsin'. Bang! A swinging right to the point, and he sagged at the knees. Wallop! A lightning left on the other side completed the business, and the wrangler went fast asleep in the dust, whilst the boys cheered Nippy to the echo.

Colonel Lou was a sport, and he was laughing too much, anyway, to object to the swapping of jobs. Maybe he thought that such a gunslinger and such a fist scrapper would be mighty useful in the trouble which was looming.

"Said I'd knock 'im out of a job, an'



I 'ave!" crowed Nippy. "But now I'm goin' to 'and it over to High Jinks, th' shootin' fool., Mebbe I'll find a job later!"

Nippy wasted no time. He dealt a swinging right to the point, and then a lightning left completed the business. The wrangler toppled back with a crash!

Leave it to Low!

BIT by bit High and Low learnt what the trouble was that threatened war on the range.

North of the Leanin' L Ranch was a big outfit owned by Gaston A. Slee, whose initials were the brand for his cattle. Naturally, his punchers were known as the "Gasbags." There had long been a suspicion that the swarthy half-breed ranch-owner was responsible for the disappearance of the colonel's cattle, but so far nothing definite had been laid to his charge. It was also shrewdly suspected that someone in his pay was on the pay-roll of the Leanin' L. and this made things mighty uncomfortable for the boys, who were suspicious of each other.

The foreman, a somewhat sour individual named Tod Slokum, suspected everybody, and was apt to brag that he could, if he would, lay his finger on the spy. This hardly made him popular, more especially as he was given to "snoopin' around," and turning up at unexpected moments at various parts of the range. He had got the men in a state of nervous tension that made them look sideways at each other.

He rode between High and Low on the way up to the ranch, and asked them sundry very personal questions. The yarns he got in exchange naturally made him more and more suspicious, until he was undecided whether to think the newcomers were cattle rustlers or range detectives.

"That bozo's axin' for trouble," High muttered to his side-kick, after they reached the ranch. "What about th' job for Nippy, Low? Anythin' doin'?"

"Providence will purvide! We will wait an opportunity an' seize it by th' short hairs when it sticks it's blamed head up!" was the cryptic reply.

Opportunity occurred that very night. The two of them had been assigned to a line camp on the other side of the divide with four other men—Texas Teck, a genial and smiling Texan in charge, with Supe Smith—short for "Superstitious"—Collins, and Drake.

"Drake, Collins an' me'll take night hawk dooty," said Texas. "Yuh two noo guys an' Supe will take on at dawn. I'd not be surprised if Tod Slokum don't show up in th' mornin', you fellers bein' fresh hands. He may want see how yer shapin'."

"Say, I'm kinder glad we've got th' day trick. I kinder hate ridin' at night, it's so lonesome," said Supe Smith. "Not that I'm sooperstitious, mindjer. I'm not. Don't believe in ghosts an' sich, but night seems so long—"

"Don't believe in ghosts?" cried Low, kicking High under the table. "Say, boyee, yuh mustn't say thet. It's like a challenge to the spooks to come along an' haunt ye. 'Pears to me this looks like the shack thet No-Ear Jake was holed up in—eh, High?"

High had no idea what he was talking about, but he looked round gravely.

"It is th' shack; course it is. I 'member thet galoot tellin' us—"

"Yeah. Described it so natural, didn't he?" interrupted Low hastily, with a side glance at the interested superstitious youth, who was listening with his mouth open.

"Wh-what w-was it?" he stuttered, with a nervous glance around.

"Oh, nothin' much. I wouldn't tell most fellers, it might skeer 'em; but bein' as yuh ain't sooperstitious—"

He reeled off a blood-curdling yarn about a rustler being driven into the shack by a posse, and fighting for his life rather than be taken.

"No-Ear Jake, his name was, bein' as his harkers had been lopped off by Injuns when he was young. They do say that on nights when thar ain't a moon he comes back an' sighs mournful, and comes searchin' thru th' bunks for his lop ears, or someone else's, if he kin grab 'em."

High backed him up with another yarn, and by the time they got to bed Supe was in a jellified state. Low blew the light out, and pretended to go to bed, but searched through his warbag,

and quietly slipped out with some articles he had found.

"Reckon I'll not take any chances to-night!" grunted High, as he got into the bunk under Supe's. "It's a moonless night, an' th' wind's gettin' up. I'm goin' to hang my six-gun on my bunk whar it'll be handy. I ain't yearnin' to have no restless ghost a-feelin' around for my ears!"

All went well for a time.

"What in peace was thet?" whispered High, about an hour later.

From the other end of the long, low bunk shack there came a low moaning sound, which rose to almost a scream as the wind howled through the trees. Then there was a rustling by the window, and something white and shadowy rushed past, and returned again after a few seconds. More rustling, a thud, followed by the sound of dragging over the floor, then a faint light which moved slowly nearer.

"By crimps, it's a-comin'!" chattered High, in an undertone.

He reached over the side of the bunk, and, with a quick jerk, tore the clothes off the shivering Supe, then laid a clammy hand on his bare leg. At the same time a most dismal shriek came from the window, and the faint, shimmering light moved again.

With a piercing yell, Supe leapt out of his bunk, fired half a dozen shots through the window-panes, and then bolted for his life out of the door. Two minutes later the sound of clattering hoofs proclaimed that he was putting miles between himself and the "haunted" shack.

"A broken bottle neck stuck in the clay between th' logs made the wailin' noise; half a dozen pack rats shut up in a sack smeared with phosphor paste, and some white paper tore up and put on top of the woodshed, so it 'ud blow this way, did th' rest of th' trick," grinned Low. "I told Nippy to ax for a job in th' mornin'!"

Thus the Tricky Three hired themselves out to the ranch of their choice, and after a day or two the boss congratulated himself on having acquired three tip-top workers.

A week later Tod Slokum unexpectedly appeared at the sideline shack. He fixed each of the pals with a lowering eye.

"Yuh boys go git yer hosses an' saddle up. I'll be ready 'most by th' time yuh gits 'em. Say, Nolan, ketch my crittur an' saddle him for me, will yuh? I'm plumb busy."

"Ow, yessir! Shall I old yer 'and and warm yer saddle for yer?" murmured Nippy, as the pals sauntered out. "I'd do hanythink for sich a sweet, smilin' hangel face!"

Suddenly a shot was heard, and High raced back to the shack.

Through the window he caught a glimpse of the foreman, slumped down in his chair, with his head down on the table. On the table itself a thin red line was trickling slowly to the floor.

Low was just emerging from the trees, and High fired a couple of shots in the air to attract his attention, and then, with a sweep of his arm, motioned him to hurry.

Low cast one glance at his pard's perturbed face, then looked in the cabin and took in the situation. He crossed rapidly to the dead man, then swung round on High.

"You fool! What yuh wants do it for?" he snapped. "Did he pull on yuh, or what?"

"Durned fool yerself! I never killed him!" snorted High angrily.

"If yuh didn't, who did? Yuh were t'only one hyar."

"I wasn't hyar. I was with yuh, ketchin' th' hosses. For th' luv o' Mike—yer s'posed to have brains—snap out of it an' help dope this out. He was shot thro' th' window, from the way he was sittin'. Come an' look!"

As they rushed out, Nippy rode up with the foreman's horse.

"What's th' shootin' abaht—Bank 'Oliday?" he grinned. "'Oly terror! 'Oo did that?"

"Shurrup! It's what we've gotta find out!" snapped Low. "Boys, come to think of it, we're all three in a mighty tight place. We're newcomers on this range, and though we might have a cast-iron alibi—which we haven't—a better thing 'ud be to be able to prodoce th' gent that fired th' shot."

"Thar's one thing sure an' sertain thet clears us!" cried High, who had been examining the foreman's wound. "This hole was caused by a thirty-eight, and we all packs forty-fives, so thet let's us out!"

"H'm! I'd hate for my life to depend on drummin' thet into a necktie party made up o' Tod Slokum's pals," said Low dryly. "We want somethin'—whoops!"

He had slipped on something as he crossed to the window, and, stooping, picked up a thin brass cylinder. He examined it closely.

"This hangs someone!" he proclaimed. "See this groove? This ain't from a revolver—it's from a .38 automatic!"

"Chee, Colonel Lou packs one o' them noo-fangled guns!" cried High. "Who'd have thought it? He found out thet Tod was th' 'Gasbag' spy, challenged him with it, and—"

"Left a brass cartridge-case as evidence?" sneered Low. "Boys, th' gun, whoever it belongs to, was fired by a feller used to an ordinary revolver, who forgot that an automatic ejects its shell."

"Nippy, git on yer hoss and bring the colonel and whoever is up at th' ranch-house hyar a-kitin'."

He sent High to stand guard outside in case of the other line riders coming in. Then he rummaged his warbag once more, and got busy, muttering to himself the while.

"It's a chanct—but if I can git the murderer to betray himself it's haff th' battle. I've got a hunch who 'tis, but thet's not evidence!"

In less than half an hour he heard the quick rattle of hoofs. Texas Teck dashed up.

"Colonel will be hyar d'reckly!" he gasped. "How ter'ble! Pore ol' Tod! Such a good feller—one o' my buddies. Can I just see him a moment, think ye, Low? Why, it's dark!"

"Sure. I covered the window up out'n respect. Thar ain't nothin' to see, but go in if you like, Tex. I'll wait outside."

A few minutes later Colonel Lou and half a dozen of the boys dashed up.

"What devil's done this?" he stormed. "What about you three men, th' only ones about th' shack at th' time—"

"Hold your hosses now, cunnel!" said Low, stepping forward. "We're all hyar, and we're not runnin' away. I'm

goin' to make the murderer confess by a simple test, with your consent. The shack is pitch-dark with the door shut, ain't it? We'll all go inside, and we three buddies, bein' th' on'y guys who slept hyar last night— Oh, Tex, you was hyar, too?"

"Yep; but I left early. Tod sent me—"

"'Course, I remember. Still, you won't mind doin' what we do, hey? We'll each take the dead man's right hands in ours and each say, 'I swear by this hand that I am not your murderer!' If th' feller lies—Tod Slokum will speak!"

"What? The dead man speak?" cried the colonel.

"Ho'll prove his murderer to be a liar!" said Low gravely. "You gents stand up against the wall at t'other end by th' door and watch. Now—it's dark. I'll go first. I swear, by this hand—"

They heard him speak solemnly and slowly. Then High followed, then Nippy, and finally Texas Teck. Not a sound!

"Open the door!" said Low, and the sunshine poured in.

"Up with yer hands, you three!" roared Low, and his six-gun covered High, Nippy, with Texas Teck in the middle. "Look at those fellers' right hands—and mine!"

They saw that the hands of the three pals were streaked with black. A glance at the dead man showed a glove on the right hand which had been liberally lamplacked.

"Keep your hands up! Shut the door! Now look!"

This time, in the pitch-darkness, High and Nippy's hands did not show at all, but the tips of Texas Teck's fingers glowed with a peculiar radiance.

"Open the door, and keep your hands up, Texas Teck, spy, rustler, and murderer!" Low roared. "When you searched about in the darkness half an hour ago for the automatic cartridge-case, you smeared your hands with the phosphor paste I had spread for a trap. High, search him, an' you'll find th' case. Nippy, if he starts anything, plug him on the jaw!"

THE END.

(Make sure you meet High, Low, and Nippy again. The Western puncher pals will appear in another exciting adventure in next week's **DUMPER FREE GIFT NUMBER** of the **MAGNET**!)

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The Annual Sports were held on Big Side on Wednesday last. Our proverbial luck in regard to weather held good, for the day turned out brilliantly fine. Big Side, as a result, looked a picture as the crowds of visitors flocked down to the big marquee where the Head was receiving them.



We haven't the space needed to name the many distinguished parents and friends who turned up. Among the most prominent were Colonel Wharton and Major Cherry, and, of course, Mr. Ferrers and Mr. Looker, who usually manages to snatch a few hours to come down and see us on Sports Day. Lord Bunter de Bunter and other titled members of the Bunter tribe were conspicuous only by their absence. Bunter was not quite sure whether this

was due to a strike of chauffeurs or a simultaneous breakdown of all their Rolls-Royces!
 An extensive programme of events was begun with the Senior Mile. Faulkner, who had been in special training for this race, was quite expected to win it. He weakened in the last lap, however, and Wingate, who had been at his heels right through, came with a fine burst of speed to win with comparative ease.
 After one or two events for fags, the Senior 100 Yards was decided and fell, unexpectedly, to Blundell, the popular leader of the Fifth. Wingate, who was in this race also, might have brought off a double event, but for an unfortunate accident, caused, as these things usually are, by Coker. The duffer of the Fifth had entered the race and quite made up his mind to win it. Owing to a last-minute argument with Potter and Green, however, he arrived on the scene rather late. The starter's pistol went just as Coker pushed his way through the crowd. Determined not to be left out, Coker at once leaped on to the track and raced off madly. In his excitement he didn't realize that he had started from the wrong end. He did realize it, however, when he and Wingate collided with a fearful impact half-way!

The terrific duel ended in Wharton breasting the tape a fraction of a second in front of his rival. But it was really touch-and-go who won, and the thunderous cheers that went up from the excited spectators were as much in honour of the vanquished as the victor!

Skinner caused a mild sensation by winning the Sack Race. There was a much bigger sensation a little later when one of the judges found that strong springs attached to Skinner's shoes had been forced through the sack! The brazen sack-racer was at once disqualified, and ordered to report to the Head after prayers the following morning, when, we understand, his ingenuity was rewarded with a dozen of the best!

Great hilarity was caused shortly after this incident when the tug-o-war between the Remove and the Upper Fourth took place. After a grim struggle lasting several minutes, both teams made terrific efforts to win—so terrific, in fact, that the rope, which evidently had a fault in it, suddenly parted in the middle, sending both teams flying on their backs! The yells of pain were almost as loud as the spectators' yells of laughter!

The result of the Junior 100 Yards, the last but one race of the afternoon, deserves to be written in letters of gold on a scroll of fame. **IT WAS WON BY BUNTER!** Our Prize Porpoise, we understand, had been taking advantage of Coker's absence on Big Side to drop into his study, where Coker had set out a tip-top tea in readiness for his Aunt Judy. Coker happened to run up and catch him, red-handed.

Of the first part of the chase that ensued, we know nothing. What we do know is that Bunter, with a look of sheer terror on his face, came rushing on to Big Side with Coker behind him at the very moment when Mr. Prout was starting the Junior 100 Yards. The Owl of the Remove joined the runners at the very moment of the start, streaked down the course like a flash of lightning and fell into the arms of the judges, an easy winner! Loud and prolonged were the cheers that greeted Bunter's great feat and Coker was so overcome that he forgave him on the spot!
 Prize-giving took place in the Hall after tea and was followed, in the evening, by a display of fireworks.
 Chumkley's of Courtyard, we are asked to mention, were the efficient caterers, and the Courtyard Silver Band provided plenty of vigorous music throughout the day.

LAUGH AND GROW FAT.

Down with the Doughnut!

Peniculous Habit Overcome

Amazing Results from New Treatment

Professor Rake, the famous Doughnut Habit Consultant, claims to have discovered an entirely new cure for the insidious vice of doughnut-eating. Sufferers in the grip of the evil habit will have renewed hope if what he tells us is true.
 "Doughnut-eating," said the learned Professor, to a "Greyfriars Herald" representative, "yesterday, 'positively' can be cured. If you want proof, ask him!"
 He jerked his thumb in the direction of a bright-eyed, healthy-looking sportsman who was walking on his hands across the table. On standing on his head in the corner, the visitor was able to recognize Mr. William Wibley, the world-famed actor.
 "Pardon the intrusion, Mr. Wibley, but have you anything to tell our readers about the alleged cure for doughnut-eating?" the "Herald" representative asked.
 Mr. Wibley performed a neat somersault which landed him on his feet and then showed how healthy he was by roaring with laughter.
 "I can tell you plenty," he said at the end of his outburst of mirth. He grabbed the interviewer by the arm and added in a dramatic whisper: "Do you realize that six months ago, I was a hopeless victim of the doughnut vice?"
 "Incredible!" murmured the "G. H." representative.

Last night was a warm, moonlight night. Several of us took a stroll round the quad before bed. It was as we were returning that we ran into Mr. Prout, prowling along with a gun under his arm.
 "Going hunting, sir?" Wharton inquired.
 The master of the Fifth stopped for a moment. "In a sense, Wharton, I am, for my strike you as a little peculiar. In point of fact, I am hunting for a highwayman!"
 "Wha-a-ah!"
 "Surprising, I know!" nodded Prout. "Nevertheless, boys, it is true. Last night, believe me or not, I saw a desperate villain, clad in the garments of an eighteenth-century gentleman of the road, in the act of climbing over the school wall."
 We looked at each other. "I could not remain inactive, I sprang at the scoundrel—Dick Turpin himself, he might have been—and endeavoured to secure him."
 "Did—did he resist?" stammered Frank Nugent.
 "Desperately!" answered Prout. "He was a powerful man, fully six feet high, and he fought with demon ferocity. He escaped across the quad, unfortunately. But if he appears to-night, he shall not escape!"
 And Prout went off, handling his gun very grimly. "Poor old Prout!" remarked Wharton sadly. "That seems the only answer, anyway!"
 "That seems the only answer, anyway!"
 We went upstairs.

"STAND AND DELIVER"
 Prout Meets Old-time Highwayman

WAS IT A GHOST?
 A shock was awaiting us in the dorm. There, large as life and twice as natural, was Dick Turpin himself! Closer inspection revealed that it was Vernon-Smith, in fancy dress.
 "Just been showing the chaps how I looked at the carnival at Lantham Ice-rink last night," Smitty explained. "You heard I had a little run out after lights out? Nearly caught by Prout, coming back, too!"
 "So you're the powerful six-footer he told us about!" Johnny Bull checked. "Well, my hat!"
 And he set the dorm in a roar by telling them about Prout's yarn.
 No sooner were we all in bed than Prout himself looked in.
 "Did I, by any chance, see a highwayman through one of the windows just now, boys?" he inquired.
 "No highwaymen here, sir!" was our answer.
 "Remarkable!" coughed Prout. "I can only conclude that I am suffering from hallucinations. Either that or a ghost has begun to make its appearance in the School! Extraordinary!"
 And Prout went off, muttering into his chin.
 N.B.—Any person showing a copy of this week's "Herald" to Mr. Prout will be hung, drawn and quartered and afterwards boiled in oil!



RESULTS OF THE PRINCIPAL EVENTS.
 Senior Mile .. G. WINGATE.
 Senior 100 Yards .. G. BLUNDELL.
 Senior 220 Yards .. P. GUYONNE.
 Throwing the Cricket Ball .. T. NORTH.
 Junior Mile .. H. WHARTON.
 Junior 220 Yards .. R. CHERRY.
 Junior 100 Yards .. W. G. BUNTER.
 100 Yards (under 13) .. NOBENT MINOR.

FASHIONS FOR THE VAC.

Remarkable Bargains in Fashionable Men's Wear.
 Our Fashion Expert reports that Chumkley's of Courtyard are offering remarkable bargains in fashionable men's wear for the holiday season.
 Most attractive neckties, for example, are for sale in mixtures of sea-green, sky-blue and scarlet, at 6d. each. They can be worn, of course, only with the mustard-coloured suits sold in Chumkley's Outfitting Department at ten guineas.
 Excellent hatguards can be obtained at the ridiculous price of one penny. They are designed specially to fit Chumkley's Panama hats at two guineas each.
 Remarkably effective trousers-buckles are offered at tuppence a dozen. All you need to go with them is a pair of trousers without buttons on them.
 Salmon pink spats are for sale at 3s. 6d. per pair. They are specially designed to match Chumkley's Nu-color Shoes at three guineas a pair.
 Silver-plated spurs can be had at the preposterous price of ten shillings. To set them off effectively, you merely need one of Chumkley's Riding Outfits at £20 the outfit.
 It is simply amazing how cheaply one can dress fashionably in these days!

BULL-FIGHTING ON A MOTOR-BIKE
 Speed-Fiend's Latest Thrill
 sanatorium and cannot, therefore, answer for himself.
 Coker astride his motor-bike, passed a crowd of us Removites in the lane. We saw him dimly through dense clouds of dust, and gathered, from the circumstances that he had a towel and a bathing-cosmetic on his carrier, that he was on his way to the river for a dip.
 A few minutes later, we saw him lifting his old chicken-slaughterer through a gap in the hedge. Coker was apparently taking a short cut across country to the bathing-pool. A board stuck over the hedge announced that "trespassers would be prosecuted," but trifles like that, naturally, didn't worry H. J. C. When we reached the gap we had a squint through. What we saw kept us there in



ecstasies of thrills for quite a long time! Coker had slowed down. He couldn't very well do otherwise. For right in his path had appeared an uninviting-looking bull.
 Coker steered to the right. The bull, with a lightning like movement, changed its position and faced him again.
 Coker steered to the left. Another lightning-like movement and the bull was still facing him. Coker looked back. He saw half a dozen grinning faces peering at him through the gap. His engine roared. So did the bull!
 What happened next was a bit too quick for the eye to see. But we did know that there was a crash and a fearful howl, and that Coker and a sadly-damaged bike sailed over the hedge together!
 We carried both back, leaving the bull in undisputed possession of the field.
 We are informed that the new sport, despite the excitement it provides, is not likely to be taken up extensively at Greyfriars!

DOG-GONE MY CATS!

Hear Me Holler!
 If the slabsided jay that rustled any bunch of keys don't return them instanter, with half-a-buck for the day's hire, I'll run him to Doc. Locke. That's the kind of a guy I am—FISHER T. FISH, Study No. 14, Remove Passage.