

MEET BILLY BUNTER, the WORLD'S FAVOURITE SCHOOLBOY—INSIDE !

The Magnet^{2^d}



The
FUNK
of the
FOURTH!

HE BEATS ANANIAS TO A FRAZZLE! Who does? Why Billy Bunter, of the Greyfriars Remove. The world's funniest and fattest schoolboy is up to his old tricks again this week!

The ANANIAS of the REMOVE!



By
FRANK RICHARDS

Amazing School-Adventure Yarn, featuring HARRY WHARTON & CO., of GREYFRIARS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Nothing Doing!

"WAIT for me!"

"Eh?"

"I shan't keep you waiting more than an hour!" said Billy Bunter reassuringly.

Whereat the Famous Five of the Greyfriars Remove grinned.

They really did not need Billy Bunter to reassure them on that point.

They were quite sure that Bunter was not going to keep them waiting more than an hour. They were, indeed, sure that he was not going to keep them waiting more than a minute. In fact, he was not going to keep them waiting at all.

On that sunny, breezy March afternoon, Harry Wharton & Co. were booked for a bike spin. They came out of the House in a cheery crowd, to head for the bike-shed, when Bunter happened. The Owl of the Remove, perhaps, had been keeping an eye open for them. Anyhow, his fat figure and fatuous countenance blocked their path.

"I'd be ready now," explained Bunter, "but I've got lines for Quelch. I can't get out till I've handed them in. Sorry, and all that; but there it is."

The Famous Five stopped. They could feel sympathy for a fellow who had lines on a particularly bright half-holiday. So instead of barging the fat Owl of the Remove out of the way, they kindly stopped, and wasted a few moments of their valuable time.

"You can mend a puncture for me while you're waiting?" suggested Bunter. "I've asked you more than once to mend that puncture for me, Bob Cherry. You've never done it."

"Never!" agreed Bob. "Shift, old barrel!"

"And you other chaps can help me with my lines," went on Bunter. He

seemed full of bright suggestions that afternoon. "That will save time."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Any fellow here keen on mending punctures, and writing lines, instead of getting out on the jiggers?" he inquired.

"The keenfulness is not terrific!" chuckled Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Well, look here, if I'm coming over to Highcliffe with you this afternoon, you'll have to wait!" said Bunter.

"That's all right," said Johnny Bull. "You're not."

"Look here, you beast—"

"Fathead!" said Frank Nugent. "It's not in your line at all. We're picking up Courtenay and the Caterpillar at Highcliffe, and going on a spin! Miles and miles—"

"And miles," said Bob Cherry, "and miles—and miles! And then more miles!"

"You'd perish on the way, fatty!" said Harry Wharton.

"Can't leave a dead porpoise lying about on the roads!" said Johnny Bull.

To the surprise of the Famous Five Billy Bunter favoured them with a fat wink. Apparently he did not believe their statement. Billy Bunter told so many fibs himself, that he had quite lost his faith in statements from other fellows.

"You can't pull my leg," he remarked. "I jolly well know you're going over to Highcliffe to tea. The fact is, I heard you mention that you were going to tea with Courtenay."

"Yes, you fat ass, but—"

"No good trying to gammon me!" interrupted Bunter. "Wash it out, old chap! Now, look here, if Bob mends my puncture, while you fellows help with my lines, we shall get off quite soon enough. Of course, it wouldn't do to be late for tea. I know that's important. But—"

"But we're not—" roared Bob Cherry.

"What's the good of trying to stuff a fellow when a fellow knows?" demanded Bunter. "Look here, if you're too jolly lazy to mend my puncture, I'll borrow Toddy's bike. That will be all right; I think he's gone out. But you'll have to wait till I've done my lines for Quelch. Much better all go together. Courtenay forgot to ask me—that chap's got a rotten memory—so I'd rather go in with my pals."

"But we're not—" shrieked Wharton.

"Oh, really, old chap—"

"Shift, fathead!" said Bob Cherry. "Can't walk round you. We don't want to tire ourselves out before we start!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly ass!" roared Bunter.

It was true that Bunter was fat—almost as broad as he was long, in fact. But really it would not have tired a fellow out to walk round Bunter. That was an exaggeration.

"Oh, come on!" said Johnny Bull.

"I say, you fellows, hold on! Look here, I'll cut in and ask Quelch to let my lines stand over till after tea. He might! He's a beast, but he might be in a good temper for once. Wait for me here."

Billy Bunter made a movement towards the doorway of the House. Harry Wharton & Co. made a movement at the same time, in the opposite direction. They walked round Bunter and walked on.

Immediately Billy Bunter revolved on his axis. He glared after the chums of the Remove through his big spectacles.

"I say, you fellows!" he roared.

Five fellows walked on regardless. They had been willing to waste a few moments on Bunter. They had wasted more than a few; and it was time to get off. As the ride that afternoon lay on the other side of Highcliffe School, they had arranged for their Highcliffe friends to join up there; and they did

not want to keep Courtenay and De Courcy waiting—not even on account of so important a personage as William George Bunter.

There was a patter of feet behind them. Bunter was in pursuit. But Billy Bunter's run was not much faster than another fellow's walk. The five Removites walked quickly and reached the bike-shed, while Bunter was still panting in the rear.

In that building, they hooked their jiggers off the stand. Bob Cherry was the first to whirl his machine round to the door. As he did so the doorway was blocked by a fat figure.

Bunter had arrived.

"I say, you fellows!" he gasped.

"Buzz off, Bunter!"

"Beast!" roared Bunter. "If you think you're going to leave me out, after all I've done for you—"

"Shift, you fat ass!" roared Bob. "Can't you get it into your fat head that we're not tea-ing at Highcliffe? If we were, we wouldn't land you on the fellows there! But we're not! Now buzz!"

Bunter did not buzz.

His ample form blocked the doorway, and Bob Cherry had to halt his bicycle or run into him.

Had Billy Bunter believed that it was a long, long spin on the bikes that had been planned for that afternoon, with tea at a remote spot miles and miles away, wild horses would not have dragged him out for that spin. But the penalty of a fibber is, not that nobody believes him, but that he believes nobody!

Bunter did not believe a word of it. It was, he was convinced, tea at Highcliffe—and he well knew what ripping spreads the Caterpillar stood in his study. And as the Highcliffe men had forgotten to include Bunter in the invitation, obviously it was better for Bunter to trot in with the Famous Five than to happen in on his own. Even if they did not want him—as very probably they didn't—they could hardly say anything if he came in with the Co. So that was that!

"Now, look here," said Bunter, "it won't take me long to cut in and ask old Quelch to let me off—"

"Will you get out of the doorway?"

"If he does, I can come at once, and—"

"Shift!" roared Bob.

"And if he doesn't, you can wait, see? But very likely he will, if I go to his study and say— Beast!"

The front wheel of a bicycle collided with the fat figure in the doorway. As Bunter refused to shift, he had to be shifted. And he was!

The fat Owl roared and rolled.

Five bicycles were wheeled out, one after another. One or two of them passed over fat, sprawling legs. Five cheery juniors wheeled down to the gate, and mounted there. Billy Bunter sat up.

"Beasts!" he roared.

Five cyclists disappeared from his view.

"Ow!" gasped Bunter. "Rotters! Ow!"

The fat junior picked himself up. They were gone—and Bunter was tempted to run out a bike—any bike but his own—and follow on.

But the grim face of Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, seemed to rise before his mental vision. Quelch had directed him, explicitly and emphatically, to bring his lines before he went out that afternoon. Quelch was not a man to be trifled with. He had too heavy a hand with a cane.

Billy Bunter resisted that temptation.

He turned and rolled back to the House, and headed for his Form-master's study. Quelch, after all, might let him off—there was a sporting chance. Certainly, the Remove master was not likely to let him off, for the noble purpose of butting in at a spread, uninvited, at another school. But Bunter was not going to tell him that. Bunter was no dealer in facts. Quelch would have to be given a good reason—and the fat Owl, as he rolled off to the House, cudgelled his fat brains to invent the good reason.

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THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Bunter Tries It On!

MR. QUELCH sat in his study with a slight frown upon his brow.

He was not, as was often the case on a half-holiday, engaged in correcting a pile of papers for his Form. Neither was he deep in literary work, to which he often devoted his scanty leisure hours.

There was a pile of Latin papers on a corner of the table. On another corner was a heap of manuscript pertaining to Mr. Quelch's celebrated "History of Greyfriars." But he was giving attention to neither.

His attention was fixed on two articles that he held in either hand—two halves of a broken watch-chain.

Hence his frown of annoyance.

Telling "fibs" comes far easier to Billy Bunter than telling the truth. No wonder his school-fellows at Greyfriars nickname him the Ananias of the Remove!

Quelch did not sport a wrist-watch. He was rather old-fashioned in his ways. Quelch had a massive gold ticker that had belonged to his father. To that gold ticker was—or had been—attached an equally massive gold chain.

That gold chain had been valuable from its start in life. Since the huge rise in the price of gold, it had, of course, become much more valuable. But Quelch gave hardly a thought to its value, and cared nothing for the fact that Mr. Lazarus, at Courtfield, would have given twenty or thirty pounds for it.

To Quelch, it was his watch-chain, and it had broken, which was very annoying. No doubt it had seen a lot of service, and lasted well. But watches were made to go; and so, in the long run, were watch-chains. A link had snapped, and that was that!

Quelch had taken it off his watch, and was now examining it with a frowning brow. But if he had hoped that he would be able to secure the snapped link, he was disappointed. The repair required a skilled hand.

That meant taking it down to the jeweller's at Courtfield. That meant a rather long walk for Mr. Quelch, which was impossible at the moment, as he had Latin papers to work through, and then an appointment in the Head's study to keep.

However, on Saturday there would be another half-holiday, when he would be free to take his walks abroad. It would have to be left till then.

Still, it was annoying—and Henry Samuel Quelch did not look in his bonniest mood, when a tap came at his study door, and it opened to reveal a

fat face and a large pair of spectacles.

Quelch's frown was transferred to Billy Bunter.

Bunter had strict injunctions to hand in his lines that afternoon before he ventured out of gates. But there was nothing in the nature of lines in the fat hands of the Owl of the Remove.

He had had plenty of time, since dinner, to write a hundred lines. But laziness, as was usual with Bunter, had supervened. Billy Bunter never did any work till the latest possible moment—and not then, if he could help it.

The expression on his fat face, and the absence of the lines, told Quelch all. The laziest and slackest member of his Form was coming there with an excuse instead of an impot.

Quelch had been frowning at the broken gold chain. His frown intensified as he gave Bunter the benefit of it.

"Well?" he rapped. The monosyllable came like a bullet.

"If—if you please, sir—" stammered Bunter.

"What is it? Be brief!"

"I—I—I haven't done my lines, sir—"

"I can see that!" said Mr. Quelch grimly. "Go and do them at once, Bunter!"

"I—I mean, I've done them, sir—"

"What?"

"Only—only I—I spilled some ink on them, and they—they were spoiled, sir," explained Bunter. "I—I didn't like to bring you a lot of inky lines, sir. But—but as I did them, sir, may I go out—"

"You may go out, Bunter, when you have brought a hundred lines to me, in this study!" said Mr. Quelch in a grinding voice. "But if you have actually written them, and inked them by accident—"

"Oh! Yes, sir!" said Bunter hopefully.

"Then you may bring me the lines as they are!"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "I—I threw them away, sir! I—I couldn't bring them to you with a lot of gum spilt over them—"

"Gum?"

"I—I mean ink!" gasped Bunter.

"You mean ink!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch, in a terrifying voice.

"Yes, sir—smothered all over with ink—so I—I threw them away, and—and I was going to write the lot again, sir, but my father's coming down to Lantham this afternoon, sir, on business, and he wanted me to go over and see him while he was there—"

Billy Bunter paused.

He had a hopeful nature, but he did not draw much encouragement from the expression on Mr. Quelch's face.

It looked, to Bunter, as if Quelch doubted.

Bunter could not see why he should doubt. Smithy's father sometimes came down to Lantham, and if it was on a half-holiday Smithy would cut across and tea at the Pagoda with his respected pater. That, indeed, was what had put the idea into Bunter's head. If Mr. Vernon-Smith could come down to Lantham on business, why not Mr. Bunter?

It seemed reasonable enough to Bunter. It wasn't true, certainly, but that was a mere detail with which Bunter had neither time nor inclination to bother.

Quelch, unfortunately, had!

His gimlet-eyes fixed on Bunter with so penetrating a stare that they seemed to be boring holes in the fat junior.

"If it is a fact that your father is at Lantham this afternoon, Bunter, and desires to see you—"

"Oh, yes, sir; it's a fuf-fuf-fact—"

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"And how," asked Mr. Quelch, with Gorgon-like grimness, "did Mr. Bunter convey this information to you?"

"Eh? He mentioned it in his letter, sir— That seemed an easy one, to Bunter. His letter this morning, sir—"

"You received no letter this morning, Bunter."

"I—I mean yesterday, sir—"

"You received no letter yesterday, Bunter—"

"I—I meant to say Monday, sir—"

"Neither did you receive a letter on Monday, Bunter."

Billy Bunter blinked at his Form-master through his big spectacles. He would have liked, at that moment, to shy something at him!

Correspondence of Remove fellows passed under the inspection of their Form-master. Bunter had rather overlooked the fact that Quelch knew whether a fellow had had a letter or not—if he remembered!

But who would have expected a busy beak to remember such trifles? Not Bunter, at all events!

Bunter hadn't had a letter that week at all, so far. Bunter knew it only too well, for he haunted the letter-rack, in the hope that his celebrated postal order might, at long last, meet his longing eyes. But he really had not expected Quelch to have such a fearfully good memory.

He was quite at a loss, for a moment. Fibs came easily to Bunter; but even Bunter required a moment or two to think of a fresh one.

"Well," said Mr. Quelch, with intensified grimness, "have you any further reckless and absurd untruths to utter, Bunter?"

Bunter would have liked to call him an insulting beast. This was the sort of thing he had had from Quelch before. Quelch never talked to Wharton, or Nugent, or Lord Mauleverer, or Mark Linley, like this—only Bunter! This, Bunter reflected, was the sort of justice a fellow got at school!

"Oh, really, sir!" gasped Bunter. "What I mean is—"

"Well, what do you mean?" Mr. Quelch looked more like a Gorgon than ever.

"I—I—I mean, it—it wasn't exactly a letter for me, sir!" gasped Bunter. "I mean, my brother Sammy had the letter, sir, and he told me. It—it was Sammy's turn to have the letter from home, sir, so—so—"

"Indeed!" said Mr. Quelch.

"Ye-e-s, indeed, sir."

Bunter was hopeful again. If Bunter minor, of the Second Form, had a letter from home—or hadn't—no doubt his Form-master, Twigg, would know; but the Remove master could not possibly know anything about letters for fags in Twigg's Form.

"Very well," said Mr. Quelch, "if Bunter minor bears out your statement, Bunter, I shall accept it. I will send for Bunter minor—"

The Ananias of the Remove quaked. "Shall I go and—fetch him, sir?" he gasped.

"Certainly not!" said Mr. Quelch. "I will ring for Trotter. You may remain here, Bunter."

"Oh lor'!"

"What did you say, Bunter?"

"Oh! Nothing, sir!" groaned Bunter.

With a chance of giving Sammy the tip in advance, there was a possibility that Sammy might have backed him up. But called in and questioned, unaware of what was coming, obviously Sammy wouldn't and couldn't!

"I—I think my minor's gone out, sir!" gasped Bunter.

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"Trotter will ascertain," said Mr. Quelch.

"I—I—I mean, it—it wasn't a letter to Sammy, sir," stammered Bunter. "What I really meant was, that—that my father mentioned it in a letter last week, sir."

Mr. Quelch rose to his feet.

The most trusting Form-master would hardly have believed that. And Quelch hadn't a trusting nature, so far as that particular member of his Form was concerned.

He did not answer Bunter. He opened a drawer in his writing-table, and dropped the broken watch-chain into it, and closed the drawer. Then he picked up his cane.

Bunter watched that proceeding with anguished apprehension.

"In all my career as a schoolmaster," said Mr. Quelch impressively, "I have never come upon a boy so utterly and recklessly untruthful, Bunter."

"Oh, really, sir—"

"You will not leave the House again, Bunter, until you have written your lines, and brought them to this study. And I shall now cane you severely for untruthfulness."

"I—I—I say, sir—"

"Bend over that chair, Bunter!"

Billy Bunter gave him a blink. Then, in the lowest spirits, he bent over the chair.

Quelch's cane went up, and came down.

Whop!

"Ow!" gasped Bunter.

Whop!

"Wow!"

Whop!

"Yow-ow-ow-wow!"

Whop!

"Yaroooh!"

Whop!

"Oh crikey! Yoo-hoop!" roared Bunter.

Whop!

It was a full six.

"Whoop! Yooop! Oh! Wow!"

"You may leave my study, Bunter."

"Yow-ow-ow-ow-ow!"

"And if you do not leave it in silence, Bunter, I shall cane you again!"

"Oh lor'!"

Bunter suppressed the sounds of woe. He wriggled out of the study, and did not yelp again till he reached the end of the passage.

Mr. Quelch sat down to a pile of Latin papers, which kept him busy till the time came to keep his appointment with the Head, and forgot the matter.

Billy Bunter did not forget it so soon. Bunter had six good reasons for remembering.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Trouble at Highcliffe!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! We're early!"

"Fathead!" remarked Johnny Bull.

Five cheery cyclists pedalled up to the gates of Highcliffe School.

At three o'clock the two Fourth Formers of Highcliffe were to be standing outside those gates with their bikes, ready to join up with the Greyfriars party. But a quarter to three was chiming as they arrived—early.

Harry Wharton had timed the run to be on time. But Bob Cherry had put paid to that. Coming through Courtfield the Removites had sighted Solly Lazarus and Willy Wickers, of Courtfield County School, also on bikes. Bob naturally had raced them. That spring afternoon—as on most other

afternoons and mornings—Bob Cherry was bursting with energy.

As Bob raced, of course, his comrades raced, and in a couple of miles they dropped Wickers and Solly behind. Which was satisfactory, but landed them at Highcliffe a quarter of an hour before their friends expected them.

So as they dismounted they saw no sign of Courtenay or Rupert de Courcy anywhere near the gates.

"Better early than late, anyhow," said Bob cheerfully, as he jumped down.

"The early bird saves a stitch in time from going longest to the well," agreed Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"That jolly old moonshoe at Bhanipur, who taught you English, was a whale on proverbs, Inky," he remarked.

"The whalefulness was terrific," assented the Nabob of Bhanipur. "There is preposterous and absurd wisdom in idiotic proverbs, my esteemed Bob."

The Famous Five turned in at the gates. Three fellows were loafing there, with their hands in their pockets, and they turned supercilious glances on the Greyfriars fellows.

Bob bestowed a warlike look at once on Ponsonby, Gadsby, and Monson. Pon, especially, Bob could never see Pon without wanting to punch his nose. In point of fact, he had punched it more than once.

But Wharton gave him a warning look. They were there to see Highcliffe friends—not for a row with Highcliffe enemies.

Bob suppressed his desire to punch Pon's handsome Greek nose. He limited himself to a glare, in return for Ponsonby's supercilious stare.

The chains of Greyfriars intended to leave their machines at the porter's lodge, and walk up to the House. Pon & Co. moved to get in the way, and the Famous Five carefully wheeled round them.

It was like Pon to make himself as unpleasant as he could when the Co. had arrived on a friendly visit. He honoured all five of them with his deep dislike—though he disliked them, perhaps, a little less bitterly than he did Courtenay, the captain of the Highcliffe Fourth. Cecil Ponsonby was rather free and liberal with his dislikes. He disliked many people, and liked none—not even his own knotty pals.

"What do these bargees want here?" asked Ponsonby, addressing Gadsby and Monson, but loud enough for the five to hear.

"Goodness knows!" said Gadsby. "They're the sort of bounders that will butt in anywhere."

"They can't know anybody here," said Monson, shaking his head. "A Highcliffe man would get into a row rather, if it came out that he knew outsiders like that."

Bob Cherry's blue eyes began to blaze; and Johnny Bull set his teeth, with a look on his face rather like that of the "tyke" of his native county.

"Come on!" muttered Harry. "No rags, you fellows! What do those silly asses matter, anyhow?"

Ponsonby & Co., of course, were well aware that the five were friends of his Form captain, and guessed easily enough why they were there. His remarks were not due to ignorance, but to a desire to irritate. On his native heath, so to speak, Pon was not averse to a row, even with such hard hitters as the Famous Five of the Greyfriars Remove. There were a crowd of Highcliffians at hand, and his Form-master,

Mr. Mobbs, could be seen walking in the quad. A row would be awkward for Courtenay—and the amiable Pon liked to make matters as awkward as possible for Courtenay. So he smiled to his friends, and they followed the fellows wheeling the bikes.

Bob had remarked that it was better to be early than late, which was no doubt true; but it was unfortunate, all the same. Their friends were not to be seen, and their enemies were on the spot.

It is said that it takes two to make a quarrel, but it also takes two to keep the peace. With one party resolved on trouble, it was not easy for the other party to steer clear.

"Oh, I know who they are now!"

quite an engaging tone. "The porter can fix you up with hot water an' soap and things. Why not have a wash before you show yourself at the House?"

Harry Wharton breathed hard and deep.

"I mean to say," explained Pon airily, "that we're rather particular about such things at Highcliffe. You'd hardly understand, of course, belongin' to Greyfriars, but take it from me. I'm speakin' wholly on your own account. The fellows will stare, you know, at a lot of dirty kids—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Gadsby and Monson.

They were quite proud of their Pon. His badinage, if not elegant, at least

poops like that on my own, I'd be ashamed to show my face in Yorkshire again."

With which remark Johnny Bull, sturdy and stocky, advanced on the three elegant knuts of Highcliffe, rather like a bulldog on three poms.

"Get out of the way!" he rapped.

Pon & Co., in point of fact, felt their courage fail them a little, now that it looked like punching. But the attention of twenty fellows in the quad had now been drawn to the scene, and some of them were coming up—among them Drury, Merton, and Vavasour, members of Pon's own select circle. And Mr. Mobbs was glancing in their direction. So Pon & Co., not without misgivings, stood their ground.



"You can't pull my leg," said Bunter. "I jolly well know you're going over to Highcliffe to tea. Wait for me while I cut off and ask old Quelch to let me off my lines——" "Will you get out of the doorway?" roared Bob Cherry. The front wheel of his bicycle collided with the fat junior. "Beast!" gasped Bunter as he toppled backwards.

said the cheery Pon. "They belong to Greyfriars. Guess how I know that?"

"How?" asked Gadsby, while Monson grinned.

"They don't wash," explained Pon. "Nobody washes at Greyfriars. You can always tell a Greyfriars man that way."

Gadsby and Monson chuckled as five faces reddened.

"You cheeky fathead!" roared Johnny Bull.

"Shut up, old man!" said Harry hastily.

"I've a jolly good mind——"

"Chuck it!" said Frank Nugent.

"Can't you see that cad is trying to draw us? Give it a miss!"

Johnny Bull expressed his feelings by a snort, but consented to "chuck it." The juniors parked the machines at the porter's lodge, with red faces, and turned to walk away, and found Pon & Co. in their path.

"Excuse me," said Pon politely.

"Are you goin' up to the House?"

"Yes," said Harry curtly.

"Well, look here!" said Pon, in

had the desired effect of "drawing" the Greyfriars fellows.

"Will you let us pass, you cheeky fool?" asked the captain of the Greyfriars Remove, with gleaming eyes. He had counselled peace, but peace was departing from his thoughts, to judge by the look on his face.

"Won't you take a friendly tip?" urged Pon. "There's Mobby, our beak, yonder—you'll have to pass him. What's he goin' to think of fellows who look as if they haven't washed their necks for weeks?"

"Months!" said Gadsby.

"Years!" said Monson.

Johnny Bull pushed back his cuffs. Johnny, like most Yorkshiremen, was patient, up to a certain point; but beyond that point he was not to be argued with.

"Hold on!" Wharton made a last effort.

"Rot!" said Johnny. "Those cheeky cads are after a row, and they won't chuck it unless we make them. You fellows needn't handle them, if you don't want to—if I can't handle three nincom-

Johnny Bull did not repeat his words, neither did he stop. He marched right on—right into Pon & Co.

They shoved him back—and the next moment wished they hadn't. Johnny's right toppled Pon over on one side—his left toppled Monson over on the other. Gadsby jumped back in time.

"Oh!" gasped Pon, as he sat.

"Ooogh!" gurgled Monson, as he sprawled.

"Come on!" said Johnny Bull calmly.

"You dashed ruffian——" gasped Gadsby.

"Hallo! You want one?" asked Johnny, stepping towards him. Gadsby made a backward jump, as actively as a kangaroo.

Ponsonby staggered to his feet. His face was red with rage. So long as it was tongue-warfare Pon had had the best of it; but at the first punch that happy state of affairs came to a sudden end. Superb superciliousness was rather dashed, by being knocked over headlong on the earth. Pon was now neither

superb nor superecilious; he was spluttering with rage.

"Collar those cads!" he yelled.

"Barge those barges out!" shouted Drury, coming up at a run.

"Absolutely!" exclaimed Vavasour.

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Bob. "This looks like a shindy! Stand together!"

For a moment or two it looked like a terrific shindy—all Pon's friends gathering round him, other fellows looking on without interfering. But a bony figure in cap and gown came whisking up, and the shrill voice of Mr. Mobbs, master of the Highcliffe Fourth, was heard.

"What is this? What is this disturbance? Cease this disturbance instantly! Do you hear me? Instantly!"

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Pleasant for Pon!

FRANK COURTENAY, captain of the Highcliffe Fourth, came out of the house, with his pal Do Courcy, otherwise the Caterpillar.

Courtenay looked very cheerful—looking forward to a long spin over hill and dale. The Caterpillar looked as cheerful as he could. The slacker of Highcliffe never said no to his more energetic chum, which was a good thing for him; but his natural taste ran rather to a well-padded armchair than to the saddle of a whizzing bike.

They were about to head for the bicycle house, when the row at the school gates drew their attention.

"Somethin's on, old bean!" drawled the Caterpillar. "There goes Mobbs—whiskin'." The little man seems full of beans!

Courtenay looked across the quad.

"Not our friends," he said. "They're not due yet—"

"I fancy I spot a Greyfriars tile, all the same."

"Oh!" exclaimed Courtenay. He started for the gates at a run, followed at a more leisurely pace by the Caterpillar.

Courtenay covered the ground quickly. He could see now that a bunch of Greyfriars fellows stood in the midst of the Highcliffe crowd. Evidently they had arrived early; and a glimpse of Ponsonby's furious face was enough to tell him how matters lay. He arrived on the scene only a moment or two after Mr. Mobbs.

Mobbs was squeaking emphatically:

"Ponsonby! Gadsby! Stand back at once! I forbid you—do you hear, I forbid you—to enter into a disgraceful scuffle with these—these persons!"

"Oh, don't worry, sir!" said Johnny Bull sarcastically. "Pon isn't in a hurry for the punching to begin!"

"What—what? Silence!" exclaimed Mr. Mobbs. "Ponsonby, stand back—I will not allow you to enter into conflict with that young ruffian!"

No earthly inducement would have caused Pon to enter into conflict with Johnny Bull if he could possibly have helped it. Really, he did not need restraining. Even with a crowd to help, he was not fearfully keen on it. Now that Mr. Mobbs was on the scene, he preferred to leave it in that gentleman's bony hands. Mr. Mobbs was not likely to fail to give support to the relative of a marquis and an earl.

"I've been knocked over, sir—" said Pon.

"I quite understand your feelings, Ponsonby—quite—but you must restrain them!" said Mr. Mobbs. "I cannot

permit you to chastise this boy yourself!"

"Oh, let him get on with it, Mr. Mobbs!" said Johnny Bull. "His face would be worth a guinea a box afterwards!"

"Silence! I repeat—silence!"

"Cheese it, Johnny, old man!" murmured Bob Cherry.

Grunt from Johnny. But he "cheesed" it.

"What are you boys doing here?" demanded Mr. Mobbs. "You are, I think, Greyfriars boys. Your own headmaster, as well as Dr. Voysey, would be very much annoyed by your coming here to cause a disturbance. You—"

"It was nothing of the sort, sir!" said Harry Wharton, speaking as respectfully as he could. "We came to call on some friends here—"

"Nonsense! The moment you enter these gates there is a disgraceful disturbance!" exclaimed Mr. Mobbs. "I myself saw one of you strike Ponsonby, and—"

"These fellows are friends of mine, Mr. Mobbs!" said Courtenay, coming up a little breathless. "We're going out on the bikes this afternoon. They have called for me."

Mr. Mobbs gave him a sharp look.

"Your friends, if friends they are, should not come here unless they can behave themselves!" he snapped.

"I've not the slightest doubt that Ponsonby started the trouble, sir," answered Courtenay.

"What—what? You cannot possibly know anything about the matter, Courtenay, as you were nowhere near the spot!" exclaimed Mr. Mobbs. "These Greyfriars boys will go away at once! If there is any further disturbance, I shall lay a complaint before Dr. Locke, at Greyfriars."

"We never wanted any trouble, sir!" said Ponsonby. "But if fellows come bargin' in, pushin' a fellow over—"

"Quite so, Ponsonby! I shall see that they leave the school premises at once! Please stand back—I will not permit any violence! I understand your indignation, Ponsonby, but I can permit nothing of the kind. Wharton—I think your name is Wharton—go away at once and take your friends with you!"

It was scarcely possible to up-end a Form-master, and sit him down in the quad, or Mr. Mobbs would have been in danger of the same at that moment. The Famous Five were crimson with anger and annoyance. Ponsonby had fairly baited them into a shindy, asking for it and refusing to take no for an answer; but Mr. Mobbs, without the slightest inquiry, backed up his dear favourite Pon, and assumed that they were to blame.

Courtenay, still more discomfited and annoyed than the Greyfriars fellows, gave them an apologetic glance.


"I'm awfully sorry for this, you men," he said. "Of course, I know how it is. We'll get the bikes and join you in the road."

"Right-ho!" assented Harry Wharton.

"What—what?" shrilled Mr. Mobbs. "What do I hear you say, Courtenay? Can it really be your intention to join those Greyfriars boys outside the school, after they have created this disturbance, and even assaulted one of your Form-fellows! You will do nothing of the kind, Courtenay. Neither will De Courcy—I forbid it!"

The Famous Five, exchanging grim glances, collected their bikes and wheeled them out.


They could not intervene between Courtenay and his Form-master. Up-ending Mr. Mobbs would have been satisfactory, but would only not



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have poured oil on the troubled waters.

Ponsonby—his face turned away from Mr. Mobbs—gave them a mocking grin as they went—and Gadsby laughed.

Johnny Bull paused for a moment—but Bob grabbed his arm, and the five went out of the gateway together.

Courtenay stood looking at Mr. Mobbs. His face was almost pale with anger. The Caterpillar, lounging up, gave him a whimsical grin.

"Floored, old man!" he murmured. "Keep it parked!"

He touched Courtenay on the arm. He could see the burst of anger and indignation coming; and he was a little anxious for his chum.

Mr. Mobbs raised his bony hand.

"Courtenay! Go back to the House! You will keep within gates—you hear me?"

"You have no right—" broke out the captain of the Highcliffe Fourth, his eyes flashing.

Pon & Co. exchanged almost blissful looks. This was really more than they could have hoped or expected. If the captain of the Fourth was exasperated into defiance of his Form-master, it meant serious trouble for him—to the extent of going to the Head! And Courtenay, generally quiet, reserved, self-controlled, was in a blaze of indignation now. They watched him eagerly.

"No right!" Mr. Mobbs almost stuttered. "Courtenay, how dare you—I repeat, how dare you use such words to your Form-master? What do you mean, Courtenay?"

"Old bean—" breathed the Caterpillar, pressing his chum's arm. But Courtenay did not heed. His eyes flashed contempt at Mr. Mobbs.

"You know what I mean, sir!" he exclaimed. "You know as well as I do that the Greyfriars fellows were not to blame, and that Ponsonby forced a row on them, like the cad and cur he is—"

"Oh gad!" breathed the Caterpillar.

The thickening Highcliffe crowd stared, and some of them grinned. This was unaccustomed language for a Form-master's ears. Nobody respected Mr. Mobbs, who was called Snobby Mobby even by the fellows to whom he toadied. Still, he was a beak.

His thin, meagre face reddened with anger. Mobbs, perhaps, did not quite realise that Courtenay's words were true. He was so accustomed to backing up his favourite, Ponsonby, that he did so as a matter of course; and, like many others, he had a way of not seeing what he did not want to see.

"Silence!" gasped Mr. Mobbs. "Courtenay, another word of insolence, and I will report you to Dr. Voysey. Go back to the House! Go into the Form-room, and write five hundred lines of Virgil! Not a word! Go!"

Courtenay did not move. But his chum, wiser than he at that moment, dragged him away almost by main force. And Courtenay, after resisting that pull for a moment or two, realised that the Caterpillar was right, and went quietly.

Mr. Mobbs, puffing with angry annoyance, stood in the gateway, perhaps to make sure that his commands were obeyed. Courtenay and De Courcy disappeared into the House.

Pon & Co., grinning, strolled in the quad.

"I rather think," remarked Pon, "that we score this time! What?"

And his knotty pals agreed, with many chuckles, that they did!

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Billy Bunter Knows How!

BILLY BUNTER yelped.

"Yow! Ow-ow! Wow!"

The fat Owl had gone to his study, Study No. 7 in the Remove. He had his hundred lines to write before he could get out, lest worse should befall him. He sat down at the study table—yelped, and jumped up again. "Six" from Quelch made him unwilling to sit down.

"Ow! Beast!" moaned Bunter.

He did not sit down to do the lines. He roamed about the study, yelping, his fat brow corrugated by a ferocious frown.

Like most plump people, Bunter was generally good-tempered. He had his faults—indeed, their name was legion!—but irate temper was not one of them.

Now, however, Bunter was in an extremely bad temper—the worst ever.

Quelch was not only a beast, but an awful, fearful beast—the very last word in frightful, unjust beasts!

In the first place, Bunter had had his lines for nothing—in his own opinion, at least! His "con" that morning in the Form-room had been bad—but no worse, so far as Bunter could see, than usual. Quelch had been unreasonably annoyed when he translated "arma virumque cano" into "the armed man and the dog." The Removites had grinned; but Quelch had not grinned—he had given Bunter a hundred lines.

And now Quelch had not only refused to take his word—a most ungentlemanly thing—but had whopped him for untruthfulness.

And he was kept in, and those beasts, Harry Wharton & Co., were only too glad to leave him behind, after all he had done for them!

He had one comfort. They had started unaccountably early for tea at Highcliffe. Bunter had lots of time to get there by tea-time, even if he stayed in to write his lines.

That was the only ray of light on a gloomy horizon.

"Beast!" groaned Bunter. "Beast! Ow! Wow! Beast!"

He set to work at last.

Lines travelled slowly from his pen with an accompaniment of blots and smears. His feelings were bitter. Lines for nothing, a whopping for nothing, sticking in the study while everybody else was out of doors—it was enough to make any fellow feel bitter. And a fellow couldn't get his own back on a beak, that was the worst of it!

Bunter would have liked to make Quelch sit up. He would have liked to fill his inkpot with gum, to swamp a bottle of ink into his armchair, to stick his manuscripts into the wastepaper-basket in small sections. But these things, delightful to contemplate, were dangerous—much too dangerous for Bunter!

Revenge is said to be sweet; but Billy Bunter did not want another whopping. That unspeakable beast, Quelch, could not be punished—it was altogether too risky.

Slowly, slowly the lines reeled off, Bunter grunting and groaning as they scrawled and sprawled over the paper.

Eager as he was to get finished and get away, the fat Owl could not quite overcome his habitual laziness. Moreover, he was feeling painful twinges from Quelch's cane.

It was past four o'clock when Bunter wrote the last line, and the dismal inkpot was done. Only the dread of being late for tea at Highcliffe caused him to get finished, even by then.

But it was done at last, and Billy

Bunter gathered up his lines and rolled out of Study No. 7.

He rolled down to Masters' Studies and tapped at Mr. Quelch's door.

There was no answer from within, and he opened the door.

Quelch was not there.

Mr. Quelch had long since gone to the Head. But his absence made no difference to Bunter. If a master was absent when a fellow brought in lines, the lines had to be left on his table to meet his eyes when he returned.

Bunter gave a grunt and rolled into the study.

He deposited his lines on Mr. Quelch's table. Now he was free to go—but he did not go immediately.

He shut the door and blinked round the study. His little round eyes gleamed through his big round spectacles.

This was a chance to make Quelch "sit up" if his fat nerve was equal to the occasion.

A heap of manuscripts lay on the table. Suppose the inkpot was knocked over them? That would make Quelch sit up—he was known to be very particular about his manuscripts, for what reason, Bunter did not know.

He stretched a fat hand out to the inkpot. But he withdrew it again. A sharp twinge reminded him of the whopping.

"Beast!" murmured Bunter.

The chance, really, was too good to be lost. Only, the prospect of another whopping stood like a lion in the path.

Suddenly Bunter grinned.

An idea had flashed into his fat brain—an idea that was worthy of that podgy intellect.

He remembered having seen Quelch drop the broken watch-chain into a drawer of his writing-table. No doubt he was going to take it to be mended some time or other. Suppose it was missing when he went for it?

That would make him sit up!

Billy Bunter chuckled—a fat chuckle.

Inking the papers or gumming the armchair would not do; Quelch would guess at once who had done that, for he would discover it immediately.

But it might be days before he looked for the watch-chain.

He could not use it, in its present disconnected state. He would not look for it until he was going to take it to the jeweller's.

That certainly would not be to-day. The lapse of twenty-four hours would be enough to see Bunter clear. In that space of time, a dozen fellows would have been in and out of the study. And it might be longer than that—and the longer the interval, the safer for Bunter.

"He, he, he!" chuckled the fat Owl.

Quelch would miss that chain—he would hunt for it—he would kick up a row, knowing that some fellow had been larking in his study. But he would not know that that fellow was Bunter, so that was all right.

Bunter was going to hide it somewhere—where it would turn up, after a long search—after Quelch had been made thoroughly wild.

He might stick it in Quelch's desk, in the Form-room—or inside a newspaper, in Common-room—or in a prefect's hat, in the Sixth Form lobby!

He chuckled at the idea.

Having decided on that remarkable scheme for handing out to Quelch what he so richly deserved, Billy Bunter pulled open the drawer into which Quelch had dropped the watch-chain.

He blinked into that drawer. The gold chain was not to be seen. Several papers met his blink. He realised that Quelch had dropped papers in that

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drawer, and that they hid the watch-chain from sight.

This was all the better for Bunter's little scheme, for it meant that if the drawer happened to be opened, the chain would not be missed at a casual glance. It would not be missed till Quelch sorted through the drawer for it. Really, things seemed to be going Bunter's way.

He turned over the papers, and a gleam of gold rewarded him. There lay the broken chain, in two pieces.

One piece was very short—it had broken near the end. The other piece was long—nearly the whole of the chain.

Bunter grabbed the long section. The small section he left where it was. He did not want both for his purpose.

He shut the drawer again, and slipped the chain into his pocket. Grinning, he rolled out of Mr. Quelch's study.

That that gold chain was very valuable hardly occurred to Bunter's fat brain. If he had thought about it, he would have supposed that it was worth a few pounds. But he did not think about that at all.

Neither did it occur to him that a fellow who took possession of an article of value was in danger of being suspected of theft.

Bunter, of course, had not the remotest idea of keeping the gold chain. He would have been horrified at the idea.

He was going to hide it for a jape on Quelch. That was all. It did not occur to him for a moment what would have been thought of his action, had he been caught leaving the study with the gold chain in his pocket. Billy Bunter was not the only fathead at Greyfriars, but, undoubtedly, he was the only fellow there fatheaded enough to play practical jokes with valuables.

Quite satisfied with himself and his proceedings, the Owl of the Remove rolled away, grinning.

Quelch was going to sit up! Serve him jolly well right!

He was going to hide that chain somewhere about the House, to reward Quelch after a long search. But there was no hurry for that—the hurry was to get over to Highcliffe in time for tea. Parking that chain somewhere could wait till he got back.

Grinning, he rolled out of the House. Vernon-Smith and Redwing were coming in as he went out, and they both glanced at him.

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

Billy Bunter chortled.

"Oh, nothing!" he answered. "He, he, he! Don't you ask any questions, Smithy, and I won't tell you any lies. I may be going to make old Quelch sit up—and I may not! He, he, he!"

"You howling ass!" said Redwing. "Have you been playing tricks on Quelch?"

"Oh, no; nothing of the kind!" said Bunter hastily. "I haven't been to his study at all. Besides, I had to go there to take my lines!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"I just popped in and popped out again," explained Bunter astutely. "I wasn't there long enough to do anything. If Quelch misses anything, I don't know anything about it. How could I?"

And Bunter rolled on, happily satisfied that he had pulled the wool over the eyes of those two juniors—leaving Redwing staring and the Bounder grinning.

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THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

A Punching in Prospect!

PONSONBY threw a half-smoked cigarette into the study grate, yawned, and rose to his feet.

"Let's get out!" he said.

There were four of them in Pon's handsome and elegantly furnished study at Highcliffe—Pon and Gadsby, Monson and Vavasour. For an hour or more they had been playing bridge—without even taking the precaution to lock the study door.

Highcliffe was a slack school—and the prefects of the Sixth were as slack as the rest. And Mr. Mobbs never paid Pon's quarters a surprise visit. Perhaps he trusted the excellent Pon—or perhaps he was afraid that he might make some discovery there, of which he would be forced to take notice.

But Pon had tired of bridge now—perhaps because he had had rather bad luck. Monson, who had had better luck, was not so tired of it, and he grunted.

Certainly any fellow might have been glad to get out, on a fine spring afternoon, from an atmosphere heavy with cigarette-smoke. Anyhow, Pon was going out.

"Trot before tea—what?" he suggested. "Might squint into the Form-room and see how dear old Courtenay is gettin' on. He's got enough to keep him busy for quite a long time. I believe the Caterpillar's stickin' in with him."

"Silly ass!" commented Gadsby.

"Well, comin' out?" asked Pon, going to the door.

"Too much fag, absolutely!" yawned Vavasour.

He moved away from the table, and dropped into an armchair.

"I'm not comin'!" grunted Monson sulkily.

"All right—come on, Gaddy!"

Ponsonby and Gaddy walked out, and went down into the quad. They strolled past the Form-room windows.

The window of the Fourth Form Room was wide open, and the elegant figure of the Caterpillar could be seen there.

De Courcy, as Pon said, was "stickin'" in with his chum. Possibly lounging about idly appealed more to the Caterpillar than covering long miles on a bike and he was not wholly sorry to cut out the spin, so far as that went.

Pon and Gaddy stopped at the windows and looked in, with smiling faces.

The Caterpillar glanced at them tolerantly. The fact that he despised the knuts of the Highcliffe Fourth did not make De Courcy any the less tolerant. But the junior seated at his desk in the Form-room gave them a grim look.

Courtenay's face was very dark.

He had a pacific nature; and, though he had in Ponsonby a bitter and unrelenting enemy, and both despised and disliked him, he generally contrived to avoid trouble with him.

But what had happened that afternoon had been too much for him to bear with patience. Mr. Mobbs' bitter tongue did not worry him very much, neither did the undeserved detention and a heavy imposition. But Pon's line of action towards the Greyfriars visitors roused his deepest anger.

It was so unusual to see a black look on his face that Ponsonby started a little as he saw it, and stared. Then he grinned.

"Gettin' on with the jolly old inpot, old bean?" he asked, through the open window.

Courtenay did not answer him, or give him a second glance. He dropped his

eyes to his work again. Five hundred lines was a heavy task, and he had plenty to do to get through before tea.

"Rather rough, Mobby comin' down on you like that—what?" smiled Pon. "But, dash it all, you checked the little man!"

"Travel, old bird!" murmured the Caterpillar. "You're worryin' us!"

"Come out for a stroll, Caterpillar!" said Gadsby.

"Thanks no end, but I'm rather particular about the company I keep, if you don't mind my mentionin' it, Gaddy!" answered the Caterpillar urbanely.

"Oh, go an' eat coke!" yapped Gaddy.

"Any message for the Greyfriars cads, if we happen to drop on them?" grinned Ponsonby. "They'll hardly be comin' here again."

Receiving no reply, Ponsonby sauntered away with Gadsby.

Courtenay's bent brow grew darker, and the Caterpillar gave him a half-comical look.

"Like me to cut after those sportsmen and knock their nappers together, old thing?" he asked. "Fearful fag; but I'd take the trouble to restore the smile to that frownin' countenance!"

"Oh, don't be an ass!" muttered Courtenay.

De Courcy raised his eyebrows. Then he grinned. Seldom or never did his chum make a tart answer.

"Go it!" said the Caterpillar. "If it relieves your feelin's to slang an old pal, don't mind me! I offer myself as a giddy victim on the altar of friendship."

Courtenay coloured.

"Sorry, old man!" he said. "I say, it's rotten for you to stick in here! You're throwing away your half-holiday!"

"Want me to go and punch Pon?"

"No!" Courtenay's eyes gleamed under his knitted brows. "I'll look after that myself a little later."

"Oh!" The Caterpillar whistled. "You haven't punched Pon this term, old man, though he's begged for it a dozen times at least. Goin' to begin?"

"You know what he's done! I don't care about the cad getting me into a row with Mobbs—he's done that before, and I despise the pair of them too much to care a straw, I hope—"

"Nice hearin' for Mobby, if he heard that!" murmured the Caterpillar.

"But kicking up that row with the Greyfriars fellows—getting them practically turned out of the place, when they came here on a friendly visit—" The captain of the Highcliffe Fourth breathed hard. "Mobby doesn't like them, and he was glad of the chance; but it was all Ponsonby's doing! Ever since I've known Wharton and his friends, he's tried to butt in and make trouble, and he would be glad to bar them off from ever dropping in at Highcliffe at all, if he could!"

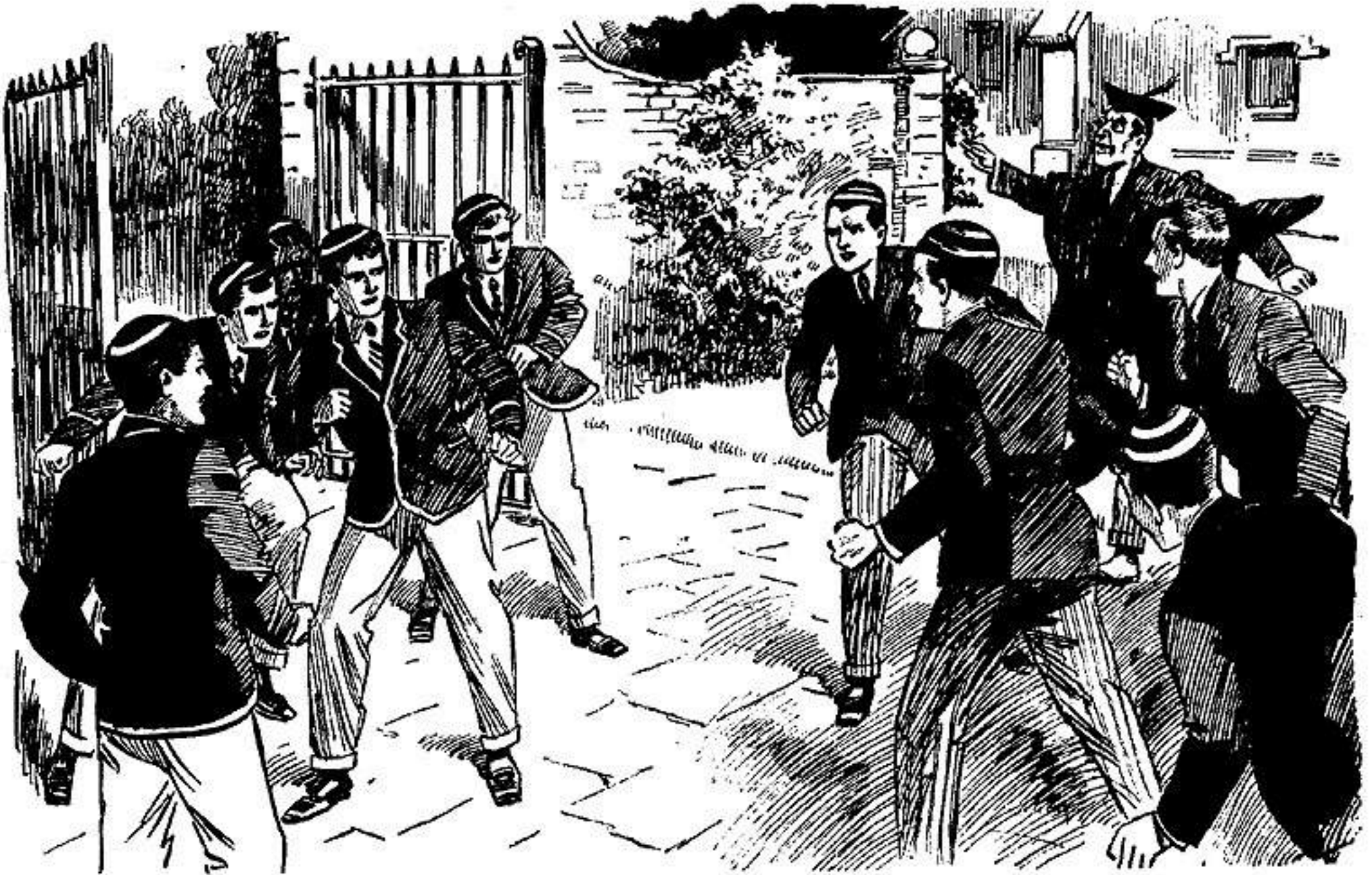
"I know, old chap. But he's tried that game before—"

"This time he's got away with it! They can hardly come again, for a time, at least, after what happened to-day—even if they care to—and I can't expect them to face that kind of thing." Courtenay set his lips. "Do you think I'm going to let the cur get away with it and leave it at that?"

The Caterpillar grinned.

"You're such a good-tempered old horse, dear boy, that I did think so—and I fancy Pon thinks the same," he remarked.

"He will find out his mistake, then!" Courtenay resumed Latin lines. The Caterpillar, lounging at the window, grinned cheerily, as he watched



"Greyfriars cads!" yelled Ponsonby. "Collar them!" "Barge the bargees out!" shouted Drury. "Oh, my hat!" murmured Bob Cherry. "This looks like a shindy! Stand together!" The Highcliffe juniors were about to make a rush when a bony figure in cap and gown came whisking up. "What is this? What is this disturbance?" It was the shrill voice of Mr. Mobbs, master of the Highcliffe Fourth.

Ponsonby and Gadsby go out at the gates. Then he winked at the pigeons in the quad. His chum's peaceful and placable temper had failed, for once; and there was trouble in store for the cad of Highcliffe. It was rather an entertaining prospect to the Caterpillar.

Probably it would not have entertained Pon if he had known. But Ponsonby was enjoying his triumph just now, and he walked out at the gates with Gadsby in cheery spirits. He had spoken, at the Form-room window, of dropping on the Greyfriars fellows; but had there been any likelihood of falling in with the Famous Five, Pon would not have been taking that walk at all. He had given Harry Wharton & Co. ample time to clear off.

He was far from expecting to see any Greyfriars fellow on the Highcliffe side of the town of Courtfield.

But it was the unexpected that happened.

As the two Highcliffians walked down the road towards the town, a fat figure came rolling up from the direction of Courtfield.

The spring sunshine was reflected on a big pair of spectacles as he came.

Ponsonby glanced at him, and grinned.

"Seen that animal before, Gaddy?" he asked.

"It's Bunter," said Gaddy.

"Looks as if he's comin' to Highcliffe?"

"Oh gad! Did Courtenay ask that fat boulder, as well as the other crew?" grunted Gadsby.

"If he did, it would have been a bit safer for Bunter to come with the other cads!" remarked Ponsonby. "I shouldn't wonder if somethin' happens to that fat animal before he sees Greyfriars again."

Gadsby grinned.

"Come on!" he said.

And they bore down on Billy Bunter.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

A Highcliffe Rag!

BILLY BUNTER was tired.

He was cross.

It was not Bunter's lucky day. Free, at long last, to start for Highcliffe, the fat junior rolled down to the bike-shed for Peter Todd's bike. His own was not a going concern—but Todd's was; Peter always looked after his bike carefully.

But it transpired that Todd's bike was not only a going concern—it was a gone concern! Peter had gone out that afternoon—Bunter knew that. But Peter had gone on his bike, which Bunter had not known.

"Beast!" Bunter remarked to the empty stand.

A fellow who went out on his bike, when Bunter might happen to want to borrow it, was, of course, a beast.

There were other bikes available—but Bunter hesitated. As Todd was his study mate in Study No. 7, he considered that he had a claim on Todd's jigger. Even Bunter could not suppose that he had a claim on the others.

It was useless to ask a fellow to lend him one. His treatment of a borrowed bike was a little too well known in the Remove. Bunter had even been known to leave a borrowed bike out of gates!

Still, he had to have a bike. Smithy's expensive jigger he dared not touch, though he would have preferred it. He decided on Ogilvy's. Ogilvy of the Remove was a good-tempered chap, and Bunter hoped that his good temper would stand the test.

But it was not to be! Wheeling Ogilvy's bike out, he almost ran into Ogilvy and Russell coming for their machines.

It proved that Robert Donald Ogilvy's good temper did not stand the test. He developed a sudden attack of bad temper!

Not only did he jerk that jigger away from Bunter, but he kicked Bunter once, twice, thrice, and would have gone on kicking him, had not the fat Owl fled and escaped the avenging boot.

The vicinity of the bike-shed lost its attraction for Bunter. He started on foot. Catching the motor-bus from Redclyffe, at the corner of Courtfield Common, he expended fourpence on a lift past the town and was only a quarter of a mile short of Highcliffe when he left the bus.

Even Bunter could walk a quarter of a mile—with the prospect of a spread at the end. He plugged on—tired, cross, and feeling that it was pretty rotten for a decent chap to have to live almost entirely among beasts.

However, the ancient red roofs of Highcliffe School were in sight; and he had, as yet, no doubt that the Famous Five were there, and that at tea-time there was going to be a gorgeous spread in the Caterpillar's study.

Bunter's vision was limited, even with the aid of his big spectacles, and he did not recognise the two elegant saunterers who came down the road towards him as he neared Highcliffe.

But when they quickened their pace, and bore down on him, the fat Owl recognised Ponsonby and Gadsby and blinked at them uneasily.

Courtenay and the Caterpillar and their friends were friendly with Harry Wharton & Co.; but Pon and his set were on the worst of terms with them.

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and with most Greyfriars fellows. Pon was rather pally with Skinner of the Remove, and sometimes with the Bounder; but Greyfriars generally he honoured with his dislike and lofty scorn. A fellow like Bunter, who could not protect himself, was in danger of a ragging if he fell in with Pon & Co., with no one else at hand.

"I—I say, you fellows—" stammered Bunter, as the two came up, grinning.

"Fancy meetin' you," said Ponsonby affably. "Goin' to Highcliffe?"

"Yes, old chap!" gasped Bunter. "My—my friends are there, you know."

"We'll walk with you, then—if you like our company, of course," added Ponsonby.

"Oh! Yes! Rather!" gasped Bunter.

He would have preferred to see Pon and Gaddy walk on. Still, he was glad to see Pon so friendly.

As for Gadsby, he stared at his great leader. He had supposed that Pon intended a rag, as it was perfectly safe to rag a fat and helpless fellow like Bunter. So he was surprised and annoyed.

"Look here, Pon, don't be a goat!" grunted Gadsby. "I'm not walkin' with that fat freak, if you are."

"Oh, really, Gadsby—"

"Shut up, Gaddy!" said Pon. "Where are your manners? We're takin' Bunter into the school—some of the fellows might rag him if they spotted him—we're goin' to see him safe."

"Eh?" ejaculated the astonished Gaddy.

"Come on, Bunter, old top," said Ponsonby. "We'll take the short cut across the paddock and get in by the old courts."

"Oh!" said Gadsby. "All right!" He understood now.

The playful Pon was going to rag Bunter, but he preferred to get him off the high road for that playful purpose. In the paddock there were no eyes to see, and no ears to hear.

"Come on, old fellow," said Ponsonby in his politest and most gracious tone. Trickery came as easily as breathing to Pon.

Much relieved, the fat Owl rolled on between the two smiling Highcliffians. They passed through a gap in a fence and entered the paddock, shaded by trees, that adjoined the part of Highcliffe School called the "old courts." The fence was high, and once away from the gap Pon could not have desired a more unnoticed spot for his amiable purpose.

He slowed down, grinning at Gadsby over Bunter's fat head.

"Did you say you expected to see your friends at Highcliffe, Bunter?" asked Ponsonby.

"Yes, old chap—Wharton and his lot!" said Bunter. "They've gone over to tea with Courtenay. I'm rather late, owing to lines from Quelch. Of course, they're expecting me."

"I'm afraid you won't see them, old bean," said Ponsonby. "You see, they kicked up a row—the sort of thing one might expect from Greyfriars cads—and Mobby turned them out."

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

"Courtenay's got into rather a row with Mobby, for knowin' such rank outsiders," went on Pon. "He objects to hooligans of that sort comin' over to Highcliffe. So do we, don't we, Gaddy?"

"We do—rather!" agreed Gaddy.

"And we object still more to a fat, frowsy freak like you, old fat barrel,"

went on Pon, in the same agreeable tone. "Don't we, Gaddy?"

"Ha, ha! Yes!"

"Oh, really, Pon—"

Billy Bunter came to a halt. He blinked at Pon on one side, and at Gaddy on the other. They were grinning, but their grins were not reassuring. The Owl of the Remove was alarmed—with cause.

"I—I say, you fellows—" he stammered. It dawned on his fat brain now that he had been led into that quiet spot to be ragged.

Ponsonby jerked the cap off his head. "Want this?" he asked.

"Eh? My cap! Yes, I say—"

"Climb for it, then," suggested Ponsonby. He tossed the cap into the high branches of an oak, where it lodged—far beyond any climbing powers possessed by William George Bunter.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter, blinking after it in dismay. "Oh, you beast!"

As he glared at Pon, Gadsby kicked. He gave a yelp, and spun round towards Gadsby, and Pon kicked. Bunter yelled, and the two Highcliffians chortled.

"Owl! You rotters!" howled Bunter. "Oh, you cads! Owl! Owl! You wouldn't dare touch a chap if Bob Cherry was here! Owl!"

That remark was too true to be agreeable. It brought a bitter and malicious look to Ponsonby's grinning face.

"You cheeky little fat freak!" he said. "Askin' for it—what?"

And he made a sudden snatch at Bunter's fat little nose; gripped it between finger and thumb, and pulled.

There was a spluttering yell of agony from Bunter.

"Oooooogh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Gadsby.

"Ooogh! Led go by dose!" spluttered Bunter. "Ooogh! Led go! Wooogh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter wriggled with pain. The grip on his fat nose was like the clutch of a steel vice. In sheer desperation the fat Owl clenched a fat fist, and hit out at Ponsonby.

Pon had not expected resistance from the hapless Owl. That sudden jolt took him by surprise, landing on his handsome Greek nose from which it drew a spurt of red.

Ponsonby gave a yell of rage and pain, and released Bunter. The instant he was released Billy Bunter took to his heels.

He fairly flew, to get back to the road.

"After him!" raved Ponsonby.

They rushed in pursuit. Terror lent Bunter wings as he heard the rush of footsteps behind him. But he had no chance in the race. And he was still a dozen yards from the gap in the fence, when two pairs of hands grasped him, and rolled him over on the ground.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Whose Property?

PONSONBY dabbed his damaged nose with his handkerchief, which came away spotted with crimson.

That punch, with Bunter's weight behind it, had done damage. Pon's nose was handsome in its natural state. Now red and swelling, it did not look handsome, and felt extremely painful. Pon, who was very particular about his looks, gritted his teeth with rage as he felt over his damaged nose.

Bunter sprawled in the grass and roared.

He made an effort to scramble up, only to receive a kick from Gadsby, and roll over again.

"I—I—I'll slaughter the fat freak!" gasped Ponsonby. "Look at my nose!"

Gadsby looked at it, and grinned.

"Looks rather a peach," he remarked. "Fancy that fat worm havin' the cheek to punch a Highcliffe man!"

"I'll make him sorry for it!" hissed Ponsonby.

"Owl! Keep off, you beasts!" roared Bunter. "Owl! Help! Rescue, Greyfriars!" He yelled frantically, in the hope of being heard on the road.

But there was no help or rescue for the hapless Owl of the Remove. The two Highcliffians grasped him, bumped him on the earth, rolled him in a puddle, smacked his head, and pulled his ears.

Bunter struggled desperately in the hands of the Philistines. But his struggles were of no use. He was no match for one of them; and the two of them handled him together.

In a flustered, fluttered, confused and breathless state, hardly knowing whether he was on his head or his heels, the fat Owl rolled and roared.

All sorts of articles tumbled out of his pockets.

A handkerchief, long in need of washing, a chunk of toffee sticking to a stump of pencil, a penknife with broken blades, with an ancient bullseye adhering to it, were strewn in the grass, along with half a dozen coppers that represented all Bunter's worldly wealth. And among the other things, a length of gold chain clinked out.

The gleam of gold in the sunshine caught the eyes of Pon and Gaddy, though Bunter was too breathlessly confused to see anything.

"What the deuce—" exclaimed Ponsonby.

He let go the fat Owl, and picked up the gold chain. Gadsby, in his turn, let go the spluttering Owl, and stared at it.

"That's gold!" said Gadsby, in astonishment.

"Great pip! That fat ass must have pinched it!" said Ponsonby, in sheer wonder.

Obviously it was not a schoolboy's watch-chain. Moreover, it was broken off at the end, and could not have been attached to a watch.

And Ponsonby could see at a glance what Bunter had not thought of—that it was worth a considerable sum.

Bunter, left to himself, sat up and roared.

"Owl! Beasts! Wow! Lemme alone! Owl!"

Then, as he set his spectacles straight on his fat little nose, he spotted the gold chain in Ponsonby's hand.

"Here, gimme that!" gasped Bunter. He scrambled to his feet.

Up to that moment he had forgotten Quelch's gold chain in his pocket, having much more urgent matters on his mind. Now, seeing it in Ponsonby's hands, he remembered it, and jumped at it in alarm.

Ponsonby held it high in the air, out of reach.

"Where did you pinch that, Bunter?" he grinned.

"You beast! I never pinched it!" gasped Bunter. "Give it to me, you rotter!"

"Make out that it's yours?" sneered Ponsonby.

"Dirty little thief!" said Gadsby contemptuously.

Both the Highcliffians knew, as a matter of course, that that gold chain

could not belong to Bunter. Even in the unlikely event of a schoolboy being the owner of a massive, old-fashioned gold watch-chain, he was not likely to carry such an article about loose in his jacket pocket.

As it could not possibly be Bunter's, neither Pon nor Gadsby doubted for a moment that he had "pinched" it. They were not the kind of fellows to judge charitably. And, really, it was difficult to see how, otherwise, Bunter had come into possession of it.

The fat Owl crimsoned with rage.

"You—you—you beast!" gasped Bunter. "It's—it's mine!"

"Is it?" jeered Ponsonby. He rubbed his damaged nose and grinned—not a pleasant grin. "Well, if it's yours, you'll be able to prove ownership. I'll take it to the police station."

"Oh crikey! I—I mean, it's my Form-master's!" gasped Bunter.

"Not much difference," chuckled Gadsby.

"That sounds more like it," agreed Ponsonby. "The sort of thing that old goat might have. You stole it from Quelch?"

"No!" shrieked Bunter.

"Did he give it to you for a birthday present?" chortled Gadsby.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I—I—I—It's no business of yours!" gasped Bunter. "Gimme that chain! I—I—I took it for a lark!"

"Some lark!" chuckled Gadsby. "Fellows get six months' hard for that sort of lark."

"You—you beast!" gasped Bunter.

He blinked at the two Highcliffians in horror. What they believed was perfectly clear. It dawned on Bunter what it looked like.

He realised, with terror, that Quelch might think the very same thing, if he found that the fat Owl had taken that gold chain from his study.

"I never pinched it!" howled Bunter. "I took it for a lark! I say, give it to me, and I'll put it back the minute I get back to the school."

"You won't have the chance, you fat pickpocket!"

"I took it for a jape on Quelch, I tell you!" spluttered Bunter. "I was going to hide it, and make him hunt for it, that's all."

Ponsonby laughed.

In desperation, Billy Bunter made a frantic clutch at the chain.

Ponsonby held it over his head, and with his left hand pushed the fat Owl back, toppling him over.

Bunter sat down with a bump.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter. "I—I—I say, give me that chain! Oh lor! I wish I'd never touched it now! Oh dear!"

"Thieves often wish they hadn't, when they get copped!" grinned Gadsby.

"You—you rotter!" panted Bunter. "I dare say you're the sort to pinch things, but I ain't!"

"What?" howled Gadsby.

"You may have thieves at Highcliffe—I dare say you have!" howled Bunter. "We're not that sort at Greyfriars, you beast!"

Pon and Gaddy stared at him. The fat Owl was crimson and spluttering with indignation and rage. Bunter was ruthless where tuck was concerned—nobody's tarts or cakes were safe near Bunter. But even the fat Owl of the Remove was not obtuse enough to forget the difference between "meum" and "tuum" when it came to articles of value.

"I say, you fellows, lemme have it back!" gasped Bunter. "I tell you I was only going to hide it. But if Quelch doesn't find it, when he misses

it, he will think it's pinched very likely, same as you fellows did. I—I never thought of that, of course. Oh dear!"

Ponsonby, grinning, slipped the gold chain into his pocket.

Whether Bunter actually had stolen it, or whether he could possibly be so incredibly stupid as to have taken it for a practical joke, Pon could hardly make up his mind. In either case, Pon was not going to give it back to him.

Billy Bunter watched its disappearance in utter dismay.

"You—you awful rotter," he gasped, "you're not going to keep it!"

"Keep it!" repeated Ponsonby blankly. Certainly Pon had no idea of keeping it.

Pon's limit was a wide one, but stealing was certainly far outside even Pon's limit. He glared at the fat Owl as if he could have bitten him. The expression on his face made Gadsby chuckle.

"You fat scoundrel!" hissed Ponsonby. "I'm going to return this chain to its owner. I'm not leaving it in a thief's hands!"

"I ain't a thief, you beast!" groaned Bunter. "I keep on telling you I took it for a lark."

"You can tell your Form-master that!" jeered Ponsonby. "All I know is that I've found you with a gold chain that doesn't belong to you. Come on, Gaddy!"

"I say—" shrieked Bunter.

The two Highcliffians walked out of the paddock.

Billy Bunter blinked after them in terrified dismay. He was breathless and dishevelled from the ragging, but he hardly thought of that now. The loss of Quelch's gold chain overwhelmed him.

"Oh lor!" groaned Bunter.

He tottered out of the paddock. He blinked up and down the road, but Ponsonby and Gadsby were already out of sight. The hapless fat Owl stood in the road, overwhelmed with dismay, and utterly at a loss what to do.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Very Mysterious!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"
"Jolly old Bunter!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"

Five cheery cyclists, coming down the road in a bunch, burst into a chuckle at the sight of a fat figure sitting by the roadside near the paddock fence.

Billy Bunter was, apparently, taking a rest.

Harry Wharton & Co. slowed down with grinning faces. They were coming back from the spin, when they spotted the fat Owl.

After their abrupt departure from Highcliffe—without the friends they had called for—the Famous Five had gone on their way. Mr. Mobbs having put his foot down, it was impossible for Courtenay and the Caterpillar to join up, as arranged, and the Greyfriars fellows had no choice in the matter.

Exasperated as they were by the happenings at Highcliffe, they did not

allow those happenings to cloud their cheery spirits for long.

They enjoyed an extended spin and tea at a country inn, and now they were on their homeward way.

They had passed Highcliffe, and were speeding on towards Courtfield, when they spotted Bunter.

Up to that moment they had forgotten the existence of the fat Owl. They were rather entertained to see him there.

Evidently, he had followed on, for the imaginary spread at Highcliffe; but he seemed to have left it rather late, as it was now long past tea-time.

As he was now sitting by the roadside, it looked as if the trip had tired him out, and he had stopped for a rest within sight of his goal.

"The fat chump!" said Harry Wharton, laughing. "He's not got a bike—and if he walked it, I wonder he got as far as this alive. He will have to get a move on to get back in time for calling-over."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The cyclists jumped down.

Billy Bunter blinked at them through his big spectacles. He had not noticed them coming—he was sitting on the grassy bank by the paddock fence, and had been sitting there for more than an hour—lost in dismal dubitation.

He was not thinking of a spread at Highcliffe now! He was not thinking of tea at all, though it was past tea-time. For once, Billy Bunter had forgotten a meal.

He hardly dared return to Greyfriars without the gold chain. He hardly dared hope that Ponsonby would give it back to him. He was scared almost out of his fat wits.

But his fat, dismal face brightened a little at the sight of the Famous Five. He tottered off the grassy bank.

"I say, you fellows—" he gasped.

"Tired?" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Eh? Oh! Yes! No!" said Bunter vaguely.

"You howling ass!" said Bob. "We told you there was no spread at Highcliffe, and that we were going for a spin."

"I—I say—" gasped Bunter.

"If you've got as far as this, why didn't you keep on?" asked Frank Nugent.

"Been there, and found that there was nothing on?" asked Johnny Bull, with a chuckle.

(Continued on next page.)

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"Eh? Oh no!"
 "Well, you'd better turn back now," said Wharton. "Time you started back for Greyfriars, old fat man."
 "I—I can't!"
 "Eh? Why not?"
 "I—I—I say, you fellows—" stammered Bunter.

Harry Wharton & Co. looked at the fat Removite a little more attentively. He looked ruffled and untidy, and his cap seemed to have disappeared. It dawned on them that Bunter had met with an adventure—or a misadventure—on his way to Highcliffe.

"Been in a row?" asked Bob.

"Eh? Yes! Never mind that! I—I say, you fellows, will—you come on to Highcliffe with me?"

"Hardly!" said the captain of the Remove. "But what the thump do you want there? Do you still think there's a spread going?"

"Oh, no! But—I—I want to see Ponsonby."

"You want to see Ponsonby?" repeated Wharton.

"Yes! I—I want to—to speak to him," groaned Bunter. "I—I'm rather afraid the beast might rag me again, if—if I went in—but—but if you fellows come in with me, it will be all right."

"Oh!" said Harry. He understood Bunter's dishevelled state now. "You've dropped on that cad, have you, and bagged a ragging?"

"Oh dear! Yes!" groaned Bunter.

"Wish we'd been around," said Bob. "But if Pon's been ragging you, what the thump do you want to see him again for? Want some more?"

"No! I—I want—I—I want to—to speak to him!" groaned Bunter. "He can't be such a beast—even Pon."

"What do you mean, if you mean anything?" inquired Johnny Bull.

"I—I mean—"

"Well, what?" asked Harry in wonder.

"Oh, nothing!"

The Famous Five gazed at the fat junior. They understood now that Bunter had fallen in with the cad of Highcliffe and bagged a ragging. But the dismal dismay in his fat face indicated that something more than that had happened, though they had not the faintest idea what it was. And his desire to see Ponsonby again was really mysterious.

Billy Bunter blinked at them dispiritedly. Not for his fat life did he dare to mention the missing chain.

Now that he understood how it looked—how it must look—he dared not. Somehow or other he had to get that wretched chain back to the drawer in Quelch's table, unseen and unknown. If Pon would relent and let him have it back, it would be all right. That was his only chance.

"Look here, what's the matter with you, Bunter?" asked Harry Wharton kindly enough. "Get it off your chest!"

"Oh, nothing! I—I—I'm all right!" groaned Bunter. "I'm not afraid of what Quelch would think—"

"Quelch?"

"Oh, no! Not Quelch!" gasped Bunter. "I—I wasn't thinking about Quelch! Nothing of the kind, you know. I—I say, you fellows, I—I just want to—to speak to Ponsonby. Just—a friendly word, you know."

"A friendly word—after he's just ragged you!" said Bob.

"No! Yes! I mean, no! That is—Oh lor'!"

"We can't go to Highcliffe with you, Bunter," said Harry. "There was a row there this afternoon, and Mobby practically ordered us off. But what, for

the love of Mike, do you want to go there for?"

"Oh, nothing!"

"Nothing?" yelled Bob.

"I—I—I mean—"

"The meanfulness does not seem terrific, my esteemed Bunter!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, with a look of wonder at Bunter's fat, dismal face.

"I—I mean, I—I must see Pon!" gasped Bunter desperately. "The brute won't dare to rag—if you fellows come. I told the beast he wouldn't have dared to rag me if Bob had been there, and it made him wild—"

"I wish I'd been there!" said Bob savagely. "By gum, I'll let him have it, next time I see the cad!"

"But what do you want to see Ponsonby for?" demanded Nugent.

"Oh, nothing!"

"You blithering owl—"

"I—I mean, he—he might give it back to me—" groaned Bunter.

"Give what back to you? Has Ponsonby taken something?"

"Oh, no!" gasped Bunter.

"If you mean your cap—"

"You silly idiot! I don't mean my cap! Blow my cap! I mean—"

"Well, what?"

"N-n-nothing! I—I—I mean—that is—n-n-n-nothing!"

"Is he off his rocker?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Beast!"

"Do you mean that Ponsonby's taken something from you or not?" hooted Wharton.

"Yes! No! I mean, yes! That is, no!"

"Rot!" said Johnny Bull. "Pon's a cur, and a coward, and a rotter, but he's not a pickpocket. He's not taken anything of Bunter's."

"Well, I suppose he can't have! But what does the fat idiot mean?"

"I—I—I mean—" stammered Bunter.

"Well, what?"

"N-nothing!"

"Look here, you fat chump, stop talking rot, and come along," said Harry. "You can have my bike as far as Courtfield, and pick up the motor-bus there. Come on!"

"I—I can't, without—"

"Without what?" yelled the captain of the Remove.

"Oh, nothing!"

"Well, if this doesn't beat Banagher!" said Bob Cherry. "Is he wandering in his mind, or trying to pull our leg?"

"Beast!"

"Are you coming, Bunter?"

"No, you beast!"

"You'll be late for calling-over, at this rate!"

"Blow calling-over!"

"Quelch will be taking roll—"

"Blow Quelch! It's all Quelch's fault. If the beast hadn't whopped me, I shouldn't have thought of it!"

"Of what?"

"N-n-nothing!"

"Look here, you'd better come back to Greyfriars with us," said the captain of the Remove. He was really concerned about the fat Owl by this time. "I'll stick you on my bike, and wheel you as far as Courtfield, if you like. Come on! Hold the jigger, Bob, while I leave him on!"

"Beast! I won't come!" howled Bunter.

The fat Owl jumped away in evident alarm. He backed through the gap in the fence, and blinked angrily at the astonished five.

"Look here, Bunter—" bawled Bob.

"Beast!" hooted Bunter. "Mind your own business! Leave a fellow alone!"

"Well, if you won't come, you won't!" said Harry; and he remounted his bike, and the Famous Five rode on their way—leaving Billy Bunter blinking after them with a dismal and doleful blink.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

A Visitor at Greyfriars!

"O H, you're back!" Herbert Vernon-Smith grinned as he met the Famous Five in the quad.

They had put up their bicycles, and were coming up to the House when Smithy cut across to intercept them.

His grin rather puzzled the chums of the Remove. They did not see, for the moment, anything at which to grin.

"Yes, we're back," said Harry. "What—"

"You didn't expect a visitor?" asked the Bounder.

"Eh? No! Anybody dropped in?"

"Highcliffe man," said Vernon-Smith.

"He's been here about an hour, cooling his heels in the visitors' room. Chap named Courtenay."

"Courtenay here!" exclaimed Bob. "Oh, my hat! We'd have got in earlier if we'd known."

"I've lent him a 'Holiday Annual,'" grinned Smithy. "That was an hour ago. I believe he's still waiting."

"Oh, blow!" said Bob.

The Famous Five hurried into the House.

They had felt it very awkward at Highcliffe to clear off without a word with Courtenay, and had no doubt that Courtenay had felt the same. But there had been no help for it.

Evidently, the captain of the Highcliffe Fourth had come over to speak to them when they returned—as, in the circumstances, the Greyfriars fellows could hardly go into Highcliffe. That, however, had not occurred to the chums of the Remove, or they certainly would have hastened their return to the school.

They ran to the visitors' room—a room on the ground floor at the end of Masters' passage.

Wharton threw open the door, and a handsome junior seated near the window, with a volume open on his knee, looked round and jumped up.

"Courtenay, old bean!" exclaimed Bob.

The Highcliffe junior nodded and smiled, and laid the "Holiday Annual" on the table.

"We had no idea—" said Harry.

"Of course you hadn't," said Courtenay, smiling. "But when I got through my lines I thought I'd cut across and tell you how sorry I was for what happened this afternoon at Highcliffe."

"The sorrowfulness of our esteemed selves was also terrific!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh solemnly.

"Terrific and preposterous!" grinned Bob Cherry; and the Highcliffe fellow laughed.

"I'm sure you know, Courtenay, that we never wanted a row with Ponsonby," said Harry Wharton. "We tried our hardest to steer clear—"

"I know that, of course," said Courtenay, with a nod. "I told Mobbs so, and got five hundred lines for my pains. Look here, you fellows, I'm awfully sorry you should have been treated so rottenly by fellows at my school. I—I thought I'd come and tell you so. I hope it's not going to make any difference."

The Co. easily understood that he was



"Oooogh! Led do by dose!" spluttered Bunter. The grip on his fat nose was like the clutch of a steel vice. In sheer desperation, the fat Owl clenched a fist and hit out at Ponsonby. That sudden jolt took the Highcliffe junior by surprise, landing on his nose, from which it drew a spurt of red. Ponsonby gave a yell of rage and pain.

a little worried and troubled on that point.

Fellows who dropped into a shindy when they were paying a friendly call, and were ordered off by a Form-master, were rather liable to feel sore about it.

The Famous Five had, in fact, decided to steer clear of Highcliffe for the rest of that term.

Courtenay probably guessed as much. They coloured a little under his inquiring glance.

"No difference at all, of course, old fellow!" said Harry Wharton. "This isn't the first time Ponsonby has barged in to make trouble, and it won't be the last, I suppose. But—"

"I was afraid there'd be a 'but,'" said Courtenay quietly. "That's really why I came over—to wash out the but, if possible."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"What I mean is, we're jolly glad to see you at any time, but it might be better to meet this end," he explained. "Pon's scored this time, and he won't lose another chance, and we don't want to get you into rows with your beak."

Courtenay nodded, his lips compressed a little.

"I quite understand," he said. "But I'm not prepared to let Ponsonby decide whether my friends visit me at my school or not."

"Um!" said Bob. "I suppose that's what it comes to—and it's rotten. But another row won't help much."

"I'm going to take measures to stop another happening of the same kind," said Courtenay. "Mobbs, of course, can't interfere, unless there's trouble when you fellows come along."

"But won't there be?" asked Nugent.

"No!" said the Highcliffe junior quietly. "I'm going to see that there isn't! I'm going to have the gloves on with Ponsonby when I go back. He seems to fancy that he's going to get by

with this, and nothing said. He is going to find out his mistake."

"Oh!" said Bob.

"I'm going to make Pon so sorry for stirring up trouble to-day, that he won't be in a hurry to stir up any more!" said Courtenay, with a gleam in his eyes. "I think I can do it—anyhow, I'm going to try hard. If Pon knows what to expect next time, I fancy there won't be any next time."

"I—I see!" said Harry.

"Jolly good idea!" grinned Bob Cherry. "You won't have a lot of trouble with Pon, except in making him come up to the scratch."

On that point, the Famous Five had no doubts. And they could not help thinking Courtenay's idea a good one. What Pon needed, in their unanimous opinion, was a jolly good hiding. They knew that Courtenay could give him one. And they knew, too, that Pon would not be in a hurry to ask for another.

"I think," went on the Highcliffe junior, "that you can rely on it, that next time you call Ponsonby will keep clear of you. I think I can answer for that. So—if you can overlook what happened to-day—"

"My dear chap, that's all right," said Harry. "We were only thinking of keeping clear of a row at your school—but if Ponsonby keeps his distance, that's that."

"He will keep his distance next time," said Courtenay. "I can answer for it that if you come over on Saturday, you won't even see Ponsonby, most likely. Anyhow, he won't barge in!"

"Right-as rain!" said the captain of the Remove.

"We'll fix up another spin, if you like, and tea in my study at Highcliffe, what?" said Courtenay.

"Done!" said the Famous Five, with one voice.

"I'm glad!" said Courtenay. "I know it was rotten for you fellows; but

if there's nothing more of the same kind, you can wash it all out. And you can take my word that there will be no more of it. Now I'd better be getting back—it's not far from lock-up at Highcliffe."

"Sorry you have had to wait for us," said Harry, as the half-dozen juniors left the visitors' room together. "Smithy says you've been here an hour or more—"

"If we'd known—" said Nugent.

"Of course you didn't," said Courtenay, with a smile. "It's all right—Vernon-Smith lent me his 'Holiday Annual,' and the time passed all right. No harm done."

The Famous Five walked down to the gates with the Highcliffe junior. He had left his bicycle at Gosling's lodge. He wheeled it out, waved his hand to the Greyfriars fellows, and rode away.

Harry Wharton & Co. walked back to the House with smiling faces. They were glad to have seen Courtenay again, and to have relieved him of any doubts he might have had about their feelings on the subject of the unpleasantness at Highcliffe. And they were still more glad to know that Pon was going to get that for which he had asked.

"That chap has jolly good ideas," grinned Bob Cherry. "He could wallop two Pons, one with each hand, if he put his beef into it. A jolly good hiding is the only thing that will make Pon behave himself—and I jolly well wish I could get over to Highcliffe this evening to see it."

"The seefulness would be terrifically entertaining!" agreed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

That Ponsonby was booked for a thrashing, the chums of the Remove had no doubt; neither did they doubt that it would be a warning to him to

(Continued on page 16.)

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(Continued from page 13.)

walk more warily on future occasions. But of what else was to follow, they certainly did not dream.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Called to Account!

PONSONBY grinned. He was standing at his study window, looking out into the Highcliffe quad.

He had a view of the distant gateway; and what he saw there seemed to entertain the cheery Pon.

In the gateway a fat figure appeared. Its unusual circumference, and the big spectacles that flashed back the spring sunset, revealed that it was William George Bunter, the fat ornament of the Greyfriars Remove.

He seemed to be hesitating to enter. Billy Bunter, at long last, had made up his fat mind to roll on to Highcliffe and try his powers of persuasion on Pon.

But now that he had arrived at his destination, he hesitated. He was feeling rather like Daniel at the door of the lions' den.

Ponsonby passed his hand over his nose—red, and a little swollen—and grinned maliciously.

He knew, of course, what the fat junior wanted, and he had not the slightest intention of giving him what he wanted.

The gold chain was still in Ponsonby's pocket, and for the present it was going to remain there.

What he was going to do with it, Pon had not yet decided.

On reflection, neither Pon nor Gaddy doubted that the fat and fatuous Owl had, as he stated, taken the article to hide for a "rag" on his Form-master.

Pon had no objection to a rag on Mr. Quelch. He had no liking for the Remove master at Greyfriars, who had, on one occasion, boxed his ears for impertinence.

It was probable that Pon's final decision would be to hand the article back to Bunter, and let him get on with his rag.

In the meantime, it was a pleasure to his peculiar nature to keep the hapless fat Owl on tenterhooks.

Bunter had punched his nose—Pon's lofty and lordly nose! In return, Pon was going to play with him like a cat with a mouse.

He grinned as he watched the distant hesitating figure in the gateway.

The Owl of Greyfriars hesitated to roll in, and he had cause. As he stood blinking there, Monson and Drury spotted him, and sauntered down to the gates.

Pon chuckled.

It looked to him as if Bunter was going to be sorry that he had called. Evidently it looked the same to Bunter, for, after one uneasy blink at the two Highcliffians coming towards him, the fat junior backed out of the gateway, and disappeared from Pon's view.

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Monson and Drury, grinning, went out of the gates, and disappeared in their turn.

Pon chortled. He had no doubt that the fat Owl was being chased down the road by the playful Highcliffians.

"What's the jolly old jest, dear man?" drawled a quiet voice.

Ponsonby spun round from the window.

His study door stood open, and in the doorway appeared the elegant, slim figure of the Caterpillar. Rupert de Courcy smiled genially at him, and Pon scowled in return.

"I don't remember askin' you to this study!" he snapped. "Does your hear-leader allow you to come here?" he added, with a sneer.

"While the cat's away the mice will play, old bean," answered the Caterpillar gravely. "I was as bad a hat as you are, Pon, before Franky came to Highcliffe, and snatched me like a jolly old brand from the burnin'. 'Member? Well, now the old sobersides has gone out and left me on my own, I'm naturally fallin' into bad company."

"You silly ass!" growled Ponsonby.

The Caterpillar, still lazily smiling, leaned on the door, his hands in the pockets of his elegant bags.

"Want anythin'?" yapped Ponsonby.

"Oh, quite!"

"Well, what, you drawlin' ass?" asked Ponsonby.

"Name of your second."

"My what?"

"Second!"

"What the thump do you mean?" exclaimed Ponsonby irritably.

"Aren't you goin' to have a second?" inquired the Caterpillar. "Man generally does, in a scrap."

"You silly ass, I'm not scrappin' with anybody."

The Caterpillar raised his eyebrows.

"Then I've been misinformed," he remarked, "or else you're makin' a mistake, old thing. I fancy you're makin' a mistake. Aren't you scrappin' with Franky?"

"If you mean Courtenay, no, you blitherin' idiot!"

"Then there's a misapprehension somewhere," said the Caterpillar, with owl-like gravity. "Franky thinks you are."

Ponsonby gave him a dark look.

"Franky's certainly got that impression," declared the Caterpillar, "for he's asked me to be his second, and to fix it up with your second. That's why I've staggered in, old bean—partly because of my natural predilection for low company, and partly to ask you who's goin' to throw up the sponge for you when you're licked."

"I'm not going to fight Courtenay, you fool!" said Ponsonby, between his teeth.

"You may be right," assented the Caterpillar. "But, as jolly old Shakespeare remarks—"

"Don't be a fool!"

"As jolly old Shakespeare remarks," continued the Caterpillar, unmoved.

"It may be so, and yet my inward soul persuades me it is otherwise."

"Get out!"

"You haven't told me your second yet, Gaddy?" asked the Caterpillar.

"Shall I fix it up with Gaddy? Might I ask you, old man, merely as a matter of curiosity, whether you expected to get away with your dirty work to-day, and nothin' said?"

Ponsonby gritted his teeth. As a matter of fact, that was exactly what he had expected.

He began to realise that he had expected too much.

"You picked a row with our strenuous

pals from Greyfriars," pursued the Caterpillar. "You got them ordered off by Mobby—dear old Snobby Mobby! You flattered yourself that you put a spoke in Franky's wheel—quite a big nasty spoke! Next time they call, you'll be up to the same game, what—havin' got away with it so nicely this time? Old Franky's such an easy-goin' fellow, that you fancied it was simply pie. And, to tell you the truth," went on the Caterpillar confidentially, "so did I! I was mistaken—as you are, Pon. Franky's in a boilin' bad temper about it!"

"Do you want me to barge you out of that doorway?"

"Yes, if you like."

Ponsonby made a step towards the smiling Caterpillar. But he made only one step, and stopped.

"That's right," said the Caterpillar with a nod of approval. "I can see the fightin' blood of the Ponsonbys gettin' on the boil—but keep it for Franky, old fruit. You'll need it when he gets back from Greyfriars!"

"Greyfriars!" repeated Ponsonby. "If Courtenay went out with those cads, after what Mobbs said, he's booked for a row!"

His eyes gleamed.

"Dear man!" said the Caterpillar. "Wash it out! He didn't! He went over to their school on his jigger, to speak to them when they came in. He's had to wait for them, judgin' by the time he's been gone. Sorry to disappoint you, old tulip, but it's absolutely no use droppin' Mobby a hint! Even Mobby can't rag a man for ridin' over to Greyfriars on a half-holiday, and waitin' for fellows to come in from a spin!"

"If that's all—"

"That's all, old bean! Merely that and nothin' more!" smiled De Courcy.

"Sorry, an' all that, but there's nothin' to sneak to Mobby about. Franky may blow in any minute, and I want to have the matter fixed up by then. Who's your second, Pon?"

"I've told you I'm not going to fight anybody!" said Ponsonby, between his teeth.

The Caterpillar sighed.

"You won't name your second?"

"No, you fool!"

"That's that, then!" The Caterpillar detached himself from the door. "See you again, old thing, when Franky blows in!"

De Courcy strolled away down the passage, humming a tune.

Ponsonby, with a black brow, slammed the door after him.

He walked back to the window and stared out, but he was not grinning now. He scowled blackly into the quad.

A few minutes later he saw De Courcy sauntering down to the gates—where he remained, evidently waiting for his chum to return from Greyfriars.

Ponsonby watched him with bitter eyes. Fellows were coming in at the gates; it was getting towards lock-up. But Frank Courtenay did not appear among them. Apparently he had been delayed at Greyfriars.

It was not till the school porter had come to close the gates that the captain of the Fourth appeared, wheeling in his bicycle.

Ponsonby gave him his blackest scowl.

He had asked for it—and what he had asked for was coming to him. Judging by Pon's look, he did not find the prospect grateful or comforting.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Late!

"BUNTER!"

No answer.

"Bunter!" repeated Mr.

Quelch, looking up from his list.

But no fat voice answered "Adsum!" from the ranks of the Remove.

Bunter was not present.

Mr. Quelch compressed his lips slightly as he marked W. G. Bunter absent. He had had trouble enough with that fat member of his Form for one day. Bunter, it seemed, was asking for more.

"Where's that fat chump?" muttered Peter Todd. "Anybody seen a fat rabbit about?"

"Then he hasn't come in," said Harry Wharton. "We passed him near Highcliffe, coming back, and he wouldn't come along."

"Can't be still sticking there!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"Silence!" called out Wingate of the Sixth, and the Remove fellows ceased to discuss Bunter till calling-over came to an end.

It was not uncommon for a fellow to be late for roll on a half-holiday—especially a lazy and unpunctual slacker like Billy Bunter.

But the Famous Five, remembering how they had left him on the Highcliffe road, could not help wondering what was "up" with the fat Owl.

He had had plenty of time to get in, if he had followed on when they left him. But he had not got in; which looked as if he had lingered in the vicinity of Highcliffe School—why, they had no idea.

It was not till the juniors were going up to prep that a ring was heard at the gate—followed by the arrival of William George Bunter.

Bob Cherry turned back, on the staircase, as he rolled in.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's the jolly old porpoise!" he remarked.

Bunter looked tired. He looked breathless. He looked untidy—especially about the hair. He had had to come back without his cap, and his hair had blown about in the wind.

"I say, you fellows," gasped Bunter, "did Quelch miss me at roll?"

It was rather a superfluous question. The master taking roll was not likely to fail to miss an absent fellow.

"Yes, ass!" said Bob.

"Oh dear! That means going in to Quelch!" groaned Bunter.

"Cut in, and don't waste any time!" suggested Bob.

"Look here, old chap, I—I don't want to see Quelch! Suppose you go in and tell him I've come?"

"Fathead!"

"Beast!"

Billy Bunter rolled dismally away to his Form-master's study. He did not want to see Quelch. Apart from the penalty for cutting roll, he did not want to see him. He dreaded that Quelch might have missed that watch-chain already.

It was not likely that he had missed it yet, as he could have had no occasion, so far, to look for it. Still, it was possible.

Had Bunter carried out his fatuous intention, and hidden the article somewhere about the House, to be found after a troublesome search, he would not have minded.

But, in the altered circumstances, he minded very much.

That wretched chain had passed out of his possession. No search within the walls of Grevfriars School could unearth an article that was over at Highcliffe.

Unless, and until, Ponsonby gave it up, it was gone for good!

Quelch would think—as Pon and Gaddy had thought—that it had been "pinched." That was really awful!

Bunter's only hope was to get it back from Pon in time. He clung to that hope—if only Quelch hadn't missed it yet!

He was quaking as he presented himself before his Form-master.

Mr. Quelch gave him a very severe glance. The fat junior gave him an uneasy blink, but he was relieved. Quelch only looked the same old Gorgon. Had he missed an article of value from his study he would certainly have looked, so to speak, much more Gorgonian. He hadn't missed it!

"You are late, Bunter!" said Mr. Quelch severely. "For what reason?"

"It—it wasn't my fault, sir!" gasped Bunter. "I—I lost the motor-bus, and—

—and had to walk!"

Bunter hadn't lost the motor-bus. He had lingered near Highcliffe, till Monson and Drury, chasing him down the road, started him on the homeward path. But truth and Bunter had long been strangers.

"Have you been out of bounds, Bunter?"

"Oh, no, sir! Highcliffe ain't out of bounds on a half-holiday."

"If you indeed lost the motor-bus, Bunter—"

"Oh, yes, sir!"

"—you should not have done so—"

"I—I—I ran after it like anything, sir—"

"—and you will take fifty lines, Bunter."

"Oh lor'! I—I mean, yes, sir."

Mr. Quelch waved him away and the fat Owl left the study.

"Beast!" he murmured as he went down the passage.

This, Bunter bitterly reflected, was the sort of justice a fellow got. Fifty lines for losing a motor-bus. True, he hadn't lost the bus. But he had told Quelch he had, which came to the same thing—to Bunter!

As likely as not, Quelch didn't believe him. He was the sort of beast to doubt a fellow's word!

Billy Bunter rolled away to the Remove studies. He was in no mood for prep—with the worry of that beastly chain on his fat mind. Still, prep had to be done.

Some of the Removites had not yet gone into the studies—and the Bouncer, in the passage, grinned as Bunter rolled up.

"Had it hot?" he inquired.

Bunter blinked at him.

"Eh? No! It's only lines for missing roll," he answered.

"Quelch hasn't spotted you, then?"

Bunter jumped.

"Wha-a-at?" he ejaculated. He blinked at Vernon-Smith in horror. Did the Bouncer know anything about that beastly chain? "Wharrior you mean, Smithy, you beast?"

The Bouncer chuckled.

"You've been up to something in Quelch's study," he answered. "Don't you remember telling me this afternoon that you hadn't?"

Bunter had forgotten! Smithy hadn't, and he had been wondering what the fat Owl had done in Quelch's study. So far, there had been no news of anything from that quarter.

"Why, you—you—you beast!" gasped Bunter. "I told you I hadn't, as you say yourself—"

"Yes, that's how I knew you had."

"Yah!" snorted Bunter.

He rolled on to his own study, leaving the fellows in the passage grinning.

Peter Todd and Tom Linton had started prep, an Study No. 7, when the fat junior came in. Bunter dropped into the armchair. He was tired. He had put in an uncommon amount of exertion that eventful afternoon.

"Quelch scalp you?" asked Peter, looking up.

"Fifty lines!" said Bunter. "And I've done a hundred to-day already. I told him I missed the motor-bus, too. Lucky I caught it; though, or I should have been an hour later. I don't believe Quelch half-believed me. That's the sort of man we've got for a Form-master, Toddy!"

"Oh, my hat!" said Toddy.

He resumed prep.

Bunter sat and took a much-needed rest, regardless of prep, for a good half-hour. But he dragged his weary, fat limbs to the table at last.

"I suppose I shall have to give this tripe a squint!" he grunted.

"Better!" agreed Toddy. "Quelch sort of expects it. He gets cross when you spring an armed man and a dog on him in construe."

"Rotten tripe!" growled Bunter. "What's the good of it, to me? I'm going into politics when I leave, and I shan't have to talk Latin when I'm in the Cabinet."

"In the Kik-kik-Cabinet!" gasped Toddy. "Oh! Make me Solicitor-General when you're Prime Minister, old chap, will you?"

"Yah!"

Bunter toyed with his prep. It did not look as if his "con" would gratify Mr. Quelch in the morning. Weightier matters were on Bunter's mind.

"I—I say, Toddy—" he said, at last.

"Don't jaw in prep, old fat man."

"But I—I say, will you come over to Highcliffe with me, after class to-morrow?" asked Bunter. "I—I want to see Ponsonby—"

"I don't!"

"Well, I do!" said Bunter. "You ain't much to look at, Toddy, and you're a bit of a fool, but you can scrap. They wouldn't rag if you came with me."

Peter Todd looked at the fat junior across the table. Bunter had his own inimitable way of asking favours.

"You blithering ass—" said Toddy.

"Oh, really, Peter! I say, I simply must see Ponsonby—it's awfully important. I may get into a fearful row otherwise. Mind, I'm not going to ask him for anything," added Bunter cautiously. "Nothing of the kind! He hasn't got anything I want, and if he had, I wouldn't ask him for it—a cad like Pon! I—I just want to see him, you know."

"What for?"

"Oh, nothing!"

"It's awfully important to see Pon for nothing?" asked Peter, staring at him.

"Yes, old chap! I—I mean—it's something—that is, nothing! Nothing at all! You'll come, won't you, old fellow?"

"No!" said Peter. "I won't! And if you talk any more piffle before we've finished prep, I'll biff you with the dic!"

"Beast!"

And prep went on in Study No. 7 without any more piffle from Bunter.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Coward's Blow!

GADSBY winked at Monson, who grinned.

Cecil Ponsonby, catching the wink and the grin, scowled.

Pon was not feeling like grinning.

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It was after prep at Highcliffe; and there was a crowd of fellows in Ponsonby's study.

After prep in that study there was sometimes bridge, and generally cigarettes. But on this particular evening, Pon had not gathered his friends about him for either card-playing or smoking.

He was expecting trouble.

The delay at Greyfriars while he waited for the Famous Five to come back from their spin had caused Frank Courtenay to return to Highcliffe only in time for calling-over. That was a respite for Pon—but only a respite. After roll, he expected to see the captain of the Fourth—but Courtenay, apparently, was leaving it till after prep. Pon nourished a faint hope that the playful Caterpillar had been pulling his leg. But that hope was very faint.

Many of the Fourth went down after prep; and Pon felt only too sure that the time had come, now, and that Courtenay was looking for him downstairs.

For which reason, Pon had stayed in his study, and gathered his friends there. Gadsby and Monson, Drury and Vavasour were with him; to back him up, as he hoped, when the tussle came. Single combat had no appeal for Pon. He was the fellow to hunt for trouble, from sheer malice, and to use every trick and dodge to elude it when it came home to him.

Footsteps in the passage warned him that it was coming—hence the wink of Gaddy, the grin of Monson, and Pon's savage scowl.

By that time all the Highcliffe Fourth knew that a row was on. Pon's friends had no doubt why he had gathered them in his study. But they doubted whether they were going to take any hand in the proceedings. They doubted that very much.

There was a knock at the door, and it opened, to reveal the captain of the Fourth, with De Courcy smiling at his elbow.

"Oh! You're here, Ponsonby!" said Courtenay quietly.

He stepped in.

Ponsonby gave him a bitter look.

"You're not wanted here, Courtenay!" he said. "The same applies to you, De Courcy!"

"Dear man!" murmured the Caterpillar.

He followed his chum in, carrying two pairs of boxing-gloves. He dropped them on the table.

Ponsonby set his lips.

"If you've come here for a row, you cads, you're going to be kicked out of this study!" he said. "Get out!"

"Yes, get out, you know," murmured Vavasour. "A man's study is his study, you know. Absolutely."

The captain of the Fourth did not even look at Vavasour. He fixed his

eyes, coolly and contemptuously, on Ponsonby.

"Are you ready?" he asked quietly.

"I'm ready to boot you out of my study!" snarled Ponsonby. "And every man here will lend a boot, too, if that's what you want."

"You've refused to name a second——"

"Oh, shut up!"

"We can scrap without seconds, if you prefer it that way." Courtenay threw off his jacket and picked up a pair of gloves. "Shift the table out of the way, Caterpillar. We shall want room."

"Leave that table alone, you swab!" shouted Ponsonby fiercely.

"Dear man, you'll want room!" urged the Caterpillar gently. "You're goin' to put up the scrap of your life, ain't you?"

"Will you get out of my study, Courtenay?"

"After I've thrashed you, yes. Not before."

Ponsonby breathed hard, and looked round at the uncertain faces of his friends.

"Those bargees have come here to kick up a shindy!" he said. "Lend me a hand bootin' them out, you men!"

Gadsby & Co. exchanged looks. It was Pon's desire to turn the affair into a general row between two on one side and five on the other. But the five were much less keen than the two.

Frank Courtenay glanced round at the knotty circle. They were looking extremely dubious. Pon was their leader, and they were his friends and followers, but—there was a "but."

"You fellows need not barge in," said the captain of the Fourth quietly. "I think you know that I'm not the man to kick up a shindy—rather the reverse. If you don't know what Ponsonby has done, I'll tell you. He picked a quarrel with my friends from Greyfriars at the gate, landed them in a row with Mobbs, and got them ordered away. Some fellows would have got their backs up at such treatment, and turned me down for it. I've no doubt Ponsonby hoped they would. But I've been over to Greyfriars and set that right. I've asked the same fellows over here on Saturday, and they're coming. I've got to see that Ponsonby doesn't play the same game over again when they come on Saturday."

Courtenay paused for a moment.

"All this term I've tried to steer clear of trouble with Ponsonby, and you fellows know it," he went on. "I've had cause enough, and I've let it pass. I can't let this pass. If such a thing happens again, it means that my friends at Greyfriars will never come to see me at all—they can't! Well, I'm not letting Ponsonby decide that for me."

"A set of rotten outsiders——" said Monson.

Courtenay looked at him.

"If you want to come next on the list, Monson, you've only to say that again!" he said. "I'll be ready for you when I'm through with Ponsonby."

Monson was silent.

"I left it with De Courcy to fix it up while I went over to Greyfriars this afternoon," said Courtenay. "Ponsonby refused. Now I'm here to

deal with him, and I'm not taking no for an answer. Are you ready, Ponsonby?"

"I'm not goin' to fight you," said Ponsonby sullenly.

"You are!"

"Step over to the fire, Pon, old bean!" suggested the Caterpillar.

Ponsonby glared at him.

"What do you mean, you fool?"

"I mean to say, the fightin' blood of the Ponsonbys seems to have gone off the boil! Warm it up!"

Gadsby & Co. grinned at that suggestion.

"Well, look here, this is Pon's study!" said Drury. "You fellows get out of it, or we'll jolly well barge you out, see?"

"I don't think you could, the whole crew of you!" said Courtenay, with cool contempt. "But we haven't come here for a shindy. Keep clear! There's plenty of fellows in the Fourth to see fair play."

That was clear enough to Pon & Co., for a mob of the Highcliffe Fourth were gathering in the passage round the doorway.

The captain of the Form had a good many more friends in the Highcliffe Fourth than Pon had. Smithson, of that Form, looked in, grinning.

"We'll see fair play, all right!" he said. "You swabs barge in, and we'll barge in fast enough!"

If Pon's knotty pals had been doubtful before, they were decided now. They moved back in a group towards the study window.

Ponsonby was left standing alone, by the table.

The Caterpillar pulled the table aside to the wall, to leave ample space.

Pon turned a bitter look on his retreating friends.

"Are you backin' me up?" he snarled.

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Drury. "A scrap's a scrap! It's man to man, and you can fight, I suppose."

"Absolutely!" mumbled Vavasour.

Gadsby and Monson looked uneasy, and stood silent. They had been with Pon in the rag at the gates. Pon, as leader, was called to account; and Monson and Gaddy were glad not to be called to account along with him. And their opinion was that if Pon asked for this sort of thing, he had to expect it.

"I'm waiting, Ponsonby!" said Courtenay.

Ponsonby gave him a look of hate.

"You rotten outsider, I won't scrap with you. I'm not goin' in for a hooligan row to please you. I'll call a prefect if you don't get out of my study."

He made a step towards the door. Courtenay stepped in front of him. Smithson and his grinning friends crammed the doorway. Pon had little chance of getting out to call a prefect.

"Will you put the gloves on, Ponsonby?" asked Courtenay quietly.

"No," hissed Ponsonby. "I will not!"

"Oh, go it, Pon!" muttered Drury, in disgust. "Don't funk the man!"

Ponsonby's ears burned, but he made no reply. He backed a step or two, and the captain of the Fourth followed him up.

The crowd in the passage were laughing, and even his own friends, in the study, exchanged looks of contempt.

"Dash it all, Pon, stand up to him!" muttered Gadsby.

"Shut up, you fool!"

Ponsonby backed and backed, till he almost barged into the group at the window. Then he stopped, panting.

"Will you put the gloves on?" repeated Courtenay.

"No!" hissed Pon.

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Billy Bunter struggled desperately in the hands of the Philistines. But he was no match for the Highcliffe juniors. Flustered, fluttered and confused, he rolled and roared. All sorts of articles tumbled out of his pockets, among which was a length of gold chain. "What the dooce—" exclaimed Ponsonby, letting go the fat Owl to pick up the chain.

"Perhaps that will make you!"
Smack!

Courtenay's hand came across Ponsonby's face with a ringing smack that sounded through the study like a pistol-shot. It was the coward's blow—and the dandy of Highcliffe reeled under it, his face deathly white, save where the smack left a red and burning mark.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Licked!

PONSONBY stumbled, and Gadsby gave him a push to steady him. He stood panting, his eyes flaming, the red mark burning on his white cheek—all eyes on him.

Even then, there was a pause—and it was not till a contemptuous laugh came from the crowded juniors at the doorway, and the Caterpillar shrugged his shoulders with disdainful scorn, that Ponsonby stirred.

Pon was a bully, when he dared—and in every bully there is a yellow streak. In Pon it was highly developed. But though, even then, he would have dodged the penalty of his own actions if he could, he knew that it was not possible. He could not take the coward's blow tamely and hold up his head at Highcliffe afterwards. The fags in the Third and the Second would have jeered at him—if, indeed, they had not booted him, too. He knew that he had to fight.

A dozen times that term, or more, he had displayed his bitter animosity towards his Form captain, unpunished. This time he had gone a step too far, and punishment was coming to him. As he looked round, with almost haggard eyes, at the mocking faces in the doorway, and the averted faces of his own friends, he knew that he had to stand up for what he had done, and he

screwed his courage, such as it was, to the sticking point. And bitter rage and hatred helped him on.

He made a sudden spring at Courtenay, lashing out with his fists, without waiting for the gloves. A ready hand went up, and his blows were knocked aside.

The captain of the Fourth stepped back.

"If you choose bare knuckles, come on!" he said quietly.

But Pon did not choose bare knuckles! He paused, turned to the table, and picked up the gloves.

"Who's keepin' time?" drawled the Caterpillar. "Gaddy, old man, trot out that big gold watch of yours."

Gadsby took out his watch to keep time.

Pon put on the gloves slowly. But even Pon could not take too long, and they were on at last.

"Ready?" asked Gadsby.

"Quite!" said Courtenay, and Ponsonby snarled.

"Time!"

Ponsonby hardly waited for the word to be uttered before he came on with a savage and desperate rush.

He knew, only too well, that he could not last. He knew that he could not stand up to punishment, and he knew that Courtenay could, and would. He had to win quickly if he was going to win at all.

And it happened that luck favoured him. So fierce was his sudden rush, that the captain of the Fourth gave ground a foot or two—and caught his foot in the rug, and stumbled.

Pon was not the man to give him a chance to recover. He fairly hurled himself at Courtenay, hitting out furiously. His right came home, and then his left, on the captain of the Fourth, and Courtenay went to the floor with a heavy crash.

Ponsonby stood panting, scarcely

believing in his luck. From his friends came a chirrup of glee.

They had not expected this—any more than Pon had! The captain of the Fourth was on his back, hard hit, panting.

The Caterpillar, for a moment, looked serious.

"Man down!" gasped Monson.

"Absolutely!" chirruped Vavasour.

"Good old Pon!" exclaimed Drury.

"Good man!"

Gadsby was counting.

Pon stood ready with a ruthless glitter in his eyes, to hit, with all his strength, if Courtenay came up to the scratch.

Gadsby counted quickly—perhaps too quickly.

"One, two, three, four, five, six, seven—"

Pon's eyes blazed. He was glad, for a moment, that he had been forced to fight. If Courtenay was counted out, he could not claim to go on. He might be good for a dozen rounds more, but it he was counted out, he was licked, and there was an end.

But Courtenay was not counted out.

He had had hard knocks, and a heavy crash, and he was a little dazed. But at "seven" he struggled up.

Ponsonby was on him like a tiger.

Crash, crash came his driving fists, as the captain of the Fourth gained his feet—crash, crash, again!

But Courtenay, facing hard punishment with grim endurance, got on his feet and stalled him off. More he could not do; but he held Pon at bay till time was called.

"Time!"

Ponsonby dropped into a chair, and Monson fanned him with a sheet of impot paper. He had had the best of that round—far and away the best—but his exertions had almost winded him. He would not have smoked cigarettes.

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after tea if he could have foreseen this. But he had, and the smokes were taking their revenge now. He panted and panted.

"Keep that up, old man!" grinned Monson. "One more dose like that, and you've got him beat! By gum, you've got him beat!"

Ponsonby did not speak—he wanted all his breath. But he nodded. He had a chance, anyhow.

"Rough luck, Franky, old man!" murmured the Caterpillar, who was also fanning his man. "But one swallow don't make a summer!"

"Time!" called Gadsby.

Ponsonby stepped up quite briskly. He tried over again his tactics in the first round. But this time his rush was stopped.

That little accident was not likely to happen twice. Courtenay met him with left and right, and Pon's rush was stopped by hard punching.

Then Ponsonby backed off. Courtenay in the first round had taken hard knocks without flinching—but Pon, when his turn came flinched and flinched, and backed and backed. He dodged, and wound and twisted and went backwards round the study, followed up by hard punching that he could not escape.

"Is that a fight?" called out Smithson from the passage.

"No—hikin'," answered the Caterpillar. "Walkin' match, dear man."

"Buck up, Pon!" breathed Monson. "Stand up to him!"

That advice was easier to give than act upon. Monson would have flinched at the deadly rain of blows that battered on Pon's handsome face—not very handsome now.

Hard and fast, fast as hail, came that rain—crash, crash after crash!

Pon was trying only to defend—forgetting attack—backing and dodging, panting and gasping. And still the rain came.

"Time!"

Ponsonby reeled to his corner and slumped into the chair. He sprawled there, streaming with perspiration, gurgling for breath.

Courtenay stood and waited grimly.

Gadsby gave his pal all the time he decently could and a little more. But he could not hang it out for ever. He had to call at last:

"Time!"

Ponsonby did not stir.

"Time!" repeated Gadsby anxiously.

Ponsonby, with an oath that startled even his friends, hurled off the gloves.

"I'm not goin' on!" he panted.

"Pon, old man——" muttered Monson.

"Somebody get a hot-water bottle!" yelled Smithson. "Bad case of cold feet!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, Pon——" murmured Drury.

"I'm done, hang you! Let me alone!"

"The fightin' blood of the Ponsonbys has gone off the boil again," said the Caterpillar gravely. "Pon, old man, don't you think there ought to be some sort of a limit? Even you, old bean, oughtn't to funk to this extent!"

Courtenay stood looking at the panting Ponsonby.

Pon had had some hard usage, but less than Courtenay in the first round. But he dared not go on. The mere thought of facing those hammering fists in another round gave him panic. The captain of the Fourth curled his lip with a scorn that cut even Ponsonby to the quick.

"You're not licked, you ear!" he said.

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"But if you funk going on, let it go at that! But understand this, Ponsonby—I'm letting you off the rest, if you choose to show up as a coward. But if there's any more of the dirty game you played to-day, you won't be let off next time. Next time I shall thrash you till you can't crawl, whether you funk or not. Take that as a tip, and steer clear."

Ponsonby made no reply—save by a look of hatred and malevolence.

Frank Courtenay turned away without saying more and left the study.

The Caterpillar collected the boxing-gloves, with a whimsical grin on his face.

"This," he remarked, "is a sell. We came here for a scrap. I'm bound to remark that Pon has let us down. But perhaps one of you men would like to show that this is a fightin' study." He glanced inquiringly at Gadsby, Monson, Drury, and Vavasour. "Say the word, and I'll have the gloves on with pleasure rather than disappoint the distinguished audience in the passage."

"Oh, don't be an ass!" said Gadsby.

"Get out!" said Monson.

"I suppose I'm to take that as an answer in the negative!" sighed the Caterpillar. He glanced round at the grinning swarm at the doorway. "Gentlemen, the show is over. Sorry you've come here for nothin'. This study keeps its fighting blood in a refrigerator, I believe."

And the Caterpillar strolled out. Gadsby kicked the door shut.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter on Tenterhooks!

BILLY BUNTER, the following morning, broke a record.

At the breakfast table he did not concentrate his attention wholly and solely upon brekker.

Every other minute, almost, the fat junior blinked along the table through his big spectacles at the face of his Form-master.

Mr. Quelch breakfasted with his Form in Hall. Early in the morning Mr. Quelch was never at his bonniest. Quelch was not old—but he was old enough to feel certain twinges when there was an east wind on a March morning. On such occasions the habitual severity of Quelch's countenance was a little accentuated.

Skinner declared that it was enough to take a fellow's appetite away. It certainly did not have that effect on Bunter.

With all the woes and worries that he had on his fat mind, Bunter's appetite did not fail him. In spite of all, it played up nobly.

Nevertheless, for once the fat junior did not concentrate on grub. Grub disappeared down his capacious gullet in as large quantities as usual, but at a slower rate.

That grim look on Quelch's face alarmed him.

Of course, Quelch often looked like a Gorgon. He often looked like a gargoyle. It might mean only a twinge of rheumatism. It might mean only that Mr. Prout had been giving him some kind advice as a senior master.

But it might mean that Quelch had missed a certain article from the drawer of the writing-table in his study.

If it were only rheumatism, that did not matter—to Bunter, at least. If it were only some annoyance from "Old Pompous," that did not matter, either. But if it concerned Bunter, it mattered a lot.

Bunter was anxious and alarmed. He

was likely to remain in a state of alarm and anxiety till he got that chain back from the cad of Highcliffe.

Bunter was no longer thinking of a "rag" on Quelch. Far from that! All Bunter wanted was to get hold of that chain and put it back whence he had taken it, and have done with the whole matter. After school he was going to see Ponsonby and try his luck. In the meantime, he could only hope fervently that the beastly thing hadn't been missed.

"I say, you fellows," Bunter whispered, with his mouth full, and nearly choked. "I say, is Quelch shirty about something?"

"Isn't he always?" murmured Skinner.

"I mean, have you heard of anything happening—anything missing from his study, or—or anything?" breathed Bunter.

Skinner stared at him.

"What have you been bagging from Quelch's study, you fat owl?" he inquired.

"Oh, nothing! I haven't been near his study."

Skinner chuckled. His chuckle was echoed by the Boulder. Smithy was much interested in Bunter's anxious blinks along the Remove table.

That the fat junior had played some trick in his Form-master's study the day before, Smithy was quite assured. Now he was able to guess what it was. The fat and fatuous Owl had bagged something!

Mr. Quelch glanced along the table, frowning. Remove fellows were not exactly expected to take their meals in silence. But whispering and chuckling did not please Quelch, at least, when he had a spot of rheumatism.

"Bunter!"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. He almost swallowed his eggspoon. "Yes, sir! I wasn't speaking to Skinner, sir. I only said——"

"That will do, Bunter!"

"Oh! Yes, sir!"

Mr. Quelch gave him a suspicious look. His gimlet-eyes seldom failed to spot anything; and certainly they had not failed to spot Bunter's anxious blinks up the table during brekker.

That the fat Owl had something on his mind, and probably on his conscience, was quite obvious to the Remove master.

Bunter was silent for two or three minutes. In that space of time he blinked along at Quelch.

Amazing to relate, Bunter gave only half his attention to his food.

Every fellow at the table, of course, could see that Bunter was worried and troubled. Quelch could see it as plainly as any Remove fellow. Grius were reflected on the faces up and down the table, though they found no reflection whatever on the face of the Remove master. That face grew more severe—more like a Gorgon's than ever—much to Bunter's alarm.

"I say, Cherry, old chap!" whispered Bunter.

"Shurrup!" murmured Bob. "Quelch has his eye on you!"

"Oh crikey!"

Bunter was silent again. He consumed an egg before he ventured on another whisper.

"Wharton, old chap, know what's up with Quelch?" he asked, under his breath. "I haven't done anything, of course. But—but some other fellow may have, you know. Think old Quelch knows?"

"Quiet, fathend!"

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"Bunter"—Mr. Quelch's voice was

not loud, but deep—"if you persist in chattering at the breakfast-table—"

"It wasn't me, sir!" gasped Bunter. "I never spoke, sir!"

"How dare you tell me such untruths, Bunter! I saw you speaking to Wharton!"

"I—I mean, I—I was only asking him to pass the salt, sir," stammered Bunter.

"The salt is standing beside your plate, Bunter."

"Is—is it, sir? I—I mean, the pepper."

"You mean the pepper?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, sir. I—I—I like pi-pip-pepper."

There was a chortle along the Remove table. Some of the fellows at other tables glanced round. But that chortle died away, under the freezing eye of Mr. Quelch. He had no use for chortles.

"Yesterday, Bunter, I caned you for untruthfulness!" said Mr. Quelch sternly. "I advise you to let it be a warning to you."

"Oh, yes, sir! Thank you, sir!" gasped Bunter.

"Now be silent!"

"Oh, yes, sir! Certainly!"

Billy Bunter tried to devote his attention to his fourth egg. But he could not help stealing a blink at the stern face at the head of the table. He found a pair of gimlet-eyes fixed on him, and quaked.

Had Quelch missed that putrid chain? Did he suspect Bunter? The fat junior helped himself to marmalade with a trembling fat hand. But he was too anxious to let the matter rest.

"I say, you fellows, have you heard anything?" he whispered at last. "Think Quelch thinks that somebody has been larking in his study? I—I suppose you'd know, Wharton, as head boy? He looks awfully bad-tempered."

Harry Wharton had no time to answer. Mr. Quelch's voice came down the table on its deepest note.

"Bunter!"

"Oh crikey! I mean, yes, sir!"

"What did you say to Wharton, Bunter?"

Quelch, apparently, suspected that there was some sort of "rag" on.

Incessant whispering from Bunter, and incessant grinning from the rest of the Remove, looked like it. Quelch was the last man in the world to allow anything in the nature of a rag at a table over which he presided.

At the Fourth Form table Temple, Dabney & Co. did almost anything they liked, under the mild eye of Mr. Capper. The Third chattered and buzzed bread pellets, and even gobbled their food under the absentminded gaze of Mr. Wiggins. But at the Remove table, under the gimlet-eye of Henry Samuel Quelch, there was seldom or never anything but orderly work.

"I—I didn't say anything to Wharton, sir," stammered Bunter.

"How dare you make an untruthful answer, Bunter?"

"I—I never said a word, sir!" gasped Bunter. "You can ask Wharton, sir. He heard me."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!" rapped Mr. Quelch. "I intend to know what is going on at this table! Bunter, I shall cane you if you do not immediately repeat to me what you said a moment ago to Wharton."

"Oh lor'! I—I—I asked him to pass the salt, sir—I—I mean, the pepper—that is the—the mustard."

"You did nothing of the kind, Bunter!"

"Oh, yes, sir! I—I like a little mustard with my egg—I—I mean—" Bunter stammered. Few fellows liked mustard with an egg; but, in any case, Bunter had reached the marmalade stage. "I—I—I mean—"

"What do you mean, Bunter?"

"I—I—I mean with—with my marmalade, sir," stammered the unhappy Owl.

There was an irrepressible chuckle up and down the Remove table.

(Continued on next page.)

The STATELY HOMES of GREYFRIARS

WILLIAM GOSLING, the garrulous gate-keeper of Greyfriars

By

The Greyfriars Rhymester



For one-hundred-and-twenty-three years—more or less—
"Gossy" has been the keeper of the keys at Greyfriars.
Bribery and corruption 'e don't 'old with . . . sez you!

(1)

You'll find it next door to the gate,
The lodge of old Gosling, the porter,
And when you are ten seconds late
You know he will give you no quarter!
The gate will be shut in your face,
Which leaves you in a rotten position.
Your only way into the place
Is ringing his bell for admission.

(2)

Then out of his lair comes the beast,
His eyes full of hatred are burning
(Well, that's what he looks like, at least,
Whenever I'm late in returning).
"You're 'art an hour late," Gossy grunts.
"I'll tell Mr. Quelch 'ow I've caught yer!"
"Oh, Gossy, forget it this once!"
"Not me!" says the brute. "I'll report
yer!"

(3)

No plea can induce him to pause.
"It's dooty!" says Gosling severely.
And Gosling will do it, because
This dooty he loves very dearly.
No tears or entreaties or praise
The heart of the tyrant can soften,
For "dooty is dooty!" he says,
And says it, in fact, very often.

(4)

And never, oh, never, when late
Attempt to give Gossy a shilling.
Or bribe him with pieces of eight—
The scorn in his eye will be killing!
He'll look at the coin in your hand
As he comes to the gate to unlock it,
He'll take it contemptuously—and
He'll throw it right into—his pocket!

(5)

And then, with a glare and a snort,
He'll send you away, feeling rotten;
His anger blots out his report.
Which always is wholly forgotten!
No words have the power to describe
His hatred of this kind of dooty,
The very idea that a bribe
Could come between him and his dooty!

(6)

His quaint little lodge is of stone
And filled with tobacco-ish odour!
There Gosling keeps house all alone
With the help of a bottle of—soda!
He sits by the fire of a night
And seems the most cheerful of porters,
When he gets his old pipe well alight
And samples his glass of strong waters.

(7)

He takes only one—and that's flat!
It keeps all his faculties supple.
He might have one more after that,
And perhaps just one more—or a couple.
And maybe another for luck
And perhaps just one more, but the fact is
That Gosling thinks whisky is muck,
And says: "I don't 'old with the practice."

(8)

Sometimes he has visitors there
But who they may be there's no knowing.
They like to leave ink in his chair
Or gum in his boots, before going!
But nevertheless, on the whole
He isn't entirely unsporting.
So here's to his health, the good soul,
With plenty of pleasant reporting!

Next Week: MICKY DESMOND, of OLD OIRELAND.

Again Mr. Quelch froze it with a glare.

"Bunter, if you do not instantly tell me what you said—"

"I—I—I only said it was a fine morning, sir," groaned Bunter. "I—I never said you looked bad-tempered, sir!"

"Wha-a-t?"

"Nothing of the kind, sir. I—I never thought of such a thing. I—I just said it was a beastly cold morning—I—I mean, a fine morning. I—I don't think you look bad-tempered, sir," groaned Bunter.

"Boy!"

"I—I—I don't really, sir!" gasped the fat Owl. "I—I think you look fearfully good-tempered, sir—nice and—and—sweet—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence, Bunter, you will take a hundred lines for impertinence! If you speak again at the table, I shall cane you!"

Luckily, brekker was near its end, and Billy Bunter contrived to remain silent till the finish. But he blinked very uneasily at Mr. Quelch when the Remove went out. Catching the gimlet-eye, he jumped, and bolted after the other fellows. The gimlet-eye followed him grimly—very grimly indeed.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Chance for Pon!

CECIL PONSONBY, that morning, sat in the Fourth Form at Highcliffe School, with a sullen face, glinting eyes, and black bitterness in his heart.

He gave little attention to Mr. Mobbs, his Form-master.

That was nothing unusual. Pon was allowed to slack almost as much as he liked by "Snobby Mobby."

Other fellows in the Highcliffe Fourth grinned when they glanced at Pon, or looked derisive or scornful.

Even his own knatty friends were not proud of Pon that day. In fact, Gadsby & Co. made little secret of the fact that they were ashamed of him.

Courtenay ignored him. The Caterpillar seemed to have forgotten his existence. If Pon glanced at them—as he did several times with evil eyes—they disregarded his glances.

The superb Pon was, in point of fact, an object of contempt. And it was likely to be a long time before the scene in his study was forgotten.

A fellow was entitled to steer clear of scrapping if he liked. But to ask for trouble—to beg for it—and show the white feather when it came, was really not the thing.

Everybody knew that Ponsonby had deliberately engineered the shindy with the Greyfriars fellows the previous day, partly because he detested them, but chiefly as a shrewd knock at the captain of the Fourth. He had banked on Courtenay's patience, though he had not quite realised that, to let him get by with it.

Next time they came he would have played the same game over again—if allowed to do so—which meant, in effect, that he was going to break off the friendship between Frank Courtenay and Harry Wharton & Co. Obviously they could not visit Highcliffe if a shindy happened every time they came. It might have led to the cancelling of games fixtures, which, undoubtedly, was one of Pon's objects.

Now Ponsonby had to throw up that game. That was bad enough, but

worse than that was the fact that every fellow in the Form knew why.

He was going to throw it up, because he was afraid to carry it on. He had no other reason, and nobody supposed that he had.

Harry Wharton & Co. were coming over the next half-holiday to tea with Courtenay in his study. All the Fourth knew that Ponsonby would steer clear of them when they came, not because he wanted to, but because he feared to be called to account if he did not.

It was a humiliating and ridiculous position for Pon—especially as he was accustomed to carrying his head very high.

Every time he thought of the scene in the study his cheeks burned. He had deliberately provoked trouble, that he could not face. He could have kept out of it quite easily, but he had not chosen to do that. He had asked for it, begged for it, and crumpled up under it.

His own friends were ashamed of him. And his lofty and arrogant manners and customs had made him more enemies than friends.

When the Highcliffe Fourth went out after class, Monson and Vavasour did not seem to see Pon. Drury and Merton walked out with him, but strolled away. Even Gadsby, who stuck to him, looked uncomfortable.

Smithson of the Fourth, passing Pon, dropped a cheery word into his ear.

"Funk!"

Then he walked on, laughing.

Ponsonby affected not to hear. Gadsby looked at him with a curling lip. Gaddy was no hero; but he would not have stood that.

Pon tramped across the quad, his hands driven deep into his pockets, his brows knitted. Gadsby loitered by his side. No doubt the thing would blow over, but, just at present, Pon's friends were not proud of being seen with him.

"I'll make him sorry for it!" Ponsonby muttered, at last, his voice almost choking with rage, shame, and humiliation.

"Who—Smithson?" asked Gadsby. "Let's go after the cad now—you can lick that swab, Pon, if you can't lick Courtenay!"

"Hang Smithson! I'm speaking of that cad—that rotter—that—that—"

Pon choked.

"If you mean Courtenay, you'd better let him alone!" said Gadsby dryly. "Everybody knows now that you funk the fellow—you've left no doubt on that subject. Why the dooce couldn't you leave him alone if you couldn't face him when he got his rag out? You know as well as I do that he's steered clear of trouble with you all this term, though you've asked for a lot!"

Ponsonby gave his friend an evil look. "He picked on me—you and Monson were in it, too—"

"We backed you up," said Gadsby, "and we'll do the same again, too. If he'd picked on me, I should have been booked for a licking, I know; but I'd have put up a scrap. So would Monson."

"Didn't I put up a scrap?" hissed Ponsonby.

"Oh, yes, when he smacked your face," sneered Gadsby, "and you pitched into him when his foot slipped, and cried off when he got going. He had harder knocks than you had, as far as it went, and you backed out! Why couldn't you leave him alone, in the first place?"

"I can't handle him with my hands," muttered Ponsonby. "But there are lots of other ways. I'll make him sorry for it!"

"You could handle him with your

hands, if you tried. It would be even chances if you stood up to him."

"Oh, shut up!"

Gadsby shrugged his shoulders, and left his disgruntled friend. He had had enough of Pon's savage, sulky temper, and he was far from keen on the company of a fellow at whom the finger of scorn was pointed in his Form.

Ponsonby slouched away by himself.

It was not like the superb Pon to want to avoid the public eye. But he wanted to avoid it now. Contempt is said to pierce even the shell of the tortoise; and Pon was by no means so thick-skinned as a tortoise.

Courtenay and the Caterpillar appeared in his view, walking and chatting together. Pon's eyes burned at the captain of the Fourth.

Somehow—anyhow—he was going to avenge his defeat and humiliation. Any means were good enough. But how?

He slouched on, his hands driven deep into his pockets. In one pocket his fingers came into contact with an article he had quite forgotten. It was the gold chain he had taken from Billy Bunter.

In the stress of what had happened since, Pon had forgotten Bunter and his "cat-and-mouse" game with that fat youth.

He remembered now. It was a satisfaction to him, in his present mood, to think of the worried, terrified state of mind that Bunter must be in.

But the fat Owl of Greyfriars was nothing to him—Bunter was beneath his dislike. It amused him to torment the fat fool, that was all. If he could have held a similar advantage over the fellow he hated and loathed—

Ponsonby hardly knew, himself, how the idea germinated in his mind—born of hatred and malice, and longing for revenge. But it came—and his brow grew darker, blacker, and sheer evil gleamed in his eyes.

Would it work? Pacing under the old trees, his hands in his pockets, he thought it over in all its bearings, under all its aspects.

That gold chain had been taken from a master's study at Greyfriars. Only he and Gadsby knew that Bunter had taken it. He need say nothing, he could make sure that Gadsby would say nothing, and Bunter, for his own sake, would say nothing. If the chain was not found, it would be a case of theft.

Courtenay had been at Greyfriars School about the same time. From what Pon had heard, he had had to wait there till his friends came in.

Where had he waited—and how long? Had he had time and opportunity for such an act?

If he had, it was only necessary for that chain to be transferred from Ponsonby's pocket to some hiding-place in Courtenay's study!

At that dreadful thought, even Pon paled a little. Rascal as he was, unscrupulous as he was, he would have driven it from his mind—in other circumstances. Now he did not.

He welcomed it; he was soon gloating over it!

The fellow who had humiliated him under the eyes of everyone he knew—what a retaliation on him! The coward's blow, the white feather, the shame that clothed him like a garment—all that would be forgotten, in the tremendous sensation of a fellow expelled from Highcliffe for theft!

Sacked—sacked in disgrace! Pon's eyes gleamed and glinted.

When the fellow was gone, he would regain all he had lost—he had been captain of the Fourth before Courtenay came. The fellow had been his rival, and enemy, in everything; and this was



So fierce was Ponsonby's sudden rush, that Courtenay gave ground. He caught his foot in the rug and stumbled. Ponsonby was not the man to give him a chance to recover. He hurled himself at the captain of the Fourth, hitting out furiously. His right came home, and then his left, and Courtenay went spinning: "Good old Pon!" exclaimed Drury.

a chance to get rid of him for ever. Sacked — sacked from Highcliffe! Courtenay sacked—in disgrace! His eyes danced.

Yet even Pon, wicked as he was, had not made up his mind when the dinner-bell rang, and he went back to the House. There were grinning faces at the Fourth Form table.

Pon knew why, when he sat down in his accustomed place.

There was something under his feet—something warm! He glanced down in surprise. It was a hot-water bottle!

He stared at it, not catching on for a moment. Then a snigger from Smithson enlightened him.

"Cure for cold feet! Ha, ha!"

The chuckle ran up and down the table. This was a jape on Pon!

Savagely he kicked the hot-water bottle away. The Caterpillar was smiling—even Courtenay's face broke into a grin. He had known nothing of Smithson's little joke—certainly he would have had no hand in such a jest. But Ponsonby's eyes burned at him across the table.

It was a settled matter now. That trifle had settled it; and Ponsonby's mind was made up.

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Blow for Bunter!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

"Bow-wow!"

After class at Greyfriars that day, one urgent and important matter weighed on the fat mind of William George Bunter.

He had to go over to Highcliffe, see Ponsonby, and get that miserable chain back. And he had, if he could, to dodge a ragging when he got there.

Less important matters were on the minds of Harry Wharton & Co. Merely games practice; but it seemed important enough to the chums of the Remove. So, unheeding Bunter, they went down to games practice.

"Beasts!" groaned Bunter.

He had to go. His misgivings that morning had proved to be unfounded—nothing, so far, had been missed by Quelch. Nothing, at all events, had been heard of it—and there was no doubt that everybody would hear when the discovery was made. There was still time, if that unspeakable beast Ponsonby let him have the chain.

Games practice claiming most of the Remove, Billy Bunter had, at least, a chance to borrow a bike. He selected Frank Nugent's — chiefly because Nugent was the best-tempered fellow in the Remove, and least likely to boot him.

Having wheeled Nugent's bike out, the fat Owl mounted, and rode away for Highcliffe on his own.

His misgivings were deep. Pon might, or might not, hand over the chain; but whether he got the chain or not, it was very probable that he would get another ragging. But the hapless fat Owl had to take his chance.

He rode past Courtfield, and followed the Highcliffe road; but when Highcliffe School came in sight, his podgy heart almost failed him.

He slowed down. His eyes, and his spectacles, fell on a well-dressed figure strolling on the road, between the school gates and the fence of the paddock where Bunter had had his misadventure.

"That beast!" breathed Bunter.

It was Cecil Ponsonby—and he was alone!

That was so much to the good, at all events. Bunter was able to see the beast and speak to him without going into Highcliffe at all, and without

running into a gang of the young rascals. The fat Owl brightened considerably.

Nothing could have been better for Bunter, in fact. He even wondered whether Pon had guessed that he might come over, and walked out to meet him on the road after class—really, it looked like it.

As a matter of fact, it meant exactly that!

Pon was strolling to and fro, evidently waiting for somebody to appear. Bunter hoped that he was the expected person.

Clearly, he was—for as soon as Ponsonby spotted Bunter on the bike, he came quickly towards the fat junior.

Billy Bunter jumped down. The farther from Highcliffe that the interview took place, the safer for Bunter. He waited for Pon to come up.

He blinked uneasily at the dandy of Highcliffe as he came. If the brute was going to rag, Bunter could not stop him.

To his immense relief, Pon did not look like ragging. He gave the Owl of Greyfriars a nod.

"I was rather expectin' to see you," he remarked. "I've been waitin' since class."

"I—I thought I'd come!" stammered Bunter. "I—I say, let me have it—"

"Step in here," said Ponsonby, moving towards the gap in the paddock fence.

"I—I say—I—I'd rather stay here, old chap!" mumbled Bunter. He had not forgotten stepping into that paddock the previous afternoon.

"Please yourself," answered Ponsonby carelessly. "But if the other fellows come along and spot you—"

"I—I—I'll come."

Bunter leaned the bike on the fence

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and stepped through the gap after Ponsonby.

Within the fence he was out of sight from the road—and there he stopped. He was not going farther, if that was Pon's game.

But that was not Pon's game. Bunter was not likely to guess what Pon's game was now.

The dandy of Highcliffe leaned on the fence, his hands in his pockets, regarding the fat Owl with a smiling face. Bunter did not trust Pon's smiles—and he watched him warily.

"I—I say, you're going to let me have it back, Pon?" he pleaded. "I say, old Quelch hasn't missed it yet. I only want to put it back."

"If that's so, it's all right," drawled Ponsonby.

"I—I give you my word!" gasped Bunter.

"That's worth a lot, isn't it?" said Ponsonby. "Don't be an ass! Look here, you said that that chain belonged to your Form-master, Quelch! If it does, how did you get hold of it?"

"The beast whopped me!" explained Bunter. "I—I thought I'd get even with him, by hiding that chain—and—and—"

"How did you get at it, then?"

"You see, it's broken—that's why he wasn't using it, I suppose. He had it in his hand when I went to his study to speak about my lines. He chucked it into a drawer of his table when he was going to whop me. So—so that's how I knew. And—and when I took in my lines, he wasn't there, so—so—"

"So you pinched it?"

"Deast! I—I mean, no, old chap! I took it for a lark!" groaned Bunter. "I wish I hadn't now! Don't I just!"

Ponsonby was scanning the fat junior's face as he spoke.

He could see that this was the truth, and he knew how the gold chain had fallen into Bunter's hands. Mr. Quelch had left it in an unlocked drawer in his study, and left the study. Anybody might have taken it. No one could know, except Bunter, at what precise time it had been taken.

"If I get it back before Quelch looks

for it, it's all right, you see?" pursued Bunter. "I—I say, be a good chap and let me have it!"

"You've kept it dark?" asked Ponsonby.

"Eh? Of course!" Bunter blinked at him. "Think I'd tell anybody?"

Ponsonby laughed.

"Hardly! Well, that's all right, then! You've only got to put it back, and no harm's done."

"That's it!" gasped Bunter in immense relief. "That's all, Pon!"

"Oh, there was somethin' I wanted to ask you, Bunter," said Ponsonby casually. "I dare say you knew there was a row at Highcliffe yesterday, when Wharton and his gang came over—"

"Eh? Yes! But I say, about that chain—"

"I've heard that Courtenay went over to see them afterwards, and that there was rather a row at Greyfriars! Is that so?"

It did not occur to Bunter that Pon had heard nothing of the kind but was fishing for information.

"Oh, no!" he answered. "I wasn't there, but I heard that Courtenay came over, and had to wait till they came in. I never heard of any row."

"He just waited for Wharton in his study?"

"Oh, no, he wouldn't go up to a study if a fellow wasn't there," answered Bunter. "He waited in the visitors' room, of course."

Ponsonby's eyes gleamed. He had visited Skinner of the Remove more than once, and knew a good deal about the interior topography of Greyfriars. He knew that the visitors' room, where he had sometimes waited himself, was at the end of the corridor on which the masters' studies opened.

He knew enough now—and he did not desire to excite Bunter's suspicions by pursuing the subject. He let it drop at that.

"I say, old chap, I've got to get back!" mumbled Bunter. "I say, hand it over, like a good chap! I say—"

Ponsonby's face hardened. The look that came over it made him seem for the moment twenty years older. Even

the hard-hearted, unscrupulous rascal of Highcliffe did not like what he was doing. But he did it!

"Hand over what?" he asked.

Bunter stared at him.

"Eh? The chain, of course!"

"What chain?"

"You silly idiot, Quelch's chain! Wharrer you mean?"

"I want to know what you mean!"

Billy Bunter's little round eyes almost popped through his big round spectacles as he stared at Ponsonby.

"G-g-gone mad?" he stammered.

"You've got Quelch's chain! You know you took it from me in this paddock yesterday?"

"I think you'd find it rather hard to prove that!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"Don't you?"

"Why, Gadsby knows—he was there—" shrieked Bunter.

"You'd find it hard to prove that, either."

Billy Bunter leaned weakly against the paddock fence.

He gazed at Ponsonby in horror and utter dismay. That awful rotter meant to keep the chain and make out that he had never had it. Bunter's fat brain swam.

"Oh!" he gasped. "You—you awful tick! You jolly well know—" He gurgled. "Look here, I'll tell Quelch that—"

"You can tell your beak anythin' you like, if he finds out that you've pinched his chain! For your own sake, I'd advise you to keep it dark. Please yourself, of course."

Ponsonby stepped out of the gap into the road and walked back to Highcliffe. He left Billy Bunter in a state of collapse.

It was ten minutes or more before the hapless Owl of the Remove dragged himself back to the bicycle. He hardly knew how he got back to Greyfriars. Billy Bunter's fatuous fatheadedness had landed him in many a scrape; but never into so disastrous a scrape as this.

THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER.

What's The Matter With Bunter?

"SEEN Bunter?"
"Lots of times!"
"Fathead! Know where he is?"

"Quite!"
"Will you tell me, then, fathead?"

"That," said Peter Todd, "depends."

He eyed Nugent of the Remove. He had last seen Frank Nugent at games practice when he had looked as cheery and good-tempered as usual. Now it was after tea; and Nugent's mood seemed to have changed. So far from looking good-tempered, he looked quite bad-tempered and rather excited.

The fact that he had a cricket stump gripped in his hand looked as if, much as he wanted to see Bunter, it would be to Bunter's benefit to avoid an interview.

"You howling ass!" said Nugent, glaring at Peter. "What do you mean, if you've got sense enough to mean anything?"

"Exactly what I say!" answered Toddy. "It depends! If you're going to whop Bunter with that stump, I feel sure that Bunter would rather I didn't mention where he was. What do you think?"

Peter, in the doorway of Study No. 7, smiled genially at Nugent as he inquired. Remove fellows, in the passage, grinned. Nugent glared.

"I'm going to whop him till he bursts!" he roared. "He's had my

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bike out, and brought it back smothered with mud with a bent pedal and a puncture. I'm going to give him a tip about borrowing a fellow's jigger, see? Is he in the study?"

Looking past Peter, Nugent could see nothing of the fat Owl in Study No. 7. Still, Bunter might have taken cover.

"Sure Bunter had it?" asked Peter. "Mustn't whop even Bunter on suspicion!"

"Of course it was Bunter, fathead! Think anybody else would treat a jigger like that? If it wasn't, he can tell me so."

"Give him a chance before you start in with the stump, what?" suggested Peter amicably.

"I say, I never had it, Nugent," came a fat squeak from the study.

"Oh! You're there!" roared Nugent, and he shoved Peter to one side and tramped into Study No. 7. "Where are you, you fat freak?"

"Beast!" The voice came from the armchair, the high back of which was turned towards the door. Nugent stepped round it.

In the armchair reposed the fat figure of William George Bunter. He was slumped there in a dismal heap, with an attitude and look of such utter dejection that Nugent was rather disarmed.

Something seemed to be amiss with Billy Bunter. Instead of hooking him out of the armchair, and laying on the cricket stump, Nugent stared at him.

Bunter did not move. He blinked back dismally at Nugent.

"Leave a fellow alone, you beast!" he mumbled. "I never had your bike! I'd have asked you, too, only you were at games practice. I haven't punctured it, either."

"Who did, then?" booted Nugent.

"How should I know? I know there wasn't any puncture in it when I put it back in the shed. Besides, it was punctured before I had it. I noticed that at once when I took it off the stand. Not that I had it, you know. I-I haven't been out on a bike since class at all."

"Isn't he a cough-drop?" said Peter Todd admiringly. "How does he do it?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You fat villain!" said Nugent. "You've mucked it up with mud, bent the pedal, and punctured it!"

"I haven't!" howled Bunter. "I think it was Smithy had it. I-I saw him hanging about the bike-shed."

"Why, you fat villain!" exclaimed the Bounder, in the doorway.

"Oh, I-I didn't see you there, Smithy! I-I mean, it was Newland had it; I saw him hanging about the bike-shed. I think he had it, Nugent—in fact, I know he had. I saw him wheeling it out, and said—Keep off, you beast!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And I had a tumble, too!" said Bunter pathetically. "Skidded over, and came down wallop! Oh dear! Don't you pitch into me, you beast, because Smithy had your bike—I mean, Newland! I've got it coming from Quelch, too! Oh crikey!"

Frank Nugent eyed him. He was naturally rather in a state of excitement over the state of the borrowed bike. But he could see that the fat Owl was in trouble of some kind. The good temper on which Bunter had relied came to the rescue, and Nugent lowered the stump.

"What's the matter with you, you fat ass?" he asked. "I knew you'd

had a tumble when I saw the bike. Hurt?"

"Yes! No! I mean, yes! Fearfully hurt! I—I've broken my leg, I think—at least, I've got an awful pain in it!"

"Which leg?"

"I—I forget—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" came a yell.

A dozen fellows had gathered round Study No. 7, at the sight of Nugent with the cricket stump. They seemed rather entertained.

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at!" groaned Bunter. "You might be sympathetic when a fellow's in an awful scrape! Oh dear!"

"You howling ass!" said Nugent.

"What scrape are you in?"

"Oh, nothing!" said Bunter hastily.

"Nothing at all! I'm not afraid of Quelch getting after me, or anything like that!"

"Oh crumbs!"

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

"He was larking in Quelch's study yesterday, I know. He bagged something, but Quelch can't have missed it yet."

"I didn't!" howled Bunter. He glared round from the armchair at Vernon-Smith. "I never went near Quelch's study yesterday. Don't you get making out that I went there, you beast!"

"You jolly well did!" chuckled the Bounder. "If you've been playing tricks on his jolly old manuscripts, I'm sorry for you!"

"I haven't! I never touched them! I was jolly careful not to touch them! Besides, I wasn't there!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, if you've got it coming from Quelch—" said Nugent.

He paused, put the stump under his arm, and went out of the study.

Billy Bunter hardly heeded him. Slumped in the armchair, he blinked dismally before him, with the expression of a fellow who failed to find life worth living.

Peter Todd gave him a penetrating look. It was only too clear that something was wrong with Bunter, and there could be little doubt that it was his Form-master's wrath that he dreaded.

"What's the matter, Bunter?" asked Peter quietly. "What have you been up to in Quelch's study?"

"Nothing!" groaned Bunter.

"Smithy thinks you've bagged something."

"I—I—I haven't!"

"Well, I don't see how you can have—but it looks like it!" said Peter, perplexed. "If you have, Quelch can't have missed it, or there would have been a row. You can shove it back, whatever it was."

"I—I can't!"

"Why not, ass? If it was a book or something, or a bundle of his dashed manuscripts, or—"

"It wasn't!" groaned Bunter.

"Then what was it?"

"N-nothing!"

"You priceless idiot!" said Peter.

"Queleby's not the man to lark with. It's quite plain that you've shifted something out of his study. That's as plain as

your face—which is saying a lot. Whatever it is, you can put it back. Look here, I'll go and spot whether he's in his study, and give you a chance."

Billy Bunter groaned. That would have been a good offer, if the missing article had been in his possession. But it was not in his possession, or likely to be again.

"Well, what about it?" asked Peter. "I tell you, I'll help. It's up to me, as your keeper."

Bunter blinked at him, with a gleam of hope.

"I—I say, Peter, you stand by me, old chap! I—I say, you were out on your bike yesterday afternoon. Suppose—suppose I was with you—"

"You weren't."

"Well, suppose I was," argued Bunter. "You could stretch a point! If—if Quelch begins asking fellows where I was on Wednesday afternoon, you—you just mention that—that I was out of gates with you—see? Then—then he won't fancy that I—I might have gone to his study and taken it."

"Taken what?"

"Oh, nothing!"

Peter regarded his fat studymate fixedly.

"You could—could stretch a point, old chap," urged Bunter. "I—I'll do as much for you another time."

"I won't whop you," said Peter thoughtfully. "I imagine you've got enough coming from Quelch! But if you ask me to tell lies for you again, old fat man, pack some exercise-books in your bags first!"

"Beast!" groaned Bunter.

Peter Todd left the study, very thoughtful and rather worried.

Billy Bunter groaned again as he went. Only groans could express the hapless fat Owl's feelings—and he groaned, and groaned again, and yet again.

THE NINETEENTH CHAPTER.

No Luck for Bunter!

"I SAY, you fellows!" The Famous Five did not reply: "Buzz off, Bunter!" They did not accelerate.

They were discussing the approaching Easter holidays—a subject on which they did not desire to hear anything from Bunter. Nevertheless, they came to a stop, and gave the fat Owl his head. The only too obvious fact that Bunter was in a scrape of some kind was the reason.

It was break on Friday morning. By that time all the Remove knew that Bunter was in some sort of a mysterious scrape.

The general opinion was that he had

(Continued on next page.)

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played some idiotic prank in Quelch's study which the Remove master had not yet discovered, but which he might discover at any moment. That, indeed, was the case, though nobody dreamed of guessing how awfully serious it was.

"Go it, old fat man!" said Bob Cherry encouragingly. "Tell your Uncle Robert all about it!"

"Open confession is good for the soul!" said Johnny Bull, with a grin. "Cough it up!"

"What have you done to Quelch?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Oh, nothing! Don't you fellows fancy that I did anything in Quelch's study on Wednesday?" said Bunter anxiously. "If anything happened, my mind is a perfect blank on the subject. But—but I never get justice here, as you know. Quelch might think I went to his study, because I took in my lines, you know."

"The mightfulness is terrific!" gasped Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"But lots of fellows have been to his study since," argued Bunter. "How's Quelch going to know it happened on Wednesday? I thought of that at the time, you know. I'm no fool!"

"My mistake! I thought you were!" said Bob Cherry. "You sort of give that impression, old fat man! What happened on Wednesday?"

"Nothing that I know of!" answered Bunter, shaking his head, while the Famous Five grinned. "It's Friday now, and Quelch hasn't missed it yet, and—"

"Missed what?" chortled Bob.

"Oh, nothing! There's nothing to miss, so far as I know," said Bunter hastily. "And if he does miss anything, it might have happened yesterday, or to-day—not on Wednesday at all. You were in his study yesterday, Wharton, so it might have been you."

"What might have?" asked the captain of the Remove.

"Oh, nothing! But I don't see that I come into it at all," said Bunter. "I don't see why Quelch should pick on me, when it comes out. So long as I don't say anything, it's all right. Still, I'd rather be—be off the scene, you know, when—when it comes out. I don't mean that there's anything to come out, you know. So far as I know, there isn't! Still, I'd rather be away when it does. I—I say, you fellows think there's a chance of getting week-end leave from Quelch?"

"Not a lot," said Harry Wharton. "Do you mean that you expect Quelch to bowl you out to-morrow, you fat frump?"

"There isn't anything to bowl out, as

I haven't done anything, you beast. Still, he might miss it to-morrow, being a half-holiday. I know he's going down to Courtfield with Capper, because I heard them talking about it. He will have to take it some time, so most likely he will take it then—I mean, he would, if it was there!"

The Famous Five gazed at Bunter. It was clear that something was missing from Quelch's study, which the Remove master might be expected to take with him when he walked down to Courtfield on Saturday afternoon. That it was an article of jewellery that required repair, they did not think of guessing.

"Have you bagged Quelch's walking-stick, you fat ass?" asked Bob.

"No, you ass!"

"Or his umbrella?" asked Nugent.

"No, you fathead!"

"Not his silk hat?" asked Johnny Bull.

"No, you idiot!"

"Blessed if I see what else he would want to take for a walk on a half-holiday," said Harry.

"Well, I mean, he's got to get it mended—"

"Something he wants mended? What the dickens is it, then?"

"I—I don't know! I—I know nothing about it, of course," said Bunter.

"Still, if there was something busted that he wanted to get mended, he would have to take it sooner or later, and as he's going down to Courtfield to-morrow afternoon, ten to one he will think of it—see? Well, if I get week-end leave, I shall be miles away, and he can't pick on me."

"Oh crumbs!"

"What do you fellows think?" asked Bunter anxiously. "Johnny got leave one week-end, when his Aunt Bull was ill. Why shouldn't I?"

"Phone to one of your aunts to get ill by to-morrow!" suggested Johnny Bull sarcastically.

"I—I don't suppose she would, just to oblige me—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Still, a fellow could say so," said Bunter brightly. "After all, Quelch took Bull's word that his aunt was ill, and I dare say it was only spoof—"

"What?" roared Johnny Bull.

"I wish you wouldn't yell at a chap when he's worried!" said Bunter peevishly. "I can tell you fellows this is serious. As likely as not, Quelch would pick on me. Look at the way he picked on me when Mrs. Kebble complained about that pie. I do get picked on, as you jolly well know. Look at the way they made out that I snooped Hacker's railway ticket first day of

term, just because Hacker saw me give it up at the station. I told Quelch that I never saw it and that I left it just where Hacker dropped it—but it was no good. I get picked on, and you fellows jolly well know it!"

"There couldn't have been a vacancy in any home for idiots when they sent Bunter here!" remarked Bob Cherry.

"You blithering, blithering bandersnatch!" said the captain of the Remove. "If you've bagged something out of Quelch's study that he's not likely to miss till to-morrow, you've bags of time to shove it back. And if you've got the brains of a bunny rabbit, don't start telling Quelch lies!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Try the truth, for a change!" suggested Bob. "A complete change is good for any fellow!"

"If you fellows were as truthful as me, you'd do!" yapped Bunter. "I say, I dare say my aunt is ill—just as much as Bull's aunt was, anyhow. But perhaps it might be better for my pater to be ill. Quelch couldn't possibly refuse a fellow leave if his father was ill. Now could he?"

"But your father isn't!" yelled Bob.

"Oh, really, Cherry! I wish you'd stick to the point! Suppose I say that he's got galloping plumbago—"

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

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! Quelch would be sympathetic, I fancy! I mean to say, he must have a heart of sorts! Even schoolmasters are human, more or less!" argued Bunter. "If my poor father's fearfully ill—"

"He might phone him up, and ask him how he is!" chortled Bob.

Bunter jumped.

"Oh crikey! It—it will have to be somebody not on the phone! I—I think I'll make it my Uncle George!"

"Good old Ananias!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Or Uncle William!" said Bunter thoughtfully. "That might be better, because I know he's not on the phone. What do you fellows think?"

Harry Wharton & Co. did not tell Bunter what they thought. They roared.

"I say, you fellows, do stop cackling!" snapped Bunter. "It doesn't really matter who's ill, so long as I get week-end leave. I call it rotten favouritism, if Quelch let Bull go home to see his aunt, and won't let me go to see my poor father—I mean, my poor Uncle George—that is, my poor Uncle William—I think it had better be Uncle William."

"Bull's aunt really was ill that time, you blithering ass!" gasped Bob.

"I know Bull said so. Well, I'm going to say so! I don't see why I shouldn't get by with it, if Bull did!"

Johnny Bull lifted his boot. But he put it down again. Billy Bunter was likely to get all he needed, if he essayed the extremely difficult task of pulling the leg of Henry Samuel Quelch.

"For goodness' sake, Bunter, don't be such a howling ass!" said the captain of the Remove, quite anxiously. "Quelch will spot you first shot—"

"He never spotted Bull, did he?"

"But that was true, you born idiot!"

"Well, so's this!" said Bunter. "I had a letter yesterday, and it might have been in it. Quelch always seems to remember whether a fellow has a letter or not, so he will remember that I had a letter yesterday. I say, though,

(Continued on page 28.)

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IN a recent chat I put forward the question: "Who can boast the largest mail?" This week I am going to ask you fellows who is the most talked-of schoolboy of the day? And I'll bet a pound to a doughnut very few of you will be stumped for an answer! Undoubtedly the name before the public eye at the present moment is Billy Bunter. The Owl of the Greyfriars Remove is in the limelight with a vengeance! Almost every daily paper recently has given publicity to Mr. Frank Richards' popular schoolboy character, and some millions of people must have seen the announcements to the effect that the one and only "Billy" is to feature as a star character in a series of forthcoming films.

So many readers have written me on this subject that it is impossible for me to reply to them all personally. The filming of Billy Bunter, as a matter of fact, is a secret I have had up my sleeve for some considerable time now. Strangely to say, however, the news has leaked out, with the result that the "big Dailies" have given the matter a great deal of publicity. At the time of going to press with this issue of the MAGNET I can only say that work on a series of Greyfriars films has commenced. To all you readers who ask for further information my answer is: "Wait and see." Rest assured, I will keep you all well informed as to what is happening in this respect.

From Tom Mansfield, of Aldershot, comes a query concerning the gentleman who has passed down to history under the nickname of

"DIRTY DICK!"

Who was he, asks Tom, and how did he get that nickname? Actually there are two men who are known by that name. The first was a merchant of Leadenhall Street, London, who, in his younger days, was something of a fop and a dandy. He had a flourishing hardware business; but, after a while, became something of a miser. He was so mean that he would not have his shop cleaned, and the place became so dirty that people complained. But he still continued until the lease of his shop ran out. This particular merchant would not wash, and he wore the dirtiest of clothes, although he was worth at least £10,000. This he spent, and he was eventually forced to leave London. He became a tramp and at last reached Musselborough, in Scotland, where he fell ill. He finally reached Haddington, where he died in poverty.

Another "Dirty Dick" had a wine shop in Bishopsgate, which he refused to have cleaned. And there it remains to this day! The counters and floors are kept clean, but the ceilings are still thick with the dust of ages. "Dirty Dick's" is now one of the show places of London.

Why are London District Messengers known as "Jaggers"? Do you know? At any rate, Arthur Fields, of Hampstead, doesn't, so he asks me to tell him. Well, the original Jaggers was

THE BOY WHO BEAT THE POST!

When the District Messengers were started one of the earliest was a boy named Jaggers. The messengers had quite exciting jobs in those days, and Jaggers, who was then only a little over 14 years of age, was frequently sent on messages to Chicago, New York, and Philadelphia. On many of these errands he frequently got there some time before the post, and eventually became a popular hero, and was presented to Queen Victoria.

In those days District Messengers were often sent on jobs that took them half round the world. One of them was sent to deliver a dog to the Sultan of Turkey, and the Sultan was so pleased that he conferred upon the particular messenger an "Order of Merit"!

WHEN talking about "Bootleggers," one invariably thinks of America. But do you know that there are

NATIVE BOOTLEGGERS IN AFRICA

who are pursuing a flourishing trade? The French authorities in Central Africa are trying to prevent the natives from getting alcohol of any description. But it's not so easy. The natives have discovered that they can make the most potent spirits from such things as palm-trees, rice, maize, and herbs. Palm wine is their favourite, and by tapping palm-trees, they can obtain a sort of wine that only costs twopenny a bottle!

Once a palm-tree has been tapped by these bootleggers it is ruined so far as the palm-oil is concerned. So the most strenuous efforts are being made to track down these native bootleggers and thus preserve the valuable palm-oil business which has flourished in the parts of Central Africa which are under French jurisdiction.

Before using up all the space at my disposal this week, I feel that I must remind you of the fact that this week's "GEM" contains a specially amusing and interesting Greyfriars story by Frank Richards. The title is:

"THE FALL OF THE FADDIST!"

and tells how Harry Wharton & Co. hit back at their temporary Form-master who has consistently interfered with their rights and diet. You will be highly amused when you read how the Removees—but, I'll leave it to Frank Richards to tell you all about it in this week's "GEM."

Here is an amusing query which comes from one of my Portsmouth readers. He wants to know what people mean when they use the expression:

"WHEN THE GHOST WALKS."

This is really theatrical slang, and means that salaries will be paid. If, by any chance, actors do not receive their salaries, it is said that the ghost didn't walk! The expression dates back to the days of

an old actor who was playing the part of the ghost in "Hamlet." He was in a small touring company, and had often been "diddled" by not being paid after his week's work. In consequence of this he used to make sure by demanding his salary on the morning it was due. If he didn't get it, he simply said: "Then the ghost won't walk to-night!" He generally got his salary, because you can't very well produce "Hamlet" without the ghost! His saying caught on, and it is common parlance in theatrical circles nowadays.

HAVE you ever seen ships tied up in dock and noticed big circles of tin fastened around the mooring ropes? Harry Cleaver, of Cardiff, has, and he wants to know why these tin discs are there. They are really

TIN DISCS FOR RATS,

and are placed around the ropes to prevent the rodents climbing up the ropes and getting aboard ships. Rats are the most persistent stowaways you could possibly imagine. Give them a chance to get aboard a ship, and they're there! A rat's idea of a really good time is to be a stowaway on a grain ship, so that it can eat to its heart's delight.

Alsation dogs have a reputation for being savage, and one of my Bristol readers, who is thinking of buying one, asks me to tell him if this is true. He wants to know

ARE ALSATIANS BRED FROM WOLVES?

The answer, as they say in Parliament, is in the negative! It is an exploded idea that Alsations have a big wolf strain in them. Dogs were the first domesticated animals in the world, and if you want to trace their wolf descent, you'll have to go back to the days of the cave-men. In its native country the Alsation is known as the "Berger d'Alsace," and in Germany it is called the Shepherd Dog.

Alsations are docile, thoroughly reliable, faithful and vigilant, and make excellent watchdogs. Of course, there are cases of savage Alsations—but there are cases of savage dogs of other breeds. So long as your dog is well looked after and trained properly, he won't go savage, so my Bristol reader need not fear buying an Alsation for a pet.

AND now for next Saturday's programme:

"PONSONBY PULLS THE STRINGS!"

By Frank Richards,

is the title of the long complete story of the world-famous schoolboys—Harry Wharton & Co. As the title suggests, Ponsonby, of Highcliffe, plays a prominent part. Having been soundly thrashed by Frank Courtenay, Ponsonby's feelings towards the junior skipper are as bitter as any fellow's feelings can be. Given a chance to score over his enemy, the end of Highcliffe seizes it like a hungry dog does a bone. Fortunately, however, for Courtenay, he has the staunchest of friends in Harry Wharton & Co., of the Greyfriars Remove, a friendship which Ponsonby, with all his trickery, fails to sever. If you fail to read this great yarn, chums, you'll be missing the treat of the week.

And if you like fun you'll get more than your fill in the rib-tickling issue of the "Greyfriars Herald." The Greyfriars Rhymester's contribution, too, is as good as ever. Be wise and order your copy of next Saturday's MAGNET to-day, chums.

YOUR EDITOR.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1513.

The ANANIAS of the REMOVE!

(Continued from page 26.)

do you fellows think an accident might go down better? There's lots of motor-bus accidents—"

"Fathead!"

"Or flu!" said Bunter. "Everybody's got flu now—that sounds better, perhaps. It doesn't really matter much, so long as I get week-end leave. Quelch is pretty certain to miss it to-morrow, and if I'm out of sight he won't pick on me, as usual. Out of sight, out of mind, you know!"

The bell rang for third school.

Billy Bunter rolled off to the House in much better spirits.

His fat mind was relieved.

Ten to one, Quelch would miss that beastly watch-chain on Saturday. Bunter was sorry, of course, for Quelch to lose it. But that wasn't Bunter's fault—that was Ponsonby's fault.

Pon had it—not Bunter! Bunter had done his best—even at the risk of ragging—to get it back for Quelch. He could do no more. There was one urgent and important consideration in his fat mind—to save his own fat skin!

Only too well he knew he would quack under Quelch's gimlet-eye when Quelch started inquiring after that rotten chain. Quelch couldn't fix him with that gimlet-eye if he wasn't present.

Week-end leave was the thing. When he came back on Monday the brunt of it would be over. He might even contrive to prolong that week-end half-way through the following week, somehow. Out of sight was out of mind. Bunter felt that he was backing a winner this time.

Mr. Quelch lot his Form in for third school. An anxious blink from Bunter showed that he was in his usual mood—nothing had happened yet. Nothing was going to happen till the morrow, when Bunter would be at a safe distance.

The juniors took their places.

Bunter stood up.

"If you please, sir—" he squeaked.

"Shut up, you fat ass!" whispered Bob Cherry.

It was a last effort to save the egregious Owl from himself.

Bunter did not heed.

Mr. Quelch glanced at him—not encouragingly.

"What is it, Bunter?"

"If—if you please, sir, may—may I have leave to go home for the week-end?" asked Bunter. "It's a serious illness, sir—"

"Indeed! If that is the case, Bunter, you may certainly have leave," said Mr. Quelch. "If it is a near relative—"

"Oh, yes, sir. My poor father, sir, is—"

"Is your father ill, Bunter?"

"Oh! I—I mean, my uncle, sir—"

"You mean your uncle?" repeated Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, sir; my poor Uncle George," said Bunter. "It—it was in my letter yesterday, sir. He's asking for me, sir."

"If your Uncle George is seriously ill, Bunter, and asking for you, you may certainly go!" said Mr. Quelch, in a grinding voice. "You may show me the letter."

"I—I left it in my study, sir—"

"You may go and fetch it, Bunter."

"I—I mean, I—I burned it, sir!" stammered Bunter.

Harry Wharton & Co. sat with expressionless faces; but on other faces grins were dawning. The Remove fellows wondered whether even that ass Bunter fancied that he would get by with this.

Apparently Bunter did. He blinked hopefully at his Form-master.

Mr. Quelch's expression did not indicate that there was much ground for hope. He fixed the Owl of the Remove with a basilisk eye.

"If this is a foolish, fatuous excuse

Who says another tip-top tale
of

HARRY WHARTON & CO.?

Then read:

"THE FALL OF THE
FADDIST!"

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It's spiffing!!! And it's in the

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to obtain an extra holiday, Bunter—" said Mr. Quelch, in a deep voice.

"Oh, no, sir!" gasped Bunter. "My poor uncle's fearfully ill, sir! It's flu, sir—and—and he said in his letter that—that if he could only see me, sir, it—it would make him feel ever so much better. I—I'm his favourite nephew, sir."

"In his letter!" repeated Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, sir; that letter yesterday—"

"Your letter yesterday was addressed to you in your father's hand, Bunter, with which I am well acquainted."

"Oh! I—I mean, my—my father wrote it for him, because he was so ill, sir!" stammered Bunter. "He—he sat by the bedside and—and wrote it out for Uncle William, sir—"

"Uncle what?" shrieked Mr. Quelch.

"I mean George, sir—Uncle George!" gasped Bunter. "My pip-pip-poor Uncle George, sir! I—I meant to say George, sir, not William. It's my

Uncle George, not my Father William—I mean, my 'Uncle William—"

"How dare you utter these reckless pravarications, Bunter?" thundered Mr. Quelch. "I do not believe, for one moment, that you have a sick relative at all."

"Oh, yes, sir!" gasped Bunter. "Just—just like Bull's aunt, you know, sir. She's awfully ill—I mean he's awfully ill, and—and asking to see me, sir! He's so terribly ill, sir, that he hasn't spoken a word since they put him to bed."

"Upon my word!" articulated Mr. Quelch.

"He—he's fearfully ill, sir, and lying there speechless, and—and asking to see me—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Removites. They really could not help it! Billy Bunter was too much for them.

"Silence!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch, in a formidable voice. "Silence! Bunter, stand out from the class."

"Yes, sir. Thank you, sir!" gasped Bunter.

He rolled out from the Form, apparently under the impression that he was obtaining the desired leave. On that point he was quickly undeceived. Mr. Quelch grabbed up a cane from his desk.

"Bend over that form, Bunter!"

"Oh crikey! Wha-a-t for, sir?" stammered Bunter.

"I am going to cane you severely for your reckless and unscrupulous untruthfulness!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"Oh, lor! But—but my father—I mean, my uncle is—is really awfully ill, sir!" stammered Bunter. "He—he caught the flu when he was knocked over by a motor-bus. I—I—I mean—"

Bunter was getting a little mixed. "I—I mean my Father George—that is, my Uncle Father—I mean—"

"Bend over that form!" hooted Mr. Quelch. "At once!"

"Oh crikey!"

Billy Bunter bent over the form. It looked as if he was not going to get that week-end leave! He was going to get something much less agreeable!

Whack, whack, whack!

"Yow-ow-ow! Wow! Woogh!" roared Bunter.

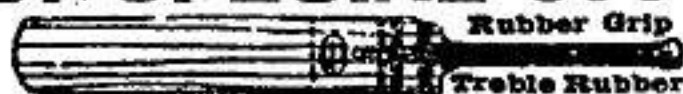
"Now go to your place, Bunter!"

Billy Bunter crawled back to his place. Evidently, he was not going to get any week-end leave. Quelch had not believed him—Bunter did not know why, but it was plain that Quelch hadn't! It was Bunter's last hope, and it had failed him—and now he had to face the music when the inevitable discovery was made on the morrow!

THE END.

(The next yarn in this grand series is entitled: "PONSONBY PULLS THE STRINGS!" Make sure of reading it by ordering next Saturday's MAGNET in good time!)

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20-3-37

TUBBY'S TRICKY MOVE!

Fun and Frolic Galore in This Week's Instalment of Dicky Nugent's Serial.
"THE ST. SAM'S TREZZURE HUNT!"

THROWN OUT!

It was the day following Doctor Birchmell's secret meeting with Serownger, of the St. Sam's Fourth, in Muggleton Woods, and four determined-looking juniors mite have been seen tramping up the drive of Sir Gouty Greybeard's residence.

"Well, here we are, you fellows!" said Jack Jolly, as he led the way up the front-door steps. "Remember, it's up to us to tell the Head plainly that we don't intend to stand any more nonsense from him!"

"Here, here!" "If he thinks that Serownger and he are going to get away with the trezzure hunt prize just because he's changed his name to Smith and become Sir Gouty's privit secretary, he's making a big mistake!" said the kaplin of the Fourth grimly. "And I'm going to tell him so!"

With these words, Jack Jolly wrenched at the massive bell-pull. A liveried funkey opened the grate door and stared down hawtily at the visitors.

"What mite you yung jents want at this 'ere ouse?" he inquired, in a rich, fruity voice.

"We want to see Mr. Smith—Sir Gouty's privit secretary," explained Jolly.

"Step hinside, yung jents!" The funkey led them across the sumptuously furnished hall to a small room from which floated faint sounds of singing and thumping. He flung open the door, and Jack Jolly & Co. found themselves gazing in wide-eyed wonderment at a most commical spectacle.

Prancing up and down the room in a gleeful dance was a tall, angular gentleman who wore riding breeches and a skull cap—in addition to a long, blue-black beard! While he danced he sang, and Jack Jolly & Co. smiled grimly as they caught the words of his song:

"Ha, ha, ha! He, he, he!" Serownger's going to win that prize for me! Duddled, dished and done the rest will be— Little fifty quid won't I love thee!"

"Ahem!" cooed the tootman, and "Mr. Smith" stopped his performance and looked round like a startled fawn.

"Bless my sole!" he eggshlaimed. "Why, it's J—"

He pulled himself up just in time. For a moment he had almost betrayed himself.

"Er—who are these yung men, James?" "If you please, sir, they're yung jents us harked to see you!"

"Mr. Smith" scratched his nose a little thoughtfully. "H'm! I can't imagine why, but I will

know you all right, anyway. You're our head-master—Doctor Birchmell!"

The juniors quite eggshlaimed to see the bogus secretary fall down on his knee at that startling accusation, grovelling for mercy and begging and praying them not to blow the guff to the porlice.

But, much to their serprize, he did nothing of the kind. All he did was to stroak his blue-black beard and smile a puzzled smile.

"Why, you must be potty!" he cried. "Doctor Birchmell? Let me see! He's the Head of St. Sam's Collidge, isn't he? A gentleman with a beard rather like my own, eggset that it's white in culler."

"Right on the wicket, sir!" nodded Frank Fearless. "It's eggseactly order to James, who appeared in an instant."

Before you could say "nife," James had summoned half a duzen burly funkeys, who proceeded to give the chums of the Fourth a proper ruff house. Jack Jolly & Co. struggled despritley. But it was of no avail, and one by one they were rushed to the door and flung out—to limp back to St. Sam's, groaning and moaning and wondering how the Head had the nerve to be such a beast!

Jack Jolly & Co. were very much serprized that the Head hadn't been more nervuss over their finding out his secret. But there was no need for their serprize, really, for in actual fakt the Head was as frightened as a kitten. He was simply snaking with fear as he rang up St. Sam's and spoke to Serownger.

"That Serownger! Serownger, we're rumbled—by Jolly and his friends! I am hoapful that they won't be such cads as to tell the porlice where I am. But I think we'd better stop meeting—or even writing letters through the post to each other!"

"Then how can I get advance information about the fourthcoming rounds of the Trezzure Hunt?" asked Serownger from the other end.

The Head pawsed. "I know! I'll leave you a copy of the whole bag of tricks at the Muggleton bunshop, and you can call for it there this afternoon. Nobody who sees you will dream of anything suspicious if you merely drop in at an innersent tuckshop. Twiggys-ous?"

"I twig, sir!" answered Serownger, with an unplezzant chuckle. Then the two arch plotters rang off.

A SHOCK FOR SCROWNGER! "Beests!" Tubby Barrell made that remark. The fattest fellow at St. Sam's was referring to the people from whom he had tried to borrow munny ever since dinner-time. He also jealously included the

tuckshop, same, who had flatly refused to give him tuck on tisk! "Beests!" repeated Tubby Barrell as he toiled down the lane leading to Muggleton. "Anybod' would think I wasn't honest, refusing to lend me even a paltry bob! As for Jolly, I've finished with him—lecturing me for five minnits before he gave me a three-ha'penny stamp for my letter to Uncle George! Mustn't forget to post that letter by the way!"

And Tubby fished out the letter from his jacket pocket and carried it in his hand for the rest of the jerney.

Five minnits later Tubby arrived at the Muggleton bunshop. "Good-afternoon, Mr. Podger!" he remarked, smirking hoapfully over the counter at the bunshop proprietor. "I've just dropped in for tea. By an over-site I've left all my munny at the skool, but I suppose you don't mind putting it on the slate!"

"Haw, haw, haw! Somethink wrong with your supposer, Master Barrell!" laughed Mr. Podger. "My motter is 'No munny—no grub!' Skeddadle!"

"Look, here, you beest! I've walked all the way from St. Sam's and—"

"Haw, haw, haw! Jest wet you need!" chuckled Mr. Podger. "All you need now is a nice walk back. That's the way to get your wait down. Master Barrell!"

Tubby Barrell glared across the counter at the yewmrous tuckshop man.

As he did so, he caught site of somethink that made him blink. It was an envelope addressed "Master Serownger"—and Tubby Barrell reckenised the handwriting in a trice. It was Doctor Birchmell's!

"Hum! Well, if you won't, you won't!" granted Tubby Barrell. "By the way, Mr. Podger, seen anything of Doctor Birchmell lately?"

"Not ney, yung sir!" answered Mr. Podger, with a shake of his head.

"Funny you should mention him 'I've just been talking about him to Mr. Smith, his secretary who's looking after Sir Gouty Greybeard's bizness affairs while Sir Gouty's away. Mr. Smith left a letter for Master Serownger."

"He did, did he?" grinned Barrell. "I'll take it and give it to Serownger if you like, Mr. Podger."

But Mr. Podger shook his head. "Thank'ee, Master Barrell. But Mr. Smith said I was to be sure nobody but Master Serownger got it. Now you skeddadle!"

With these words Mr. Podger turned to go back to his little parlour.

As he did so, Tubby Barrell leaped swiftly across the counter, and with a litening-like movement changed the letter for the one in his hand.

When Mr. Podger turned round from the doorway of his parlour, Tubby Barrell was rolling out of the bunshop—and a letter was still reposing on Mr. Podger's counter. And it natcherally didn't occur to Mr. Podger for a moment that this letter was one to Tubby Barrell's Uncle George!

Five minnits later Serownger of the Fourth sneaked furtively into the bunshop and asked if Mr. Smith had left him a letter.

Mr. Podger promptly handed over the letter Tubby had left, without even glancing at the name on the envelope, and Serownger sneaked away again, gaining all over his dial.

But when Serownger opened the letter further down the road and started reading "Dear Uncle George,—I hope you won't think me a newsance, but I am very hard up," the grin quickly vanished, and his eggsspression became simply feendish.

remarked Fearless of the Fourth, as the skool assemblled a cupple of days later for the fourth round of the Gouty Greybeard Trezzure Hunt.

"Bound to," said Bright. "By this time the Head has probably given him a full list of the trezzures required right up to the end of the hunt. I eggsspect he's got them all tuckled away in readiness."

Jack Jolly frowned. "If Serownger does win, you chaps, we shall simply have to act. Either he'll have to make a clean breast of it to Mr. Lickham—or we'll inform the porlice of the real eyedentity of 'Mr. Smith'!"

"Here, here!" Mr. Lickham russed on to the platform at that moment, putting a stop to the confab. Once again the master of the Fourth was holding one of Sir Gouty's letters in his hand.

"Here we are again, boys!" he grinned. "It is now the fourth round of the grate trezzur hunt, and I have much plezzure in oponing this letter from Sir Gouty's secretary and reading what you have to get this time."

He ripped open the envelope and read out as follows:

"St. Sam's Trezzure Hunt. Round Four. 'One mark will be awarded to the boy who first captures a live mouse. (Sined), 'ALFRED SMITH, 'Privit Secretary."

There was a grato buzz of eggssiment from the assemblled skool. "Good egg!" "This gives us all a chance, by Jove!"

"The hunt has now begun, boys!" grinned Mr. Lickham, and there was a rush for the doors. This time, however, for a change, Jack Jolly & Co. did not fall over themselves for the trezzure. Instead, they waited behind with Mr. Lickham. They wanted to see just how long a period elapsed before

Serownger turned up with the trezzure. But the chums of the Fourth were in for a big serprize.

Somebody turned up in Big Hall in less than a minnit, with a trapped mouse in a cage.

But that "somebody" was not Serownger! It was Tubby Barrell! "Here you are, sir," grinned Tubby, puffing and blowing, as he raced back to the platform.

"My win, eh, what?" "Bless my sole! I should think so, too!" gasped Mr. Lickham.

"Tubby!" ejaculated Jack Jolly. "Tubby Barrell wins!" mermered Frank Fearless, quite feintly. "Grate pip! What happened to Serownger, then?"

The heroes of the Fourth were completely mistified.

"Something's gone wrong with the Head's little plan—that's a cert!" said Jack Jolly. "What it is remains to be seen!"

(Don't miss next week's spiffing instalment, whatever you do! You'll find yung Dicky in fine fettle!)

mutts must have felt more like crying than laughing—especially the "patients"! Brown, for instance, who was supposed to be receiving treatment for a broken leg, got a real twisted ankle out of it. Russell, who was acting the part of a chap with a fractured jaw, received a genuine black eye, due to one of the first-aid exports giving him a over with his elbow!

And—oh scissors!—weren't they speedy!

Still, we all gave an encouraging cheer at the finish. If we'd learned nothing else, we'd at least learned how not to do it!

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The GREYFRIARS HERALD

No. 232.

EDITED BY HARRY WHARTON.

March 20th, 1937.



BUNTER and BARBARA —THE TRUTH!

By PETER HAZELDENE

What is the truth about the wild rumours of an impending engagement between Bunter and Barbara Redfern, of Cliff House? Sit back and hold tight and you'll hear! I'm in a position to tell you, because I've just succeeded in interviewing both parties.

When I approached Bunter and asked him for a statement, he grinned a fat grin and waved a fat palm.

"Sorry, Peter, old chap," he said. "My private affairs are my private affairs, and I don't want 'em discussed in blessed third-rate scandal sheets. Of course, I admit that Miss Redfern and I are very good friends. I entertain her lavishly. My hat! You should have seen the tea I stood her at Chunkley's the other afternoon. Fruit salad and three kinds of cake and assorted pastries! A ripping spread, I can tell you. As to any talk of an engagement, well—he, he, he—I'd rather you asked the lady about that!"

Miss Redfern was not so taciturn. "Say that again and I'll slap your face!" she said, when I touched on her rumoured engagement to Bunter. "Of all the fat little worms—"

"Exactly, Miss Redfern! But Bunter mentioned his entertaining you at Chunkley's—" "I like that!" said Miss Redfern. "It was I who did the entertaining! I'd arranged to meet Wharton in Courtfield to discuss a tennis tournament we're planning for next term. Bunter turned up with the news that Wharton had been detained for the afternoon. Must have heard it at the keyhole, from what I know of him! He asked me to have tea with him at Chunkley's, and thinking Wharton had sent him along, I went. After we'd had tea, the fat little porker had the cheek to borrow ten bob from me to pay the bill with. Just tell him, with my compliments, that if I don't get that ten bob back this week he'll have an engagement with me—in the County Court!"

And that, my 'earers, is the truth about the Bunter-Redfern engagement.

"ANTI-BLADÉ" (Remove).—"Having seen Skinner talking to the landlord of the Cross Keys, I am sure he's a loose liver." That's nothing. Having seen Maully talking to the young lady at the bunshop, we're sure he's completely lost his heart!

FIRST-AID DISPLAY WAS THIRD-RATE!

Declares BOB CHERRY



We all turned up to the First-Aid Display in the gym last Thursday. But—ye gods and little fishes!—what a display it was! I went personally to get a few useful hints. What I actually got was a jolly good laugh. Not that everybody got that out of it, mind you. Some of the poor

mutts must have felt more like crying than laughing—especially the "patients"! Brown, for instance, who was supposed to be receiving treatment for a broken leg, got a real twisted ankle out of it. Russell, who was acting the part of a chap with a fractured jaw, received a genuine black eye, due to one of the first-aid exports giving him a over with his elbow!

BRUISER BECOMES CROONER!

BOLSY SURPRISES THE NATIVES!

Of course, it's no news to any of you people that Battling Bolsover, the heavyweight would-be champ of the Remove, is rather partial to music now and again. Bolsover's Comb-and-Paper Band has often featured in the news, as we all know.

But Bolsover as a crooner is different. All the same, it's true! For several weeks past weird sounds have been heard from Bolsover's study—sounds reminiscent of the fabled dying duck in a thunderstorm!

It was merely Bolsover having an all-in wrestling bout with Napoleon Dupont or putting a leg to torturo. It wasn't. It was Bolsover practising crooning!

The effect on Bolsover has been remarkable. He used to stalk about with his head stuck forward and his jaw protruding, looking for trouble. Now he waltzes about with his head in the clouds and his jaw drooping, looking for dreams that won't come true, or something!

is finding life by no means a bed of roses, by the way. Quelchy has put his foot down and forbidden him to croon in such a way as to annoy other School House residents. And Quelchy means to see that his ban is observed!

Yesterday he got out of bed at half-past six and went downstairs in his dressing-gown, thinking he could hear Bolsover crooning. Fortunately, it turned out to be a false alarm. It was only one of Gosling's chickens, laying an egg!

Still the Head didn't look put out. He put on a bold face and put back a defiant reply. "Put breefly, then," he sneered, "you seem to be threatening me. Let me tell you you've woke up to the wrong customer. I refuse to be threatened."

"What are you going to do, then, sir?" asked Jolly. "Mr. Smith" laughed. "That's easily answered," he said. "I am going to have you put through the door!" He rang the bell and wrapped out a sharp

order to James, who appeared in an instant. Before you could say "nife," James had summoned half a duzen burly funkeys, who proceeded to give the chums of the Fourth a proper ruff house. Jack Jolly & Co. struggled despritley. But it was of no avail, and one by one they were rushed to the door and flung out—to limp back to St. Sam's, groaning and moaning and wondering how the Head had the nerve to be such a beast!

Jack Jolly & Co. were very much serprized that the Head hadn't been more nervuss over their finding out his secret. But there was no need for their serprize, really, for in actual fakt the Head was as frightened as a kitten. He was simply snaking with fear as he rang up St. Sam's and spoke to Serownger.

"That Serownger! Serownger, we're rumbled—by Jolly and his friends! I am hoapful that they won't be such cads as to tell the porlice where I am. But I think we'd better stop meeting—or even writing letters through the post to each other!"

"Then how can I get advance information about the fourthcoming rounds of the Trezzure Hunt?" asked Serownger from the other end.

The Head pawsed. "I know! I'll leave you a copy of the whole bag of tricks at the Muggleton bunshop, and you can call for it there this afternoon. Nobody who sees you will dream of anything suspicious if you merely drop in at an innersent tuckshop. Twiggys-ous?"

"I twig, sir!" answered Serownger, with an unplezzant chuckle. Then the two arch plotters rang off.

A SHOCK FOR SCROWNGER! "Beests!" Tubby Barrell made that remark. The fattest fellow at St. Sam's was referring to the people from whom he had tried to borrow munny ever since dinner-time. He also jealously included the

tuckshop, same, who had flatly refused to give him tuck on tisk! "Beests!" repeated Tubby Barrell as he toiled down the lane leading to Muggleton. "Anybod' would think I wasn't honest, refusing to lend me even a paltry bob! As for Jolly, I've finished with him—lecturing me for five minnits before he gave me a three-ha'penny stamp for my letter to Uncle George! Mustn't forget to post that letter by the way!"

And Tubby fished out the letter from his jacket pocket and carried it in his hand for the rest of the jerney.

Five minnits later Tubby arrived at the Muggleton bunshop. "Good-afternoon, Mr. Podger!" he remarked, smirking hoapfully over the counter at the bunshop proprietor. "I've just dropped in for tea. By an over-site I've left all my munny at the skool, but I suppose you don't mind putting it on the slate!"

"Haw, haw, haw! Somethink wrong with your supposer, Master Barrell!" laughed Mr. Podger. "My motter is 'No munny—no grub!' Skeddadle!"

"Look, here, you beest! I've walked all the way from St. Sam's and—"

"Haw, haw, haw! Jest wet you need!" chuckled Mr. Podger. "All you need now is a nice walk back. That's the way to get your wait down. Master Barrell!"

Tubby Barrell glared across the counter at the yewmrous tuckshop man.

Bolsover the Crooner