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The MAGNET 2

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By Frank Richards.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

A Quick Recovery!

GROAN! Lord Mauleverer started. He had tapped at the door of Billy Bunter's room, at Mauleverer Towers, and opened it.

As he did so that deep and hair-raising groan greeted his ears.

It was ten in the morning—a bright, cold, clear December morning. Woods and fields round Mauleverer Towers glistened with snow in the wintry sunshine.

Harry Wharton & Co., who were staying with their noble pal Mauly for the Christmas holidays, had long been up. Billy Bunter, who was also staying for Christmas—or, at least, hoped that he was—was not up yet.

To judge by that awful groan, there was something the matter with Bunter.

Mauly looked quite concerned as he stepped into the room.

Groan!
"Bunter, old bean—"

Groan!
Billy Bunter was sitting up in bed. Pillows propped him. Upon his fat knees rested a tray. The wreck of a breakfast—a very large breakfast—was on the tray. Whatever was the matter with Bunter, it did not seem to have affected his appetite.

He blinked at Lord Mauleverer, as the schoolboy earl came to his bedside, with a pathetic blink.

"Anythin' up, old bean?" asked Mauly.

"I'm ill!" said Bunter faintly.
"Too much brekkor, poor old chap?"
"Oh, really, Mauly —""What's the trouble, then?"

Lord Mauleverer was sympathetic; he had a sympathetic nature. And he was not suspicious. Had he been suspicious he might have suspected that Billy Bunter's sudden illness had developed specially to prevent him from catching a morning train.

"I'm ill!" said Bunter. "I've got a fearful pain, Mauly! I—I think it's a touch of pneumonia in my—my shoulder."

"Oh gad!" said Mauly.

Groan!
"You don't want to stick indoors and—"

Groan!
"Like me to phone for a doctor?" asked Mauleverer.

Bunter shook his head feebly.
"Doctors are no good!" he answered. "I had a doctor last Christmas, and the silly ass said I had been eating too much! That's the sort of stuff you get from doctors. What are you grinning at, you beast?"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" Bob Cherry's powerful voice boomed along the corridor. "You coming, Mauly?"

"Yaas."
"Well, come on, ass—the car's ready."

"Bunter's ill!" said Lord Mauleverer.

"Oh, my hat!" Bob Cherry's ruddy face looked in at the doorway. "What the thump's the matter with Bunter?"

"Pneumonia in his shoulder, he says."

Billy Bunter blinked across the room towards the doorway, with an indignant blink through his big spectacles.

Five cheery faces were looking in. Harry Wharton & Co., of the Greyfriars Remove, seemed in good spirits that morning. Neither did they seem unduly cast down by the news that Bunter was ill. Perhaps they guessed the cause of his complaint. And perhaps pneumonia in the shoulder was not very convincing.

"I say, you fellows, there's nothing to cackle at!" said Bunter. "I'm ill—frightfully ill! I couldn't catch a train to save my life."

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All is gay and jolly at Mauleverer Towers—until the appearance of a sinister figure, which provides an unusual thrill to Harry Wharton & Co.'s Christmas holiday.

"I've hardly touched my brekkor—"
"Oh!" said Mauly, with an involuntary glance at the tray.

"Only a few eggs, and a few rashers, and a few kidneys, and—and a few other things, Mauly! Practically nothing! I—I can't eat."

"What about gettin' up?"
Groan!

It was a deep and dismal groan. The mere thought of getting up seemed to make Bunter worse.

"The car's comin' round!" said Mauly.

Groan!
"All the fellows are comin' in the car!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at! I've got a pain like a—burning dagger in my lungs," said Bunter. "I think it's plumbago."

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Bob Cherry.
 "Lot you care if a pal perishes under your eyes of galloping plumbago!" said Bunter bitterly.

"The carefulness would be terrific, my esteemed fat Bunter!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "But the belief-fulness is not great."

"Oh, really, Inky—"
 "Well, if Bunter's ill he can't come!" said Lord Mauleverer, with a dubious glance at the Owl of Greyfriars.

"Of course I can't!" yapped Bunter. "Like me to perish in the train? Nice sort of hospitality, after pressing a chap to come for Christmas."

"Oh gad!" ejaculated Lord Mauleverer. "But—but I didn't—"

"I can't move!" said Bunter firmly. "With these fearful pains in my legs I can't get out of bed."

"As well as in your lungs?" asked Frank Nugent.

"I mean in my lungs! I think I caught a fatal chill in the turret-room yesterday. If it turns out to be double pneumonia in both legs—I mean in both lungs—you fellows will be sorry!"

The Famous Five chuckled.

"I say, Mauly, turn those fellows out! You oughtn't to let a mob of noisy schoolboys disturb an invalid! I can't get up! I shall have to stay in bed until—until—"

"Until Mauly makes up his mind to let you stay over Christmas?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beast!"

"Well, if Bunter can't come out—"

said Mauleverer.

"I can't!" declared Bunter. "You can send the car back to the garage, Mauly! If those fellows think they're going to see me off at the station they're jolly well mistaken. I'm afraid I shall be ill for some time! I feel like it. A week or two, most likely—"

"Poor old Bunter!"

"I'll try to come down for Christmas dinner, Mauly! I can't move to-day. You can tell the chauffeur to take the car back to the garage."

"But we're goin'—"

"You're not going to take me to the station, Mauly! That's impossible—quite impossible! Ill as I am—"

"We're goin'—"

Groan!

"Oh gad! Is it so bad as all that, Bunter?"

"Worse!" groaned Bunter.

"Poor old chap! We'd better leave Bunter here!" said Lord Mauleverer. "He can't come out in the car in that state. We'd better get off. Hope you'll be better when we get back, Bunter. Come on, you men!"

Lord Mauleverer quitted Bunter's room. Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent, Johnny Bull and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, turned to follow him down the corridor. Bob Cherry lingered in the doorway, with a cheery grin on his face.

"Still feeling bad, old fat bean?" he asked.

"Yes, you beast! Frightfully ill!" said Bunter. "Much too ill to move! If you think you're going to get me to the station you're jolly well mistaken, see?"

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"But we weren't going to the station," he said.

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"Eh?"
 "Nothing of the sort, old fat frump! We'd all kick you out, with pleasure, if Mauly gave the word. But he seems to have made up his mind to let you rip."

"Wha-a-t?"

"We're having a day out in the car—"

"Oh!"

"Lunch at Southampton, and a matinee to follow."

"Oh crikey!"

"So sorry you're too ill to come!" chuckled Bob. "Mauly wouldn't have left you out. But as you're so ill—"

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Bunter.

He blinked at Bob's grinning face in dismay. He had taken it for granted that that visit to his room was preliminary to seeing him off at the station. Evidently he had taken too much for granted.

Bunter knew exactly how much Lord Mauleverer desired his fascinating company at Mauleverer Towers. But he seemed to have under-estimated the long-suffering patience of the good-natured Mauly.

Mauly had looked into his room, not to turn him out, but to include him in a merry party for a motor-drive and a theatre. Bunter's sudden illness had been absolutely superfluous!

The expression on Bunter's fat face was too much for Bob Cherry. He hung on the doorpost and roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beast!" gasped Bunter. "If that was what the silly idiot meant, why couldn't the silly idiot say so?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob.

"I say, I'm not ill—I mean, I feel better—much better!" gasped Bunter.

"I say, I'm not going to be left behind! I say, tell the fellows to wait for me. Tell Mauly I've recovered—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, take this beastly tray away!"

Crash! "I say, where's my trousers? Where's those blessed trousers? I say—"

Bunter scrambled out of bed.

Bob Cherry, chortling, followed his friends. His merry laugh floated back as he departed.

"I say, tell them to wait!" yelled Bunter. "Tell Mauly I'm all right! I'm not ill—not ill at all! It—it was all a mistake! I'm—I'm as well as—anything! I'm coming, you know! Don't you leave me behind! Where's those beastly trousers?"

Honk, honk! came through the frosty air.

"Beasts!" gasped Bunter.

With one leg in his trousers he rushed to the window. The big car was gliding away down the drive, packed with merry schoolboys. Billy Bunter glared down at it as it vanished, with a glare that almost cracked his spectacles.

Lord Mauleverer and his Christmas party were gone. Billy Bunter was left, and his only consolation was that he had completely recovered from his sudden illness.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Bunter Borrows a Few Things!

BILLY BUNTER stood in his doorway and blinked out into the corridor. Like Moses of old, he looked this way and that way, and, like Moses again, he saw no man.

The coast was clear. With a grin on his fat face, Billy Bunter rolled along in the direction of Lord Mauleverer's room.

Billy Bunter had arrived at Mauleverer Towers the previous day without luggage. He had what he stood up in;

and Bunter, though he was not careful in matters of attire, and was, indeed, rather slovenly, realised that he would need a change or two during the Christmas holidays. He had said that he relied on his old pals to see him through, but his old pals had not seemed enthusiastic about it.

But in matters of this kind Bunter was the fellow to help himself. Mauly had gone out for the day, and Harry Wharton & Co. had gone with him, so this was an opportunity not to be lost.

Lord Mauleverer had a very extensive wardrobe, which was not likely to be quite so extensive when his charming visitor had done with it.

Bunter needed socks and shirts and ties and all sorts of things. He knew where to look for them.

In such supplies, Lord Mauleverer's apartments were like unto a land flowing with milk and honey.

Mauly might possibly have raised objections to such a raid had he been at home. But he was not at home, so that was all right. This was, in fact, the opportunity Bunter wanted, and he was not the fellow to let it pass unimproved.

But he was rather cautious as he approached Mauly's door. Even Billy Bunter did not want to let the servants catch him despoiling his host.

He strolled along the corridor with a casual air—an air so very casual that it certainly would have drawn attention upon him had anyone been at hand to observe.

But there was no one at hand. He opened Mauly's door and stepped in cautiously, closing the door quietly behind him.

He blinked round Mauly's room.

There were two other doors to the room—one leading into a bath-room, the other into Lord Mauleverer's dressing-room. It was towards the latter that Bunter proceeded—on tiptoe.

The servants were downstairs, but it was possible that his lordship's man might be in his lordship's room, attending to some duty or other.

At Greyfriars School Lord Mauleverer lived and moved and had his being in the Lower Fourth, like any other junior, though it was rumoured in the Remove that when Mauly first came to school he had innocently desired to bring his valet to Greyfriars with him. It was said in the Remove studies that Mauly had been quite perturbed by the discovery that Lower Fourth fellows could not have personal attendants at Greyfriars.

At all events, when he was at home at Mauleverer Towers his valet was in attendance, as Bunter was aware.

And with such nefarious designs on Mauly's wardrobe, the fat Owl had a natural disinclination to butt into Mauly's man.

The door of the dressing-room was ajar, and Bunter crossed to it on tiptoe, to peer in before entering.

The next moment he was glad that he had been so cautious.

There was a sound of a movement in the dressing-room. Evidently someone was there, and as Mauly was miles away, it could only be Mr. James Orris, his valet.

"Beast!" breathed Bunter.

He blinked through the narrow opening of the door.

Standing before an open, tall wardrobe, with his back towards Bunter, was a rather plump man.

Bunter could not see his face, but he knew who it was. It was Mauly's man, Orris.

The valet had a grey tweed jacket in his hands—one of the innumerable garments belonging to his master,

Apparently he had, for some reason, taken it from the wardrobe, for he was now replacing it carefully on a hanger, to hang up again.

Having replaced it, he closed the door of the wardrobe, and Bunter heard the latch click.

The wardrobe door was a mirror, a full length sheet of glass, and as it closed, Bunter saw the full reflection of the valet in it.

He started. He had seen Orris before, several times. The man had been more than a year in Mauly's service. Bunter rather approved of Orris. He was so quiet and deferential. He had a rather plump, clean-shaven face, good-looking in its way; but as a rule it was almost expressionless. If it expressed anything it was a deferential sedateness.

whether that blighter has been pinching?"

Bunter shook his head seriously. "Bit thick, if the rotter comes in pinching things while Mauly's out!" he murmured. "Well, he's gone now, thank goodness. I fancy I'll borrow that tweed jacket—it would suit me to a T. Most of Mauly's things suit me, luckily!"

Orris, being safely off the scene, Billy Bunter rolled into the dressing-room.

He lost no time in getting to work. Everything in the room was in perfect order. James Orris was a careful and methodical man; in fact, a jewel of a valet.

Bunter was not long in making a change.

He was rather anxious to get through,

Bunter blinked at the stack in the chair. His selection was so very extensive that it seemed doubtful whether he could carry all his plunder away in one trip.

He gathered up innumerable articles, enfolding them in his fat arms. He was loaded above the Plimsoll line, as he rolled away with his loot. He opened the door of the corridor and blinked out. The corridor was empty, and Bunter rolled out, heavy laden, towards his own room.

There was a footstep. "Oh crikey!" murmured Bunter. A portly and imposing form turned into the corridor from the direction of the stairs. It was Porson, the stately butler of Mauleverer Towers.

He met Bunter fairly face to face.



"I'll come to the theatre!" gasped Bunter. "I'm not ill—I mean, I feel better, much better! Take this beastly tray away!" Crash! Bunter scrambled hastily out of bed, while his schoolfellows roared.

Now it was quite different; so different that it made Bunter blink through his big spectacles in surprise at the reflection in the mirror.

It was slightly pale. The lips were tightly set, the brows knitted over eyes that had a strange glint in them.

Orris stood for some moments quite still, and Bunter could see that he was breathing hard.

Then he turned away and crossed the room towards the door on the corridor.

Bunter almost gasped with relief.

Had Orris come through the bedroom he could hardly have failed to discover Bunter there at the communicating door.

Fortunately, he left by the door on the corridor, and Bunter was glad to hear it shut behind him.

"Well, my hat!" murmured Bunter. "Blessed if I don't believe he's been up to something! He looked like it! That ass Mauly is ass enough to leave money in his pockets. I wonder

before anyone could interrupt him. Orris might come back, and he did not want any cheek from Orris.

He had no time to bother about tidiness. Articles he selected for his own personal adornment, he piled into an armchair. The pile grew larger and larger. Articles he did not require he dropped carelessly. Orris could pack them away again, some time. What the dickens was a valet for?

The stack in the armchair grew quite mountainous. The floor was littered right and left.

Bunter's selection was very extensive. It included a grey tweed lounge suit—the jacket of which he had seen Orris handling. It was a very handsome, very well-cut, and very expensive suit, and Bunter had no doubt that it would suit him quite well. No doubt it would be a little tight; Bunter had a figure, and Mauly hadn't! But that could not be helped; besides, the waistcoat could be slit up the back.

Porson was seldom, or never, known to betray emotion of any kind. He was too well-trained a butler for that. Nothing ever startled him. Bob Cherry had declared that if the crack of doom happened while Mauly was at home, Porson would announce with unperurbed calm: "The crack of doom, my lord!"

But Porson, for once in his stately career, was startled, as he beheld Billy Bunter rolling away from Lord Mauleverer's room with his fat arms stacked with plunder.

He jumped! For the first time in his life, Porson jumped. He stared. He stared so hard that it seemed, for a moment, that his eyes would pop out of his head.

"Oh!" gasped Porson. Bunter blinked at him. He had just room to blink over the stack of plunder piled on his fat chest and enclosed by his fat arms.

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"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "That you, Porson? I—I—it's all right, Porson! I've—I've borrowed a few things from Mauly—" Three or four collars and a necktie and a pair of silk socks fluttered to the floor. Bunter made a hasty grab at them, and a pair of trousers escaped; and as he grabbed at the trousers, the whole cargo shifted and streamed down round Bunter.

He stood in a sea of shirts and collars, socks and pyjamas, trousers and waistcoats and jackets, shoes, slippers, ties, studs, and all sorts and conditions of things.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bunter. "I—I—I say, Porson, help me pick up these things! Oh crumbs!"

"Sir!" gasped Porson.

"Come and lend a hand!" hooted Bunter. "Don't stand there like a stuffed dummy!"

"Oh!" gasped Porson.

Like a man in a dream, Porson helped to pick up the scattered garments and pile them on Bunter. Bunter was a guest at Mauleverer Towers, though a very remarkable guest. What a butler ought to do in such circumstances as this, Porson did not know. He was an experienced butler, but he had never been up against a problem like this before in all his long career in the best houses!

Bunter rolled on to his room. Porson almost tottered away to the stairs, still looking like a man in a dream.

What Porson thought, Bunter did not know. He did not care very much. In his room, he proceeded to make a change that was undoubtedly very much for the better; and he surveyed in the glass a tubby figure, that threatened to burst out of an elegant tweed suit, with great satisfaction. And, having smirked at his reflection with a happy and gratified smirk, Billy Bunter rolled out to take a walk before lunch.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Bunter on His Own!

"**B**EASTS!" murmured Billy Bunter.

He was feeling rather fed-up.

Mauleverer Towers was a magnificent place; it swarmed with servants, and the food was all that even Bunter could desire. The fat junior was satisfied, so far as that went.

In a few days the Towers would be crowded with Christmas company, and Bunter, assured now that Mauly was not going to kick him out—was looking forward to the Yuletide festivities.

Hazeldene of the Remove was coming and bringing his sister Marjorie and some of her friends from Cliff House School, and Bunter looked forward to the pleased expression that would dawn on Marjorie's pretty face when she saw him there. Bunter really was a kind-hearted fellow, and liked giving pleasure to others.

But at the present moment, Bunter was feeling fed-up. The beasts—Lord Mauleverer and the Famous Five—had gone off and left him on his own. Mauly's uncle, Sir Reginald Brooke, and his good lady, had gone out to lunch; not that Bunter was keen on the society of an elderly baronet and an elderly lady. At present there was nobody else at the Towers, and Bunter was a gregarious fellow. His own company was fascinating, of course; still, he liked the company of others.

Next to eating, talking was Bunter's

chiefest delight, though sleeping ran it close. But he could not talk without a listener. Certainly, he liked to do all the talking, and had little use for replies; still, he wanted somebody to listen-in when he talked. He really could not talk to himself.

He took a solitary walk before lunch, and when he came in, he lunched with nobody but Sir Reginald's secretary, an elderly gentleman who was a little deaf, and would say nothing but "Hoy, hey," in reply to Bunter's easy flow of light and genial conversation.

The lunch was all that could be desired, and Bunter, as usual, lunched not wisely, but too well.

After lunch, he rolled away to his room for a nap.

Many eyes had lingered on Bunter that morning. He wondered whether the servants recognised the handsome tweed suit he was wearing. Still, Bunter did not care what they thought in the servants' hall.

That suit had fitted rather tightly when Bunter put it on. It felt still tighter after lunch. The slit up the back of the waistcoat prolonged itself a little, and a button went west. Bunter was used to little things like that, however. It was not the first time, by many a one, that he had strutted in borrowed plumes.

Having napped, and apprised all the Towers of the fact by a far-reaching melodious snore, Bunter came down. There had been a light fall of snow outside, and he was not inclined to go out. The library did not attract him, but he found diversion in the billiards-room for half an hour, knocking the balls about, and cutting the cloth. Then he wandered forth again, feeling more and more fed-up.

It was like those beasts to leave him on his own like this—after all he had done for them!

By this time Bunter had so much conversation bottled up in him, that he stopped Porson in the hall to give the butler the benefit of a little chat.

But household duties called Porson away; or, perhaps Bunter's genial conversation palled on him. He disappeared, with a last lingering look at Bunter's handsome tweed suit.

The fat junior rolled away to the turret at last, to see whether the beasts were coming back. Little as he admired Harry Wharton & Co.—having always found them fall far below his own high standard—he was rather anxious to see them come in. He was fed-up to his fat chin with his own entrancing company by this time.

The old turret of Mauleverer Towers was the most ancient part of the building. It dated from early Norman times, and it had been left entirely unchanged, while the rest of the place was modernised. It was reputed to be haunted by the ghost of the Red Earl—an ancient Mauleverer who had vanished mysteriously with the king's pursuivants in pursuit of him. According to the legend, the Red Earl had vanished in that very turret, and, by a strange chance, it happened that Billy Bunter had learned that the story was well founded.

He grinned as he rolled into the high turret-room, a dusky apartment, with black oak walls and tall slits of windows.

The old oak panels were strangely carved, and on one of them a grotesquely carved lion's head concealed a spring that opened the panel.

Bunter blinked at it, grinning.

He knew the secret, and no one else

did—or if anyone else did, he said nothing of his knowledge. Certainly Lord Mauleverer and his friends knew nothing of it.

Bunter had tumbled into the old disused well in the grounds on the evening of his arrival, and so made the discovery that nobody else had made.

From the old well there was a subterranean passage leading to a spiral stair in the thickness of the ancient wall which gave access to the haunted turret-room.

That was the way Bunter had entered the Towers.

Harry Wharton & Co. were under the impression that he had sneaked in somehow unseen, and kept his arrival dark till a late hour, when it was too late for him to be kicked out again. But they did not dream that Bunter, by sheer chance, had stumbled on the secret of the Towers, and made use of it.

Bunter had no intention of telling them.

He realised that it was possible that he might need to use that peculiar mode of ingress another time.

Mauly seemed to have submitted to his fate, and made up his noble mind to put up with Bunter over the Christmas holidays. Still, the position was a little precarious.

Any fellow ought to have felt frightfully bucked at having Bunter for the holidays, but Bunter knew from experience that fellows did not always feel as they ought.

Bunter blinked at the secret panel, with the idea in his fat mind of opening it and exploring the recesses beyond to fill up time.

But he shook his head.

It was dark and cold and chilly in the secret passages; and though Bunter did not believe in ghosts—in the daytime, at least—he did not feel disposed to venture alone into the gloomy recesses reputed to be haunted by the Red Earl.

He turned to one of the tall windows and looked out.

In the clear winter sunshine he had an extensive view of the wide acres of the Mauleverer estate, with the fields and woods and hills of Hampshire beyond. Far in the distance a tall spire indicated Winchester. It was a magnificent view, but it did not interest Bunter very much. There was no sign of the big car coming back with the Greyfriars party.

He turned from the window as he heard a footstep on the turret stair. Someone was coming up.

He blinked at a plump figure and a clean-shaven face. It was James Orris who entered the turret-room.

Bunter eyed him curiously. Unless the valet had come up for the view, he could not guess what the man wanted there.

Orris, evidently, was unaware that the room was occupied. He gave a violent start at the sight of Billy Bunter.

Bunter bestowed a genial grin on him. "You can come in, my man!" he said patronisingly.

Bunter was prepared to give Orris the benefit of his conversation till a more worthy victim could be found.

"Thank you, sir!" said Orris in his quiet, deferential voice. "I was about to look from the turret, sir, to see whether his lordship was returning."

"The beasts aren't coming back yet!" grunted Bunter.

"Oh, sir!" murmured Orris.

Perhaps he was surprised to hear his lordship's guest refer to his lordship and his fellow-guests as "beasts."

Suddenly Orris' eyes became fixed on the grey tweed suit.

Evidently he recognised it.

He came quickly towards the fat junior.

Bunter frowned.

It was no business of Mauly's man if he was wearing Mauly's clothes—so far as Bunter could see, at all events.

"Excuse me, sir!" said Orris, evidently perturbed. "May I ask whether you have taken that suit from his lordship's room?"

Bunter gave him a glare.

"I suppose I can borrow a few things from Mauly without asking you!" he snapped.

"Oh, certainly, sir! But—but his lordship intended to wear that suit to-morrow morning."

"I suppose he's got others!" jeered Bunter.

"Oh, certainly! But—but—"

"It's all right, Orris," said Bunter. "You can tell Mauly I've borrowed the things—in fact, he will see me in them."

"But, sir, as his lordship's valet, I am in charge of his lordship's garments, and—and—"

"That's all right," said Bunter. "Mind your own business, Orris! Here, keep off, you silly idiot!" he added, jumping back.

Orris had stepped nearer to him, with a glint in his eyes that Bunter did not like at all.

For the moment he had quite ceased to be the quiet, deferential manservant. It really looked for the moment as if the thought was in his mind of marching Bunter down to Mauly's room and making him change out of his lordship's clothes.

Bunter blinked at him in alarm.

"You cheeky rotter!" he gasped. "I'll jolly well ask Mauly to sack you! Go and eat coke!"

And Billy Bunter rolled out of the turret-room, and descended the stone stair rather hastily.

Orris made a stride after him, but paused.

For whatever mysterious reason, he was evidently deeply disturbed at finding that tweed suit adorning the fat person of William George Bunter.

He stood at the top of the stone stair staring after Bunter as he descended, and the look on his hard, clean-shaven face might have alarmed the Owl of the Remove had he glanced back.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Amazing!

"I SAY, you fellows!"
"Hallo, hallo, hallo! You're looking well, Bunter!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Quite recovered, old fat man?"

"Glad to see you're well, Bunter!" said Lord Mauleverer. "Did you have a doctor, after all?"

"Oh, really, Mauly—"

"All those fearful pains gone?" chuckled Bob Cherry. "Got rid of the plumbago in your lungs, and the pneumonia in your left ear?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Wharton & Co. had returned in cheery spirits. Billy Bunter met them in the hall, evidently fully recovered from his sudden illness of the morning.

"I say, you fellows, don't cackle!" said Bunter peevishly. "I've got something to tell you—something that will make you jump."

"Has your postal order come on from Greyfriars?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Where did you get that clobber?"

grinned Bob Cherry. "I saw Mauly wearing a suit like that yesterday."

"Oh gad!" said Lord Mauleverer, staring at Bunter.

"Mauly doesn't mind a pal borrowing a few things!" said Bunter scornfully.

"He's not mean like you fellows! By the way, Orris was rather cheeky about it, Mauly, and I told him I'd ask you to sack him."

"Oh gad!" repeated Lord Mauleverer.

NOW HE'S GOT
A
SPLENDID
PRIZE
FOR CHRISTMAS!

All he did was to send in a funny story. Have you heard it?



"Believe me, mum," said the tramp, "the soles of these 'ere boots I'm a-wearing are so thin that if I happened to tread on a penny—which I never does, worse luck—I could tell if it was heads or tails!"

Congratulations to Desmond Wilson, of 51 Bessborough Avenue, North Strand, Dublin. Hope you'll find the prize useful, Desmond.—Ed.

LOOK LIVELY,
CHUMS,
and win one of these
HANDSOME PRIZES!



"No!" roared Bunter. "I don't, you silly ass!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, I don't see any other danger he can be in," said Bob, shaking his head. "Feeling nervous, Mauly?"

"Not frightfully!" grinned Lord Mauleverer.

"I say, you fellows—" Bunter broke off abruptly, as Porson hovered near. He waited till Porson was out of hearing. "I say, I've not said anything yet. I haven't told your uncle about your awful danger, Mauly—"

"Good gad!"

"He's rather an old ass, you know!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"And I haven't told your aunt, either—she's rather a silly old frump—"

"Shall I kick him, Mauly?" asked Johnny Bull.

"No!" gasped Lord Mauleverer. "I'm goin' to kick him myself! Turn round, Bunter."

"Oh, really, Mauly! I haven't said a word yet! I thought of phoning up the police—"

"The—the police!" gasped Mauly.

"But I thought I'd leave it till you came in. Better come into your den and I'll tell you. My idea is to keep it dark till we spot the villain."

"What villain?" gasped Mauly.

"Is the fat idiot wandering in his mind?" asked Harry Wharton, in amazement.

"Has he any absurd mind to wander in?" asked Huree Janset Rau Singh.

"Come on!" urged Bunter. "I can't tell you here—the servants will hear—some of them may be in the plot—"

"The—the—the plot!" stammered Mauleverer.

"Yes; Porson may be in it—"

"Pi-pip-Porson?"

"Or Orris—"

"Orris?"

"Or John, or Peter, or George, or any of them!"

"John, or Peter, or George?" repeated Mauleverer, like a fellow in a dream.

"It's plain enough that it's somebody who's got the run of the house," said Bunter.

"Who is?" shrieked Mauleverer.

"That villain!"

"What villain, you kerighted ass!"

"The one I'm telling you about—the one who is goin' to knock you on the head—"

"Kn-n-ock me on the head?"

"Yes; unless you pay him a thousand pounds."

"Oh, good gad!"

"Mad as a hatter!" said Johnny Bull.

"Madder!" said Frank Nugent. "I suppose the fat duffer is trying to pull our leg somehow."

"I tell you I've found it out!" booted Bunter. "I tell you you're in fearful danger, and I'm trying to shave your wife—"

"Wha-a-at?"

"I mean, save your life! Rely on me to protect you, Mauly! Lucky you've got a loyal and devoted pal with you."

"Oh crumbs!"

Lord Mauleverer gazed blankly at Bunter. The fat junior grabbed him by the arm and fairly dragged him away to the old armoury, which was now used as a "den" by the schoolboy earl.

The Famous Five followed in great surprise. Unless William George Bunter had gone off his "rocker," it was difficult to account for his amazing words and actions—though they had a

strong suspicion that the fat Owl was making some egregious attempt to pull their leg.

As soon as they were inside Lord Mauleverer's den, Billy Bunter carefully closed the door. Then he blinked cautiously about the room—looking behind the old armoured figures that stood by the walls, and into various niches and recesses. The juniors watched him, with growing astonishment. Bunter was apparently taking precautions against being overheard, and he was evidently labouring under deep excitement.

"All serene!" gasped Bunter at last. "Can't be too careful, with your life at stake, Mauly!"

"You fat ass—"

"Don't be afraid, old fellow! I'm here to protect you!" said Bunter reassuringly. "You know my pluck. I'm going to watch over you. After all, we're pals!"

"Are we?" said Lord Mauleverer doubtfully.

"Will you tell us what this performance means, you howling ass?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Yaas, put us up to the game, you know," said Mauleverer.

"Look at that!" said Bunter.

He slipped his hand into a pocket of the tweed jacket. He drew out a crumpled paper and, with a dramatic gesture, threw it on Mauleverer's writing-table.

"What the dooce—"

"Look at it!"

Lord Mauleverer smoothed out the crumpled paper and looked at it. Harry Wharton & Co. looked. They stared blankly at what they read.

Written in capital letters, apparently for the purpose of disguising the hand, was the following startling message:

"LORD MAULEVERER—
PLACE £1,000 ON THE OLD SUN-
DIAL OR PREPARE FOR DEATH!"

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Bumps for Bunter!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. stared at that startling message in stupefaction.

Lord Mauleverer opened his eyes wide.

For some moments there was silence, the silence of utter amazement.

Billy Bunter blinked from face to face, through his big spectacles, in eager excitement.

Apparently he expected his thrilling excitement to be shared by the chums of the Remove.

If so he was disappointed.

The juniors were astounded; but not at all excited. They stared at the paper, and then they stared at Bunter.

Harry Wharton was the first to speak.

"You frabjous idiot—"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"What's this game, you benighted bandersnatch?" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Holy smokel!" said Lord Mauleverer. "Is this a jolly old joke? If it is, I don't seem to get it! What did you write this silly rot for, Bunter?"

Bunter jumped.

"I! You silly ass! I—I didn't write it!" he stammered.

"Eh! Who did, then?"

"That villain!"

"What villain, you ass?"

"The one who wants the thousand pounds of course," said Bunter. "Can't you see? It's a case of your money or your life."

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"You pernicious chump—" said Johnny Bull.

"You terrific ass—"

"I say, you fellows, I tell you that paper was meant for Mauly—" gasped Bunter. "I don't know who wrote it."

"Gammon!"

"The gammonfulness is terrific!"

"I say, Mauly, you believe me, don't you?" gasped Bunter, with an appealing blink at the schoolboy earl.

Apparently the fat Owl had not expected to have to deal with half a dozen doubting Thomases.

"Well, I'll try, old bean," said Mauly dubiously. "If this isn't a little joke of yours, where did it come from?"

"I borrowed this suit from your room, old chap! I knew you wouldn't mind lending a few things to an old pal, though your valet was rather cheeky about it. Well, going through the pockets—"

"What the dooce did you go through the pockets for?"

"I—I wasn't looking to see if you'd left any money in them, Mauly—"

"Eh?"

"If I found any, I wasn't going to borrow it to go to the pictures while you fellows were out—"

"Oh gad!"

"Well, going through the pockets not more than an hour ago," said Bunter impressively, "I found that letter."

"My dear man—" murmured Lord Mauleverer.

"It was in the jacket pocket," said Bunter. "Somebody must have got to your room and slipped it into your pocket, Mauly, for you to find there."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Some awful villain!" said Bunter.

"A fat villain, you mean!" said Johnny Bull.

"Beast! You'd have found the letter, Mauly, as soon as you happened to change into these things," said Bunter. "As I happened to be wearing the jacket, I found it instead. See?"

"Pile it on!" said Bob Cherry.

"I say, you fellows—mean to say that you don't believe me?" exclaimed Bunter.

"Believe you! Oh, my hat!"

"The believfulness is not terrific, my esteemed fat Bunter."

"Not likely!" chuckled Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter blinked at the juniors.

Lord Mauleverer was grinning, and the other fellows were laughing. There was no sign of anybody's flesh creeping.

"I say, you fellows," almost wailed Bunter, "it's true! I tell you it's true!"

"How can it be true, when you tell us?" asked Johnny Bull. "Mean to say you're starting telling the truth?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I found that paper in this jacket pocket—"

"Pile it on!"

"The villain must have sneaked in somehow and stuck it there for Mauly to find—"

"Go it!"

"He's trying to frighten Mauly into paying him a thousand pounds—"

"Why didn't you make it a million?"

"He's a murderous villain—"

"Oh, no!" chuckled Bob. "Only a fat, frowsy, frabjous villain!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's true!" shrieked Bunter.

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

Billy Bunter blinked at them, his little round eyes goggling through his spectacles. He had fully expected to thrill and alarm the Christmas party. Certainly, had that extraordinary paper been found by any other fellow, it

would have produced a rather alarming effect.

But Bunter was suffering the fate of the boy in the old story who cried "Wolf!" so often when there was no wolf that he was unheeded when the wolf really came.

Instead of being thrilled and alarmed, the chums of the Remove roared with laughter. They were not taking Bunter's word for it that some desperate scoundrel was seeking to extort money by threats from the schoolboy earl. To their minds, it was simply an egregious attempt to pull their legs, on the part of the Owl of the Remove.

"I say, you fellows," wailed Bunter, "if you think I wrote that paper—"

"We don't think—we know!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

"The knowfulness is terrific."

"Pulling poor old Mauly's leg!" said Nugent. "What beats me is the fat duffer thinking that we should believe a word of it! Did you get the wheeze from the films, Bunter?"

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

"Gentlemen, chaps, and fellows," said Bob Cherry, "this fat idiot has been trying to pull our leg. I vote that we stuff his jolly old document down his back—"

"Hear, hear!"

"And bump him—"

"Passed unanimously!"

"I say, you fellows! Here, you keep off!" yelled Bunter in alarm. "I tell you it's true! I found that paper— Yaroooooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter struggled frantically in the hands of the Philistines. The mysterious document was duly shoved down his back; then, in the grasp of many hands, he was swept off the floor.

Bump!

"Yoooooop!"

Bump!

"Yow-ow-ow! Help! Yaroooooh! Fire!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hold on, you men!" gasped Lord Mauleverer. "It was only Bunter's little joke—"

"Ow! It wasn't! Yaroooooh!"

Bump!

"Ow! Help! Murder! Fire! Yoooooop!"

Bump!

"Ooooooogh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Wharton & Co. streamed out of the armoury, leaving Billy Bunter sitting on the floor gasping and spluttering. Billy Bunter's sins had found him out. His record as an Ananias was his undoing. Almost for the first time in his fat career, Bunter had told the truth—and nobody believed a word of it!

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Some Skater!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. came out in the bright frosty morning, carrying their skates. Billy Bunter rolled after them, and Orris followed, carrying his lordship's skates. The lake was frozen as hard as rock, glimmering like silver in the winter sunshine. Harry Wharton & Co. were keen on skating; Lord Mauleverer rather less keen, as exertion did not appeal very much to his noble lordship. It appealed still less to Billy Bunter, but he was going to skate.

In a day or two the Cliff House girls were coming, and Bunter was going to take them on the ice—at all events, that was his intention. So a little practice did not come amiss. It was not till the party reached the hut by the lake that

Bunter mentioned the trifling circumstance that he had no skates.

"I say, you fellows, who's going to lend me some skates?" he asked.

"Fathead!" grunted Johnny Bull. "You can't skate!"

"I'm going to show you fellows how to do it," said Bunter calmly. "You skate like a rhinoceros, Bull. Perhaps you'd better lend me your skates and watch me and pick up the hang of the thing. See?"

Johnny Bull did not seem to "see." He snorted expressively and proceeded to put on his skates.

"I say, Mauly, you'll lend me some skates?" said Bunter.

"My dear man, if you'd told me you were goin' to skate there's skates in the house," said Lord Mauleverer.

"Well, send Orris to fetch them."

Lord Mauleverer looked at Bunter. Orris' impassive face remained expressionless. The lake was a quarter of a mile from the house, so it was a half-mile walk for Orris to fetch skates for Bunter.

"You fat ass!" grunted Bob Cherry. "Why couldn't you say you were going to skate?"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"You can't skate, anyhow!" said Nugent. "And we're jolly well not going to roll you round! Sit down and dry up!"

"Beast! I say, Mauly, send Orris for some skates."

Bunter did not believe in saving servants trouble. What were servants for except to take any amount of trouble for important persons like William George Bunter?

"It's all right, old bean, I'll lend you mine," said Lord Mauleverer. "I'm not keen on skatin'. I'll wait till you're done."

"Well, after all, you're not much good on the ice, are you, Mauly?" said Bunter cheerfully. "I say, you fellows, help me on with these skates."

But the fellows were already gliding out on the ice. The Famous Five had come down to the lake to skate, not to wait on Billy Bunter. The fat junior blinked after them indignantly and then blinked at Mauly.

"I say, Mauly, lend me a hand."

"Oh dear! Would you mind lendin' a hand, Orris?"

"Certainly, my lord."

Orris lent a hand, and the skates were secured. Billy Bunter kept a tight grip on Orris' arm.

"Hold me!" he gasped.

Orris held him.

"Now help me on the ice! Don't shove me, you idiot! And don't pull me, dummy! Have a little sense!"

"Certainly, sir!" said Orris.

"Look here, Bunter—" began Lord Mauleverer.

"Take my other arm, Mauly! I shall be all right when I get going. This silly fool is just going to let me slip! Hold me, you fathead!"

"Oh gad!" said Lord Mauleverer. He took Bunter's other arm.

Loaded above the Plimsoll line with his loot, Bunter was rolling away from Lord Mauleverer's room when he came face to face with the butler. "It's all right, Porson!" gasped Bunter. "I'm only borrowing these things from Mauly!"



Between his lordship and his lordship's valet, Billy Bunter was navigated out from the bank.

Both of them held Bunter, and Bunter held both of them.

Bunter had no doubt that he could skate, indeed, he had no doubt that he was the best skater there. Nevertheless, he had a very uncertain feeling, with the slippery ice under him.

Each of his feet seemed to want to travel in a different direction, and each of his feet, somehow, seemed to have developed a will of its own.

"D-d-don't let go!" gasped Bunter. "I say, hold on! Hold on, Mauly! Hold on, Orris, you dummy!"

"Oh gad! Look here, Bunter, you can't skate—"

"Shut up, you ass, and hold on!" howled Bunter. "I'm slipping! There's something wrong with these skates! Oh crikey!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" came a cheery roar across the ice from the Famous Five, as Bunter's feet shot into the air.

Bunter clutched wildly at his two supporters.

One arm was round Orris' neck, the other round Mauly's, and all Bunter's terrific weight was thrown on them. They bent like saplings before a storm.

"Ow! Help! Hold on!" shrieked Bunter. "I'm falling! Woooooh!"

"Good gad! You're breakin' my neck!" wailed Lord Mauleverer. "Oh crumbs! Get him off the ice, Orris!"

"Yes, my lord!" gurgled Orris.

Clash! Clatter! Clash! Crash! Bunter's feet came down again, and he shot forward on the skates, dragging Orris and Mauly after him.

His feet travelled fast. The rest of Bunter followed more slowly. The inevitable result was that the Owl of Greyfriars came down with a heavy bump.

Mauly and Orris strove against the strain, but it was too much for them. Both of them came down with Bunter.

The three rolled on the ice, with a terrific clattering of skates, gasping and spluttering from Bunter, and a wild howl from Mauly.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Famous Five.

"Ow! Help! Yarooooh!" roared Bunter.

Lord Mauleverer disentangled himself and scrambled away. Orris was not so fortunate. Bunter was clutching him with the clutch of a drowning man.

"Ow! Help!"

"Let go!" yelled Orris.

"Boast! Hold me! The ice is breaking! I shall be drowned! Help! Rescue! Yooooooop!" shrieked Bunter.

"For goodness' sake, get off the ice, Bunter!" gasped Lord Mauleverer.

"Ow! I can't! Hold me! Yow! Ow! Ow!"

Orris struggled up. Bunter clung to him, and he slipped and came down again, with a crash that almost cracked the ice, stout as it was. There was a howl of anguish from Mauly's man.

His nose had established contact with the ice. A stream of crimson ran from his nose.

"Ow! Let go!" he yelled.

"Beast! Shan't! Help!"

Orris scrambled to rise, and Bunter scrambled and slipped, and came down on Orris. They rolled over together.

frugging and spluttering. Breathless howls came from the unfortunate Orris.

Lord Mauleverer rushed in to help, skidded on the ice, and added himself to the heap. Three tangled figures rolled over, accompanied by a packet of toffee, a slab of butterscotch, and a bag of bullseyes, that exuded from Bunter's pockets.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Rescue, you men!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Famous Five came gliding up. With considerable difficulty, they sorted out the breathless, squirming three, and dragged them to the bank.

Lord Mauleverer sat down and gasped for breath. Orris stood gurgling, holding his streaming nose. Bunter sprawled and roared.

"You can go, Orris!" gasped Lord Mauleverer. "Sorry you're damaged. You'd better get somethin' done to your nose!"

"Yes, my lord!" gasped Orris.

He gave Bunter a look—not his usual deferential look—and started for the distant house. Bob Cherry whipped the skates off Bunter.

"I say, you fellows, let those skates alone!" gasped Bunter. "I'm going to skate, you know! Two of you fellows can hold me!"

"I can see us doing it!" chuckled Nugent.

"If you're going to be selfish beasts—"

"We are—we is!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Here you are, Mauly," said Bob. "Here's your skates! Shut up, Bunter! We've come here to skate, not to watch a performing elephant!"

"Beast!"

Lord Mauleverer donned the skates. Even his good-natured and long-suffering lordship was fed-up with Bunter, the skater. He followed the Famous Five on the ice, while Bunter sat up and spluttered.

"I say, you fellows! I've dropped my toffee! I've lost my butterscotch! Where's my bullseyes? I say, you fellows, pick them up for me, can't you?"

Apparently the fellows couldn't! At least, they didn't! Six cheery juniors whizzed away on the ice, leaving Billy Bunter spluttering.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Makes a Discovery I

BILLY BUNTER sat and gasped. He was left alone in his glory.

Orris had disappeared in the direction of the house; Lord Mauleverer and the Famous Five were far away across the frozen lake.

Bunter's exploits as a skater were over. He sat and gasped and gurgled, crimson with exertion and indignation. But he picked himself up at last. Various articles had scattered from his pockets in that wild struggle on the ice, and as they were of an edible nature, it was impossible to leave them there.

"Beasts!" gasped Bunter.

He crawled out on to the ice very cautiously. Ice seemed to be a treacherous sort of thing, and Bunter did not trust it. He negotiated the slippery surface on his fat hands and knees.

The butterscotch was recovered, and immediately transferred to Bunter's capacious mouth. Then the bullseyes were recaptured. The toffee seemed to have slipped farther away, and Bunter crawled and blinked round for it. A

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folded paper fluttered in the breeze, and Bunter grabbed at it and caught it. He supposed, for the moment, that it was a letter that had dropped from his pocket among the other things.

But, as he blinked at it, he gave a jump.

It was a letter, but it was not Bunter's. It had fallen from somebody else's pocket in the flurry on the ice. And the name "J. Orris" gave the clue to the owner.

Any other member of the Greyfriars party who had picked up that letter, certainly would not have dreamed of looking at it, except to ascertain who was the owner. But William George Bunter was not particular in such matters as these.

Besides, the letter was a surprising one, to be addressed to Lord Mauleverer's valet. Bunter blinked at it in astonishment. In his surprise and intense interest, he forgot even the toffee of which he was in search, and he sat on the ice, devouring the letter with his eyes and spectacles.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter. "I fancy that fellow wouldn't keep his job long if Mauly saw this! My hat!"

The letter had an engraved heading of a business firm. And the heading was:

"TOPHAM & TUKE,
Turf Accountants.

Topham House, Tufesbury Avenue,
London."

Certainly, Lord Mauleverer would have been surprised, and no doubt perturbed, had he been aware that his "man" was a client of a firm of turf accountants. Undoubtedly he would have been still more surprised at the contents of the letter.

The letter was typed, and it ran:

"J. Orris, Esq.

"Sir,—It is unnecessary for us to point out that our terms, as plainly stated in our rules, are weekly settlements.

"We must ask you to forward immediately a remittance for £256.

"Yours faithfully,

"TOPHAM & TUKE."

Billy Bunter blinked at that remarkable epistle, with his eyes almost popping through his spectacles. He forgot the toffee; he forgot that the ice he was sitting on was decidedly cold.

"Two hundred and fifty-six pounds!" gasped Bunter. "My only hat! He's been going it—a blinking manservant! Phew!"

Really, it was amazing!

No doubt Mr. James Orris had a good salary at Mauleverer Towers. But no servant's wages were likely to be so munificent as to meet racing losses to this extent.

Evidently Mr. Orris had been backing horses, and he had backed them not wisely but too well!

Bunter whistled.

"Who'd have thought it?" he gasped.

Nobody would have thought it—that was certain. Orris, the quiet, steady, deferential, almost silky manservant, was the last man who would have been suspected of being a reckless gambler.

But that letter left no doubt on the subject.

Outwardly, Mr. Orris was impassive, deferential, sedate, with no apparent object in life but to brush his master's clothes in a thoroughly efficient manner. Inwardly, he was quite a different sort of man. Plainly, he had set out to "spot winners," and, like most men

who set out on that difficult task, he had found the winners very elusive.

Judging by this communication from Messrs. Topham & Tuke, he had spotted losers.

Obviously, he had an account with Messrs. Topham & Tuke, who received instructions from him by letter or telegram, to back the horses he fancied. And the account must have been on extensive lines to allow a debit of two hundred and fifty-six pounds to accumulate. It was possible—indeed, probable—that Messrs. Topham & Tuke were not fully aware of Orris' circumstances. Possibly so magnificent an address as Mauleverer Towers had given them confidence, and possibly Orris had somehow concealed the fact that he was only a manservant there.

Anyhow, they had evidently allowed him to run a heavy account, and equally evidently he had not paid, and they wanted their money.

"If Mauly knew!" gasped Bunter. "My hat! The chap can't pay this—of course he can't! He's been taking long chances, and got landed. Might try to pinch something—I shouldn't wonder! He's cheeky, anyhow."

Bunter grinned.

Orris had been distinctly cheeky, in Bunter's opinion, more than once. And the man, with all his outward aspect of extreme respectability, was a reckless and desperate plunger on the races, and had landed himself in serious trouble. Quite likely such a fellow, in such a fix, might "pinch"—and Bunter remembered how he had seen Orris handling the tweed jacket, in Mauly's dressing-room, the previous day. Looking for something to pinch, as likely as not!

Billy Bunter slipped the letter into his pocket. It was cold on the ice, and he got into motion again. He found the toffee at last, crawled back to the bank, and sat down in the hut to wait for the skaters to come off. The butterscotch, the toffee, and the bullseyes, disappeared in turn.

"He, he, he!" chuckled Bunter suddenly.

From the hut he observed a trim, plump figure coming hurriedly down to the lake. It was Orris—and there was a startled and alarmed expression on his smooth, clean-shaven face.

Bunter could guess that he had missed the letter from his pocket, and was coming back to look for it.

He grinned as he watched the man moving along the bank, bent double, searching among the frozen grass and rushes.

Then Orris went out on the ice, treading carefully, and scanning the frozen lake with anxious eyes.

The skaters were at a distance, and Orris did not even glance towards them. His brows were puckered with anxiety as he continued his search.

He gave it up at last, and as he came off the ice he caught sight of Billy Bunter's grinning face in the hut.

For an instant his eyes glinted as he realised that the fat junior had been watching him, and his lips set hard. The look that came over his face was like that which had appeared there for a brief moment in the turret-room the previous day. But again it was only for a moment. If there was a fierce and savage temper hidden under Orris' smooth suave exterior he kept it well under control.

His manner was civil and deferential as he came towards Bunter in the hut.

"Excuse me, sir," he said quietly. "I lost a letter from my pocket when you pulled me over on the ice—"

(Continued on page 12.)

FOOTBALL FAVOURITES!

No. 9.
ALEX
JACKSON,
of
CHELSEA
F.C.



A wing-forward of Scottish birth, who holds the unique record of having earned three "caps"—against Wales, Ireland and England—before attaining the age of twenty.

As Slippery as an Eel!

HERE was a time when Alex Jackson was studying in order to take a doctor's diploma, but football called him. Later he had a wonderful opportunity of becoming an engineer, but again the cry of the winter game. Football was, and is, in his very bones. What was he to do? Make a failure in some other walk of life, or adopt football as a means of gaining huge success, both on the field of play and in finance?

It was during the latter part of his stay at Huddersfield that he admitted arriving at that position where a brick wall, as it were, hampered his further progress. The field for his ambitions was necessarily smaller in Huddersfield than it would be in London. His heart was set on earning money during those hours when he was not occupied on the football field. I advised him to go South, and—well, he's at Chelsea.

From the first this brilliant winger endeared himself to the Chelsea supporters, whilst the Chelsea management, obviously satisfied with their recruit, saw fit to make him captain of the team—a decision which pleased the "fans" vastly.

Alex is still a very young man, having come into the world at a place called Renton, near Dumbarton, twenty-five years ago. I knew his father very well—a fine, bluff, superior kind of man, who had interests in the trawling industry, and was often away from home for quite long periods.

I am afraid neither he nor I took the trouble to witness any of the Renton School's games, although young Alex was spoken of as being a clever player for his years, and was the shining light of the football team. But when the youngster eventually entered Dumbarton Academy as a pupil, and became talked about by reason of his prowess in a side of boys much older than he was, we "sort of sat up and took notice."

The first match young Alex's father and I witnessed was Dumbarton Academy v. Hutchinson's Grammar School, and I marvelled at the size and weight of the two teams when I gazed at the slim figure of young Jackson. There was some rough play, and Alex was in and out of the opposition like an eel. He was cheered by the big crowd of onlookers, who, later, burst into a tremendous roar of appreciation when, after the ball had gone over the line, one of the opposing backs, instead of the goalkeeper, took the kick, merely tipping the ball back to the "goalie."

Like a flash young Alex sprang forward and intercepted the ball while on its passage of but a few yards. Then, with a lightning shot, he scored. Such strategy was uncanny, and two men who were standing behind me roared their delight. One was Donald Colman, and the other Pat Travers, who was then the manager of the Dumbarton Club, and is now the manager of Aberdeen. The fame of the boy Jackson had brought them to see a school match.

I mind Alex's father expressing a wish that football would not interfere with his son's medical studies, but as the boy was only about thirteen years of age, I advised giving him a free rein. Not long after this I met Mr. Wylie, the science master of the Academy, who replied to my questions: "Alex Jackson! Ay, vera guid in the laboratory; but his Latin—ah!" And he threw up his hands with disgust. A minute later a light of enthusiasm came over his face as he described the boy's play in a football match of the previous day.

A Wonderful Achievement.

YOUNG Jackson must have left school when he was about fifteen years of age. I had little time for sport during the next twelve months, and then one day I met Pat Travers, of the Dumbarton Football Club. I was seedy through overwork. "Come away wi' us!" said Pat.

"Where?" I asked. "Norway, Sweden, and Denmark. I am taking a football team on tour," he replied, "and the boy, Alex Jackson, is one of them."

I went. It would be impossible to describe every incident connected with the youngster during a series of enjoyable games; but even then, when he was only sixteen years of age, he was the outstanding player of the side—and that side contained some professionals of high repute.

I saw Alex's father just before we went away, and promised to look after the lad, at the same time suggesting that it was time he was put into long trousers, saying that he'd feel somewhat awkward travelling in the garb of a child. Alex got his new suit with long trousers.

After returning to England, Jackson played for Dumbarton for one season, and then, despite all the advice which was showered upon him by his numerous friends, he went to America, where his brother had gone to take up a position in some steel works. These were situated at Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, where Alex remained a year, playing for the works football team, and generally collecting friends. The two men who owned the steel business were so interested in Alex that they offered to pay all fees if he'd stay and be coached, in order to take a course at one of the leading American Universities; then to enter their business.

He was nineteen years of age when he returned to England for a holiday of three weeks before taking his studies, but he did not return to America, because almost as soon as he set foot in Scotland, Pat Travers, who by this time was managing the Aberdeen Club, tempted him with a good salary, and got him to sign a professional form for that team.

From that day Alex Jackson began to take life seriously. I don't mean to suggest that his happy disposition became changed, but that he saw the path which led to success, and made a quick determination to concentrate on a great achievement.

Five months after he signed for Aberdeen he played for Scotland against Wales and Edinburgh, and what a magnificent exhibition he gave! And then came the unique record of earning all three "caps"—against Wales, Ireland and England—before he was twenty years of age.

Nine Goals out of Eleven!

AT the conclusion of that wonderful first season, when every follower of football throughout Scotland was enthusiastic with praise for that youthful phenomenon, Alex was interviewed by one of the most astute managers connected with the game—Mr. Herbert Chapman—and, after negotiations which lasted but a few days, was signed on for Huddersfield Town.

What the young Scotsman did for the Yorkshire club is now a matter of history, for he lifted Huddersfield to dizzy heights, even to winning the Association Cup twice in three years. During the competition last year he scored the winning goal in each round up to the Final, getting nine goals out of the total of eleven that were scored. For a wing-forward the feat was wonderful.

Altogether, Alex Jackson has played on some sixteen or seventeen occasions for Scotland, and he has been on the losing side on only one occasion—viz., Scotland v. England at Wembley last season, when England won by 6-1.

As a Scotsman I have the most unshakable faith in Alex's great future. What he has done for Dumbarton Academy, for Dumbarton, for Aberdeen, for Huddersfield Town, and for Scotland, he will do for Chelsea. Furthermore, his sense of scrupulous fairness, of indomitable courage, and of cheerfulness under adverse conditions, will undoubtedly bear fruit, and Southern football will be the better for his assistance and his example.

THE UNKNOWN HAND!

(Continued from page 10.)

"I didn't pull you over on the ice," answered Bunter. "You pulled me over, like a clumsy ass."

"Well, sir, I lost a letter from my pocket—at least, I think I must have done so, as I have missed it since—"

"Better look for it," suggested Bunter.

"I've looked, sir. Perhaps you may have seen something of it," said Orris, his eyes sharply on Bunter's fat face.

"What sort of a letter?" asked Bunter coolly.

"Oh, just a letter, sir."

"Well, if you want me to tell you whether I've seen it you'd better describe it," suggested Bunter.

Orris was silent.

Certainly it was not a letter that he desired to describe if Bunter had not seen it. It was a missive that he desired to keep very secret indeed.

At the same time, the lurking grin on Bunter's fat face made him suspect very strongly that the fat junior had picked up the letter, and knew what was in it.

"Well, what was it like?" grinned Bunter.

The fat Owl found it rather entertaining to tease Orris, in repayment for his check the previous day on the subject of his master's clothes.

Orris compressed his lips.

"I think you must have seen it, sir," he said. "If you have picked it up, will you kindly return it to me?"

"I may or may not have picked up a letter," yawned Bunter. "That's telling. I may or may not consult Lord Mauleverer about it—that's telling, too. You may go, Orris."

He waved a fat hand in dismissal.

But Orris did not go. His lips set harder in a thin tight line, and the glitter in his deep-set eyes startled Bunter. He made a step nearer to the grinning Owl.

"Give me that letter!" he said in a low, concentrated voice.

"Look here, you cheeky rotter—"

"Give it to me at once!"

There was a snarl in the man's voice—a threatening glitter in his eyes. Bunter jumped up from his seat.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" Bob Cherry came whizzing up to the hut. "Bunter, old fat freak, I'll take you round if you'd like a turn."

Instantly Orris recovered his composure. The deferential smoothness came back to his face like a mask replaced. He stepped back from Bunter, and left the hut, walking away quickly towards the house.

Bunter gasped with relief.

"The cheeky rotter!" he ejaculated.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Rowing with Mauly's man, you fat ass?" exclaimed Bob.

"He's cheeky!" said Bunter warmly. "Making out that a fellow's got his letter. As if I'd touch a fellow's letter! I shall ask Mauly to sack him—and if he doesn't I shall jolly well leave! I'm not staying here to be checked by a dashed manservant."

"Then I hope he'll be awfully cheeky," chuckled Bob.

"Beast!"

"Well, are you coming round on the skates?" asked Bob cheerily. "I'll take you round if you like."

Sniff from Bunter.

"You can't skate for toffee," he answered. "Take me round! I like that! If you want me to show you how to skate—"

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"Fathead!"

Bob Cherry shot away again, and Billy Bunter was left on his own till the skaters came off the lake to walk back to the house for lunch.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Mauly is Wrathful!

"MAULY, old man!"

"Yaas."

"I'm going to give you a tip!"

"Oh gad!" said Mauly.

"About that man of yours!" said Bunter.

"Eh?"

"That man Orris!"

Lord Mauleverer looked at Bunter. The other fellows looked at him rather expressively.

The Greyfriars fellows were chatting before the blazing log fire in the armoury, while they waited for Porson to announce lunch. They looked very cheery and ruddy after a morning on the ice. Billy Bunter was sprawling in a deep chair, eyeing the cheery group through his big spectacles. He had been silent for a few minutes; but that, of course, was too good to last.

"Bunter, old bean," said Lord Mauleverer quietly, "I'm frightfully obliged, but I'd rather not hear anythin' on the subject! Dry up, there's a good fellow!"

"Oh, really, Mauly—"

"The dry-upfulness is the proper caper, my esteemed Bunter!" murmured Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"I wish you wouldn't butt in, Inky, when I'm talking to Mauly!" said Bunter peevishly. "Look here, Mauly, I've asked you to sack that man. He was cheeky to me yesterday."

"Chuck it, old bean!" implored Mauleverer.

"He's been cheeky again!" said Bunter.

"Did you check him?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Eh! Don't be an ass, Wharton! Check a manservant! I can jolly well tell you that I talk pretty plainly to the menservants at Bunter Court!"

"It any!" murmured Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But that isn't all," said Bunter. "It's not only his cheek, though a gentleman and a Public school man can hardly be expected to stand cheek from a valet. He's a bad lot, Mauly."

"Give us a rest, old man!"

"If you knew what I know—I say, Mauly, don't walk away while a fellow's talking to you!" bawled Bunter.

"Oh dear!" groaned Lord Mauleverer.

"You remember that that silly fat-head dragged me over on the ice," said Bunter. "I dropped some things out of my pockets, owing to his clumsiness. Well, he dropped something, too. I picked it up."

"Well, what about it, Bunter?" asked Mauly patiently. "I suppose you handed it back to Orris, if it was his."

"No fear! You see, it was a letter—"

Lord Mauleverer's face became suddenly stern.

"You picked up a letter belonging to my valet?" he exclaimed.

"Yes. You needn't glare at a fellow—"

"You wouldn't be such a worm as to read it, I'm sure, Bunter," said Lord Mauleverer quietly.

"Oh, really, Mauly! I hope I'm not

the fellow to read a man's letter—especially a servant's."

"Oh, good!" said Mauleverer, in relief. It was plain that he had feared that Bunter was just such a fellow! "You're such an inquisitive, pryin' little beast, you know, I was afraid—I mean, it's all right. Hand me the letter, and I'll give it back to Orris."

"I fancy you'll sack him fast enough when you know what's in that letter!" chuckled Bunter, fumbling in his pocket—or, rather, in Lord Mauleverer's pocket. The fat Owl was still wearing the annexed tweeds.

Mauly's face became stern again.

"Does that mean that you know what's in the letter, Bunter?" he asked, and there was a grim tone in his voice.

"Well, a fellow couldn't help seeing it, I suppose," said Bunter. "Besides, it might be a fellow's duty, in the—the circumstances! Considering what is in that letter, and whom it's from—"

"Silence!" rapped out Mauleverer, in a voice that made Bunter jump. "Don't dare to tell me a word of it, or, by gad, I'll boot you!"

"Hear, hear!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

Billy Bunter blinked at the schoolboy earl in angry amazement.

In his own fat and fatuous way, the fat Owl was intending to do Mauly a good turn, by apprising him of his valet's rather shady secret proceedings. It had not occurred to his podgy brain that Lord Mauleverer was rather more particular in such matters.

"Look here, Mauly!" he gasped. "If that's the way you talk to a visitor—"

"Shut up!" rapped Mauleverer. His long-suffering patience and politeness seemed to have entirely deserted the schoolboy earl for the nonce. "How dare you look at Orris' letter? By gad, how can I face the man, when a guest of mine has read his private letters? You sneakin', pryin', spyin' fat little rotter—"

"Oh, really, Mauly—"

"Give me the letter!" rapped Mauleverer.

"Look here—"

"If you don't give me that letter at once, Bunter, I'll heave you out of that chair, and bang your head on the floor."

"Beast! I was just going to give it to you! Here it is!" gasped Bunter. "Here you are, you beast! Now look at it and see what sort of a blighter he—"

"Silence!"

Lord Mauleverer took the letter, carefully keeping it folded so that he could not see what was written—a proceeding that was absolutely inexplicable to William George Bunter.

"I—I say, Mauly, look at it—"

"Silence, I tell you!"

"But it's from— Yaroooooh!" roared Bunter, as Lord Mauleverer, taking him suddenly by the collar, banged his bullet head on the high back of the chair. "Yooop! Whoop! Leggo! Beast! Wow!"

"There, you fat rotter!" gasped Lord Mauleverer. "Now, if you say another word, Bunter—"

"Yaroooooh!"

"You've read this letter! You're a disgraceful spying little beast! If you say a single word to a soul-of what you've read in it, I'll boot you out of the house!"

"Ow! Wow! Beast! I was going to give you a tip—"

"Shut up!"

Harry Wharton & Co. looked on in silence.

Never had they seen the young master of Mauleverer Towers so angry.

They understood his feelings, if Billy Bunter did not. Bunter was a guest at the Towers, though an uninvited one, and he had read a private letter belonging to a servant of his host! The position in which his action placed Lord Mauleverer was extremely uncomfortable; though Bunter was quite unaware of it.

Mauleverer, keeping the letter closed in his hand, touched the bell.

Orris appeared in the doorway of the armoury.

"Come in, Orris!" said Lord Mauleverer, his face almost crimson, with annoyance and humiliation. "I hear that you dropped a letter when you were helping Mr. Bunter on the ice this mornin'."

"Yes, my lord!" said Orris.

His face was quiet and impassive; but the juniors, though they did not look at him, were conscious of something like tension in his manner.

It was pretty clear, from what Bunter had said, that there was something in that letter which James Orris would not have liked his master to see. And they gathered the same impression from Orris. Calm and impassive as he was, there was something about him that suggested a man expecting a blow to fall.

"Here it is, Orris!" said Lord Mauleverer.

Orris took the letter from the schoolboy earl.

"Look at it, and see if it's yours!" added Mauleverer.

Orris gave the schoolboy earl one swift, searching glance. Then he glanced at the letter and slipped it into a pocket.

"Yes, my lord, this is mine," he said.

"I hope there's nothin' of a private nature in it, Orris," said Lord Mauleverer, "for I'm afraid Mr. Bunter has seen it by—by accident, I—I think—I mean, I—I hope. I hope you will excuse him!"

Billy Bunter spluttered with indignation. A manservant asked to excuse him—him, William George Bunter! It seemed to Bunter that it was time for the skies to fall.

"Certainly, my lord," said Orris smoothly. "The letter is of very little consequence."

"I'm glad of that, Orris! I'm really very sorry!" said Lord Mauleverer.

"Not at all, my lord."

Orris disappeared, with his usual gliding, noiseless step. Lord Mauleverer breathed hard as the door closed behind him.

Billy Bunter rolled out of the arm-chair. He fixed his eyes, and his spectacles, on Lord Mauleverer with a devastating blink.

"You've called me names, Mauly!" he said accusingly.

"Not so many as you deserve, you fat scoundrel!" answered Mauly.

"If that's the way you're treating a guest—"

"Bow-wow!"

"After pressing a fellow to come for Christmas—"

"Oh gad!"

"I'm not the fellow to be treated like this, I can tell you," said Bunter warmly. "Not like these chaps, glad to butt in anywhere for the vac—"

"Oh, yo gods!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"I'm waiting for an apology, Mauly!" said Bunter, with dignity. "Otherwise, I shall, of course, leave at once."

"Good!"

"I—I say, you fellows! What has Mauly got his rag out for?" he asked.

"You don't know?" grinned Bob.

"Haven't the least idea! He seems to have got his back up about something," said Bunter. "I hope he'll be better tempered after lunch. Of course, I'm not going to let him down over Christmas."

"You jolly well are!" chuckled Johnny Bull. "Mauly looks to me as if he's made up his jolly old mind."

"I say, you fellows, Mauly's a silly ass, you know. Now he's gone, I'll tell you what was in that letter—"

Bump!



Clash! Clatter! Crash! Bunter's feet came down again, and he shot forward on the skates, dragging Orris and Mauleverer after him. The result was inevitable. The three rolled on the ice, gasping and spluttering!

"Wha-a-at did you say, Mauly?"

"Good! I'll order the car at once," said Mauleverer heartily. "The fact is, Bunter, after what you've done, I don't see how you can stay. I'm dashed if I'm not ashamed to look my own valet in the face. Shall I order the car now, or after lunch?"

"If you think I can travel a hundred miles on an empty tummy, Mauly—"

"After lunch, then!" said Mauleverer. "I'll ask Porson to look you out a train from Winchester."

"Oh, really, Mauly—" Bunter blinked at five grinning faces, and at one frowning one. "The—the fact is, I—I'll overlook it, old chap! Apologies aren't needed among friends. It's all right, Mauly! You—you needn't ask Porson to look out that train. I—I'll stay!"

"You won't!" said Lord Mauleverer.

"I—I say, old chap—" Lord Mauleverer walked out of the armoury. Billy Bunter blinked after him, and then blinked at the Famous Five.

Before Billy Bunter could proceed, five pairs of hands were laid on him, and he sat down on the floor with a heavy concussion and roared. And the Famous Five followed Mauleverer and left Bunter to roar.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Loses His Train!

SIR REGINALD BROOKE glanced at Billy Bunter, at the lunch-table, rather curiously. His good lady glanced at the fat junior with something like alarm. Porson eyed him several times, as if fearing that Bunter might burst over the polished floor. Bunter's gastronomic performances were always remarkable. But on this occasion the Owl of the Remove was breaking his own record. If Bunter was going that afternoon, he had a long journey before him, and apparently he was packing away the foodstuffs in

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(Continued from page 13.)

readiness. He really seemed to be packing away enough for a journey to the North Pole.

By the time lunch was over, Bunter looked fat and shiny, and was breathing with some little difficulty.

Many times during lunch Bunter had tried to catch Lord Mauleverer's eye. Every time he had failed. He had hoped to read relenting there. But there was no relenting. Mauly's kind and good-natured face was unusually severe in expression.

After lunch Bunter rolled away to the stairs. Lord Mauleverer tapped him on the arm.

"I've asked Porson——" he said.

"Oh, really, Mauly——"

"Train at half-past two."

"Look here——"

"The car will be ready——"

"I'm going to have a nap!" said Bunter, with dignity. "I always have a nap after lunch in the vac. You can tell Porson to call me."

"Very well!"

Billy Bunter rolled his considerable weight upstairs. There was a thoughtful frown on his fat face.

Lord Mauleverer, it appeared, had made up his noble mind. Bunter's latest had been too much for him. That very peculiar guest was to shake the dust of Mauleverer Towers from his feet.

A few minutes later a deep snore was heard proceeding from Bunter's room. That snore was still going strong when Porson came up with the news that the car was at the door.

Porson tapped.

Snore!

Porson turned the door-handle. The door did not open. It was locked on the inside.

Rap, rap, rap!

Snore!

"Mr. Bunter! Sir!"

Snore!

With a baffled look Porson turned away and descended the stairs. The car was waiting to convey Billy Bunter to the railway station. It continued to wait.

Harry Wharton & Co. had gathered to see Bunter off. Lord Mauleverer was there to speed the parting guest. But the parting guest did not turn up to be sped. Porson coughed as he came along the hall.

"You've called Mr. Bunter?" asked Lord Mauleverer, apparently surprised not to see the fat Owl.

"Yes, my lord! He—'hem--appears to be sleeping," said Porson.

"Better wake him, then; he mustn't lose his train," said Mauleverer.

"'Hem! His door is locked, my lord!"

"Didn't you knock?"

"I knocked very loudly, my lord."

"Oh gad!"

"Bunter sleeps very soundly," said Bob Cherry gravely, "and on an

occasion like this I fancy he will sleep very soundly indeed."

"The soundfulness will probably be terrific!" murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Lord Mauleverer breathed rather hard.

"Very well, Porson," he said, and the butler retired.

Lord Mauleverer went up the stairs, and the Famous Five looked at one another and grinned.

"Bunter's jolly well not going!" said Bob. "He won't unlock that door in a hurry. He's going to stand a siege! He's laid in provisions for a siege."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let's go and help Mauly," said Johnny Bull. "He won't hook Bunter out without bursting in the door, and he may want help."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Famous Five followed his lordship upstairs, curious to see how the peculiar affair was going to end. They found Mauly rapping at the locked door of Bunter's room. A series of Gargantuan snores answered his raps.

Bunter, apparently, was fast asleep. Perhaps he was determined not to wake up.

Bang, bang, bang!

Snore!

"The fat scoundrel!" breathed Lord Mauleverer. He glanced round at the chums of the Remove. "Look here, you men, what's a man to do? I can't let that fat villain stay, after prying into a servant's letters! It's altogether too thick! If it had been a letter of my own I'd have stood it; but—it's too thick! He seems frightfully fast asleep."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" bawled Bob Cherry, through the keyhole. "Hallo, hallo, hallo! Bunter!"

"Beast!"

"Oh, you're awake, are you?"

Snore!

"You fat villain! We know you're awake!" roared Johnny Bull.

Snore!

Bunter had inadvertently awakened, as it were, for a moment. Now he was snoring again.

"You'll lose your train, Bunter!" shouted Lord Mauleverer.

Snore!

"The losefulness of the train will not be a preposterous disaster to the absurd Bunter!" grinned Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Bunter! Wake up! Open the door!"

Snore!

"Like us to barge the door in, old bean?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Oh gad! No, thanks! I—I—I suppose he'll have to catch a later train. Bunter! There's another train at four."

"Beast!"

"What?"

"I—I mean, I—I'm asleep——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, Bunter——"

Snore!

It was evident that Billy Bunter was going to lose that train!

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

The Second Message!

"JUMPIN' Moses!"

Lord Mauleverer uttered that startled ejaculation suddenly.

It was some hours later, and the chums of the Remove had gathered in the old armoury, after dressing for dinner. Lord Mauleverer, a handsome

and elegant figure in his evening clothes, stood before the fire, with his hands in his trouser's pockets, and a slightly thoughtful expression on his noble countenance. Billy Bunter was still in his room—having lost train after train; and as he was cautiously keeping the door locked it looked as if he was going to lose all the trains in the time-table. Harry Wharton & Co. wondered whether even the dinner gong would draw the fat Owl out of his lair.

The Famous Five glanced at Mauly, as he uttered a sudden ejaculation. Mauly had drawn one hand from his pocket, and in that hand was a slip of paper. Staring at the slip, Mauly ejaculated "Jumping Moses" in tones of great astonishment.

"Anything up, old bean?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Good gad!" said Lord Mauleverer. "What the thump's the meanin' of this? Has Bunter been up to his tricks again?"

He held out the slip of paper.

The Famous Five looked at it. Then they stared. It bore an inscription in capital letters, like the previous paper that Bunter had found—or stated that he had found—in the pocket of the tweed jacket. And the message ran:

"LORD MAULEVERER!
THIS IS THE SECOND WARNING,
AND THE LAST!
PLACE £1,000 IN BANKNOTES ON
THE OLD SUNDIAL TO-NIGHT, OR
DIE!
YOUR LIFE IS IN MY HANDS!"

"Now, what does that mean, you men?" asked Lord Mauleverer. "Is it a new Christmas game, or what?"

The chums of the Remove were too surprised to speak for some moments. They could only stare at the mysterious message. Harry Wharton was the first to speak.

"You found this in your pocket?"

"Yaas."

"Somebody must have put it there! And it can only have been——"

"Bunter!" growled Johnny Bull.

"The Bunterfulness is terrific."

"The fat old bean's keeping it up!" grinned Bob Cherry. "He got the idea from the jolly old films, I suppose; and he's trying to make your flesh creep, Mauly!"

Lord Mauleverer smiled.

"I suppose that's it!" he said. "I don't quite get the joke—but it may be Bunter's idea of fun. The fat chump!"

"Well, it couldn't be anybody but Bunter playing the goat," said Nugent. "I suppose there isn't some awful rascal after your tin, Mauly?"

"Rather not!"

"This was written by somebody who knows his way about here," said Harry. "The old sundial must be the one near the well, in the grounds. And whoever put it in your pocket must have the run of the house; it was put there for you to find when you changed for dinner. Either it's that fat idiot playing the goat, or there's some member of your jolly old household after you for blackmail."

"Bunter, of course," said Lord Mauleverer. "But it's queer! Bunter's every kind of an idiot; but a jape like this is really the limit. I suppose he slipped into my room durin' the afternoon, and put this into the pocket of my bags; Orris had laid the things out ready for me. By Jove! I wish Bunter had caught that train."

"The catchfulness will not be terrific," grinned Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Lord Mauleverer compressed his lips a little. The problem of Billy Bunter was one that his lordship had not yet been able to solve.

The fat Owl had remained in his room all the afternoon. He had even missed tea; though, after his uncommon exertions at lunch, probably even Bunter had not missed it very much.

"My lord!"

Porson appeared in the doorway.

"Yaas, Porson."

"Mr. Bunter has rung, sir, and sent down a message to your lordship."

"Oh, good! Is he ready for the car?"

Porson coughed.

"I think not, my lord. He desired me to inform you that he was ill—"

"Ill!" ejaculated Lord Mauleverer; and the Famous Five grinned.

The fat Owl was evidently "trying it on" again.

"Yes, my lord."

"What on earth's the matter with him?"

"He thinks it is pneumonia, my lord. He desires your lordship to step up and speak to him."

"Very well, Porson."

Lord Mauleverer sighed, as the butler retired. He glanced round at the grinning faces of the Famous Five.

"If he's really ill!" he murmured.

"If!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

"The if-fulness is terrific!"

"Well, let's go and speak to him," said Mauleverer. "A fellow doesn't want to be suspicious, of course; but I can't help thinkin' that perhaps Bunter isn't really ill, you know."

"Go hon!" grinned Johnny Bull.

The juniors went up to Bunter's room. They found the door still locked; apparently Bunter had talked to Porson through the door. Lord Mauleverer tapped, and a faint voice answered.

"Is that you, Mauly, old man?"

"Yaas."

"I say, Mauly, I'm ill!"

"Well, let me in."

"I don't think I can move! I've fearful pains in my legs, owing to that clumsy fool Orris dragging me over on the ice. I've something like a burning dagger in the spinal column of my ribs."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You can cackle, you beasts! I can't get off this bed! As for catching a train, that's absolutely impossible. I say, Mauly, you'll have to send my dinner up to my room."

"And pass it through the keyhole?" chuckled Bob. "If you can't get off the bed, you can't open the door."

"I—I think I could manage to get as far as the door."

"Well, get as far as the door, and unlock it, you fat fraud!" said Lord Mauleverer.

"I say, no larks, you know!" said Bunter. "I'm too ill to move! I mean, to move out of the room! I've got galloping plumbago, I think—"

"Open the door, ass."

"I say, it's pax, isn't it?" said Bunter. "I'll catch a train in the morning, Mauly! I may be well enough to move then. I'm not sure—but I'll try. See?"

"Look here, Bunter—"

"Well, you look here, Mauly! I'm not the fellow to stay where I'm not welcome. I hope! But I'm simply too ill to move. Am I staying to-night or not?" demanded Bunter categorically.

"Yaas. Now let me in."

There was a sound of movement in the room. The door opened, and the juniors entered. Billy Bunter blinked at them with a pathetic blink. He did not look ill. But whether he was ill or not, he

was hungry. Now that dinner was at hand, something had to be done.

"I say, you fellows, there's nothing to cackle at," said Bunter. "I've got fearful pains—"

"Too ill to eat any dinner?" asked Nugent.

"I think perhaps a meal might bring me round a bit. I don't feel like eating—I never do, really—but I'm going to try to take a mouthful or so."

"Oh, my hat!" said Bob. "If you take a mouthful, Bunter, there goes the whole dinner! What about us?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beast!" roared Bunter.

Bunter's mouth was capacious; but really it was not so capacious as all that.

"Now, look here, Bunter," said Lord Mauleverer. "I'm sorry, and all that; but you're the jolly old limit, you know, and you're catchin' the mornin' train. And if you play any more tricks like this"—he held out the slip of paper—"I'll have you bundled head-first into the car and buzzed away. See?"

Billy Bunter blinked at the mysterious message with a startled blink.

"Oh, my hat! That's the same villain again!" he ejaculated.

"Don't be an ass! You sneaked along to my room and put this into my pocket, you fat ass!"

"I didn't!" roared Bunter.

"Fathead!"

"I haven't been out of the room since I came up!" howled Bunter. "I've kept the door locked all the time."

"Then who put this in my pocket?"

"How should I know, you fathead?" hooted Bunter. "It's the same villain who put the other paper in your pocket, of course!"

"And we jolly well know the villain!" chuckled Bob. "A fat villain—a podgy villain—"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Look here, Bunter, what are you playing these idiotic tricks for?" demanded Wharton. "Are you ass enough to think that you can frighten Mauly with such rot?"

"I didn't!" yelled Bunter.

"What's the good of telling whoppers, when we know that you did?"

"If you can't take a fellow's word, Wharton—"

"Oh crumbs!"

Lord Mauleverer tossed the paper on the bedside table.

"You can have it back, Bunter," he said quietly. "And I warn you to chuck it. If it's a joke I'm fed up with it. If my uncle or aunt saw that they might think it was serious and get alarmed. I tell you plainly that if I find any more of these idiotic messages you go neck and crop into the car to be driven home, ill or not."

"I say, Mauly—"

Lord Mauleverer walked out of the room without waiting for Bunter to finish.

"Beast!"

Bunter picked up the slip of paper and blinked at it.

"I say, you fellows, the villain means business this time," he said. "He says that if Mauly doesn't shell out the money to-night, you know—"

"Keep it up!" said Nugent, laughing.

"You can see from this that he's jolly desperate,"

said Bunter. "I can tell you that he will look on the sundial to-night, and if the money isn't there, what do you think he will do?"

Harry Wharton & Co. gazed at Bunter. Really, they might almost have believed that Bunter was speaking the truth if they had not known him so well.

"Mauly's in danger!" said Bunter impressively. "Some awful villain is after his money. There's a villain in this house, you fellows!"

"And he's talking to us at the present moment," grinned Bob.

"You silly ass!" hooted Bunter. "Do you think I wrote this stuff for a lark?"

"We jolly well know you did."

Bunter blinked at the juniors in intense exasperation. Really, it was hard to be doubted like this when he was telling the truth—almost for the first time in his life!

"Can't you fellows see that Mauly's in danger?" he gasped. "His uncle ought to be told—"

"If you try to scare old Brooke, you fat idiot, Mauly will kick you out on the spot. That's a tip!"

"The police ought to be told—"

"Oh crumbs! They might run you in for trying to pull their leg."

"I say, you fellows, let's sit up and keep watch to-night," said Bunter; "or you fellows can keep watch and call me if there's danger—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Famous Five.

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at! Look here—"

"I can see us sitting up and keeping watch!" chuckled Bob. "I can see us having our legs pulled to that extent by a fat, frabjous owl!"

"I tell you—" yelled Bunter.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! There's the jolly old dinner-gong! Better buck up and get well, Bunter. There's turkey for dinner!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Famous Five went down. Billy Bunter, as it turned out, was well enough to eat his dinner—quite a large dinner. His illness, in fact, was not needed till the time came to catch his train in the morning. So the fat Owl postponed it till the morning.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter on the Watch!

MIDNIGHT! Mauleverer Towers was buried in silence and darkness.

The winter wind rustled in leafless branches, shaking down snow on the frozen earth, and wailed among the ancient chimney-pots and round the tall turret, haunted—or not

(Continued on next page.)

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haunted—by the phantom of the Red Earl.

Lord Mauleverer slept the sleep of the just. Harry Wharton & Co. were slumbering, dreaming perhaps of Christmas festivities.

The morrow was Christmas Eve, when many guests were to arrive at the Towers, among them, Marjorie and her friends. Yuletide was going to be nobly celebrated, and it was going to be a good time. And the chums of the Remove certainly were not dreaming of danger to their noble host, or of giving the least heed to the strange message he had found in his pocket.

That, to their minds, was only a fatuous jape on the part of the egregious Owl, and they would have been surprised, could they have been aware how Bunter was occupied while their own heads lay peacefully on soft pillows.

Bunter was not asleep.

Bunter had been thinking.

This was unusual; but the fat Owl undoubtedly had food for thought.

Bunter—and Bunter alone—knew that those mysterious warnings, written in capital letters, on strips of paper, were genuine—threats from some unknown and mysterious enemy of the schoolboy earl.

But for Bunter's presence at the Towers those warnings would have fallen into Lord Mauleverer's hands, and he would have known how matters stood. But the first had fallen into Bunter's hands; and not one of the fellows doubted that he had produced it, and followed it up with the second. Only Bunter knew the truth.

After dinner that evening Bunter had slept. He needed sleep, for he was going to remain awake all night!

While the other fellows were buried in slumber Bunter was sitting, fully dressed, in an armchair before the fire in his room. He had put the electric light out. He did not need a light; and besides, a light would have alarmed the unknown "villain." On a table beside Bunter was a large dish, containing an immense stack of mince pies. These were Bunter's comfort while he sat awake. From moment to moment he gobbled a mince pie, and was comforted.

But as the hour grew later Bunter forgot even the few remaining mince pies and listened intently and anxiously.

The later the hour grew the less Bunter liked his vigil.

But he was sticking it.

The warning in the second missive was plain enough. Lord Mauleverer was ordered to hand over a thousand pounds that very night. That night, therefore, something was likely to happen—or rather, fairly certain to happen.

Had Mauleverer known the truth—that the mysterious missives were written by a secret enemy in his household, it was not likely that he would have taken heed.

His lordship was so kind and good-natured, and gentle in thought and manner, that a designing rogue might very likely have supposed him the fellow to yield to threats. As a matter of fact, Mauly, though kind to a fault, was by no means "soft," and was anything but a coward.

The unknown rascal, had he known it, had no chance whatever of frightening the schoolboy earl. Not even in the shadow of death would Mauleverer have yielded to a threat.

As the matter stood, he attributed the whole thing to Billy Bunter's fatuous folly, and gave it no thought at all.

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Bunter gave it a good deal of thought.

If danger threatened Mauly that dark winter's night and Billy Bunter weighed in to the rescue, it was absolutely certain that he would not have to catch that dreaded train in the morning.

But, to do Bunter justice, that was not his only motive. He thought of himself first, second, and third; but he really was concerned for the unsuspecting Mauly, too.

Bunter pictured himself watching over the safety of poor old Mauly, of grabbing some stealthy villain by the throat. It was quite a fascinating picture, and it bucked the fat Owl to think of it—until the hour grew late and the house silent and still. After that, it was not so attractive.

Bunter was always prepared to face the deadliest danger, so long as it was not in the offing. When the time came to be weighed in the balance, he was likely to be found wanting.

As the dark night grew older Bunter grew more and more uneasy.

Grabbing a stealthy villain by the throat was an easy thing to plan—a few hours ahead!

But when the time came, the actual grabbing was quite a different matter!

The stealthy villain might grab back—in fact, he was pretty certain to do so—and the idea was not attractive at all.

Bunter felt a palpitation in his fat heart at the thought of it.

His plans were cut and dried. At a late hour he was going to creep along the corridor and keep watch outside Mauly's door in the dark. Then he would be on the spot, ready to grab the villain when, and if, he came.

But though the time to take up his watch had come, and gone, Bunter was still in his armchair before the dying fire.

He did not admit to himself that his fat courage had failed him, and that he dared not step out of his room into the shadowy corridor. Bunter was not the fellow to admit that, even to himself.

He decided that, all things considered, he might as well stay in his room, and keep watch there!

So he stayed!

Midnight chimed out from somewhere in the distance, and Bunter gave a start, and shivered a little, as he listened to the deep strokes dying away.

The wail of the wind, the snapping of old wainscots, came with an eerie effect in the silence of midnight, as well as the recollection of the ghost that was said to haunt Mauleverer Towers at Christmas-time.

Bunter was strongly tempted to plunge into bed, draw the blankets over him, and forget the whole affair in sleep. And in spite of a generous allowance of sleep during the day, he was drowsy.

But he nobly resisted.

In fact, he was now reluctant to stir, even to get into bed. He had long ceased to help himself to mince-pies, or to drop logs on the fire, which was burning very low. He had set his door a few inches ajar, so that he could hear any stealthy sound from the passage.

Now he wished that he hadn't; but it was too late; he had a strong disinclination to approach the door or to move at all. The fact was that, in the silence and stillness of the December midnight, all Bunter's courage, such as it was, had oozed out at his fat finger-ends, and he was in a state of hopeless funk.

He sat in the armchair, quite still, in thickening darkness, as the fire died out, and palpitated with nervous dread.

W. G. Bunter, as a matter of fact, was not of the stuff of which heroes are made! Too late he realised it.

Suddenly, and involuntarily, he gave a violent start, and his fat heart almost leaped into his mouth.

There was a sound from the corridor.

Bunter's heart beat like a hammer. His eyes almost popped through his spectacles. He hardly breathed.

No sleeper could have heard that faint stealthy sound. Even awake, Bunter would not have heard it had not his door been ajar and his nerves on the strain.

But he heard it—and there was no mistaking it! It was a soft, creeping, stealthy footstep!

Bunter could have groaned from sheer terror.

But he made no sound, only listening, with straining ears and throbbing heart.

Anyone desiring to reach Lord Mauleverer's room had to come along the corridor from the stairs, as the passage was a "blind alley," ending in a tall window with no outlet. And that stealthy, creeping footfall came from the direction of the stairs.

It seemed to Bunter, in those terrifying moments, that the unknown who was creeping down the passage must hear the thumping of his heart and take the alarm!

The stealthy creeping passed his door. It died away down the passage, the unknown had gone on.

That was a relief, at least! But he—whoever he was—had gone on to Lord Mauleverer's room! That was certain! The mysterious danger that threatened the schoolboy earl was close upon him now.

Still Bunter sat without motion, glued by terror to his chair.

His plans, cut and dried with care, were forgotten. Bunter would no more have followed that creeping figure, and grabbed him by the throat, than he would have tracked a tiger to his lair in the jungle. His fat limbs would have failed him if he had made the attempt!

Minutes passed—while Bunter quaked with horror, too terrified to move; terrified of drawing the unknown wretch's attention upon himself.

What was happening to Lord Mauleverer?

That thought, at last, spurred Bunter into motion.

With an effort, shaking in every limb, he dragged himself from the chair. Slowly, as if his feet were of lead, he dragged himself across to the door. There he listened, shuddering. There was no sound—and at length, with another effort, he put his head out. A dim glimmer of snowy starlight fell in at the high window at a distance. The corridor was vacant. Billy Bunter pulled himself together, taking his courage in both hands, as it were, and made a frantic rush across the passage to Harry Wharton's room, tore open the door, and bolted in. And once inside, he yelled, with a yell that woke nearly every echo of Mauleverer Towers.

"Help! Help! Help!"

PLEASE NOTE

that next week's MAGNET
will be on sale THURSDAY,
December 24th, 1931.



Mauleverer opened his eyes and blinked in the blinding light of an electric torch held in an unseen hand. He could see nothing, but from the blackness behind the gleaming beam came a muttering, husky voice: "Silence!"

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

The Unknown!

LORD MAULEVERER opened his eyes.

He blinked.

A touch had awakened him. And as his eyes opened, a beam of bright light dazzled them.

It came from an electric-torch held in an unseen hand.

He blinked dazedly.

With the dazzling light in his eyes blinding him, he could see nothing. From the blackness behind the gleaming beam came a muttering, husky voice.

"Silence!"

"Oh gad!" gasped Lord Mauleverer.

He made a movement to disengage himself from the bedclothes, and sit up, utterly amazed and confounded. But before he could do so a grip was laid on his throat, pinning him down.

He gurgled.

"Silence!" repeated the voice. "One cry and you will never utter another. I am a desperate man!"

The light was shut off.

Lord Mauleverer stared dazedly into the darkness. He was dimly aware of a dark form that bent over the bed.

His heart thumped and throbbed. He could not speak. The grasp on his throat was like iron; it choked him into silence, and it seemed to him that it would choke out his life. He gurgled for breath.

"Listen to me." The voice was a husky whisper. "Utter a cry to alarm the house and it will be your last! Do not attempt to struggle—you are an infant in my hands! There is a chloroform pad within a foot of your head—once it is placed over your face you will never know anything again! Take warning!"

The schoolboy earl lay still.

He was too dazed and amazed to think clearly, but he was aware that he was in desperate hands.

Faintly, a sickly odour came to him. He knew that the unseen assailant had spoken the truth. It was the smell of chloroform.

The grip on his throat relaxed.

"I have warned you!" came the husky whisper. "Take care! Speak in a whisper or you will never speak again."

"Good gad!" gasped Lord Mauleverer.

He collected himself a little, but he did not attempt to stir. The grip on him was that of a powerful man, and he was well aware that he had no chance in a struggle. And the sickly scent of the chloroform was very near.

"Who—who are you?" he breathed.

"What—what's this game?"

"Never mind who I am! You have received two warnings from me—and you have not heeded them."

Mauleverer started violently.

"What? What do you mean? What do—"

"You have not placed the money on the sundial! You have defied one who holds your life in his hands."

"Good gad!" breathed Mauleverer.

He stared upwards in dizzy amazement. Dimly he made out the shape of the half-seen figure; and he could discern that the face looming over him was covered by a black mask.

Slowly he realised the truth.

"You understand?"

"Oh gad! I—I thought it was a silly trick of that fat ass Bunter, and—and it was—"

"This is your last warning!" went on the husky whisper, as Mauleverer's voice trailed away. "I am a desperate man! You are rich—richer than you need be. A thousand pounds is the ransom of your life."

"Oh!" gasped Mauleverer.

"Place a thousand pounds, in bank-notes, on the old sundial, and you will never hear of me again. Do this to-morrow. And give me your word of honour to leave the sundial unwatched. You understand?"

"Oh, quite!" said Lord Mauleverer.

He was cool again now.

"You consent?"

"No fear!"

He caught a glitter of the eyes from the eye-holes of the mask that loomed shadowy over his upturned face.

"Take care!" came the whispering voice. "You are in desperate hands. You should realise that."

"I know it," answered Lord Mauleverer quietly. "I don't know who you are, you scoundrel, but I know you must be a precious villain. But if you think you can frighten me, you are mistaken. Go and eat coke!"

He heard the deep breathing of the man leaning over him. The grasp on his throat tightened a little.

"You refuse?"

"Yaas."

"Your life—"

"Oh, can it!" said Lord Mauleverer. "You don't dare! You've got only one neck, and I fancy you know how to take care of it."

There was a pause.

Lord Mauleverer made no movement. He was at the mercy of his unknown, half-seen assailant. But he was cool as

ice. And he was aware that his coolness startled and surprised the unknown. He knew that the man had expected to see him trembling. Whoever he was, if he knew Mauleverer, he had not judged him well.

"You are right," came the whisper, at last. "I have, as you say, only one neck, and I shall not place it in the noose. But there are other means."

He paused again.

"You will disappear from your home," came the voice again. "You will be secured in a safe place, and neither food nor drink will pass your lips till you come to my terms. Your training has not fitted you to endure an ordeal like that, Lord Mauleverer."

"You won't get away with it easily, whoever you are," answered Lord Mauleverer coolly. "I'll take the chance. But if I were sure you could do as you threaten, I wouldn't give you a penny piece. Do you think I'm a coward, you scoundrel?"

He heard a hissing breath from the unknown.

"That is your final answer?"

"That's it!"

"Then you leave me no alternative. When you have starved in the darkness for a few days——"

The stronger scent of the chloroform warned Mauleverer that the hand that held the pad was approaching his face.

He had no chance, and he knew it, but he was not the fellow to submit tamely. He made a sudden, fierce effort to rise, at the same time attempting to utter a shout for help.

But no sound left his lips. Something soft and clinging was jammed down over nose and mouth, and he sank back helplessly. For a few seconds his senses whirled, and then came unconsciousness.

He knew no more.

He did not know that he was lifted from his bed, and wrapped in a dressing-gown; that he was raised on a strong shoulder, and borne to the door. He did not hear the sudden, startled exclamation that broke from the masked man, as a sudden din of yelling came ringing along the dark corridor from a room farther on.

"Help! Help! Help! He's got Mauly! I say, you fellows, wake up! Wake up! Help! Murder! Help!"

There was a curse between gritted teeth. From an open doorway up the corridor a light flashed, as it was turned suddenly on. It streamed out into the passage. The wild yelling went on.

"Help! Help! Help!"

"What the thump——"

"Help! Murder! Mauly! Help!"

The insensible schoolboy earl was dropped to the floor. The masked man raced down the corridor.

He had to pass the open, lighted door to escape, and he had not a fraction of a second to spare. He ran like the wind, but as he ran a figure appeared from the lighted doorway, and he crashed into it.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Man in Black!

HARRY WHARTON came out of the land of dreams with a jump. He was not a heavy sleeper; but had he slept like Rip Van Winkle the frantic yelling in his room would have awakened him.

"Help! Help! Help! Murder! Mauly! I say, help!" Bunter was yelling on his top note.

Wharton started up in bed.

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Bunter, fumbling blindly for the electric switch, turned it on, and the room was flooded with light.

Wharton sprang from the bed.

"Bunter, what the thump——"

His first impression was that the fat Owl was in the grip of nightmare. Bunter's face was white, his eyes starting behind his spectacles, and he yelled and shrieked frantically. In his wild excitement he grasped Wharton by the arm, and with the other hand pointed to the open door, fairly jabbering.

"Mauly—Mauly! Go and help him! Murder! Mauly!"

"What utter rot! What——" gasped Wharton.

"Help him! He's got him! I heard him! For Heaven's sake——" groaned Bunter.

Whether it was nightmare or not, the fat Owl was wildly excited and alarmed,



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almost gibbering with terror. And Wharton, leaving him to gibber, ran to the door. Obviously it was wisest to ascertain whether anything was happening to Mauly without losing time.

He rushed out into the passage, turning in the direction of Lord Mauleverer's room.

Crash!

A running figure coming down the corridor like the wind came past the doorway as he ran out, crashing into him, and bowling him over like a nine-pin.

Wharton sprawled helplessly.

The figure stumbled over him, and fell.

But it picked itself up again instantly. Wharton, staring, had a glimpse of a figure in black, with a black mask drawn closely over the whole of the face, leaving only the eyes visible.

But it was only an instant's glimpse. The man in black raced on, vanished

round the corner of the passage towards the stairs, and was gone.

"Oh!" gasped Wharton.

He staggered up breathlessly.

He made one step after the fleeing man, stopped, turned back, and ran up the corridor to Mauly's room. He knew now that it was not a false alarm. That glimpse of the fleeing figure in black was proof enough for that. What had happened to Mauly?

Bunter's wild yells were still ringing. Every member of the Co. had been awakened, and lights were flashing on, and doors opening.

Harry Wharton reached Mauleverer's door, and stumbled over a form that lay half-in in the doorway, half-out in the passage.

"Mauly! Is that you, Mauly?" panted Wharton.

With a strange dread at his heart, Wharton dropped on his knees beside the still form, dimly seen in the dark.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" came Bob Cherry's startled voice. "What's the jolly old row?"

"Turn on the light!" shouted Wharton.

The electric light in the corridor was switched on.

"Mauly—Mauly, old man!"

The sudden light revealed Lord Mauleverer lying on the floor, his face white, set, lifeless.

"Mauly!" panted Wharton.

The fearful thought was in his mind for a second that Mauleverer was dead. There was no sign of life in the still face with its closed eyes.

But the schoolboy earl's heart was beating as Wharton pressed a hand to his chest. And at the same moment he became conscious of a faint, clinging, sickly odour. Mauly was living, but he was completely insensible, under the influence of chloroform.

"What the dickens——"

"My esteemed chum——"

"What the thump——"

"It's Mauly! Something's happened to him!" said Wharton huskily. "He's been attacked—chloroformed! Help me get him back to bed!"

"Oh crumbs!"

"But who——"

"Help me with him."

The insensible Mauleverer was lifted and carried back to his bed. He lay there, inert as a log.

"But who— who— what— how——" stammered Nugent.

"I saw the man just for a second. He's got away!" said Harry. "A man with his face covered. Bunter woke me up——"

Bunter was still yelling. Footsteps could be heard now. The house was alarmed. Porson, half-dressed, came hurrying up the corridor, followed by several menservants.

Harry Wharton ran out into the corridor.

"Bunter! Shut up, Bunter! It's all right now. Porson, Lord Mauleverer has been attacked. The man ran down the stairs. He must be still in the house. Search for him!"

"H-his lordship attacked?" stammered Porson.

"Yes, yes!"

"I say, you fellows——"

"It's all right, Bunter. Dry up now, for goodness' sake!"

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"His lordship attacked!" gasped Porson, as if he could scarcely believe his ears. "His lordship attacked in his own mansion!"

"Some of you call Sir Reginald

Brooke!" said Wharton. "Here, Orris, go and wake Sir Reginald!"

Orris was coming up the corridor at a run.

"What has happened, sir?" he exclaimed.

"Lord Mauleverer has been attacked!"

"Good heavens!"

"Call Sir Reginald at once!"

"Very good, sir!" said Orris, and he hurried away.

Porson entered Lord Mauleverer's room, and stood staring blankly at the insensible form on the bed.

"He is not—not—not——" stammered Porson. His plump face was as white as chalk.

"No, no! It's chloroform. Call all the servants, and search for the man!" rapped out Wharton. "A man dressed in black, with a masked face. I saw him as he ran. He got away down the stairs."

"Good gracious!"

The portly butler hastened from the room. Sir Reginald Brooke, in dressing-gown and slippers, came hurrying on the scene, startled and amazed. The whole house was in an uproar by this time, lights flashing from almost every window, stairs echoing to hurried footsteps, voices calling and shouting.

"Herbert, my boy!" gasped the old baronet, as he gazed in horror at Lord Mauleverer's still, colourless face. "Herbert!"

"I say, you fellows, is he alive?" gasped Billy Bunter.

"Yes, you ass!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Well, if he's alive, I've saved his life!" said Bunter. "I say, Mauly, old man, lucky I was keeping watch—what? Why, what's the matter with him, you fellows?"

"Chloroform, fathead!"

"Oh crikey!"

"But what—what—what——" gasped Sir Reginald.

"He's coming to," said Bob Cherry, dabbing Lord Mauleverer's face with a sponge dipped in cold water. "He's all right!"

"But what—what—— Wharton, tell me what has happened. Who has done this?" exclaimed the old baronet.

Wharton hurriedly explained, as far as he could. Sir Reginald listened in utter amazement.

"I will remain with him," he said. "Go and help search for the wretch who has done this. Tell Porson to telephone to the police and for a doctor!"

The juniors were eager enough to join in the search for the schoolboy earl's assailant, but they had been unwilling to leave Mauleverer. Now that his uncle was present, however, they hurried from the room. Billy Bunter rolled after them as far as the doorway, and stopped.

"I say, you fellows, I'll look after Mauly!" he called out. "Rely on me to protect him!"

And the fat Owl remained in Lord Mauleverer's room, though whether he was thinking of Mauly's safety or his own was perhaps doubtful.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Vanished!

"WHAT'S the way he went, sir," said Orris.

"Gone!" said Wharton, between his teeth.

Porson was at the telephone, spluttering into the transmitter in wild agitation. Innumerable menservants were searching the great building for Lord Mauleverer's assailant. It was Orris who discovered the open window.

GREYFRIARS HEROES.

No. 13.

HAROLD SKINNER.

This week's clever effort by the Greyfriars Rhymester is devoted to the hero whom the leg-pulling Skinner professes to adore.

I REALLY thought my ears must be deceiving;
I felt, in point of fact, completely floored,
And I thought I must be barmy
After Skinner told me calmly
That old Æneas was the hero he adored;
Considering the fact that he's a rotter,
His hero should have been a cad or liar;
Good Æneas is called "pius,"
Not a bit like Ananias,
Whom I quite expected Skinner to admire.

When wrestling with the Æneid of Virgil,
With Quelch looking out for idleness,
Which he treats in manner drastic,
Skinner's not enthusiastic
On the hero he has chosen to profess;
In fact, he hates Good Æneas worse than poison,
And says, "We all dislike him, I suppose;
I know, at least, that I do,
And I often think Queen Dido
Should have bumped a bludgeon on his Trojan nose.

"Then Turnus had a chance to kill the bounder



It was a casement window on the ground floor in a room adjoining the library used by Sir Reginald Brooke's secretary, Mr. Dyer. It was wide open, letting in the keen December wind, which fluttered snowflakes into the room.

Harry Wharton leaned out and stared into the winter darkness.

Snow was falling in light, powdery flakes.

The light from the window streamed out on spotless snow, which covered the ground like a white mantle. There was no sign of footprints on the snow. But the feathery flakes were falling fast, and footprints were not likely to remain uncovered.

Wharton set his teeth. He had had little hope that the mysterious assailant of Lord Mauleverer would be captured. Obviously, the man, whoever he was, would lose no time in seeking safety once the alarm was given. A minute would have been enough for him, and he had had many



By chopping him to pieces in a duel;
It might have helped diminish Horrid Virgil near the finish
If the fathead hadn't acted like a fool;

But, of course, old beastly Æneas won the contest,
And stretched the story umpteenth pages more."

So said Skinner, moralising—
Which remarks may be surprising
On the hero he professes to adore.

Yet Skinner still says Æneas is his hero.

"My love for him," he said, "is widely known;

As I read, my breath is lured,
I'm completely fascinated,

And, in fact, I cannot put my Virgil down;

I love the scenes in Africa and Carthage;

I often shed a solitary tear
At the tragic termination
Of old Æneas' narration—
(How I wish I was behind him
with a spear)."

But Harold Skinner has a sense of humour,

And loves the game of "having one on toast,"

We're right in pre-supposing
That the hero he has chosen
Is the very person he dislikes the most;

Good Father Æneas may have his admirers,

His fame no ancient warrior can surpass;

But he'll never raise a bellow
From the ordinary fellow
Who is made to read old Virgil's works in class.

minutes while the juniors were looking after Mauleverer.

"He must have got in this way, sir," said Orris, in his quiet, deferential tones. "You can see that the catch of the window has been forced. And he went the same way."

"Looks like it," said Harry.

"Don't see any footprints," said Johnny Bull.

"The snow is falling, sir," said Orris. "It would cover up his footprints very quickly."

Johnny Bull looked puzzled.

"He must have made pretty deep footprints, jumping from this window," he said. "I hardly believe the snow would cover them up so quickly without leaving a sign."

"But he's gone!" said Bob.

"Well, I don't get it," said Johnny, in his slow, thoughtful way. "I don't believe footprints made by a man jumping down could get covered out of sight

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so soon. There isn't a trace. I—I suppose he can't have opened this window for a trick while he's dodging about somewhere else?"

"Well, it stands to reason that he got out of the house as quickly as he could," said Nugent. "Why should he open this window, fathead, and then go and look for another way out?"

"Well, I suppose he wouldn't," agreed Johnny Bull. "All the same, I don't understand no sign being left if he got out this way."

Harry Wharton started. Johnny's remark had put a new and alarming idea into his mind.

"Is it possible that this is a trick, and that he's hiding somewhere in the house—to get at Mauly again?" he exclaimed.

"Oh, my hat! That may be it!" said Nugent. "Mauly mustn't be left alone for a minute. His uncle's with him, but—"

"I will go to his lordship at once, sir!" said Orris.

"Good!"

The valet hurried away.

"Mauly will be all right with his uncle and Orris, not to mention Bunter," said Bob Cherry. "Let's go on rooting round the house. If the villain's still here, we'll jolly well nail him!"

Wharton was about to close the window, but he stopped.

"Better leave things as they are for the police," he said. And, leaving the window open, the juniors rejoined the numerous searchers who were still rooting through the house.

There was no more sleep in Mauleverer Towers that night.

Before long the doctor's car came grinding through the snow, and Porson led the medical gentleman up to Mauleverer's room. A few minutes later another car honked through the night, with an inspector and a constable from Winchester.

By that time the search had been given up. It was clear that the mysterious assailant was not to be found within the Towers. Even Johnny Bull no longer had any doubt that the wretch had escaped by the window of the secretary's room.

Inspector Rymer was a very puzzled gentleman as he listened to the account of the strange happening. Lord Mauleverer was in the doctor's care, and could not yet be questioned. But Sir Reginald came down to the library to see the inspector, and Mr. Rymer questioned the Famous Five, and then Orris told how he had found the window open, and the inspector proceeded to examine the open window.

That Lord Mauleverer had been attacked while in bed, chloroformed, and carried as far as the doorway of his room was certain, but the motive of the mysterious assailant was as yet a mystery. Harry Wharton gave the best description he could of the man he had glimpsed, but he could only describe a figure in black with a masked face. The inspector rubbed his chin thoughtfully.

"You say you were awakened by Bunter?" he said. "I must see Master Bunter at once. Has he explained how he knew what was going on?"

"No," said Harry. "I haven't asked him. I only know that he came yelling into my room and woke me up."

"Let Bunter be called at once!" said Sir Reginald. "I sent him back to his own room, as he fell asleep in Herbert's room."

"I'll get him!" said Harry.

He hurried out of the library and scudded up the stairs. Bunter was in his own room, as a deep and resonant

snore announced when Harry Wharton arrived there.

He turned the door-handle, but the door did not open. Bunter was not taking risks. The door was locked.

Wharton thumped angrily on the panels.

"Bunter! Bunter, you fat idiot!"

Snore!

Thump! Thump! Bang! Kick!

"Bunter!" yelled Wharton.

"Oh! Wharrer marrer? I say, you fellows, has he come back? Yaroooh! I say, keep him off!"

"You fat chump!" roared Wharton.

"You're wanted!"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "Is that you, old chap? All right! I say, wharrer you waking me up for? I've been awake nearly all night! Can't you let a fellow have forty winks?"

"Open the door!"

"'Tain't light yet!" hooted Bunter. "'Tain't breakfast-time, you ass! I'm not getting up yet!"

"You frabjous chump, the police have come, and the inspector from Winchester wants to see you!"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

Wharton heard him roll off the bed. The door was opened, and the fat Owl blinked out.

"Come on, you dummy!" growled Wharton.

"Beast! I'm coming!"

Bunter followed Wharton down the stairs, sleepily blinking behind his big spectacles. But his manner was very important as he rolled into the library. Bunter was, so to speak, the goods for once in his fat life! He was the fellow who mattered!

"This is Bunter, Mr. Rymer," said Sir Reginald. "Bunter, explain to the inspector."

"Certainly!" said Bunter cheerfully. "I know all about it, sir—know the whole thing from start to finish!"

"Indeed!" said Inspector Rymer very dryly. To Bunter's surprise, the Winchester inspector glared at him instead of being properly impressed. "In that case, Master Bunter, a great deal of trouble will be saved."

"Talk sense, you fat ass!" whispered Nugent.

"Oh, really, Nugent, don't butt in!" said Bunter.

"It seems that it was you who gave the alarm, Master Bunter!" rapped the inspector.

"Yes, rather!" said Bunter. "You see, I was keeping watch. Mauly being my best pal, I stayed awake to watch over his safety. I'd do more than that for a fellow I really like. As for the danger, of course I never gave that a thought. Not my style."

Mr. Rymer stared at Bunter. The fat Owl of Greyfriars seemed to be a new experience to him.

"Do you mean to imply that you knew that an attack was to be made on Lord Mauleverer?" he exclaimed.

"Of course I did! That's why I kept watch," said Bunter. "I told Mauly and all these fellows, and they wouldn't take any notice."

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

"You see," said Bunter, blinking cheerfully at the amazed inspector, "there's a villain after Mauly for his money. He's written messages warning him to put the money on the sundial—"

"You fat ass!" hissed Johnny Bull. "Haven't you sense enough not to spin that yarn to a police inspector?"

"My esteemed idiotic Bunter—"

The fat Owl gave them a lofty, disdainful blink.

"I say, you fellows, you shut up!"

he said. "Don't you butt in! You leave this to me! Look here, sir!"

And, to the consternation of the juniors, Billy Bunter produced the two mysterious missives—the one he had found in the pocket of the tweed jacket and the one Mauleverer had found in the pocket of his evening "bags"—and threw them on the table before the Winchester inspector.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Vindication of W. G. Bunter!

INSPECTOR RYMER stared blankly at the two papers. Sir Reginald Brooke jammed his eyeglass a little tighter into his eye and blinked at them. Both were utterly astonished.

Bunter grinned.

Harry Wharton & Co. looked on in silence.

They had almost forgotten those mysterious missives, and had never dreamed of any connection between them and the strange happenings of the night. They had looked on those menacing messages as a fatuous prank of the fat Owl of the Remove. Even now they could only wonder at Bunter's nerve in producing them for a police officer's inspection.

"What the dooce—" ejaculated the old baronet. "What—what—what is all this? What does it mean?"

Inspector Rymer knitted his brows over the papers.

"LORD MAULEVERER.
PLACE £1,000 ON THE OLD SUN-
DIAL, OR PREPARE FOR DEATH."

"That's the first," said Bunter, indicating it with a grubby finger. "That was found in Mauly's jacket pocket."

"Who found it?" rapped the inspector.

"I did. I borrowed the jacket," explained Bunter. "These silly asses thought it was a jape, so did Mauly. Made out that I was spinning a yarn, you know!"

"So you were, you fat idiot!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull—"

"And the other paper?" asked the inspector quietly.

"LORD MAULEVERER!
"THIS IS THE SECOND WARN-
ING, AND THE LAST! PLACE
£1,000 IN BANKNOTES ON THE
OLD SUNDIAL TO-NIGHT, OR DIE!
YOUR LIFE IS IN MY HANDS."

"Good gad!" said Sir Reginald. "If that was written by the man who attacked my nephew, his motive is clear."

"But was it?" said Inspector Rymer. "Where was this paper found, and by whom?"

"Lord Mauleverer found it in his trousers pocket," said Wharton. "We all thought it was a jape. As we thought that Bunter had written the first paper, we supposed he'd written the second—"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"So he jolly well did!" grunted Johnny Bull.

But the other fellows were looking dubious now. It was dawning on their minds that they had jumped to a conclusion rather hastily. What had happened in the night let in a flood of new light on the strange affair.

"You supposed that this was some sort of a practical joke?" asked the inspector, tapping the papers with his finger.

"Yes," said Harry. "Bunter's such a



Bunter distinguished himself at the dance, though not in the way he had anticipated. He slipped and cannoned into Bob Cherry, barged into Wharton and his partner, and finally landed with a bump on the floor!

howling ass—I mean—well, he's such a blithering idiot—"

"Look here—" hooted Bunter.

"But—but now it looks—" stammered Harry.

"Was it because of these messages that you remained awake on the watch to-night, Master Bunter?"

"Yes, rather!" answered Bunter. "You see, in the second message the villain says 'to-night,' so I jolly well sat up to watch. And I jolly well heard him creeping past my door. And—and I was just going to—to rush after him and—and collar him, but—but I thought I'd call one of the fellows first, because—because—"

The inspector smiled faintly. Perhaps he could guess the reason why Bunter had not rushed after the villain and collared him.

"Well, my hat!" murmured Bob Cherry blankly. "Is—is it possible that Bunter was telling the truth all the time?"

"Esteemed wonders will never cease," murmured the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"I asked these fellows to sit up and watch," said Bunter. "They wouldn't. Funky, you know!"

"You silly Owl!" snapped Wharton. "We thought it was all your fatheaded nonsense. If we'd dreamed that Mauly was in danger—"

"Any excuse is better than none!" jeered Bunter.

"You piffing porpoise—"

"Well, I jolly well kept watch, and you didn't!" said Bunter. "I've jolly

well saved Mauly's life, anyhow! Haven't I?"

"His lordship's life does not appear to have been threatened," said Inspector Rymer dryly. "I understand that he was chloroformed and removed as far as the door of his room. That, Sir Reginald, would indicate that there was some intention of taking him away, which was, fortunately, frustrated by Master Wharton—"

"Me, you mean!" said Bunter warmly.

"It was fortunate you gave the alarm, at all events," conceded the inspector, and he turned to Sir Reginald again. "No doubt his lordship will be able to let in some light on this matter when he can speak. Perhaps you will ascertain whether—"

"Certainly!" said the old baronet.

He left the library. Inspector Rymer sat with his eyes fixed, under his knitted brows, on the two papers.

Billy Bunter gave the Famous Five a vaunting look. Bunter was vindicated now!

The Winchester inspector, it was clear, was taking the threatening messages seriously. In view of what had occurred, it was scarcely possible to do otherwise. Harry Wharton & Co. had to admit as much.

"I say, you fellows," grinned Bunter, "perhaps you're sorry now that you couldn't take a fellow's word—"

"Don't be a silly ass!" said Wharton tersely. "If you'd ever told the truth before, we might have believed you were

telling it this time. But you never have."

"The neverfulness is terrific."

"He ought to be jolly well kicked!" growled Johnny Bull. "If we'd known we'd have watched over old Mauly and seen him safe. If Bunter wasn't such a rotten fibber we should have known that—"

"Why, you cheeky beast!" exclaimed Bunter indignantly. "After I've saved old Mauly, while you fellows were snoring—"

"Oh, rats!"

"After I've risked my life—" roared Bunter.

"Br-r-r-r! If you'd had the pluck of a bunny rabbit you'd have collared that rascal, instead of letting him get away while you went howling to Wharton!" snorted Johnny Bull.

"Why, you—you—you—" Words failed Bunter.

There was a tap at the door, and Orris entered, with his silent step. His eyes went quickly and curiously to the thoughtful face of the inspector.

"His lordship can see you now, sir," said Orris.

Inspector Rymer followed the valet at once. Billy Bunter rolled after them; and Harry Wharton & Co., after exchanging a glance, followed. They were very anxious to hear what Mauly had to say.

Lord Mauleverer was sitting up in bed. His face looked very white against the white pillows. Lady Brooke

was at his bedside now, her kind old face troubled and perturbed. Mauly gave his friends a faint smile and a nod as they followed the inspector in.

"If your lordship can make a statement now—" said the inspector.

"Certainly, sir!" answered Mauleverer. "I'm all right—right as rain! Bit of a headache, that's all."

"Then please tell me what happened, so far as you know, my lord."

Quietly and succinctly Lord Mauleverer told what he knew. The inspector made notes, while the juniors listened in silence.

"Then it was kidnapping that was intended!" said the inspector, when the schoolboy earl had finished. "There seems no doubt about that—kidnapping with intent to extort money!"

"Looks like it," assented Mauleverer.

"You did not know the man?"

"Not in the least."

"You cannot identify him in any way?"

"Sorry—no."

"Was his voice familiar to you at all?"

Lord Mauleverer shook his head.

"He spoke in a sort of hoarse whisper," he answered. "I couldn't say what his voice was like."

"You do not think you had heard it before?"

"I imagine not!" said Lord Mauleverer, a little surprised. "I'm not likely to have come in contact with the rotter."

Inspector Rymer pursed his lips.

"That is by no means certain, my lord. His words to you prove that he was the writer of the threatening letters that were found in your pockets."

"Yaas," assented Lord Mauleverer. "But—"

"The man evidently knows his way about the interior of this house, my lord, and it appears that he has access to your rooms, as he placed his messages in your pockets, to be found when you put on the clothes."

"Yaas," said Mauleverer slowly.

"The inference, my lord, is that the man has a confederate in your house, or may actually be an inmate of the household himself."

"Impossible!"

Lord Mauleverer spoke with the utmost decision. Sir Reginald Brooke shook his head decidedly.

"There is no one in the household in whom you have not absolute trust?" asked the inspector.

"No one," answered Lord Mauleverer. "My uncle will say the same."

"Assuredly!" said Sir Reginald. "Porson is responsible for engaging the servants, and Porson is a very careful man."

"Well, at all events, the matter will be very carefully investigated," said Inspector Rymer, and he left Lord Mauleverer's room, a much puzzled man.

"I say, Mauly—"

"Herbert must sleep now," said Lady Brooke.

"I'm all right, auntie—right as rain!" protested Mauleverer. "Look here, you're jolly well not goin' to make an invalid of me!"

"You must rest!" said his aunt firmly.

"I say, I dare say it would do Mauly good if I sat with him a bit and cheered him up," said Billy Bunter.

"I—I think I'll rest, after all!" said Mauleverer hastily.

And Harry Wharton & Co. gently, but firmly, extracted Billy Bunter from the room, leaving Mauleverer to rest.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Merry Christmas!

"MARJORIE, old dear—"

"Dry up, Bunter!"

"Shan't! Clara, old thing—"

Billy Bunter was still at Mauleverer Towers on Christmas Eve. Fat and fatuous as ever, he greeted Marjorie and her friends when they arrived.

Bunter had not caught his train.

He was not going to catch any train.

Catching trains was entirely dismissed from mind. Bunter, indeed, had long ago dismissed it from his fat mind. Now Lord Mauleverer had dismissed it also.

Bunter—amazing as it was—had been the means of saving Lord Mauleverer from the grasp of the unknown enemy. He had not, perhaps, shone as a hero, but undoubtedly it was Bunter who had watched, Bunter who had given the alarm, Bunter who had roused Wharton in time to save the schoolboy earl. In the circumstances, there was only one thing to be done. Bunter generously offered to stay with his pal Mauly for the whole of the vacation, and protect him; and Mauly sighed and gave in.

So there was Bunter, as large as life, almost bursting out of one of Mauly's most expensive suits, to greet the Cliff House girls when they came.

"Expected to see me here, what?" asked Bunter.

"Blessed if I did!" said Hazeldene.

"Mean to say you've landed yourself on Mauly for Christmas!"

"Oh really, Hazel! I say, Marjorie, come this way!" said Bunter, with an enticing wink.

"Eh, what for?" asked Marjorie.

"Mistletoe!" whispered Bunter.

To Bunter's surprise, Marjorie did not come that way! She turned another way—apparently having no use for mistletoe and Bunter!

"I'm going to kick him!" said Johnny Bull. "If Bunter's staying all through the vac, he will have to be kicked sooner or later—so I'm jolly well going to kick him now!"

Bunter dodged away in time.

It was rather a grievance with Billy Bunter that he was not the object of general admiration, after the way in which he had distinguished himself.

But he wasn't!

Even when he had related to Marjorie and Clara how he had saved Mauly from deadly peril, they did not gaze at him with the ecstatic admiration which he felt was his due.

Everybody admitted that Bunter had come in useful, but nobody seemed to realise what a hero he was.

But if Bunter was misunderstood and misjudged, as usual, there were compensations—solid compensations. He was safely landed at Mauleverer Towers for Christmas, and there was no longer that worrying question of catching trains and, that, after all, was the chief

thing. A Christmas dinner out-weighed lesser considerations, and Bunter certainly distinguished himself on that occasion.

Indeed, he distinguished himself to such an extent, that serious fears were entertained that Mauleverer's clothes would not stand the strain, and that they would burst—if Bunter himself did not!

The following morning he was looking rather pale and peevish. He frowsted before a fire, while Harry Wharton & Co. and the girls were on the ice. But he was himself again in time for the dance on Boxing night. When Lord Mauleverer went up to dress he found his dressing-room already occupied. Bunter was there—getting into the beautiful evening clothes Orris had laid out for his lordship.

"Oh gad!" said Lord Mauleverer.

Bunter blinked at him.

"You don't mind, old chap?" he asked. "As you know, I came here in rather a hurry, and never brought my things. I say, you don't mind if I slit this waistcoat up the back, do you?"

"Not at all!" said Lord Mauleverer, with gentle sarcasm.

"I'm not bony like you, old fellow!" explained Bunter.

"You're not!" agreed Mauly. "Anythin' but that, by gad!"

"I've a figure, you know," said Bunter, surveying himself in the pier-glass with great satisfaction. "Girls admire a good figure in a chap, Mauly."

"Oh! Do they?" gasped Mauly.

"Yes, rather! I can tell you, when I've been on the pier at Margate, lots and lots of girls have looked round at me, and smiled like anything."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! It's rather rotten to be jealous of a fellow's good looks, Mauly!" said Bunter severely. "It's not my fault that I'm the handsomest fellow here, I suppose?"

"On gad! No! You've got your faults, old bean, but that's certainly not one of them!" gasped Mauly.

Bunter gave a final smirk at the attractive reflection in the glass, and rolled out. And Orris sorted out another suit for Lord Mauleverer.

Bunter distinguished himself at the dance, though not in the way he had anticipated. He declared afterwards that it was Miss Clara's fault that he sent Wharton and his partner reeling, and Mauly's tailor's fault that an alarming number of buttons burst off Mauly's best evening clothes. He also declared that it was not by accident that Frank Nugent fell over him while he sprawled, and that it was not by accident Johnny Bull spilled an ice down his neck. Certainly it was not by accident that Hurree Singh and Hazeldene took hold of his fat ears to help him up.

But, in spite of little incidents like these, it was a merry Christmas for Billy Bunter, as for everyone else, and in the general festivity Lord Mauleverer quite forgot the danger through which he had passed. Indeed, if he thought of the mysterious man in black at all, his kind-hearted and charitable lordship probably hoped that that obnoxious individual was also having a merry Christmas!

THE END.

The Next Yarn in this TOPPING CHRISTMAS SERIES is entitled:

"The SECRET of the TURRET!"

Don't Miss It, Chums!

THE OLD WISH, CHUMS, BUT IT'S NEW AGAIN—A HAPPY CHRISTMAS TO YOU ALL!



Come Into The Office, Boys!

Here your Editor is pleased to answer questions and discuss topics of general interest. Write to him: Editor of the "Magnet," The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. A stamped and addressed envelope will ensure a reply.



WELL, chums, what did you think of last week's splendid Christmas number? It was worth while waiting for, wasn't it? I hope you'll enjoy this number every bit as much. Now please allow me to wish every one of you the old, old wish—

**A Happy Christmas
and a
Prosperous New Year!**

All my staff, my authors, and my artists join me in sending along the compliments of the season, and I can assure you that they are going to do all in their power to make the jolly old MAGNET better and brighter than ever next year—if that is possible! But, as you all seem to agree that it's already the finest boys' paper on the market, it's going to be hard to improve it, isn't it?

I have also received the following to pass along to you:

*Whoever you are, and wherever you be—
In England, or far away over the sea—
Accept our best wishes for Christmas, each
one,
And then, when the old year is finished and
done,
In the New Year to come we all hope you
may thrive,
And that is the wish of your chums—*

FAMOUS FIVE.

Accompanying the above, and scribbled (with lots of blots) on a piece of old toffee paper, was the following:

*Now that Kristmus has cum I wish you all
good luck
I hope you'll all soon be a-bursting with
luck,
Plum duff and prime turkeys and lots of
mince-pies,
With chochits and ginger-pop, gorged to
the eyes!
Each one should be hungrey as any old
hunter,
And that is the wish of yours truly,*

G. BUNTER.

A BRISTOL chum of mine writes to ask me if I can tell him something about

THE MARTELLO TOWERS

which are to be found all round our coasts. These were built during the time that it was feared this country was to be invaded by Napoleon. The idea came from the Island of Mortella, where there was a round tower which strenuously resisted the efforts of a British fleet to bombard the island. Because of that, hundreds of so-called "Martello Towers" were built all round our coasts, in the hope that they would come in useful against any fleet which Napoleon liked to send. But, actually, the idea of round

towers with an entrance which could only be reached by ladders is as "old as the hills!" Why, the ancient Picts used to construct similar structures!

The little "items of interest" which I gave you recently under the heading of

THINGS YOU'D HARDLY BELIEVE

apparently caught on. Dozens of my readers are sending in curious little paragraphs which they ask me to pass on to you, while others are sending along queries concerning some of the astounding "traveller's tales" they have heard, and asking me if they are true. Send along your queries, chums. I enjoy answering them. Here are some to be going on with:

An Insect Can Travel Faster than the Fastest Schneider Plane! Scientists have measured the speed of the Cephemyia Fly, and state that it can travel at the rate of 840 miles an hour! It is the fastest living thing!

You Can Actually See the Sun After It Has Set! Rays of light are bent in passing through the atmosphere. Therefore, when you appear to see the sun on the horizon it is actually below the horizon!

Butter is Used to Light Houses! In Tibet butter is used as a fuel for lamps by the natives. It is also moulded into geometrical designs to decorate the interior of temples!

Squirrels are Amongst the Finest Swimmers in the World! They are often seen swimming across the Mississippi, and have an amazing sense of direction. If taken in a boat they know exactly if the boat swerves from the proper direction and will jump overboard and finish their journey by swimming!

England is Twice as Densely Populated as China! There are 701 people to the square mile in England. Although China has the largest gross population, there are only about half as many people to the square mile!

Stories of TREASURE TRAILS.

are always interesting, so perhaps you'll like to know that an English explorer claims to have discovered the famous Queen of Sheba's mines. He and a companion were exploring in Abyssinia, when they obtained a map from an old Arab, which revealed the whereabouts of a deposit of alluvial gold. Off they went, and after enduring untold hardships, and losing nearly all their mules and stores through roving bandits, they arrived at a spot in the interior of unexplored

territory, near where the legendary mines are supposed to have been.

One of them was stricken down with an illness, but although supplies were running short, the other pushed on into the hills, where he came across an underground river, running through a series of caves, in which he found diamonds, rubies, and alluvial gold. The shortness of stores, and the illness of his companion, however, forced him to return, but he is now preparing to fit out an expedition to trace the underground stream, in the hope that it will eventually bring them to the reef from which the gold must have been washed. This reef, he claims, must be the famous Queen of Sheba's mines, for which many explorers have sought in vain.

So, you see, there is still adventure and treasure to be discovered in this old earth of ours, provided that one is adventurous enough to go in search of it!

Have you ever seen a

MEXICAN JUMPING BEAN?

It is a little bean-shaped arrangement that suddenly jumps and writhes about in a remarkable manner, and J. G. R., of Heytesbury, asks me if I can tell him why it should behave like this. The reason is that these beans contain the larvae of a certain moth, and as these grow, they wriggle about in their shell-like prison, thus causing the beans to jump and jerk in their peculiar manner.

DON'T forget to pop into your newsagent's this week—if you haven't already done so—and ask him to let you have a peep at some of the splendid Annuals which are on sale now! Ask him in particular to let you look at "The Holiday Annual," "The Modern Boy's Book of Aircraft," "The Modern Boy's Annual," "Every Boy's Hobby Annual," "The New Zoo Annual," and "The Popular Book of Boys' Stories." If you don't think that they represent the absolute tip-top notch in value, then call me a Dutchman! They're all written by the best authors and illustrated by the best artists.

Just have a look at 'em, chums, and if you don't want to become the owner of one or more of them—well, I'll eat my hat!

NOW for next week's programme. You'll all be wondering what further adventures are going to befall Harry Wharton & Co. this Christmas-time, and in next week's long complete yarn of the Greyfriars chums, which is entitled

"THE SECRET OF THE TURRET!"

By Frank Richards,

you'll get an inkling of the exciting times that are in store for them. Frank Richards' new series of tales is going to be one of the most successful we have ever published, so my advice to you all is not to miss them, whatever you do. Why, Christmas-time, wouldn't be complete without the MAGNET to read by the fire-side while the wind is howling about the house outside!

There are thrills galore for you in "Oom, the Terrible," and another really fine issue of the "Greyfriars Herald," not to mention our other grand features. Don't miss them, chums.

YOUR EDITOR.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,245.

Oom, the Terrible!

Oom, the Terrible, is a Flying-Bandit who aims to be master of the world. He finds two formidable foes in the brothers Dare, who have sworn to bring him to book. An attempt to raid the house of Silas Merger, a millionaire, is frustrated by Rick. Meanwhile, at the Flying-Bandit's secret headquarters, Tom Dare succeeds in wrecking the special wireless apparatus which controls Oom's aeroplanes.

At the moment when the Flying-Bandit's capture seems certain, the wily Oom turns the tables by commandeering his foes' plane. Undaunted, however, Tom decides to set up a wireless plant even more powerful than Oom's.

depressed it, expecting to see the brilliant light, by which he worked at night. Except for the click of the switch, there was no result, and he knew that his worst fears were realised and that someone was in the power-house to put the lights out of commission and tamper with his beloved engines.

Instinctively the young inventor ducked out of the line of the switch. It was well he did so, for something whizzed past his ear and hit the wall with a nasty little "pat."

Tom dodged again, and sprang in the direction he thought he discerned a movement. His foot struck against the raised concrete bed of one of the engines and he nearly fell on his face. He recovered his balance as he felt a solid figure dart past him, and he thrust his hands out, to encounter a smooth body, obviously oiled.

Tom felt a blow on his shoulder, and a sickening, seething pain that paralysed his shoulder. The next moment he went reeling back.

The steel bar which protected the engine caught him behind the knees and he collapsed helplessly over the rail, hitting his head a terrific thump on the steelwork as he did so.

In a mist of pain, Tom Dare saw a tiny, agile figure spring from the lathe bench to a small window. For a second it was outlined against the faint light outside, and the young inventor saw it put something to its mouth. Again he ducked, covering his face with his hands. Then something came with a soft thud against his thick sleeve, and as he slipped sideways the tiny figure disappeared.

After what seemed hours, but in reality was not more than a few minutes, Tom struggled back to consciousness.

There was a hot trickle down his shoulder, and he realised that he had been stabbed; but the uppermost thing in his mind was the recognition of that tiny figure—Malze, the sinister dwarf of Oom's stronghold.

Where the servant was there would be the master too; and what object could he have but the destruction of those engines which menaced his secret? Dully, Tom could hear the beat of an aeroplane propeller and the smothered roar of an exhaust fired with a



In the Nick of Time!

TOM DARE had had a mattress and some blankets placed in the power-house, where he would sometimes snatch a few hours' sleep when fagged out. The drone of his engines seemed to exercise a soothing effect upon his tired brain.

Late one night he slipped out of the house, where he had been working at some of his plans, and went for a stroll, clad in a heavy frieze overcoat over his pyjamas and a muffler, with the idea of getting some fresh air before turning in.

He was dog-tired, and yet his active brain would not allow him to sleep.

Titicaca Lake is 12,645 feet above sea level, and the night air was like a tonic to the jaded young inventor. Suddenly he bethought himself that he would sooner sleep in his power-house beside his beloved engines, than in a house which seemed close and stifling to his restive nature.

Tom had an electric torch with him, so did not trouble to switch on the lights. He sank down on the mattress with a grunt of exhaustion, and in two minutes was in deep slumber. In his dreams he seemed to hear the beat of a propeller, but that was nothing to an airman, who had been accustomed to being aroused at any hour of the day or night to take part in a raid, or repel one.

He awoke with a start, and that uneasy feeling that he was not alone. There seemed to be the faintest rustling from some place on the other side of the great engines. He lay for a moment or two, with a feeling that a human and menacing presence was at hand.

Lying still as a mouse, he listened intently, and heard a distant ticking sound.

This was curious, for a clock had not been put in the power-house by reason of the electric dynamos and other things which would upset any clock. Yet the ticking persisted.

Tom jumped out of bed and slid on his shoes, then crept to the switch and

silencer. But above it all there seemed to come to his ears that menacing ticking which he had heard in his dreams.

The malignant dwarf had placed something right near his beloved engines, some hideous infernal machine timed to explode—when?

The young inventor reeled to his mattress and fumbled about for his torch, finding it at last where it had rolled a few feet away. Worn out with loss of blood and excitement, he switched on the tiny light and threw the rays round the power-house.

Forcing himself to keep his senses, he clutched anything solid to hand, trying to conquer the deadly nausea that almost overcame him.

Tick, tick, tick!

Would he never find that hideous thing that seemed to beat in upon his brain in mocking cadences?

Then the white light of the torch shone upon something that reflected the light, and Tom saw a common alarm clock with the bell removed and the striker attached to a length of fulminate fuse, which, in turn, was wired to a steel canister.

Had he been in his normal senses the young inventor would simply have ripped away the fuse, and so rendered the deadly infernal machine useless. But he was half unconscious, reeling in a mist of pain, worn out by overwork, and now weakened by the loss of blood which was pouring from his lacerated shoulder.

He clutched the deadly thing to his chest and staggered blindly out of the building, his one thought being to get it as far away as possible from his beloved engines, the child of his industry and invention.

With whirling head, Tom staggered down towards the lake, dully visible in the moonless night. The cool breeze revived him somewhat, and, as he staggered towards the water, he heard a clock up at the house strike the hour. At the same time a slight whirring sound came from the clock, and, with a last effort of sense, he swung the infernal machine around his head and sent it spinning into the lake.

Ere it struck the water there was a mighty roar. He felt as if a giant hand had struck him right on the solar plexus, and he collapsed on the shingle, just clear of the water that came rushing up like a tidal wave from the effects of the terrific explosion.

From the house, from the workers' camp, from every part of the little island, people came rushing in various stages of undress. Foremost amongst them was Rick, who, with that peculiar telepathy that existed between the brothers, had spent a restless and uneasy night.

As a matter of fact, Rick Dare had jumped out of bed with the idea of going to Tom's room when that deafening roar came and he felt the shock of the explosion.

Thinking first of his brother's engines, Rick rushed immediately for the power-house; and, finding the door open, tried, without success, to turn on the light. Luckily, he had a pocket torch, and by its light saw the tumbled bedclothes and the ominous streaks of red which led in a trail to the water's edge.

"Gee whiz! Look here, it must have been some explosion to cause this!" cried one of the men, shining an electric torch on a deep hole in the shingle, which was filled with water, on

the surface of which dead fishes of all sizes floated.

Then Rick saw the still form near the hole, and next moment was tearing his brother's coat open and feeling for his heart. It still beat, though very feebly, and he yelled for the doctor. In the light of half a dozen torches he saw the deadly little dart sticking in the thick sleeve of Tom's jacket, and he groaned aloud.

"Maleze and Oom!" he muttered. "If my brother has been struck by one of those ghastly darts—"

But his hand touching the blood-soaked shoulder reassured him. It was the loss of blood that had caused Tom to lose consciousness. If he had been hit by the tiny poisoned dart he would not be breathing at all!

"How is he, doctor?" Rick asked anxiously.

"Knocked out—nothing dangerous!" the medico said. "Lost a lot of blood—but that's nothing. Do him good—"

YOU'LL LAUGH— YOU'RE BOUND TO—

at the following ribtickler for which Master H. Grant, of 14, Linskill Terrace, North Shields, Northumberland, receives a **HANDSOME CHRISTMAS-BOX** in the shape of a **DANDY POCKET KNIFE**.



Storekeeper: "Any orders while I was out?"

New Assistant: "Yes, one; two gentlemen ordered me to put up my hands while they took the cash register!"

Pile in with your efforts, boys!

what he needed! Been working at too high pressure. Wonderful constitution! Be all right in a week or two!"

Rick held out the tiny dart he had found.

"I think he was touched by this?" he asked.

Briefly he told the doctor where they had come from, where he had seen them last, and how they had been used.

The doctor listened, smiled, and gave another glance at his patient. Then he patted the anxious Rick on the shoulder.

"You needn't worry about that, old man!" he whispered. "If it had been that it would have been fatal!"

Tom Dare looked as if he had been tattooed, by the marks of the kicked-up gravel from the high explosive which had gone off in the air within a few yards of him. The very fact of his collapsing at the water's edge had saved him from the brunt of the explosion.

But he was thinking about his power-house, the machines he had given his life to, and his brain worked back always to them—not only to them, but what they were connected with.

"Rick—Rick, old man," he breathed, as he was being carried up to the house, "I'm kind of done—I shan't be able to see to things. Can you carry on, old man? There's Oom's plane back in the forest—I've got the power stuff going—his perfectly good machine is going spare!"

He grinned up in his brother's face, and Rick smiled back bravely, for he could plainly see that Tom was going through agonies.

"Want me to carry on, Tommy?" he whispered. "Me and Alf, and the boys, and Ham?"

"That's it, old chap!" came the faint response. "Jump to it! You've seen what I've got back there in the workshops? They're all saved, thank goodness! There's the power there, old man—use it! And use it to down Oom! Use his own wireless power plane against himself—and good luck, old Rick! I'll be with you in no time at all!"

Rick looked down at his brother's face, saw the urgent message there, and wasted no time.

"Tommy," he whispered, "I'm beating it right away for Oom's plane in the forest, and I'll have it flying as soon as your fellers can give me the wireless power. Rest easy, old man, and as soon as you can join us—do!"

He gave his brother's hand one squeeze, then raced for the hangar and called for one of the little experimental planes.

Almost as soon as Tom was tucked away in bed he could hear the low hum of the tiny two-seater zooming off over the forest trees.

The doctor came along with a sleeping-draught, but Tom waved him aside.

"I don't want any dope!" he murmured sleepily. "Rick is in charge, and I can only rely on him. Just lemme sleep for a bit and I'll soon be with old Rick on the job. Go 'way, doctor! Dares don't want doctors—they just want to be up and doing!"

Back in the forest, Alf Higgs was listening to the hum of two planes approaching with his red head cocked on one side.

"Tommy Dare's experimental bus, for a tanner!" he crowed. "T'other one I wouldn't bet hon; but 'o sounds to me like that De Hay bomber wot me and Master Rick commandeered. Can it be Oom? I shouldn't wonder!"

A Duel in the Air!

AL F HIGGS was showing almost second sight in placing the two planes as they came over the clearing. His air sense and hearing had told him that the first plane was the little De Hay bomber, and he had had hand enough in the construction of Tom Dare's experimental machine to know the sound of her in the air. In that respect an airman's sense is akin to a motor-driver's, which is sometimes almost uncanny to a layman.

Rick had wasted no time in getting off in one of the fastest machines from the Titicaca Island Depot, and he hit up a speed which the plane had never been called upon to give before. He had perfect faith in her, as she was

fitted with one of his brother's inventions—the Dare Stabiliser—which would enable her to drop from top speed, to be held, as it were, in mid-air by the "spinning-top" of the gyroscope, and then float down like a leaf to the ground.

Even as he emerged over the tops of the forest trees, Rick had spotted the De Hay bomber soaring up to get position over the great wireless plane. He thought, quickly, that Alf and his engineers would be all asleep, unaware of the arrival of the bomber and himself in his brother's express plane.

"Oom's either got news, or rumbled that Tom's fixed up a new wireless plant that has got his licked to a frazzle," the lad thought, even as he first glimpsed the other plane and could see it manoeuvring for position. "He means to do it in before Tommy has a chance to make use of it. Gosh, but Oom's quick! If he manages to drop an 'egg' on the wireless plane, it won't be worth much. I'm going to show him what Tommy's inventions can do. And he won't half say 'Thank you!' when I've shown him—I don't think!"

Rick put on all the power possible, and started the helicopter, and the little machine forged ahead, and was away over the De Hay Tiger almost before Oom had time to realise it was there.

But the Flying-Bandit was a magnificent airman, and he knew a dozen air tricks to Rick's one. He bore to the right, rose up, and then executed a marvellous turning movement that brought him well above the top of the other machine. Then he skimmed down once more, and was right above the derelict wireless plane when Rick stopped in mid-air, with the helicopter whirling madly, and dropped like a stone until he was level with Oom's borrowed machine.

Then, with a roar from his exhaust, he charged full speed at the other as if he would drive right through it. Oom was compelled to bank, and, going all out, had to race away again as Rick loosed off a hail of bullets from the small machine-gun with which his brother's plane had been fitted.

Rick had to dive beneath the other machine to avoid a nose-on collision, and, as he swooped, Oom dropped one

of the bombs with which he had provided himself. It would have finished the fight if it had struck its objective. But Rick was going too fast to be hit, except by rank bad luck, and he was zigzagging in the air in addition.

There was a mighty explosion which made both the planes rock and drop into air pockets. But the Dare Stabiliser steadied Rick's machine seconds before the other had regained control, and he seized his opportunity and swooped down like a hawk on a dove.

B-r-r-r-p! B-r-r-r-p!

There came the sharp staccato bark of his machine-gun, and for the flash of a second he had a glimpse of a tiny, wizened, little monkey-like face chattering with fury from the back of the cockpit of the other plane. Then the dwarf-like object threw up its hands, and sank down out of sight.

At the same moment the machine made a sharp nose-dive, looking as if she was about to crash; then, with a magnificent bit of work from Oom, recovered, stalled for a moment, then zoomed up above the trees again, and was away.

Two seconds after, Rick heard a thundering crash, and the very air seemed to be split in the roar of a mighty explosion.

"Jumpin' jinnny, what's he up to now?" gasped Dick, as he swung up in pursuit. "Is he loosing off more 'eggs' by mistake, or has he found something?"

In a very few minutes he chased right into a cloud of smoke that was like a thick fog, whilst below him flames were bursting forth from the thick forest undergrowth. Suddenly, he let out a yell, and had to make a swift swerve, for, out of the camouflaging smoke the De Hay Tiger came charging, and Oom was jamming on the trigger of his machine-gun with deadly intent.

Rick heard scores of bullets pinging through the frail body of his machine, then there was a loud Twang g-g-g! as the other machine sped past, and something flew rocketing past his head, making him duck so sharp that he rapped his forehead against the partition of the cockpit.

For a second he was almost knocked

out, and the experimental plane got out of control. She dived down nose first, and Rick choked and spluttered in the dense smoke and acrid fumes of the furnace below.

With a frantic effort he shook off the feeling of faintness, and switched on the gyro. He knew something had gone radically wrong with either engines or propeller, and he would have to depend upon his brother's invention to get him out of difficulties.

Nobly the gyro responded, and the little machine rose almost perpendicularly until a vagrant gust of wind blew it out of the danger zone of the burning forest.

Hastily Rick tested his controls, to find that his engines seemed to be working all right, but the plane had no forward movement, and was being borne by the eddies of the breeze like a leaf on the surface of a stream. Then, to his amazement, he realised that his prop shaft was spinning with never a blade attached.

Oom's last burst of machine-gun fire had hit the blades whilst they were revolving at full speed, and had stripped the shaft clean. As the propeller blades are invisible when spinning at top speed, Rick had not noticed his loss at first.

The stabiliser took the machine up, and by good luck the wind was in the right direction, and carried Rick's machine like a lame duck over the tree tops towards the spot where Alf Higgs and his engineers were anxiously awaiting results.

They had heard the tremendous explosion and the sharp crackle of the machine-guns, followed by the distant hum of Oom's plane as it rocketed high above their heads and vanished in the distance.

"The young gov-nor's copped a packet!" gasped Alf anxiously. "That perisher Oom 'as got off scot-free, cursè 'im, and me 'avin' to squat dabba 'ere not hable to get at the blighter. If that ain't emuff to gimme th' 'orrors, I'd like to know wot is!"

(Boys, you simply must read next week's fine instalment—it abounds in thrills. Order your copy of the MAGNET now!)

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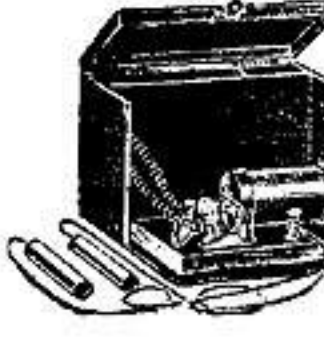
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Vacation in Switzerland for One Penny

Spend Your Money to the Best Advantage

"Easy!" says W. G. Bunter

HERE are times when even the wealthiest and most blue blooded are short of money. I have been it myself, dear reader. It seems incredible, I know, as I ride this article I seem to hear you fairly gasp with astonishment. Nevertheless, it's true that we're all likely to run short at times.



On those occasions it's very useful to know how to spend one's limited resources to the best advantage. Hence this instructive little article on "How to Have a Holiday in Switzerland for One Penny."

Get into the train as soon as it arrives at the platform and select a third-class carriage. It's rather a drawback having to travel with the common people, but experience has taught me that the space provided beneath the seats in first-class carriages is not so eggensive as that in the third.



No. 77. December 26th, 1931.

Editorial Staff in Ancestral Home

Strange Effects of Surroundings

Passing It On

THIS number of the "Greyfriars Herald" is unique. It has been edited and produced entirely at Mauleverer Towers.

At Mauleverer Towers, you see, they have a kind of "casse" system by which orders are passed from one servant to the next, and from him to a regular series of others.

When I came to the job of editing the "Herald" I found that this little peculiarity had spread beyond the servants!

Shortly after that I approached Bull and sternly ordered him to write a topical article on "Snowballing." Johnny responded by sternly ordering Nugent to write an article on "Snow-balling."

On the boat, make a bee-line for the dining saloon and order a big meal. Leave the last few crumbs and rush out, holding a handkerchief to your mouth, and in many cases the waiter won't even question you!

Vernon - Smith's Copical Calk

Bright Bits from the Boulder

Warning by Post Card

HERE are hosts and hosts, but there's no doubt that Mauleverer Towers above all others in his lavish hospitality.

He says he has never seen a "blue mince pie," and he's quite sure he bears no resemblance to one.

With a wildly enthusiastic audience of one farm labourer, two village youths, a stray motor-cyclist, and several sheep and a dog.

Exciting Events on Essex Estate

Exciting Events on Essex Estate

Radio Mystery

Warning by Post Card

Sensational Sequel

HE day after we arrived at Mauleverer Towers, Mauly received a mysterious postcard, which read as follows:

"Tune in to 55 metres on the wireless at 9 p.m. and you may hear something of unusual interest."

"Lost, stolen or strayed: a ripe tomato, last seen on the face of Robert Cherry, of Greyfriars School. It is suspected in some quarters that it is not a tomato, but Cherry's nose!"

Wild West Rodeo

Wild West Rodeo

Christmas Pudding Chat

Shock for Celebrated Schoolboy Cook

Small Quantity of Coke Wanted

SHOCK for the celebrated schoolboy cook Bunter the last week of the term Bunter made himself a monster Christmas pudding out of the proceeds of a collection of ingredients contributed by various kind-hearted Removers.

There was a weeping and a wailing and a gnashing of teeth after that, we assure you! Bunter simply couldn't understand what had happened.

Small Quantity of Coke Wanted

Small Quantity of Coke Wanted



He seems to have lost his appetite for Christmas pudding now!